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AT HOME IN THE BLACK ATLANTIC: CIRCULATION, DOMESTICITY
AND VALUE IN THE SENEGALESE MURID TRADE DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT

Through ethnography, the dissertation shows how the diasporic practices of Senegalese migrants relate to process of domestic social production at home. I argue that cycles of production and reproduction both transform and are transformed by global religious and financial circulations. In this dissertation, I consider the implications of diaspora, a slippery concept that poses methodological and theoretical challenges for anthropology, by anchoring it in a twentieth century African labor migration. The dissertation theorizes diaspora in a novel way by treating religion not as an exogenous factor, but as the symbolic and material motivation behind movement and migration and thus as integral to the analysis of social processes. By looking critically at circulation in the context of a West African trading community (the Murid Sufi way) in Senegal and in New York and Chicago, the dissertation posits the domestic as political, the family as a point of articulation between society and the economy, the imbrications of the local and the global and the historical development of global circulation, and the relevance of gender and generation to anthropological thought and to emergent “neoliberal” politics.

The dissertation analyzes the remittances of overseas male traders of the Murid tariqa to the religious hierarchy in Senegal and to Murid households (mothers, sisters and wives) to understand how Senegalese are creating social worlds in the context of an inadequate local economy. The volume and velocity of money transfers, merchant goods
and the prosperity projected by feasting and gift exchange are at odds with household stories about contracting marriages with absent husbands, baptisms for offspring of unwed mothers and funerals for bodies yet to be repatriated. These stories are themselves critical narratives of the neoliberal present and of the possibilities the contemporary historical moment offers for social production. How these obligations are fulfilled through movements across the Black Atlantic can best be understood by returning home in the double sense of home as Africa and home as the domestic sphere.

I argued that the domestic is political and that the substance of the nation-state, religious institutions and global economic processes are intertwined with domestic politics. I show through ethnographic narratives that there is a politics of value at play, women invest themselves with embodied, consumable forms of value such as clothing and cosmetics whereas men invest themselves in house-building. In addition, I show how domestic reproduction itself, as represented by these contentious forms of the house and the female body, is a value.
CHAPTER ONE
GLOBALIZING CIRCUITS OF WAGE LABOR AND CAPITAL, THE STATE AND THE DOMESTIC SPHERE IN SENEGAL

The politics of the belly are also the politics of intimate liaisons.
Jean-Francois Bayart

Unfinished Home-work: Laying Thematic Foundations

Senegal, like remittance economies in many parts of Africa\(^1\) and elsewhere such as Yemen, Mexico and the Philippines, is undergoing material transformations in the architectural and urban landscape. For example, neighborhoods that formed around the periphery of the Senegalese capital of Dakar at the beginning of the decade, which housed rural migrants looking for urban work, are now centers of transnational trade. These neighborhoods have become popular among trading families looking to live near the airport and the port of Dakar and to maintain their rural households in the sacred village of Tuba, the center of spiritual life for members of the Murid Sufi\(^2\) order

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\(^2\) Sufism is the esoteric or inward (*baatin*) aspect of Muslim practice that involves direct contemplation of "divine realities" and its transmission from one master to another (Burckhardt 1995:15).
(tariqa'), which organizes long distance trade routes. By the close of the decade, glaring white stucco villas were constructed in neat rows along increasingly congested roads bordered by tidy displays of bathroom fixtures, ceramic and marble tiles and flowering crimson hibiscus plants for sale. In the context of trade liberalization in the 1990s, successful overseas traders built new homes, which became the hallmark of a prosperous decade, but the forms of labor, capital and credit cemented in their structures sank from view. This thesis is an ethnography of the remittances, religious offerings and ritual exchanges of disciples and traders of the Murid Sufi way (tariqa or known way of achieving divine union). The desire to invest in home building at home and the Murid narrative of global economic processes, as Mamadou Diouf (2000) argues, destabilizes conventional assumptions about the structure and process of globalization as a course that universalizes spatial and temporal horizons. Unlike national economies that are similarly supported by migrant labor, real estate development in Senegal is part of an encompassing Muslim vision of wealth, grace and value that is particular to the Sudan region, which Biaya argues has been exposed to the “cosmopolitanism of Islamic urban culture” (2000:711) for centuries. These Senegalese and Muslim homes are important for

Sufism may be properly understood as Islamic mysticism but not with the notion of individualistic subjectivity prevalent in Christian mysticism (Hunwick, personal communication, October 1997).

3 In Arabic, tariqa is synonymous with sirat, or path, but it has wider meaning and can be translated as ways and means (Lings 1993:28). Scholars have translated tariqa both as “brotherhood” or “confrerie,” however; this term is misleading as the turuq include male and female disciples. The tariqa has also been referred to in the literature as “order,” but this term is not really an accurate translation of tariqa, which refers to the Sufi path to divine union.

4 For a discussion on Murid circuits and trade liberalization in Senegal see Diouf 2002.
what they can tell us about the historical development of global exchange,
transformations in domestic cycles of reproduction and the post-colony.

The thesis contributes to diasporic research through a concern for the location of
Africa in the discussion of the Black Atlantic, not only as a philosophical project, but also
as a theoretically and historically informed ethnographic project and as a social reality.
The project historicizes spiritual economy within the shifting basis of production in this
community from peanuts and dry season trading in the early colonial period to
transnational trade emerging out of ecological devastation, and falling peanut prices on
the world market in the 1970s.

What distinguishes Murid remittances from earlier migratory phenomena in
Senegal is the centralized control of the Murid clergy over these circuits of wage labor
and capital. Though the dissertation primarily concerns those families whose lineages
have been devoted to Murid shaykhs5 for several generations, youth conversions to the
Murid way are on the rise. The phenomena of increasing Murid affiliation is tied to the
new forms of accumulation provided by the Murid way through international trade and
exchange. Like the rising tide of Pentecostalism in many African countries, such as
Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, the turn to religion in Senegal is part of a response to

5 One may also hear the seexs being referred to in the literature as marabouts. The word marabout
is not indigenous to Senegal; it has several suspected origins. Etymologically, marabout may have
developed its meaning from the North African Arabic word mrabot (which is the same as al-moravid).
Mrabot means either “the man from the fortified monastery” or simply “religious.” In practice marabout is
the word that the French colonial ethnographers attached to this class of scholars with in the Mouride
hierarchy and the word continues to be used interchangeable with sëriñ and seex, which are both Wolof
words. These terms, marabout, sëriñ and seex are used interchangeable to signify a religious leader
(Monteil 1969:88).
economic and social dislocation. Despite the entrance of several Muslim and even Murid candidates in the 2000 Presidential race, Senegal is remaining steadfastly committed to secularism. Though a Sunnite movement is emerging among university students the movement is predominantly anti-Sufi, not anti-accumulation. Its adherents oppose Murid, Tidjan and Qadir clientelist ties to the state (Augis 2001).

Tariqa Murid, in its current phase of transnational expansion, depends for its production and reproduction, on the ability of traders to work themselves through the domestic sphere. Thus, I analyze two interlocking circuits of exchange: global circuits of wage labor and capital organized by the spiritual vision of the Muridiyya and female circuits of ritualized gift exchange fueled by overseas remittances. I argue however, that the productive and reproductive value of Murid wealth is skewed. There are two inversions; exchange produces social relations rather than the functionalist notion of kinship producing exchange and exchange fuels production rather than vice versa. I am using circulation here as both the actual movement of people and goods as well as a ritual system of moral obligation. Through participation in Murid circuits, men build homes in Senegal to fulfill the prophecy of their “man of God” (wali), Amadou Bamba.6 These offerings enter the circuit of “blessings” (baraka) through which disciples enter into their relations with shaykhs: blessings that are spiritual and material at once, for through them

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6 Eric Ross discusses the development of Tuba in relation to the Murid ndiggel (commands) by Murid shaykhs to encourage their disciples to invest in Tuba to stem the flow of urban and overseas migration as well as Bamba’s prophecy concerning the sacred city of Tuba. See also Gueye 1999 for growth and development of Tuba.
disciples gain access not merely to eternal prosperity but also to the this-worldly wealth whereby they are able to create social worlds in the absence of viable local and national economies.

In contrast, women build households through ritual exchanges of cash and merchant goods obtained through Murid trade networks. In this context, foreign commodities, rather than undermining the production of blood ties, are thought by women to be the very means of constituting relations of kinship and alliance. However, these merchant goods (housewares and cosmetic products), the extracted labor of male kin, are mere placeholders for idealized complete families that in reality are nothing more than a collection of broken bonds. Nevertheless the symbolic foundations of the ritualized domestic economy in large degree drive the trade diaspora itself.

Within the domestic sphere there is a politics of value at play; women invest in embodied, consumable forms of value whereas men invest in house-building. In addition, there is a politics of value to domestic reproduction itself, as represented in the contentious forms of the house and the female body. The volume and velocity of money transfers, merchant goods and the prosperity projected by feasting and gift exchange are at odds with household stories about contracting marriages with absent husbands, baptisms for the offspring of unwed mothers and funerals for bodies yet to be repatriated.

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7 See for example Biaya 2000 for a discussion of accessories and eroticism and Heath 1992 for a discussion of cloth and status.

8 Antoine provides demographic evidence of delayed marriages among Dakar youth.
These stories are critical narratives of the neoliberal present and of the possibilities that
the contemporary historical moment offers for social production.

Against the backdrop of a history of value extraction that has shifted from peanut
communes to transnational trade,⁹ the Muridiyya restructure both domestic and
productive processes, and it offers its adherents new forms of community and prosperity.
is the inability to exercise control over a global economy to which Senegal is increasingly
irrelevant and a state unwilling to secure the social welfare of its population, Murid
leadership and control over global circuits and the social welfare of its disciples is an ever
more important phenomenon. Global circuits are primarily organized through a symbolic
idiom of Murid brotherhood. This relationship of brotherhood solidarity is formed in the
institution of the daara, the Koranic school and rural workgroup, and the da’ira, the
prayer circles of adult men and women. It was initially the peanut production and
donating labor to the shaykh’s fields that generated exchange and baraka. Today it is
trading in urban spaces in New York and sending addiya, or religious offerings to the
Murid clergy in the sacred village of Tuba that generates baraka, or blessings.

Neoliberal economic policies have had some positive consequences for the Murid
tariqa, their embracing of trade has provided some forms of real development, and this is
why I pick up on home construction. In addition, through the da’ira organization and its
system of religious offerings, the Murid clergy has appropriated an NGO model, as

⁹ See Boone 1992; Cruise O’Brien 1975, 1988; Ebin 1992, 1993; Mbojd 1993
Cheikh Babou (2002) argues, investing in infrastructural improvement in Tuba in the form of electrification, sewage and water facilities, and thus filling in for the state.

“Senegalese exceptionalism,” that is a stable state with a high degree of legitimacy despite its failure to industrialize, has been investigated by a number of scholars working on the relationship of the state to the Sufi orders including Mamadou Diouf, Donal Cruise O’Brien, Leonardo Villalon, and Linda Beck. Through access to patronage resources of the state and a claim to divine rule, Murid shaykhs deliver the support of their disciples contributing to the legitimacy of the state (Beck 2001:602). The French bequeathed to Senegal this political economic system based on peanuts, based on control of the center of the country through Murid shaykhs in exchange for neopatrimonial support. Senghor inherited the model of religious allegiance to the state and used it to build national consensus and to secure his political hegemony. Catherine Boone (1992:197) argues that by the 1970s preserving the alliance between the political elite and rural shaykhs became an end in itself. The state turned a blind eye when Murid clergy established parallel markets for peanuts between Tuba and the Gambia. Trucks left Tuba with peanuts and returned with inexpensive consumer goods and thus Tuba became a center of this contraband circuit. In the 1970s the Murids transferred assets accumulated through the peanut trade into urban real estate, cement, construction, import/export and transport.

Abdou Diouf, who succeeded Senghor in 1980, as a technocrat was sought to diversify the Senegalese economic base but beginning in 1981, at the behest of the World Bank, the Senegalese state began a twenty year process of devaluation, dismantling
industrial protections, giving price incentives for agricultural production and exports, and substituting private for public enterprise, not just in industry but in the provision of social services as well. With trade liberalization in 1997, which aimed to foster Senegal’s integration into the world economy by freeing markets from government control and encouraging private enterprise” (ibid), and with the 1999 decentralization of the Senegalese state, which transferred power to local authorities, local Murid leaders became quite powerful.

Mamdani argues that political reforms in Africa fail to empower citizens because they sidestep the colonial legacy of what he terms decentralized despotism. Reforms have failed in Senegal because of the unwillingness of the socialist party to break the rural stronghold of the Murid clergy. Linda Beck argues that the Senegalese case is even more fraught because the Murid stronghold on the state is both rural and urban elite, in fact, the current president, Abdoulaye Wade, is a Murid. When Abdoulaye Wade campaigned in New York in 1999 he did not promise to build factories in Tuba, he promised an airstrip because he was committed to providing the infrastructure to support Murid trade engendered by liberal trade policies.

Since I first went to Senegal in 1992, there have been fundamental changes in that Senegal is irrelevant not only for production, but for finance capital as well. Moreover, the very nature of money itself has changed, both technological developments, of the kind that Harvey and Gideon speak about with respect to space-time contraction, but also a very different spirit tied to notions of money and its circulation. This is an economy of recompense that hinges on the remittance, the lottery and the rotating credit
union. This chance encounter with money is fundamentally different from the developmental state and the well-defined patronage relations that went with it.

Although it is widely recognized by now that two decades of neoliberal reform in Africa have resulted in the unequal, if not negative, material development of these communities, the impact of these reform measures on processes of social production are less well understood. My research addresses how economic transformations translate into debates concerned with local social and moral orders: on life cycles and households, and on gendered and generational bonds, and struggles. I am interested in how Senegalese are working to reconstitute the means of supporting institutions of kinship and community when confronted with the withdrawal of the state from education, health, markets and development projects.

*Homebuilding and the Trade Diaspora*

In an architectural nod to admired locales such as Saudi Arabia, a center of the Muslim world, and Dubai, an international commercial hub with no exchange controls, quotas or trade barriers, these multi-story homes are rising up in both urban and rural regional centers. Desirable features include inner quarters protected by high cement walls, arched balconies, second floor terraces with awnings and tinted glass, durable marbled facades and ceramic tiled floors. Additionally, many of these homes display a desire for decorative arts such as the front, garage and inner doors, which are crafted by local woodworkers drawing on historical motifs symbolic of rank. Some of these homes openly face frontage roads, others peek out of their protective enclosures; all of them
employ ornamental motifs giving their facades a celestial tilt. These new homes contrast to more conventional peri-urban homes, without facades, whose rooms are conventionally built facing an inner courtyard, which is the customary domain of female labor and the public square of family politics.

Internet sites such as Projet Espace Residence promote the idea of luxurious residences to Senegalese. Projet Espace Residence offers an urban apartment community outside of Dakar, which invites Senegalese to experience “d’une architecture élégante aux lignes modernes et d’une situation exceptionnelle.” In addition this kind of home marketing is widespread, S.C.I. La Linguere, a joint venture between “Sénégalais résident à Dakar et Sénégalais résident dans la Diaspora,” promotes “immobilière d’un type nouveau alliant social et qualité.”\textsuperscript{10} The desire to construct is not limited to new homes. Home renovation that entails the addition of several rooms or even of entire floors, is also on the rise. Senegalese men who have been working abroad boast of the homes that they have built for their parents and senior women often give tours of their homes to explain how they plan to defal ker gi, or renovate their home, and direct the conversation by describing the additions made by husbands and sons such as contemporary lighting, flooring and bathroom fixtures. These conversations are often punctuated with the declaration that the relation who has undertaken these renovations has proved himself to be a good person, moom, dafa baax.

\textsuperscript{10} S.C.I. two and three bedroom homes are listed for 18.000.000 to 25.000.000 F CFA, roughly $25,000 US.
These villa structures are a far cry from the descriptions of Senegalese homes once given by the Senegalese novelist and filmmaker Ousmane Sembene in his 1965 novella, *The Money Order*, as “nearly all identical: built of old, rotten wood, with roofs of corrugated iron, which was invariably rusty, or of old thatch that had never been renewed, or even of black oilcloth.” And they are a far cry from the drab Brooklyn apartments and Paris foyer Senegalese inhabit as diasporic workers.

The bright stucco cement villas, in contrast to the makeshift homes described by Sembene, are the work of highly organized prosperous transnational circuits of wage labor and capital administered by the clergy of the Murid Sufi Islamic way (*tariqa*). These yet to be inhabited dwellings and the incomplete neighborhoods they form are constructed by the remittances of overseas peripatetic traders and factory workers who view houses as a form of social value that is both the product of and the motivating force behind their sojourns abroad. These homes are built primarily at two strategic nodes in the Murid circuit: Dakar, the capital of Senegal, a major shipping port and home to the national airport; and Tuba, the holy center of the Muridiyya and a post-colonial tax and duty free zone.

In devoting their wages to the development of Tuba—its central mosque and the homes radiating out from this sacred center—disciples realize the blessings (*baraka*) of the saintly founder of the Muridiyya, Amadou Bamba (ca 1851-1927), who promised prosperity in this world and salvation in the next to all who aspire to his path of divine union. The Murid gate to Paradise is the holy city of Tuba, which was founded on the vision of their *Man of God*, Amadou Bamba. The name Tuba derives from the Tree of
Paradise and was chosen by Bamba following a vision during one of his retreats (khalwa). Under the tree where he experienced his vision, he intended to build the largest mosque in Africa. The mosque would be constructed in the middle of the public square, or penc, named for the palaver tree that stood at the center of Senegambian royal capitals and which was an acknowledged political symbol. Radiating out from this central structure would be the roads that would lead his faithful to him (Ross 1995:231). His plan, begun in 1926, was carried out by his brothers upon his death. The brothers succeeded him to the caliphate of the Murid holy center. Each brother in turn headed a wedge shaped quartier surrounding the great mosque by parceling land out to their devotees. And thus Tuba evolved into a locus of spiritual and political power (Ross 1995:231).

Though many real estate developers who target Senegalese abroad offer what they term an “exceptional situation,” the reality is that many of these newly constructed dwellings on the outskirts of Dakar and regional centers are more like castles built of sand—their half-built structures worn down by the elements after years of inactivity. Some of these homes are settlements; they are built on land donated by a Muslim clergy trying to push the outer limits of their holy terrain. Others are like homesteads, their cement outlines preventing the land from reverting back to the government under the domaine national law of 1964, which places rural land under state jurisdiction. Still others are staking their claim to government land and are razed as soon as they are discovered.
The growing number of secondary homes in Tuba is enough to make one think it is the vacation capital of Senegal; in fact its population had doubled between 1988 and 1998 and its built up area has expanded from 575 ha in 1970 to 3,900 ha in 1990, and finally surpassing 12,000 ha in 1997 (Gueye 1999:1). More than 300,000 Senegalese (ibid) out of a national population of 9.5 million (2000)\(^{11}\) inhabit or maintain a home in this rural region plagued with the weekend traffic of urban disciples seeking respite in the country, a visit with their shaykh or a long holiday weekend and family reunion. These homes give both form and meaning to spiritual endeavors. Aspiring homebuilders lay the foundation of their dwellings on the land in and around Tuba not only to stake a claim to the property in this rapidly growing “spiritual metropolis,” to quote Eric Ross, or to benefit from free water (an exceptional benefit given the drying up of rural villages in this rapidly desertifying landscape) but also to generate an eternal sacred connection to the land and the collectivity that it signifies. These homes are eschatological edifices for they express the destiny of humanity; Amadou Bamba, the founding saint of the Murid way, maintained that all of the children of Adam would one day return to Tuba (Ross 1995:227). In addition, these homes also express a concern with death and final destiny. A devotee buried in Tuba escapes the need for intercession by the angel Jibril and thus ascends directly to paradise. This idea of the home as the heavenly conduit is reflected in the poem by Rumi who writes, “when the bodily houses have lost their foundations the believers become like a ‘single soul’” (Chittick 1983). The construction of these homes,

\(^{11}\) World Development Indicators database, April 2002.
even if incomplete, places the transnational trader at the crossroads of heaven and earth, where profits meet prophets, prayers meet prosperity and the divine encounters the domestic.

Murid homes, and the materials garnered for their construction, tell of a vast array of international networks of exchange, of circuits of merchant goods imported through this village metropolis—ceramic tile, Italian marble and European toilets and basins. They also reveal financial linkages through which these merchants transact commercial arrangements involving procuring, shipping and remitting cash and merchant goods to fulfill filial obligations and spiritual duties. The fact that the builders of these homes live their lives elsewhere—in diasporic and urban locals—tells us of the centrality of Tuba as a spiritual center for these vast networks of globalized exchange.

*Murid Homes and the State*

In practical terms, these homes need for plumbing, sewage, electricity and garbage collection and their potential for tax revenue as vestments of wealth to be obtained overseas also tell of the prospects of a decentralized state apparatus following fifteen years of structural adjustment programs and of the promises of a rural elite, the Murid shaykhs, to care for their ever increasing band of disciples. The relationship between the state and the Murid elite has shifted significantly since the state implemented policies liberalizing trade in the 1990s and a large number of Murid faithful endeavored to participate in the overseas expansion of Murid trade and religious life. These disciples showed their submission to their shaykhs from overseas by sending *adya*, or religious
offerings, and by building homes to glorify the great city of Tuba, fulfilling Bamba’s master plan. These partial homes invite one to look into a turbulent *addunya Murid*, a Murid world situated in the post-colonial and neoliberal moment in Senegal; a world that hinges on a global economy whose very foundations crumbled as the World Trade Center in New York came falling down in September 2001.

The magnitude of remittances, which are inscribed on the Senegalese countryside through home building, is felt at every level of society, from the urban and rural households whose ritual cycles depend on their receipt, to the rural councils, religious organizations, state bureaucracies, and myriad telecommunications, shipping and import/export enterprises, and of course, the construction companies building homes, who depend on this wealth produced overseas. These homes also raise questions about the nature of production in post-colonial African communities. For if the state does not inhere in social services such as health care, sanitation and education or in national wealth produced through manufacturing, industry and agriculture, of what does it consist? How do we view the decline in the production of material wealth in relation to mystical forms of value production such as the Murid circuitry?

*Murid Homes and their Domestic Politics*

And what does a countryside of unfinished homes tell us about the possibilities that the contemporary historical moment offers for social production? An elderly man retires to his son’s seaside villa in the periphery of Dakar where he is permitted to herd his sheep in the unfinished second floor bedroom. He tells me about his youth in Taif, a
Murid agricultural settlement, of his childhood on the Murid daara, the children’s Koranic school, and of his young adulthood cultivating black-eyed peas, millet and manioc. He tells me, “we ate better in those days, though we didn’t have any good fish, we ate what we grew, and when we wanted to eat meat, we bought a lamb or beef, it was only coffee and sugar that we bought every day with cash. We had sow pure (fresh milk).” From his perspective, and from his age group, these comments speak to a loss of the capacity to benefit from control over the agricultural domain.

In the same seaside community, a young Murid wife lives with her mother-in-law and after a polite interview in the living room during the soap opera Circle de feu; we take a walk near the water. It is timis, or dusk, the witching hour and most have sought shelter indoors. She speaks passionately about the idea of the long-distance marriage; her husband is a factory worker in Italy. She tells me that she tried to live abroad, but it was expensive and she was lonely so she returned to Senegal. She tells me that her husband may not come back for the annual pilgrimage to Tuba and that he may not return for vacation in August. She wants me to understand that it is difficult for women to be faithful to husbands who are long absent. She recounts stories of women in Tuba and its neighboring village, Mbacke, who have had extra-marital relations and children who are not their husbands’. She speaks of a rising divorce rate, of wives that are outright abandoned, who never receive remittances, and of others denied a divorce by strict parents and in-laws. More commonly, she warns, the remittances that women receive make up a paltry sum. She then turns to the subject of the husbands. Of them she says that their work abroad would shame them in Senegal, they sell drugs and prostitute
themselves just to have money to send home as a matter of pride. She stops, embraces my forearms and says screwing up her nose, and then these husbands come home and invest all of their money in the house so that their neighbors can witness their success.

Murid circuits of wage labor and capital are inscribed with domestic politics and thus that the domestic sphere and the sphere of global exchange are mutually constitutive; they present a singular process. One way of understanding the connections between overseas trade and social production is to analyze an emergent disjuncture between the projected prosperity of male migrant traders of the Murid Sufi way, and the actual ability of these trader/disciples to maintain the social relations that engender wealth. Though men may build the home, building the household is a process ultimately controlled by elder women through their system of ritual exchanges, which play out in the context of family ceremonies: baptisms, weddings and funerals. Moreover, women support the labor of men though feasting and gift-giving, which enables men to trade on that reputation. Although commodity circuits are organized and often controlled by the Murid religious hierarchy, trading is ultimately a family business and families depend on fostering ties of reciprocity and obligation among kin and neighbors for capital and credit, and to establish a client base for their trading ventures. Though the home can be viewed as a constrictive space in which women’s domestic labor sustains male productive efforts abroad, the Senegalese household is also a node in women’s circuits of exchange. These exchanges include family ceremonies, rotating credit unions, and trading, and as such are the arena in which women implicitly reconfigure relations of gender and generation within their communities. Thus, while migration and house-building may be viewed as circuits in the
construction of a male, religious economy of status and virtue, they also are the means for building elaborate cycles of female commerce and prestige.

Moreover, while overseas exchange seems like a purely male endeavor, women are drawn into commodity circuits, and might even be seen as the driving force behind male migration. In contrast to men, women carry their wealth on their bodies in consumable form—cloth, cosmetics, wigs and other accessories obtained from male trade networks—and ostentatiously display their affluence by making large cash prestations during marriages, baptisms and funerals. However, while women are sometimes said to draw value away from the household, on another level, men and women are equally interested in the production of blood relations. Foreign commodities and cash, rather than undermining the creation of blood ties, are important social media that Murids, and especially Wolof, use to develop social relations. And thus, women’s domestic practices are both informed by, and seek to reform, gendered and generational ideas of home, homemaking and family, and are consequently the site of some of the most creative and conflictual human endeavors.

And many are proclaiming that women’s ostentatious gift giving and feasting practices are escalating out of control. These events are financed through women’s ritual associations (mbotaye) and through women’s participation in rotating credit unions sponsored by non-governmental organization who match the funds that they invest while at the same time providing the women with official recognition in relation to the state. In contrast to their migrant kin, women’s stable residential patterns and indigenous credit union practices are seen as conduits for grass roots development schemes. These rotating
credit unions, which are part of an overall trend towards the feminization of development in many African countries, have become a big business for women who mold their social persona, as well as their family’s reputation through gift-exchange and hospitality and who seek to establish their own trading networks in relations to holy sites of pilgrimage in the Muslim world. Amy Patterson (2000) has developed the argument that lateral ties to international donors have enabled women to become significant state actors in Senegal. Brett O’Bannon (2001) has argued with respect to peripheral regions of the country, such as Bakel, that NGO ties have enabled small-scale interests to establish patronage links with international organizations effectively bypassing state controls to achieve a level of local autonomy. James Smith (2002) has shown in his ethnography of the Taita Hill, Kenya the irony, that while the state is withdrawing from many sectors, we are witnessing a plethora of development efforts and of development discourses on the ground.

This dissertation is principally concerned then with looking at the transformation of value from wage labor and remittances to the various forms of social value generated by offerings to the clergy and gifts to kin and community, which animate the Murid community. I aim to elucidate the relationship between the domestic strategies of female kin with respect to the present (financing family ceremonies and thus social production) and male visions of the hereafter (financing the development of the sacred city of Tuba). And how to account for this split vision? Thus, I argue that the unfinished home-work is about competing and incomplete gendered projects. The homes are no more finished than the processes of domestic social production taking place within them. The Senegalese
landscape is littered with half-built villas which are iconic of half built families, that is Senegalese homes contain many relations (and are incredibly overcrowded) but are filled with the wrong kinds of relations: unmarried daughters, out of work sons, and landless elders. Thus, Murid migration is not only motivated by a shared spiritual vision but by the domestic strategies of lineages in crisis.

What do processes of home building tell us about other African communities and the world? These local processes of value formation both inform and are informed by transformations in the global economy such as the feminization of development, the changing nature of work, and the velocity of money and other commodity transfers and innovations in technology that are a fundamental feature of the neoliberal moment. The Murid case sheds light on the nature and operation of national economies supported by remittances from immigrant labor. They can tell us about Muslim banking and other financial networks operating beyond the purview of national states and international financial structures, of the movement of money uncaptured by national and international financial structures and regulations. In some ways, homes in Senegal are like homes built anywhere, as in Greece, Mexico or the Philippines, they are ultimately about establishing a set of social relations in one’s absence. The alarming regularity with which homes are built in Senegal and mowed down by the state also tells us of complicated relations between Mamdani’s “citizens and subjects” and the forces that govern them; of competing local and national agendas and of a state still unable to impose its will upon its subject population, a common theme in the literature on the state in Africa. These homes tell us of the desire on behalf of Senegalese men and women to partake of the vitality of
the globalizing world as manifested in a desire for sit down toilets and stand up sinks in private spaces rather than stand up Turkish toilets and bend down faucets and pull up wells in public courtyards; a literal re-ordering of the relations of the home, of the state and society and of an international order.

The Money Order: Remittances and the Transformation of the State

In his 1965 novella, *The Money Order*, Ousmane Sembene chronicles humorously the desperation and hysteria surrounding the receipt of a money order by one village elder. As news of the money order spreads, neighbors flock to his house demanding their shares of rice and money—a reapportioning of his good fortune among the community. The boutique owner offers to extend his credit with fifteen kilos of “very special rice” banking the elder’s receipt of the money order. To obtain the remittance, sent by his nephew, a dockworker in France, the elated protagonist navigates the state bureaucracy with its taxes, fees and corrupt civil servants. To deflect the accusations of selfishness and greed brought by angry neighbors when the funds fail to materialize, his wives come to his defense declaring that the money order has been stolen. The protagonist then receives relief from a relation of his wife, a young university educated businessman on the rise who promises to overcome bureaucratic intransigence and to deliver the cash. When the protagonist returns to this young man’s villa to receive the money, he is saddened by the news that the money order was pilfered from his relation’s car is compensated with half a sack of rice.
As in Sembene’s novella, remittances and their apportioning among family and friends continue to be the subject of fierce debate, ill-feeling and court cases amidst charges of deceit, concealment and mis-appropriation. For Sembene, the money order is a metonym for the corruption of social relations by money and the entrenchment of patronage relations in Senegalese society. Sembene’s primary target is the state and its forms of entrenchment and bureaucratic inertia.

In contrast, today’s money order, remitted through informal networks and international corporations such as Western Union, epitomizes the contraction of the state. And the emergence of informal and commercial entities to facilitate its circulation leads one to question the relevance of the state as a unit of analysis in comprehending the expansion of global circuits of capital. The money order thus, rather than conveying the story of the state and its citizens, brings transformations in the nature of labor and of production into relief. The remittance, like the sources of overseas finance provided by non-governmental development agencies, speaks to the waning of the vertical state, as Andrew Apter (forthcoming) has called it, “top-down” in its distribution of wealth through patronage relations, to the creation of lateral ties between local centers and overseas locales that is both the result of and the reason for a declining state.

The Senegalese postal service provides an example of how, in the smallest details are written larger transformations of state power and regional decline in relation to a world economy touting the benefits of globalization. For example, the state has difficulty benefiting from wealth garnered by overseas labor because currency problems have reduced the accessibility and performance of classical structures of monetary transfer.
under its purview such as the bank and the post office (Tall 1996:2). The Senegalese post office cannot deal in money orders in foreign currencies and since the 1970s the postal service has been troubled by security problems as well as delays in the payment of money orders, much of which is chronicled humorously by Sembene. These problems have been exacerbated by currency troubles such as devaluation in 1994, the non-convertibility of the Franc CFA outside of its zone of issue, and restrictive legislation concerning the trade in foreign currency. The post office in Senegal has been for some time facing a financial crisis and thus has poor relations with other African countries where remittances are also sent and received and where Senegalese have long migrated for work. In 1994 foreign posts were in arrears to the Senegalese post for eleven million Francs CFA for money orders that they had endorsed (Tall 1996:4). Furthermore, declines in the banking sector, which are related to the declining interest of foreign investors and aid workers in the merits of large-scale infrastructural development projects such as in agriculture, have prompted Senegalese to develop other productive possibilities such as micro-credit projects related to commerce. The banking sector in Senegal underwent major restructuring in the 1990s and development banks and credit societies suffered losses.

Among the eighteen financial institutions that operated in Senegal at the end of the

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12 In 1985 the Senegalese post suspended relations with Central Africa and Mauritania (Senegal has high numbers of Mauritanian migrants) due to financial difficulties. For further development of this argument see Tall 1996.
1980s, by 1995 all had been liquidated except the eight that remain.\textsuperscript{13} The large number of Western Union money transfer bureaus, in the wake of declining postal and bank transfers, is also iconic of this shifting away from the state as a source of capital.

Additionally, despite the withdrawal of the state from the home finance sector, there is a real estate boom in Senegal financed by overseas remittances. Serigne Mansour Tall’s research shows that in the \textit{quartier populaire} of Grand Dakar, in the periphery of the capital, close to fifty percent of the proprietors are Senegalese that have migrated overseas recently (1996:2). The era of middle class neighborhoods financed by state capital, such as the modern HLM townhouses and the SICAP villas dotting Dakar, has given way to beachfront villa communities such as Guedjeway and a resurgence of construction in rural areas and \textit{quartier populaire} financed by Murid migrants.

These remittances from Senegalese abroad, Tall estimates that by 1996 there were 11,000 Senegalese established in the United States and 45,000 based in Italy, have had a profound affect on the technology and structure of financial markets in Senegal. Because monetary transfers happen in such informal atmospheres, it is difficult to estimate the amount of remittances flowing into Senegal, short of tracking changes in other sectors such as home construction. However, Tall estimates that one money transfer organization, Kara International alone transferred three billion Franc CFA to Senegal

\textsuperscript{13} Among the losers were BNDS (Banque Nationale de développement du Sénégal), BSK (Banque Sénégalaise-koweitienne), SOFISEDIT (Société Financière Sénégalaise de Distribution et de Tourism), SONAGA-SONABANQUE (Société Nationale de Garantie et d’Assistance, Société Nationale de Banque), BCS (Banque Commerciale Sénégalaise) and others according to E. Baumann as quoted by Tall (1996).
during the year 1994 (1996:12). And he further suggests that by 1996 one could expect
double the amount of remittances due to the growing population overseas. Tall (1996)
suggests that informal money markets have emerged to fill a void left by a weakening of
public finance and the disengagement of the Senegalese state. These institutions have
surfaced in the wake of privatization of state sectors mandated by structural adjustment
policies. In contrast to commercial banks, Murid businesses thrive on minute
transactions. Technological innovations have gone hand in hand with Murid innovation.
Murids who specialize in import-export operations between the U.S., Italy and Senegal
devised these informal schemes of monetary transfer (Tall 1996:2). The capacity to send
remittances quickly and informally, without need of identification and other bureaucratic
devices, is crucial for traders whose moral, spiritual and filial obligations are met through
remittances of cash.

In the area of transport there have been improvements in containerization and
airfreight. Murid merchants can amass the capital to rent an entire shipping container, and
the organizational and business sense to divide the container into ever smaller chunks of
rental space thus specializing in small transactions of banking and shipping for the
average trader. It is through the accumulation of such small business ventures that Murids
have parlayed into real power competing with the national level. In the communications
sector falling telecommunications costs are associated with satellites, fiber optic cables,
cell phones and the Internet. So Muridiyya opened telecentres in their regional capital of
Diourbel to handle the demand for overseas communications at the same time that international donor agencies mandated the privatization of the communications sector\textsuperscript{14} (Wilson Fall, personal communication 2000). In addition, declining tariffs on manufactured goods in high-income countries has facilitated some Murid trade.

Murid banking institutions in the early stages were organized along the lines of village of origin and family networks. As the overseas community has grown, affiliations based on residence, professional patronage, patriotic references and Sufi orders have accompanied those based on family and origin. Not only do traders need to produce wealth through commercial activity, but the success of their enterprise is closely linked to reproducing the social relations that engender wealth. In Sembène’s conception of the money order, the social relations that engendered wealth were those that translated into state patronage. Today, the relations that engender wealth are viewed as those that have ties overseas and to a greater degree, relations with shaykhs as those who have the capital and the political connections to conduct business abroad. Men also turn to their wives who tap into capital available to them in the form of rotating credit unions organized by local NGOs.

In addition to the decline of the financial sector in Senegal and many government services Senegal has also suffered setbacks in agriculture (peanuts), industry (phosphates) and manufacturing (textiles). The Senegalese state is heavily in debt. Murid agricultural practices and the perceived stability of the CFA, by virtue of its parity with the French

\textsuperscript{14} It is interesting to note that telephone booths, as a symbol of state inefficiency were one of the
Franc, led to the lending frenzy of the late 1970s and culminated in the debt problems of the 1980s. In the 1980s, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund began to recommend politics of deregulation, privatization and devaluation for a number of African countries. This move served to heighten the over-valuation of the CFA franc (Whiteman 1994:15). And thus Senegal was the first African country to acquiesce to Structural Adjustment Programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in 1979. In January 1994 the currency of Senegal and the franc zone of francophone West Africa, was reduced from 50 CFA to one French franc to 100 CFA to one French franc. Devaluation, it was argued, is a necessary step is to render Senegalese manufactured products more competitive with imported goods but thus far has failed to cause industrial recovery or attract foreign investors (Gellar 1995:62). Further, devaluation was recommended to make millet and rice more competitive with imported grains and to make peanuts and cotton more competitive in the international market as well as to increase agricultural production. Theoretically, devaluation would stimulate industry, in practice it was accompanied by increased layoffs to reduce to industrial workforce. By 1994 1,000 jobs were eliminated in the industrial sector, the general price index jumped more than 30% and in 1994 the inflation rate was 40% (Gellar 1995:75). Devaluation doubled Senegal’s foreign debt. The event of devaluation marked the end of a 45-year special relationship between France and its former colonies. Devaluation is a significant event for Senegalese because not only did food prices double overnight while targets of election violence in 1993.
salaries remained fixed, but rather devaluation marks a rupture in Senegalese, indeed West African, and French relations. "There is a sense of something having been lost or broken, never to be repaired, that goes beyond the simple fact of a change in the value of the currency" (Whiteman 1994:14).

The decline of industry and of agriculture and their more visible forms of production and of material wealth within the boundaries of the nation-state raises the question, how are we to understand the nature of production in the post-colony? The degree of urbanization in Senegal without concomitant processes of industrialization is almost unprecedented in world history and poses particular problems for our understanding of production in non-industrialized countries in Africa and elsewhere. The Senegalese state, as part of its broader policy of decentralization, which I discuss below in relation to the Muridiyya, has been in the process of outsourcing its economy. For example, the formerly state run bus service has been sold to a Canadian company and similarly, the water and electric utilities have been put on the market. The privatization of formerly state managed utilities by Western multinational companies has been criticized by local NGO's for being profit driven and reluctant to invest those profits locally in infrastructure. Moreover, privatization is meant to shift investment risk to the private sector however private contractors commit little of their own capital. Rather the World Bank and regional development banks usually provide the capital.15

What are we to make of this collapsing of the center? Anthropological theory has turned towards the surface features of this transformation of state and society referred to as globalization such as consumption, but what is beneath this most obvious feature? What is the nature of this transformation called globalization and how are we to understand it historically? Senegalese theorists of the Murid phenomena and the problems that they pose for theories of globalization have attempted to understand them from the perspective of a “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (Diouf 2000) thus re-introducing concepts of the historical, thus emphasizing the significance of meaning and interpretation as embodied religious practice. In this dissertation I follow Diouf’s lead in providing an historical perspective on global phenomena. I also argue for a return to the political economic as a condition for the framing of theory today. In this respect, I argue for the enduring relevance of Marx’s project—a cultural analysis of the economy—for it seems that the problem of theorizing the present is tied to the separation of cultural and historical analysis from the economy (Lee and LiPuma 2002). Moreover, in keeping with Marx’s emphasis on circulation, as a bridge between production and consumption, I employ the concept of circuits and of Murid circuitry, to analysis the dynamics of circulation that define the contemporary historical moment referred to as globalization. I choose to emphasize circulation, for two reasons. First, to analyze consumption in isolation is politically problematic as it obscures an analysis of labor and considerations of exploitation. Secondly there is the problem of production, which I have alluded to previously in terms of discussing the political economy of a Senegalese nation-state in decline. Lee and LiPuma argue that the current phase of capitalism can be comprehended
as a “transition from a production-centric system to one whose primary dynamic is circulation...Production-based labor—the combining of materials, machines and workers to produce commodities—is being displaced and dispersed. The labor that increasingly drives the system today is of a sort that has no value in a strictly production-based account (2002:208).”

Focusing on circulation thus demands a critical perspective; one in which the anthropological concern for meaning and interpretation unfolds within the context of contemporary global transformations to develop an anthropological understanding of economic processes. I aim to provide, through the medium of ethnography, an analysis akin to Lee and LiPuma who argue for ‘cultures of circulation’, an analysis of the centrality of processes of circulation to the analysis of global capital. Like Lee and LiPuma, I view exchange and circulation not merely as transmitting meaning but as a constitutive process. Unlike Malinowski’s Trobrianders who could not discuss the Kula ring as an objective phenomena but could only discuss the intricacies of its circuits from various perspectives, the Muridiyya share in Bamba’s vision of the Muslim totality and talk about the connections between trade, religious offerings and gifts for life cycle rituals as part of a circuit of blessings and prosperity, jam ak xeul.

As Lee and LiPuma contend, circulation is more than mere movement of people and ideas; it is a process “with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation and constraint which are created by the interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them” (Lee and LiPuma 2002:192). In addition, the kinds of circulation that I discuss are discursively mediated practices, much of this
dissertation thus concerns talk about idealized forms of gift and commodity exchange and the formation of social relations that either did or did not occur as a result. In fact, some of the most interesting work being done at the moment on recent African diasporic movements concerns the ways in which these communities constitute themselves through talk (see for example Reynolds 2002). Through ethnography, I show how processes of exchange and circulation index, that is point to and constitute, social relations. The objects of exchange and of circulation are themselves icons; they contain in them a vision of the social totality, for Muridiyya, the perfect Muslim community.

**Tuba and the Redistributive State**

The nature of production in the post-colony and of the demise of national wealth in its more concrete and visible forms raises the question of the role of the state as a patron, as a redistributive entity of the kind of politics of the belly discussed by Jean Francois Bayart (1993). Since its inception, Tuba has been a locus of rational urban planning and of resolute control of the forces of production. In the colonial era, the Murid shaykhs co-opted the colonial cash-crop economy, and its forms of alienation, to build Bamba’s mosque and to secure the ṭarīqa and its following. Since independence, the Murid clergy have turned what has been in many African countries a rural exodus, outward onto the larger world and rooted/routed these migrants through Tuba by commanding the faithful to build homes in the spiritual center. Because the Murid clergy have been able to build Tuba by mobilizing persons and commanding resources, what then do we make of Tuba as an alternative model of state development? This question has
been posed elsewhere by Ross who suggests "some inquiry into Touba’s alternative civil (and civic) organization is warranted" (1995:254).

Mahmood Mamdani (1996) argues that the politics of the post-colonial state have been shaped by the incorporation of African subjects into the colonial state by customary authority in response to conventional accounts of colonial rule that suggest both that Africans were racially excluded from the state and that forms of civil society were absent in Africa. Mamdani argues that political reforms in Africa—decentralization of state structures, privatization of social welfare functions and state run utilities, transparency and accountability, and currency devaluation to spur African markets—fail to empower citizens because these reform measures sidestep the colonial legacy of what he terms decentralized despotism, which is shaped by figures of customary authority under indirect rule, such as chiefs and religious leaders, who linked rural and urban areas through local ethnic and religious leaders and patronage relationships.

The political scientist, Linda Beck (2001) takes up Mamdani’s thesis with respect to the Muridiyya as an example of customary authority through which rural Senegalese have historically been linked to the state. In Senegal, the figures of indirect rule were the Murid shayks who mediated their disciples’ relationship to the colonial authority and then to the post-colonial state. The supreme Murid leader is the Khalife-général who is also referred to as Sēriñ Tuba, from Wolof meaning a shaykh in Arabic, or spiritual guide, and denoting legal authority to rule over a particular community, or Booron Tuba, a political term meaning head of or master or lord, indicating both his divine and his political right to rule. The idea of the Khalife-général derives from the Islamic tradition of the caliphate,
an elective position based on the *shūrā* (Ross 1995:257). “Although Murids would hardly describe maraboutic power as ‘despotic,’ the customary authority of the marabouts has permitted them to control—directly or indirectly—local institutions of political representation or to by-pass the authority of these institutions altogether” (Beck 2001:603). Mamdani’s model of customary authority describes Tuba very well, for its colonial mandate an independent administration district endures and Tuba could be viewed as a state within a state modeled on the Vatican. And thus classical features of a state apparatus were noticeably absent in Tuba, no taxes, no gendarme and no infrastructural investment by the state. Rather, these services were offered in the name of the *Khalife-général* and divine providence.

However, its *da’ira* structure in rural, urban and diasporic locales both challenges the rural-urban dichotomy and serves as an example of both customary authority and civil society. The *da’ira*, formed around allegiance to a particular shaykh, illustrates the porous nature of categories of customary and civic (Beck 2001:606). It serves as an example of clientelist relations controlled by a local shaykh, and in addition, as a civic institution “many rural as well as urban based daahira are a able to maintain their autonomy from maraboutic power by ironically naming their Khalife as their patron” (Beck 2001:606). Moreover, apart from Murid associations, clientelist networks of ethnic and religious leaders can be found co-existing in both rural and urban locations with a civil society comprised of literacy groups, women’s associations, youth organizations and economic interest groups (ibid).
Beck argues that the despotic nature of customary power endures, not only as Mamdani suggests, because democratization efforts conceive of democracy narrowly as multiparty elections, but also due to the failure of decentralization to transfer real power, fiscal and otherwise, to the local level (see also O’Bannon). Decentralization in particular was intended to change the popular idea of the state as a redistributive entity. And in Tuba especially, caliphal authority over the selection of representatives to rural councils means that little reform is likely to happen by state efforts to transfer power to the local level. Moreover, since the Second World War, when rural Senegalese obtained suffrage, the Murid clergy has issued *ndigal* (orders) commanding disciples to vote for the ruling Partie Socialiste of Leopold Sedar Senghor. In exchange for their political support, Senghor gave access to state resources (especially needed agricultural implements and land grants), and official recognition of Caliphal authority, “while turning a blind eye to their participation in Senegal’s informal market” (Beck 2001:612). In the 1970s following devastating returns on the peanut harvest and the world oil harvest, the *Khalife-général*, Abdoul Lahat, showed reluctance to issue an *ndigal* in support of the PS and only issued an *ndigal* in 1988 after President Abdou Diouf paved roads and rural electrification projects to urge his disciples on behalf of Amadou Bamba to “thank” Abdou Diouf. The current *Khalife-général*, Sèriñ Saliou has shown extreme reluctance to issue and *ndigal* since. I suggest that his reluctance is based on both a recognition that state patronage resources have dried up, and an increasing reliance not on agricultural and large state development projects, but on international trade and overseas wealth which bypass state structures. Moreover, given the liberalization of trade in Senegal in 1996,
state efforts at decentralization may have further empowered the shaykhs who were active in international trade. Murid shaykhs could expect that an increasing number of disciples employed in overseas trade would ultimately contribute to Tuba’s development.

Ironically, Tuba’s need for infrastructure, water supply, sanitation and road construction, to meet rates of migration towards this rural capital has arisen at the same time that the capacity of the state to embark on such projects has declined (Beck 2001:619). One place that many African states have looked for new resources in the wake of decreasing international lending and development funds, and the declining capacity of spheres of production, is to implement local taxes. Beck suggests that the refusal of Tuba merchants to pay taxes levied by the Khalife-général (through the rural council upon which sat representatives appointed by the shaykh) for the purpose of developing Tuba’s infrastructure in 1997 signaled a significant shift in patronage politics and the nature of the relationship of the state to the Murid clergy and its disciples. The proposal would have placed a tax on business licenses, 15,000 to 350,000 Franc CFA or $25-$600 and on stall rentals in Tuba’s markets from 750 to 4,500 Franc CFA or $1.25 to $100 a month. The rural council argued that Tuba’s merchants could afford the tax given the growing importance of Tuba as a commercial hub and that they had already benefited from years of Tuba’s exceptional status with the Senegalese state allowing them to avoid state levies. Beck raises an important question concerning the growing autonomy of disciples with respect to their shayks, autonomy that is both geographical, as disciples engage in productive activities beyond the sphere of Caliphal authority, and political, as declining state resources have forced shaykhs to look elsewhere for patronage resources. These
taxes, Beck suggests, foretell of shifts in clientelist relations and thus fundamentally altering the neo-patrimonial nature of Senegalese politics. For the tax revolt signaled opposing currents: a demand for greater accountability on the part of the state, and resistance to political reforms that would have altered the nature of clientelist relations between shaykhs, their disciples and the state in Senegal. She predicts that the fundamental tension between the state’s need for money and the citizen’s need for accountability may tend towards a breakdown of patronage relations.

Rather than seeking legal remedies, Tuba merchants turned to the arbitrage of the Khalife-général. They contested the taxes on the basis that the rural council lacked accountability, that the president of the rural council, Béthio Thioune, had a history of embezzlement in his home region of Kaolack and they doubted that their taxes would ultimately benefit Tuba’s infrastructure. Moreover, the merchants found support among Bamba’s grandsons who viewed Thioune’s actions as threatening their economic interests and the authority of the Caliphate. Many of the merchants belonging to the da’ira Matlaboul Fouzeni rejected the growing authority of Béthio Thioune and his supporters, Hizbut Targiyya, the university da’ira. Their opposition to the growing power of these two entities was based on the efforts of the university da’ira to diminish the genealogical inheritance of the wird, the chain of transmission of Islamic knowledge, and thus of Caliphal authority. And the merchants and Bamba’s grandsons anxiety mounted as Sēriñ Saliou granted Thioune and the student da’ira the honor of organizing the 1997 Magal de Tuba, the yearly pilgrimage to the spiritual heartland. Thioune’s motto of “efficiency, expediency and taalhibeti,” or disciple power as opposed to Caliphal authority, was taken
up by the students. The grandsons hold the most significant business interests in Tuba, and they opposed these new taxes which would require them to also contribute to the rural council, contributions which would further the aims of Thioune and his calls for *taalibétié*.

From the perspective of the *Khalife-général*, the taxes were not an affront to his authority; he had chosen Thioune and approved his development plan. Thus to preserve the prestige of the sacred city, Sèrini Saliou issued an *ndigal* to the grandsons to support Thioune and this move was heralded as placing the grandsons, indeed all of the Mbacke-Mbacke, or the descendants of Bamba, on equal footing with Murid disciples in general according to Islamic doctrine (Beck 2001:616). Though in the past infrastructure projects would have been the spoils of a privileged relationship between Murid shaykhs and the state, Sèrini Saliou sanctioned the taxes to renovate Tuba, but he did not command his disciples to pay them and he admonished the rural council to act in a responsible manner. In the end, Thioune and the rural council reduced the proposed taxes by fifty percent.

A series of missteps during the 1997 Magal diminished the movement of *taalibétié* significantly; however, Sèrini Saliou did continue to transfer power to the rural council, this time by granting the authority to assign land in Tuba to the rural council. Until recently, the grandsons of Bamba serving as heads of each Tuba neighborhood allocated parcels of land to their disciples because the representatives of the grandsons, upon whom the administrative task fell, had been assigning land that had been planned as streets. Houses that had already been constructed on major thoroughfares throughout the city were subsequently scheduled to be razed in 2001.
Diasporic and Domestic Circuits and Transformations of the Domestic Sphere

In the Tuba quartier of Darou Khoudouss, a young mother in a thin red and brown print boubou and rubber thongs attempts to swing herself and her newborn infant over the top of a dump truck. In the truck are about thirty young men and women some of whom are reaching over to aid her climb. These disciples are workers, their clothes showing the wear and tear of their labors, and they are headed for Khelcom, an emerging Murid daara in what was once the central forest region of Senegal and protected government land. In the mid-1990s, this land was donated to the Murid clergy to be cleared by their disciples and planted with peanuts and a diverse number of local crops as part of a World Bank development plan. In another instance, a young boy is found to be in critical condition after stowing away in the wheel well of a jumbo jet bound for Marseille. He survives, but is sent back to Senegal. Instances of total devotion born both of desperation and of industriousness such as this example of a young woman and her infant child who would consider the back breaking labor of clearing land for cultivation and inhabiting a remote rural wilderness with an infant has been the subject of much thinking on the part of academics interested in the Muridiyya. Approaches to the study of the Murid tariqa by Sy 1969; Creevey 1970; Cruise O’Brien 1971, 1992; Copans 1980; Magassouba 1985 have attempted to understand the economic exploitation of disciples by their shaykhs and the degrees of corruption of the Murid shaykhs with respect to their dealings with the state. Indeed this literature raises crucial questions concerning the nature of Murid wealth and power. However, this enormous hold over
their communities is not merely a function of manipulating disciple’s offerings or the state’s patronage.

I aim to reconsider conventional political science type approaches to the Murid phenomena by focusing on society and economy and the inseparability of the domestic and the political/economic. The strong pull of the Murid tariqa is related to the enormous importance of remittances generated by what I would call “Murid transnationalism” to Murid households and the relations that they generate. One cannot possibly understand what it is that is the motivation and the outcome of Murid productive efforts in Tuba and in the diaspora unless one has an eye on processes of social production taking place in the domestic sphere in Senegal. For the money earned through Murid circuits of wage labor and capital and amplified through submission to a Murid spiritual framework of peace and prosperity have enormous social significance in Murid lives. Thus, I interrogate the dimension of producing/reproducing social subjects and the changing place of things and signs as the space of the domestic and the reproductive expands on a global scale. Jean and John Comaroff (1992) argue that colonialism was as much a political process as it was a process of the colonization of consciousness. One way in which the British succeeded in controlling the Tswana population was by promulgating a particular form of Christian and British domesticity, through reforms of the body and of the house. Their centering of the social person and of local worlds in decoding macro process such as colonialism, post-coloniality and the neoliberal moment have relevance for understanding the workings of late capital in many communities such as the Muridiyya.
Fieldwork

This dissertation is based on several periods of ethnographic fieldwork in Senegal and in its diasporic communities in New York and Chicago beginning in 1992. I first went to Senegal in January 1992 to research women’s rotating credit unions as part of an internship with the NGO, ENDA T.M. My mentor was Emanuel Ndione at Chodak in Grand Yoff. It was Mr. Ndione who first introduced me to the matron of the host family, a community leader who had been active with the NGO’s development programs, with whom I conducted my subsequent dissertation research from 1999 to 2000. In the meantime I produced a Master’s Thesis on the Murid da’ira in Chicago based on ethnographic research from 1996 to 1997. There were also several shorter periods of fieldwork, archival research and further language training in the summer months of 1997 and 1998. In the time since I first came to know my host family in 1992, three sons and one daughter have moved overseas to join their three brothers already living abroad in Italy, France and the U.S. I have had the good fortune to be in the company of an aunt, a daughter and her two brothers in the US during the writing of the thesis.

I never consciously set out to study the domestic sphere; the subject of my dissertation I attribute to a conversation I had at the West African Research Center in Dakar with Cheikh Gueye and Serigne Mansour Tall, researchers affiliated with WARC. Gueye and Tall were excited about the idea of inquiring into the incorporation of remittances into Murid households. They told me that as a junior woman, I would be privy to activities and conversations that they would be excluded from as men. For example, it was awkward for me to sit with men my age during a pilgrimage, but
perfectly unremarkable sit among older women next to crates of onions and potatoes. It was through women that I was brought into the complex and subtle politics and aesthetics of the feast; I was admonished not to slice onions that dicing was now stylish and women who sliced rather than diced were held out as examples of unfashionable behavior. And because women were constantly teaching me, telling me to pay attention, *ngir sa gestu*, for your research, the material about which I have written was shared quite openly.

Though the ethnographic narratives in the thesis are based on several members of a single family, this family has several hundred members in Dakar, Tuba-Mbacke and other rural areas. I followed the circulation of family members through these households on occasions such as social visits, pilgrimages, baptisms, weddings and funerals. I built a room in the home of my host family in Dakar and traveled extensively to Tuba-Mbacke often staying for up to a month at a time with rural relatives in several different households. From 1993 to 1994 I lived in Brooklyn, NY to be near several relations of my host family and since have visited them regularly, especially since the oldest daughter has moved to New York in 2000. Thus, the extended family network on which this research is based included rural, urban and diasporic households, but mainly focuses on their linked fortunes.

I take the household, or *ker*, as the primary unit of analysis. *Ker* translates as both the lineage and as the compound or household. When speaking of one’s connections ‘at home’ it is the *ker* that is referred to by Murid diasporics. There is another word for family (in addition to the matriline, *xet*, and the patriline, *genyo*) that is *njabout*. *Njabout* is family without reference to place. The maternal side of the family, on whom many of
the narratives focus, are Murid faithful; their *xet*, or race/ethnicity according to some translations, or matriline in the direct Wolof translation, originates from the central Wolof regions of Senegal. Their household is composed of the mother and father, their children and their grandchildren as well as elders, some relatives, some not, and children fostered to them, some country cousins, others “given” to the various members of the family to establish ties of reciprocity and mutual aid between families that are not necessarily blood kin. Rather than overspecifying the phenomena by concentrating on Murid, Wolof and urban aspects of the circuit, I use the narratives to show how the circuit operates through particular modes of deployment, and often through gendered and generational strategies. The ethnographic material itself is the product of a plodding and constant tracking of the minutia of everyday life, of inquiring into things as mundane who is having their septic tank emptied and who is making do, of the arguments between a mother and the girl she sends to the market over what 1,000 F CFA will provide towards the family meal, and why it was the kitchen implements, especially gas tanks, regularly went missing. It is an attempt to track vernacular conceptions of the commoditization and monetization of everyday values. It is precisely these details from which one can read larger historical and economic transformations. And this is the way that I aim to provide a cultural account of political economic analysis of the state in Africa. By “cultural” I mean the social processes and historical circumstances through which one can understand the phenomena such as the state and the economy.
Overview of the Dissertation

I began this introductory chapter with a discussion of The Money Order as a means of discussing the “early” moment of remittances that were surrendered to state patronage systems. The ensuing dissertation chapters look at how the remittance is surrendered to the desires of the elders who use gift-giving to fill in for the breakdown of patronage relations and the declining significance of the state and the local economy. Each chapter addresses the gendered disjuncture in the idea of the home and the gendering of forms of value (such as the material architecture of the home, housewares, and cloth) that convey different ideas about the community and its future. Through each of the narrative passages, I aim to show how social reproduction, as the establishment of new households, emerges as a form of value.

Chapter two historicizes male spiritual economy within the shifting basis of production in this community from peanuts and dry season trading in the early colonial period to transnational trade emerging out of ecological devastation, and falling peanut prices on the world market in the 1970s. Chapter three addresses the emergence of the practice of adya, or cash offerings, to the spiritual hierarchy in Tuba. This chapter is based in part of ethnographic research that I conducted in Chicago in Da’ira Tuba Chicago.

Chapter four considers gendered aspects of the Murid circuit. This chapter focuses on how a Murid woman employs various strategies to migrate to the United States—such as coquetry, divination, sacrifice, and ultimately marriage to a wealthy Murid trader. The chapter traces this Murid woman’s personal and trade networks from her initial
departure from Senegal in the early eighties to trade in the Ivory Coast to her present efforts to reestablish herself as a major trader in New York.

In a triad of later chapters (chapters five, six and seven) on household economy, marital payments and gift giving, I link transformations in production, exchange and consumption. Chapter five analyzes the hajj and the social and financial obligations that land this family deeply in debt. The hajj, normally an opportunity for cementing and creating relations of obligation and reciprocity fails in this instance. I take hospitality as a precursor to gift exchange, initiating relations with non-kin to bring them into the circle of kin exchanges and to push that relationship forward in time, with the hope that the exchanges will increase in value over time. At the close of these feasts, rather than fostering a sense of obligation in their guests, the family actually found themselves in “debt,” socially and financially. Chapter five covers household debt, feminization of development and rise of female authority at the level of the household, with the contradiction that they are still unable to create viable exchange networks and contract marriages. The chapter looks at the tension between male incorporation into overseas commodity networks and the incorporation of women at home into the development projects of non-governmental organizations.

Chapter six focuses on an exchange of bridewealth that ultimately resulted in a collapsed marriage, to show how households are made and unmade across time and space by diasporic practices. I aim to show how two decades of neoliberal reform in Senegal have had unintended consequences for the prospects of social production. The movement of male traders into transnational trade networks to shore up a stagnant local economy
and to reproduce the social and moral order has unanticipated consequences for women’s authority. Women claim male earnings not only to run the household, but also to finance family ceremonies—baptisms, marriages and funerals—and the social payments that accompany these occasions. Women also seek commodities obtained through male trade to exchange in life-cycle rituals. For women, foreign commodities, rather than undermining the production of blood ties are the very means of making those ties a social fact. In Murid families, the rejuvenation of domestic rituals through access to male earnings abroad sets in motion the production of women headed households and ultimately lineages.

In chapter seven I show how women rely increasingly on the art of self-display to signal ties to long distance trade and the imagined possibilities of reciprocal gift exchange. The ethnography focuses on talk about the pace and sequence of the marital process and the naming ceremony and on how the crisis in domestic reproduction is resolved through symbolic means such as gift giving. The circulation of symbolic commodities during the naming ceremony and talk about the imagined possibilities of gift exchange becomes a form of symbolic production in the face of what could be characterized as a crisis of social production. The ethnographic material suggests a complicated relationship between a concern for reciprocity based on the assumption of debt and pretensions to consumerism based on the assumption of surplus. Thus chapters three through five show how debt, produced by cycles of gift giving, is worked out through borrowing cash and cloth for gift exchange and display. It is the expansion of a
vast culture of credit upon which male trade networks depend. For the men, it is not actual wealth in the form of material objects that they are trading, but rather, reputation.

Conclusion

To the extent that the production of persons is embodied in the value form of the house, the scattering of homes in progress on the Senegalese landscape speaks well to the prospects for processes of social production. Tuba is a metropole of intended social projects, cinder block villas in the making, the skeleton of an Islamic university, a hospital and numerous other social projects dependent on overseas remittances. The Murid circuit of blessings and prosperity remain central to all, not immediately because they offer the promise of eternal prosperity, but because they enable access to the forms of trade and production through which that prosperity is crafted in the present world. Murid households are one of the principal forms of value that motivate Murid practice at the intersection Tuba creates between sacred and secular realms of experience. The metamorphosis of the village of Tuba into the second largest city in Senegal is a product of the purposeful activity of the disciples who see reflected in it the forms of value that are both the outcome of and the motivation for their offerings. The social processes that take place in these unfinished Tuba and Dakar homes, the gendered and generational views of these processes, and the ways in which ideal plans are deferred will be the subjects of the remaining chapters.
CHAPTER TWO

THE MURID WAY: TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE DOMESTIC SPHERE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SACRED ECONOMY IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA

Scholars of Senegalese Sufism have looked to the role of Sufi men of God (wali allah) to understand the mass appeal of these reform movements in the Senegambia at the turn of the twentieth century (Creevey 1979, Cruise O'Brien 1975, Robinson 1991). However, conversion to Islam and submission to the Murid way relates as well to transformations taking place in the domestic sphere as a result of the social crisis that was engendered by the French conquest and the disintegration of the Wolof kingdoms, which destabilized the material basis of social production. Though early converts were, as David Robinson (1991) suggests, “weary of war,” most likely they also sought land and bridewealth. In this chapter, I attempt to get to the domestic base of a long and important process in Senegal’s economic history.

However, it is difficult to write a history of the emergence of the Murid way from the perspective of the politics of the domestic sphere and of the formation of new Murid households with the growth of the community. One of the principle reasons for the difficulty is that although Islam in the Senegambian region has been studied extensively by Islamist scholars, colonial ethnographers and practitioners alike, Islam has been studied in terms of its normative and legalistic framework as well as in terms of the
thought and practices of Sufi scholars and leaders. Scholars of the Murid way have been simultaneously interested in relations with colonial authorities (Robinson 2000), with Wolof kings and chiefs (Searing 2002) and with the incorporation of former slaves into these emergent communities (Klein 1998) at the turn of the twentieth century. Additionally, the archival material reflects an interest by French scholars and administrators in comparative religious thought and practice and in stemming Muslim lead revolts against colonial rule; therefore less information is available regarding household organization—affinal and kinship relations, gender and generation within the early Murid communes. Additionally, the academic division of labor makes the study of the domestic domain within Muslim communities equally difficult. Historians of Islam and Political Scientists who worked in the Senegambia researched shaykhs, whereas anthropologists interested in the structure and function of Wolof households looked to areas that had not been converted to Islam such as the Wolof of the Gambia (Ames 1953, Gamble 1957) because Islam is presumed to have altered Wolof pre-Islamic matrilineal principles. It is not until 1970, with the dissertation of Judith Irvine and 1988, with the publication of Abdoulaye Bara Diop’s La Famille Wolof in 1985 (see also Diop 1970) that we get the first major synthesis of household organization and kinship principles in Wolof society in Northern Senegal, the area dominated by Islam. However, though many Muridiyya are Wolof, not all of the early disciples were as they migrated from diverse areas.

Martin Klein (1998) argues that many of the early Murid disciples were former male slaves who migrated to the peanut basin in search of land and productive
possibilities. But how did they contract marriages and constitute households given their lack of kinship ties to the surrounding communities and their separation from their place of origin? As the communes formed into villages with land grants from the shaykhs, what were the relations of production within the household and how did they figure into the shaykh-disciple relationship on the commune, which is credited with creating the surplus through which the shaykhs provided for the well-being and material enrichment of the community? What are the cycles of domestic production and reproduction within this community and how have they been fundamentally transformed through contemporary diasporic practices?

The particular way in which the Senegambian region is further entrenched within Atlantic commercial, political and social relations through Murid practices brings into relief the way in which the Senegalese Murid trade diaspora of the present is not epiphenomenal to late twentieth century global economies, but rather is constitutive of those processes. Moreover, the specific ways in which the Muridiyya have partaken of these wider processes is due to the politics of the domestic unit. The Murid material points to the way in which the region has always been tied to trans-Saharan and overseas influences, has shaped and been shaped by events in the region such as colonial rule, slavery, and trade, has created a space of autonomous action beyond the purview of the colonial and post-colonial state and has narrated its own version of history. The contemporary phenomenon of the Muridiyya in Senegal and its new diaspora can be understood in terms of four historical debates surrounding emergence of the Murid way
and the asymmetrical incorporation of the region into what would become global economies by the end of the twentieth century.

**Four Debates and the Missing Gender Question**

First, as Martin Klein (1998) argues in opposition to the thesis of the French colonial Arabist and ethnographer Paul Marty (1917), the Murid way should not be seen as a new form of slavery as Marty argues, but rather understood in terms of the ways in which it was as responsible for the end of slavery in the region of the Senegambia as was the emergence of free labor under French colonial rule. Much of what is known of the early life of Bamba is found in Paul Marty’s monographs (1917). Marty was among the first generation of French colonial ethnographers to study the French Soudan. He was a military officer and an Arabist inspired by the Colonial Exhibitions to join the service. While his monographs are an invaluable source concerning the life of Bamba and the early development of the Mouride tariqa, Searing (2002) argues that they are intelligence reports and they are arguments in favor of Bamba’s exile from the colony. Thus he focused primarily on the shaykhs and on understanding their Islamic practice. Klein argues that the Muridiyya offered new forms of community for those cut loose from the social hierarchies that accompanied the Wolof kingdoms, such as slaves and members of the warrior (*ceddo*) caste, by offering land and security and that the incorporation of former slaves into Senegambian society transformed the structure of social relations in the region. He also suggests that the incorporation of former slaves, many of whom came
from diverse ethnic backgrounds, into these new communities emerging in the peanut basin contributed to the Wolofization of Senegal.

Second, Boubacar Barry and Philip Curtin respectively debate whether slavery can be seen as a unique and tragic episode in Senegal’s history or whether it is but one more instance of Senegal’s incorporation into global commodity circuits. It seems clear that both perspectives are important to an understanding of how Murid communes attracted followers, either those seeking to escape slavery or those seeking the means of production not available to them previously.

In “Slavery and Colonial Rule in the French Sudan,” Martin Klein argues that the Sudan—Senegal, parts of Mali and Guinea in particular—seems to have always been connected to the Saharan trade, through which Islam also spread. Hunwick and Troutt Powell (2002) and Klein (1998) point to the transfer of African slaves to the Mediterranean as early as the first millennium. Klein argues that Senegal’s prolonged involvement with long-distance trade has impacted the forms of institutions of trade and complex political structures. Senegal’s long history of trade, Atlantic and Mediterranean, is integral to the development of the domestic community and vice-versa.

Commerce in the region was based initially on gum Arabic but only really took off with the cultivation of peanuts for light industrial applications and cosmetics in Europe. Through slavery and monocrop production under French colonial rule the Senegambia region was incorporated into Atlantic global markets. However, the Senegambia was also linked into other global histories, notably the trans-Saharan trade networks as well as the Mediterranean lands of Islam where adherents to Islam had
participated in the hajj but also where West Africans were enslaved. Thus through Muslim trade networks and religious ties as well as through Atlantic and Mediterranean slavery, the region was “globalized.” Thus the shift from a social structure based on centralized political states such as the Wolof kingdoms to one based on Maraboutic allegiance can be understood as part of the longer history of Islam in the region.

Martin Klein (1998) and Boubacar Barry (1998) argue that the trade in slaves incorporated the Senegambian region into the wider global economy. Klein is particularly interested in how the export trade in slaves impacted processes of social production in the region and in how emancipated slaves were incorporated into Senegambian society. The decline in slave trading and raiding and the aftershocks on domestic cycles of production and reproduction helped spread the conversion to Islam in northern Senegal. The Muridiyya, its founder Amadou Bamba and first Khalife, Mamadou Mustapha, incorporated those of the former slave and warrior (ceddo) caste members into systems of social and agricultural production. In addition, according to David Robinson (1991), conversion to the Muridiyya followed not only the logic of colonial resistance, but an internal logic concerned with the Sufi esoteric practice of self purification. Thus the emergence of the Muridiyya is rooted in complex historical, meaningful and material practices. Widespread conversion to the Murid way has been understood in the literature as based on the charismatic leadership of Amadou Bamba (Cruise O’Brien 1988). I argue that the forms of productive community that the Murid way offered in the wake of colonial penetration and the disintegration of the Wolof kingdoms and the social structures that went with them, attracted new adherents.
Martin Klein (1992) addresses the historiographic argument between Philip Curtin and Boubacar Barry concerning the impact of the slave trade on the Western Sudan. Curtin argues that the slave trade is an extension of markets already in existence in the region. Barry argues that the slave trade had a significant moral impact on the nature of these societies and thus focuses on the disintegration of the structure of states. He argues that the moral economy of Islam is attached to organizing local production not slaves and thus is compatible with colonialism.

It is in some respects important to understand the Murid phenomenon in relation to commodity circuits. Contemporary Murid attempts to transform the sacred capital of Tuba into an entrepot zone along the lines of Dubai, which is a duty free commercial center of the Arab world, though an inventive turn for a once agriculturally based community, is not surprising if one situates the Murid phenomenon within the wider world of Islam and within longer historical shifts in the region pre-dating colonial contact. Though colonialism is often seen as a form of integration into globalization that is by drawing West Africans into global markets through the export of primary commodities, Senegal was already tied into other global histories through Islam and Senegal’s connections to the north. Though the title of the thesis suggests a concern with the Black Atlantic, as Gilroy conceives of it, highlighting the connections between Africa, the Caribbean and North America, I contextualize Murid movements across the Atlantic within the forms of globalized trade already taking place across Sudanic Africa prior to colonial intervention. I investigate the impact of the Atlantic slave trade and the longer history of forced migrations to the Mediterranean on local populations and
processes in the Senegambia region to understand the emergence of the Murid way and allegiance to Maraboutic leadership.

Gilroy also talks about the Black Atlantic as coming out of the Atlantic slave trade. In some ways then, this is not Gilroy’s Black Atlantic; this Atlantic story is one of entrepreneurs and commodity movers. Though many adherents to the Murid way were former slaves seeking the means of social and material production through submission (djebalou) to the Murid way, their movement across the Atlantic and their incorporation into commodity circuits can be connected to the influence of a longer history of trade in the Western Sudan, as well as the impact of the Atlantic slave trade. Recent migration across the Black Atlantic and the formation of Murid communities in New York and other overseas locations though very much a part of the defining features of our contemporary world, globalization and transnationalism, can also be viewed as part of a longer history of migration in the Sudanic region to establish new productive communities based on allegiance to Muslim shaykhs.

Third, nationalist and scholarly work has attempted to grapple with the extent to which the Muridiyya either resisted or collaborated with the entrenchment of colonial power in the region. Many have argued that Islam engendered the means of colonial resistance. The role of the Muridiyya in resisting French domination, such as taxation and forced labor and conscription, or more mundane cultural encroachments, is an important theme and should not be discounted. David Robinson (1991) has also pointed out the limits of this analytic approach, arguing for the importance of understanding the internal motivations of Amadou Bamba and his followers. He argues that Bamba was as
concerned with creating a sphere of autonomy in which he could practice Sufism. James Searing (2002) has re-written the historical account contained in the archives by working with oral historical sources and Murid hagiographies. Both scholars have contributed a great deal towards understanding the complex and often contradictory sets of power relations in which religious figures and movements are embedded. Searing points out that while Sufism operated as a mode of resistance to colonial rule, it also operated as a mode of resistance to a cast system within traditional monarchies. His work reveals how alliances were made across distinctions between resisters and collaborators and captures how people entered into the process of colonial encounter as socially endowed actors with different stakes, power, politics and outcomes.

Searing, however, argues against Robinson’s archivally based account of Bamba’s relations with the French colonial authorities. Searing argues that the French archives read something akin to a dossier for the prosecution (2002:78). Searing maintains that Bamba was unpopular with the Wolof kings and members of the Muslim party who had attained positions of authority within the colonial administration as chiefs. Bamba’s widespread following threatened the authority of these appointed leaders who collaborated with the French and saw to Bamba’s exile at first to Gabon, then Mauritania.

In addition to David Robinson (1991), Robert Launey and Ben Soares (1999) also argue that a sphere of autonomy was carved out through Islam. The principle wali or saint of the Muridiyya, Amadou Bamba, turned away form violent resistance to French rule that had been promulgated by the likes of El Hajj Umar Tall, and took up cultural forms of resistance (Robinson 1991:150, Cruise O’Brien 1975:22). Bamba provided his
disciples with a practical form of Sufism which the masses could participate and which the colonial worldview could not encompass (Robinson 1991:149). The formation of Murid communities abroad today participates in the tradition of young shaykhs pioneering new communities to aid in the spread of Islam and to establish as basis for their spiritual leadership independent of their fathers’ disciples. Moreover as Villalon (1995) argues, through Islam and the mediation of the shaykhs, colonial rulers as well as the contemporary state has had to be cognizant of local demands.

Fourth, Mamadou Diouf argues that the Murid phenomenon points to the fact that Senegal has always been global and that the Murids in particular have their own “vernacular” story of globalization. This is an important theme, which I will pick up in the next chapter on Da’ira Tuba Chicago. It is worth noting here that the Murid emphasis on labor as spiritual redemption sets this form of religious production apart from other forms of religiosity in Senegal. Murid religious doctrine differs from other Sufi ways on the issue of labor as a form of salvation and spiritual asceticism. The Murid doctrine of labor, self-disciple and self-deprivation reflected Bamba’s orientation towards asceticism. Although most Sufi communities are oriented towards a select group of ascetics who strive to achieve divine union, or salvation, in this life, Bamba transformed Sufi practice by opening asceticism onto the world, enabling mass participation. Although Sufis maintain that asceticism can only be practiced by removing oneself from this world and its concerns, Bamba acknowledged that labor as a form of self-discipline, when done in the service of a calling, qualified as a form of asceticism and piety that is in this world but not of it.
For Murid disciples, transnationalism and globalization and its accompanying flows are sacred processes that are understood through a religious idiom. Circuits of wage labor and capital are inscribed upon circuits of religious offering. Moreover, Muridiyya talk about the economic in sacred terms and the sacred in economic terms, an inversion that has its roots in the language in the Koran. They describe their economic predicaments in relation to religious narratives describing the trials of the order’s founder under colonialism as trials of God, testing his spiritual metal. Muridiyya link money’s purported velocity and its self-expanding nature to their desire for salvation.

As movers and carriers of capital, Murid circuits are constitutive of a particular moment of global expansion. I suggest that global flows re-inscribe a religious cultural identity that is, the sacralization of Murid economic activities and capital flows counters the Weberian argument that monetization of the economy through the expansion of capital leads to the rationalization of social life. The fact that Murid disciples are negotiating a new kind of sociality in Senegal in which they are conspicuously absent and their money is conspicuously present suggests multiple ways in which money has extra-economic social value.

In addition to the narrative of Islam, Murid traders also speak of their practices in relation to the chain of transmission of Islamic knowledge that also follows trans-Saharan trade routes. Senegambia remained under the influence of the western Sudan well into the fifteenth century due to the importance of the trade routes and the influence of Islam. Senegambian societies accessed the long distance trade circuits of the Sudan through Mali. Additionally, societies in the Senegal River valley traded agricultural produce for
the livestock products of the nomadic Berbers in present day Mauritania. Trade with the Berbers was an important link to the trans-Saharan trade for these societies. In this trade, slaves were exchanged for horses as well as gold for manufactured products from the Mahgrib (Barry 1998). Trade remained oriented in this direction until the French conquest transformed the productive capacity of the region. Under the French, the cultivation of cash crops replaced trade reversing the direction of the trade routes from the western Sudan to the Atlantic Ocean.¹

In addition, Murid circuits could be historicized within the context of earlier Senegalese migrations made by those in Soninke and Peul communities to other parts of Africa in search of labor and sending remittances to their natal communities. And though these movements between other African countries have laid the groundwork for Murid mappings, what makes their orientation towards the Atlantic and towards Islam significantly different are the processes of racialization and Muslim consciousness. Murids themselves tend to view the history of their circuits from both perspectives simultaneously.

Here I elucidate the gender relations that underpin forms of piety and production which generate historical shifts in the relationship between the internal organization of the Muridiyya, namely the relationship between shaykhs and their disciples as well as the forms of household organization that buttress the religious community, and the place of

¹The Portuguese arrival on the coast at the end of the fifteenth century had an important impact on the development of trade in the region especially in terms of beginning a long process economic domination that only the French would successfully complete.
the Murid order within the wider world of Islam and of commodity production in the region vis a vis global economic forces. What is the particular way in which women practice Islam in relation to men as well as the relationship between the structure of household production, involving men, women, young and old, and the relations of production on the communes involving predominantly at least in the early period relations between junior and senior men? Until recently, the vast literature on the Murid tariqa and on Islam in West Africa more generally, focused on relations of production on the communes and forms of male piety associated with these practices. Coulon (1988:113-114) argues that Islamist scholars emphasizes how women practice and preserve pre-Islamic practices, such as the ndeph possession rituals in Wolof societies, and their exclusion from “the Muslim world under male control...With it their only option is to attempt silently to subvert, to their advantage, the Islamic rules that keep them within an inferior position.” Male and female practices are mutually co-creating spiritual and materials realms and are complicated by relations of age and caste. Thus, though the constitution of Tuba as a Murid spiritual center involves numerous rites, pilgrimages and prayers and homage to male and female shaykhs alike, the forms of social and financial investment in the construction of this Muslim community depend on women’s gift-giving practices through which relations of obligation and mutual aid are established which are not exclusively Muslim, for example in the financial logic and moral precepts underlying such gift exchange, but can be viewed as following pre-Islamic matrilineal principles. What I argue is that such a distinction does not yield an analytically sound understanding of how the Murid community inheres.
Another reason Coulon suggests that accounts of women’s practices are absent from Islamist scholarship is the emphasis of these scholars on normative and legalistic aspects of Islam (1988:15), thus taking an emic explanation at face value, eschewing practice as the realm of “popular” Islam, not Islam proper. Though certainly these distinctions are made within the Murid community, these are distinctions that are the product of internal debates and thus one must be wary of reifying these dynamics at an analytic level.

A central theme of the dissertation is baraka, which is blessing or grace and is transmitted from shaykhs to their disciples. Baraka is said by Muridiyya to be witnessed in this world through prosperity and its material things. Thus one who has baraka is not only one who has things, but one who displays qualities of generosity and munificence by distributing wealth. Baraka belongs equally to men and women and as Coulon (1988) suggests overcomes the split between focusing on the legalistic and institutional aspects of Islam, predominantly viewed as male practices/domains and female as domestic and shifts the focus of analysis to the everyday this worldly and otherworldly aspirations of men and women alike. Within Senegalese Sufism, women are particularly active in making the ziyara, or pilgrimage to Murid shaykhs and shrines and they participate actively in the da’ira, or prayer circles of the order, and as Coulon argues “the search for baraka is central to these ritual activities” (1988:117). Thus, it should be clear in the balance of this chapter that when I discuss the shaykhs, I am referring equally to male and female shaykhs as both the male and female descendants of Bamba are considered to have inherited his baraka and thus enjoy a following of disciples.
The Domestic Base of a Global Phenomenon: Murid “Conversion” and Cash Crop Production

The Murid story is at once a history of globalization in Senegal and a very local story at the same time. John Hunwick argues that West Africa was isolated from the wider Muslim world during the colonial period due to the efforts of colonial authorities to co-opt religious leaders. Therefore, the forms of Islam that emerged were more strongly embedded in local areas such as the Sufi congregations. These Sufi movements, including the Muridiyya, privileged spiritual over intellectual knowledge enabling them to become mass movements (Hunwick 1997:31). Lacking an international outlook, these movements were remarkable for the degree to which they spoke to localized concerns.

The Murid way emerged within the transition from the Atlantic slave trade to an economy of “legitimate commerce.” James Searing (2002) argues that the distinction between these two seemingly opposed forms of economy is untenable, that slavery in the Senegambia continued well after the Atlantic trade was banned by the French colonialists and that slave labor contributed in part to the expansion of a peasant economy. Wolof monarchies depended on slave labor and were also subject to the attacks of Muslim reformers, some of which resulted in succession (Searing 2002). These events lead to upheavals in the region wrought by disintegrating Wolof monarchies, Muslim reform movements and encroaching French presence paired with shifts in production away from the trade in slaves to colonial capitalism (Monteil 1969, Copans 1988). Disciples were
attracted to the ascetic Muslim scholar Amadou Bamba (ca 1851-1927) whom they regarded as a “locus of Divine grace” (Robinson 1991).² During his life, Bamba demonstrate qualities of saintship (waliyat) and developed considerable spiritual authority.³ The Murid movement gathered strength from the French exiling of its “man of God,” Amadou Bamba to Gabon for seven years. Bamba’s biographies adjudicate his status as a saint (wali, or friend of God) by drawing out his genealogical ties, establishing his inheritance of the litanies (wird), and sufficient baraka or spiritual grace as can be read from the various miraculous episodes he experienced in exile. The hagiographic literature is for the most part produced in this tradition (Ane 1973; Diene 1977; Dieye 1985; Mbacke, S. 1995; Thiam 1964). Colonial ethnographies by arabists and colonial officers and many other early texts in Islamic studies also undertook textual exegesis and constructed biographies of the Sufi masters (Marty 1917). These scholars were interested in Muslim orthodoxy and in determining the degree to which the Murid tariqa differed in thought and practice from other Sufi traditions (Diouf 2000:681). In addition, these texts were important documents for colonial authorities who sought to determine which shaykhs posed a threat to colonial rule and thus led to the exiling of many Sufi figures. Since, scholars have been interested in the shaykh’s claims to waliyat, or saintship and

² Bamba was a student of the Qu’ranic sciences studying with his maternal uncles. Local qadis recognized that he was a master scholar. Cheikh Sidya, a Mauritanian linked to the Kunta of Timbuktu, initiated Bamba into the Qadiriyya tariqa.

³ Bamba’s biography, Les Bienfaits de l’éternel, written in Arabic by Serigne Bachir Mbacke and translated into French by Khadim Mbacke, adjudicates his status as a saint (wali) by drawing out his genealogical ties and establishing his inheritance of the litanies (wird) and sufficient baraka, or spiritual grace.
this focus on leaders has taken a Weberian turn in its examination of the charismatic qualities of saintly leadership (Creevey 1979; O’Brien 1970; Dumont 1968, 1980; Hiskett 1984; Norris 1990; O’Fahey 1990).

There is a long debate on the issue of exploitation of disciples or taalibe by Sufi masters, and Murid shaykhs in particular (Cruise O’Brien 1971, Copans 1988, Marty 1917). Villalon (1995) has argued that in the late twentieth century, Senegalese Sufi movements can be understood as a form of religiously based civil society. Thus he suggests that the question of exploitation is to be phrased as a question of degree. He suggests, as does Robinson (2000), that even in accommodation Sufi orders have carved out a domain of autonomous action and a limitation of colonial and state authority. Thus he suggests that the state, and earlier the colonial order, had to be more accommodating to social demands in Senegal and that this relationship is a precursor to the emergence of a semi-democracy in post-colonial Senegal.

The dominant interest in the Weberian notion of charisma and its routinization as well as in the disciple-shaykh relationship to explore concerns with exploitation has led scholars to focus on the organization of economic production and religious thought within the Murid community to understand its mass appeal. But what we know much

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4 For example, on the relationship between Murid disciples and their shaykhs see the work of Donal Cruise-O’Brien and Christian Coulon. Jean Copans has also written on the relationship between Murid religious thought and the organization of economic production as does Abdoulaye Wade and Cheikh Tidjane Sy. Momar Counda Diop has written extensively about the relationship between spiritual and economic life as well as on the movement of Murid disciples into urban spaces as well as overseas and the organization of Murid prayer circles in these new areas.
less about is what life looked like beyond the agricultural communes established by the Murid way. Ultimately, disciples did put together households and form villages and the relations within these structures also played a part in the creation of the Murid community as a whole. Thus I argue that widespread conversion to Islam also resulted from the purposeful activity of adepts who sought to create viable spiritual, affective and productive community in the midst of disintegrating Wolof monarchies, encroaching French rule, and a rising smallpox epidemic in 1903 (Gouvernement General de l’AOF 1904: 4). According to Copans, it was the young and the landless (slaves and warriors) who sought the shaykhs’ patronage. The Murid way was most successful in recruiting in the old peanut zone of Kajoor and Bawol as well as in areas where Islam was not strong; “most Tijani strongholds held fast to the Tijaniya, but their poorly educated slaves often found Amadou Bamba’s version of Islam more attractive.” (Klein 1998:202). Moreover, because the Murid way attracted men born in Senegal as well as those who, for various reasons such as slavery, came to the region very young, the Murid way participated in the Wolofization of the Senegambia region (ibid).

In Wolof households, male youth answered the shaykh’s call to pioneer new and distant communities, which was common across the various Sufi orders. Wolof society practiced double descent but senior males determined the allocation of land and usufructory rights. Fathers relied on their sons’ labor to cultivate fields but would release their sons from their authority to allow them to cultivate Islam in new lands, a spiritually sanctioned calling (Copans 1972, Rocheteau 1975). In the upheavals surrounding the breakdown of the Wolof monarchy, fathers could not provide for their sons and thus
young men lacked the means to contract marriages, such as slaves, gold and the land to build up households. Youth turned to the patronage of Murid shaykhs in response to social and economic crisis that had destabilized the material basis of social production in these societies. These young Murid adepts sought the means of production, primarily land and access to cash cropping, through which they accumulated bridewealth. Additionally, families would often resolve inner feuds by separating quarreling kin. Moreover, those who were destitute departed, frequently in response to a shaykh’s call, to save face for the lineage. Travel, especially to pioneer new Muslim communities, has been richly symbolic as a means of obtaining knowledge of the world, the inner self, and ultimately the divine; travel is an important metaphor in Sufi practice.

The Murid way also drew new adepts from those who were formerly slaves as well as from members of the warrior (ceddo) caste, both of which were affected by the social turmoil that marked the transition from an economy driven by trade in general, and especially in slaves, to an economy driven by an export cash crop such as peanuts (Copans 1988:226). Land was the domain of the freeborn, the aristocracy and the farmers. Slaves and ceddo were equally landless. Klein argues, “there is little archival evidence of massive departures [of slaves] from the peanut basin” (1998:198). Additionally, Klein argues that oral sources indicate that many slaves moved into the

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5 The first great Murid migration took place between 1904 and 1920 to the arrondissements of Darou Mousty, Kael and N’Dame. The second major Murid migration occurred between 1930 and 1950 towards the area of Kaffrine.
peanut basin hoping to benefit from the growing peanut economy, and that the “agricultural sector absorbed the greatest number of ex-slaves” (1998:199).

The shift from slavery to peanuts was fraught with conflict. The ruling Wolof courts did not favor the French proposal to substitute peanuts for the export of slaves because the production of this cash crop would enable the peasant farmers to escape their control. The establishment of transport networks by the French to facilitate exportation of the peanut crops from the rural interior to the coast antagonized Wolof conflict. The Wolof aristocracy, fearing the growing following of Bamba and their loss of control over the peasant producers collaborated with the colonialist to see that Bamba was exiled. The French sent Bamba in exile for seven years, a mystical number of significance (Roberts 1996), in Gabon from 1895 to 1902 and for four years in Mauritania from 1903 to 1907 where he became widely recognized among the Quadiriyya as a master Sufi scholar. Upon his return to Senegal, he was kept under house arrest in an isolated area of Jolof from 1907 to 1912. This period of exile was one of Bamba’s most prolific periods of writing and scholarship and is the source of the miracle corpus the disciples have constructed around his person. Bamba’s exile by French colonizers assisted in the development of his authority, as his exile is believed to be an enactment of the hijra or the flight of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 1/622.

Thus while the Wolof kings opposed peanut production and the construction of new transportation networks, leaders of the Muslim tariqas approved of the new transport networks into their agricultural zones (Cruise-O’Brien 1975:30). By the 1850s, Senegal shipped peanuts, which the Portuguese traders had brought from South America for local
use as a food crop, to France to produce cooking oil and soap for the European market. With the help of the Murid way the turn of the twentieth century, French colonialists had succeeded in dominating the region with the aim of establishing a peanut monoculture to satisfy the French industrial demand for vegetable oils for light industrial applications and cosmetic products. The export of peanuts as a cash crop further tied Senegalese into global processes of production and exchange. Searing (2002) argues that many Senegalese sought this connection to the world market through which they obtained imported goods like sugar, tea, cloth, rice and other manufactured goods. Additionally proceeds from cash crops were put towards bridewealth and other social investments. It is not clear from any of the published literature at what point cash and merchant goods get incorporated into the ritualized exchanges that accompany the marital and other life cycle processes. What is clear from Searing’s (2002) account, is that through the establishment of a peasant economy, Murid disciples sought to re-invest their earnings in their quest to become rural household heads much like the mining workers of Southern Africa invested the proceeds of their labor in their rural households and Soninke migrants described by Francoise Manchuelle (1997) took their earnings back to their rural homes. Moreover, Searing suggests, not only did cash cropping increase the base of the peasant economy, but it enabled men to marry at a younger age as well thus leading to migrations and the establishment of more rural communes. Unlike the slave trade and the production of millet for local consumption, the exportation of peanuts and of gum arabic marked the beginning point of the commodification of indigenous production.
Amadou Bamba and the Religious Value of Work

In Muslim societies across Sudanic Africa, scholars survived on the alms of the community. In addition to alms, which were usually made in cash or kind, shaykhs of the Tijani and Kadiri orders in Senegal also accepted agricultural labor in exchange for Koranic lessons. Bamba not only accepted labor in exchange for Koranic lessons, he promulgated a practical form of Sufism in which the masses could participate. On his agricultural communes, disciples labored in exchange for his guardianship of their salvation. Although Sufism posits that salvation is achieved through asceticism, usually in the form of prayer, Bamba posited a soteriology, a doctrine of salvation, whereby labor in a calling—as a form of ascetic practice equal to prayer—would lead to salvation. James Searing tells of Bamba calling his disciples to him, upon his father’s death, to inform them that if it is scholarship that they seek, then to submit themselves to another shaykh. But if it is “craziness” (dof) that they seek, that is divine unity in this life through direct contemplation, then they may join his effort to establish Murid communes in the rural hinterland on the Ferlo fringe of the Wolof kingdom of Kayor. His community was organized into those who would be scholars and those who would be laborers, each meeting the needs of the other. This distinction derives in part from the myths surrounding the figure of Ibra Fall, Bamba’s first disciple. Murids tell of Fall stripping himself and prostrating before Bamba declaring his allegiance in the form of labor. Klein suggests that Fall was a key figure in getting the ceddo to submit to Bamba’s leadership (1998:201). Fall is also credited with establishing the daara, the Murid communities
organized to cultivate produce rather than prayer (ibid). Additionally, disciples who did not labor on the communes but sought his guidance made offerings to the shaykh.

According to Murid hagiography, Bamba lived simply and ascetically, distributing the offerings from his disciples to other impoverished disciples and family members who sought his assistance (S. Mbacke 1995). Through this system of offerings, mutual aid and blessings, Bamba attracted male youth, former slaves, and navetannes (ANS 13G/67 1906-17). The latter are seasonal agricultural workers, who resided in family compounds, receiving their keep in exchange for their labor. Because they did not have access to land in their own right they were ordinarily not in a position to contract marriages (Copans et al. 1972). Navetannes were often former slaves who had escaped or been freed and they were from various ethnic groups in the region. Moreover, peasant farmers also sought Bamba’s protection to escape the oppression of the Wolof aristocracy (Cruise O’Brien 1975:101). And as mentioned above, Bamba and his form of worldly asceticism also attracted youth, who sought to escape harsh economic conditions and heavy kinship obligations (ANS 10D1/15 1912, ANS 10 D1/15 1911). New forms of productive community offered in the person of Bamba appealed to converts who diverted their wealth from Wolof elders as they sought in him blessings of prosperity. At the time of Bamba’s death in 1927, estimates of Murid disciples totaled to about 100,000 (Babou 2002:153).

Murid disciples cultivated their shaykh’s fields in the rainy season and in the dry season, worked in the markets and sought alms (ANS 10 D1/15 1911). As the community continued to grow, new communes, or daara, were established in more distant areas.
New converts resided on communally cultivated land and after about eight to ten years of service, each adept received his own plot of land. These daara attracted slaves who could hope to gain access to land (Klein 1998:201). Cruise O’Brien points out that “slaves and castes shared a common predicament in the marginality or non-existence of their rights to land in the traditional zones of Wolof agricultural settlement...Land in these areas was already overcrowded by the late nineteenth century” (1975: 64-65). The colonial government shifted away from its policy of suppressing Murid expansion and granted expansive tracts of land used by Peul herders to the Murid clergy in exchange for their efforts to clear and cultivate the terrain with peanuts (Cruise O’Brien 1975). This process eventually formed the core of Murid villages headed by Bamba’s sons who recruited disciples to pioneer new lands granted to them by French colonialists. Bamba’s sons continued to collect a fee for their role in allocating new land and recruiting disciples. Representatives of the shaykhs, the diewrigne, organized farming in distant areas, and one day a week was reserved for cultivating the shaykh’s fields. Eventually the villages formed daara associations in which they devoted a field to the Khalife-général, rather than to a particular shaykh. It is important to keep in mind that by the 1960s when the ORSTOM team, which included Copans, conducted interviews in Murid villages in the peanut basin, Murid disciples stressed the degree to which the Muridiyya overcame social barriers based on caste and promulgated forms of social equality (Copans et al. qtd in Klein 1998:202). However, as will become clear from my subsequent chapters, “Within the Mournies, restrictions on marriage between ger, jam and nyenyo still prevail, and some ritual obligations persist, including symbolic payments to the master” (Klein
1998:202). These orders do not however play a part in access to land within the collective work groups organized by Murid shaykhs and their dewrigne (ibid).

As the railroad continued to be extended east in 1907, Murid communities pioneered new land in anticipation of the rail lines (Klein 1998:202). As cash crop agriculture in the form of peanuts replaced subsistence agriculture, households began to depend more on goods bought in the market for the maintenance of the household and the ritual cycle. French colonialists offered compensation in cash and cloth to those who cleared the land. As men cultivated cash crops, women began to trade along the railway line; buying peanuts and selling imported commodities such as cloth, sugar and tea (Cruise O’Brien 1975:47). In addition to their success cultivating peanuts and given their ties to the colonial order, Muridiyya also succeeded in distributing manufactured goods in the rural regions. “Thus they carved out, in a contradictory way, a space for themselves within the colonial system and its economy” (Diouf 2000:684).

**Post-Colonial Rural Murid Households and Agricultural Production**

By the 1960s, when the équipe de ORSTOM conducted surveys and oral histories in the peanut basin, the division of labor in Murid villages continued to follow the lines of gender in the first order and generation in the second order. The male head of the household (boroom diel) managed the cultivation of the millet fields collectively and allocated individual parcels of cash crops to male youth who put their produce towards bridewealth. Young men sought to display the qualities of obedience and assistance towards their elders by plowing their fathers’ fields and they also sought to achieve
economic independence by cultivating their own fields. This reveals a fundamental tension inherent in the system of production between senior and junior males. The organization of labor based on generational submission (surga) placed the youth in the same position as seasonal workers (navetanes) who resided within the compound receiving their maintenance in return for their labor in the collective fields. The maintenance of course, never allowed a surplus that could be put towards bridewealth. Furthermore, class based and generational tensions were exacerbated by the position of sons via their mothers; the first wife’s children could hold the children of successive wives in the position of surga. In this period families resolved these conflicts by encouraging sons to pioneer new lands, often in the name of Bamba. These youth migrated thus not only aiming to submit to the Muridiyya, but aiming to become heads of households and lineages through the economic autonomy that discipleship brought them.

Junior men could only break out of the position of surga by becoming the head of household, which would either be granted by the male elder who would maintain his position as head of the lineage, or which could be achieved through migration and return. However, a young man could only become head of the household through the matrimonial process, which would afford the head of the lineage new alliances and new economic and political possibilities. I emphasize here however, following Copans (1972), that the sons do not ascend to head of the household through marriage, but rather, that they arrive at the point of marriage through the granting of their status of head of the household by their elders. It is quite impossible for the son to become head of the
household while residing in the same physical space as his father. Thus there must be the material possibility of two separate homes.

Following a period of devastating famines in the Sahel in the early 1970s (due to a prolonged period of monocropping, drought and locust plagues) and the given the decreasing price peanuts could bring on the world market, Murid youth turned to their dry season trading into full time activity. The history of the Muridiyya is thus also the history of a colonial process of capital extraction drawing Senegalese further into the international political economy through the production of peanuts as a cash crop. Peanut production was rationalized on the Murid collective communes and in the Murids attempts to avoid wage labor under the colonial authority; they built the foundation of the colonial economy on the backs of the disciples who labored in the service of Bamba in the knowledge that he would secure their salvation. Bamba held that labor was commensurate with prayer and contemplation, that it was a form of asceticism. The colonial government encouraged the development of the order by granting huge tracts of land to Bamba in exchange for his efforts to propagate peanuts in the newly settled regions.

**Murid Leadership and the Post-Colonial Economy**

In many ways, the colonial economy, with its dependence on peanut monoculture is to blame for the decline of national wealth; at the same time the peanut economy enriched the rural notables of the Murid tariqa. However, the monocropping of peanuts had serious consequences. During the inter-war years, from 1919 until 1939, when the
price of peanuts fell, farmers lacked traditional nutritional food crops to fall back on. Moreover, the expatriate import-export banks skimmed off most of the profit from the peanut trade and Senegalese suffered deteriorating terms of trade as peanuts brought less income and imported goods, many of which were foodstuffs, became more costly. Disciples became more dependent on the shaykhs who organized agricultural production and distributed goods and services to meet the social well being of their disciples. Thus, disciples farmed more land—increasing the potential devastation that would follow from depleting the soil. Colonial policy emphasized production but invested little in increasing the agricultural output of the farmers. By the 1930s, drought and depression brought drastic reductions in Senegalese standard of living.

Historically Murid shaykhs have used their control over the production of peanuts as leverage with the government. During the colonial period, shaykhs used the peanut revenue to buy support from the administrative chiefs, subsidize electoral campaigns of Senegalese politicians in the Four Communes who could protect the clergy’s interests in Dakar, Saint Louis and France and to corrupt local French officials (Cruise-O’Brien 1975:104). Murid shaykhs guaranteed the support of their followers to Senegalese citizen politicians in exchange for government subsidies to build mosques, schools, obtain jobs and trading licenses and redress against abuses perpetrated by colonial administrators (Gellar 1995:12).

Following independence in 1960, Murid shaykhs, as well as party bosses and rural notables, controlled the cooperative marketing boards set up by the government to market Senegal’s peanut crop and distribute agricultural credits and inputs (Gellar 1995:69).
State leaders, like their colonial forbearers, found that peanuts were the quickest way to pay for the state apparatus (Cruise-O’Brien 1975:8). However, the drop in peanut prices on the world market and the depletion of the soil in the early 1970s led Murid farmers to abandon their agriculturally based system of production. Murids were among the hardest hit when the price for peanuts bottomed out in the world market in the 1960s and were as devastated as the rest of the country when in 1970, due to a prolonged period of monocropping, poor environmental management, and severe drought and a series of locust plagues, the whole country fell prey to a devastating famine. Many disciples migrated from Thies, Diourbel, Louga and Sine-Saloum, the central agricultural regions of the country to the urban center of Thies and eventually to Dakar and where they would populate the bidonvilles, or shantytowns, and monopolize the trading networks and market stalls (Creevey 1985:715). There were earlier periods of migration, of course, between the world wars and shortly after the Second World War when Murid merchants traveled to the French colonial ports (Diouf 2000:691). In the 1970s Murids migrated to French cities such as Strasbourg, Marseilles, and Paris where they sold to German, Italian and French tourists (Salem 1981). By the 1980s Murid communities had grown in New York, Belgium and Italy (Diouf 2000). These communities will be the subject of the next chapter. Though we are seeing the very same kinds of contradictions today that Martin Klein addresses in his article on impact of slave trade, that is a parochial story on the one hand, but Black Atlantic on the other, and the Murid way as an important nexus in a global process, at base, can they reproduce themselves?
CHAPTER THREE

PROPHETS AND PROFITS: TRANSNATIONAL NEXUS OF MERCHANT EXCHANGE AND THE MURID SPIRITUAL ECONOMY IN THE DIASPORA

“Do you want me to plug this in? Do you want me to plug this circuit into God?” These are words one might hear spoken often on the radio in Senegal. The speaker is a shaykh of the Murid Sufi way. The “circuit” of which he speaks is the ambit of spiritual power by which blessings (baraka) radiate outwards from God to those who have submitted through homage to Sufi shaykhs. He might as well have been talking though, of the circuits of cash that Murid disciples remit as offerings (adya) to their shaykhs from their earnings as merchants and workers of the diaspora in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East. The shaykh’s redistribution of these offerings is shown in the videos produced annually to commemorate the yearly pilgrimage (magal) of Murid disciples to their sacred city of Tuba, in the desert interior of the country. The video displays the many proceeds of the money sent to Tuba—bowls overflowing with food for pilgrims and dignitaries, the many forms of public and private transport that have brought close to three million disciples there, and the development of a vast infrastructure of electricity and sewage canals which they have come to witness—and the cassette itself is of a kind that is circulated annually to disciples around the world who are unable to journey in
person to the center, for them, of globalized networks in which they seek fortunes no longer available in Senegal’s barren ecology and economy.

The Muridiyya broadcast their annual pilgrimage to the sacred city of Tuba over the national television station (*Radio et Television du Senegal*, RTS) and in videos circulated as far away as the United States. The RTS video productions open with scenes of aspirants crowded into Tuba’s main streets, leading up to the Grand Mosque then pans back to the rural roads jammed with buses, *car rapide* minivans and taxis meant for urban transport. As far as the eye can see there are *Ndiaga Ndiaye* minibuses intended for urban-rural commutes, the air-conditioned busses of Cheikh Mortalla Mbacke, as well as double axle dump trucks, their trailers spilling over with disciples. Then the camera pans the rural countryside and through the brush behind a single baobab tree a train emerges, its box cars transporting Murid disciples in from the rural agricultural communes surrounding Tuba. The viewer is told that these are disciples from all over Senegal, indeed all over the world, headed for Tuba to thank their man of God (*wali*) Amadou Bamba, the saintly founder of the Murid way. The camera then takes the viewers into the mosque to witness the work of Sēriñ Saliou Mbacke, the current *Khalife-général* (successor, caliph) of the Muridiyya and one of the last two living sons of Amadou Bamba. Sēriñ Saliou has added gold leaf to Bamba’s mausoleum and installed a crystal chandelier overhead, two symbolic projects among his numerous works around the city of Tuba. The video captures the famous griots, whose wailing of Murid litanies establishes a historical genealogy for this media event. Among shots of political and
military dignitaries from Africa, the Middle East and France, the viewer is told of the benefits accruing to one who follows the way of the Murid shaykhs.

Tuba, in the heart of Senegal’s peanut basin, is exceptional for its spiritual significance as the birthplace of the Murid order. Cheikh Gueye (1999) and Eric Ross (1995) have written extensively about its extraordinary spiritual and commercial importance for Murid disciples. Not merely an agricultural town, Tuba’s very existence depends on its connection to globalized economic processes. In the colonial era, Tuba was the center of peanut processing and transport from the rural areas (Ross 1995:251). Following ecological and economic crises of the last three decades, Tuba has emerged as a major commercial center by virtue of its trade in diverse commodities across North America, Europe, and also the Middle East. Tuba continues to serve as the transportation hub of the rural areas; it is the center of the trucking industry and major point along the railroad. Unlike the ad hoc growth of other African cities, Tuba’s rationalized development is iconic of the Murid’s view of their role in the global economy. Tuba’s development proceeds from the Murid clergy’s control over circuits of production and exchange at local, national and transnational levels, and from their disciples’ submission to this authority through their offerings to the shaykhs in cash or kind. Thus Tuba is not only a holy city and a place of pilgrimage; it is the major agricultural center in the north of Senegal’s rural hinterland. Moreover, Tuba is not merely a representation of paradise; it is how disciples access paradise (Ross 1995:223) through their industrious efforts to expand this Muslim community, the sacralization of work and interment in Tuba.
For 95% of the Senegalese who belong to one of the four Sufi orders in the country: Tidjani, Kadiiri, Layenne and Murid, to be a disciple (murid) is to be part of a known way of achieving divine union. And to be “connected” is to receive the esoteric litanies (wird) that will bring one closer to God. But for the five million Murids in particular, to be “plugged in,” offers not just the promise of eternal prosperity but access to the forms of trade and production through which that prosperity is crafted in the present. Not only is much of the political and economic business of the Senegalese state structured through this and other Sufi orders, the Muridiyya have expanded their business transnationally reading devaluation as their mandate to expand into the transnational trade in merchant goods between global points elsewhere. Expansion, they say, borrowing from American Imperial discourse, is their manifest destiny. And any place that Murids settle becomes a hyphenated extension of the center of these globalized processes: Tuba-Chicago, Tuba-Turin (see also Carter 1997).

The circulation of these signs of wealth stand out against a declining post-colonial state following two decades of structural adjustment programs, devaluation of the currency and failed privatization schemes of state managed transportation and communications industries. This “wealth” also stands in contrast to the decline in peanut production in the 1970s, on which Senegal’s export based economy depended, and the closing of local manufacturing plants, most notably textiles.¹

¹ See Boone 1992 for a further discussion of the textile industry.
These transformations in and the the economy and in the role of the state and the attendant impact on processes of social production have increased the popularity of the Murid way, leading to many new adherents, especially among male youth. Hooking into Murid circuits of wage labor and capital are significant not only for the forms of production and prosperity that they offer, but for more enduring forms of value such as the reproduction of households as symbolized in the construction of new homes, for example. Life-cycle rituals, on which the production of new households depends, have become increasingly characterized by monetized transactions of ritual gift exchange and thus many Senegalese scramble to garner dissipating supplies of cash for prestations at events such as baptisms, marriages, funerals and religious pilgrimages, events through which they make themselves and their communities viable entities in this world.

As African modernities face fundamental challenges in the wake of neo-liberal restructuring and globalized economic processes, ritual and religion re-emerge as critical junctures where Senegalese, like other Africans, struggle over the terms of sociality (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). Being “plugged into” Sufi circuits of production and exchange resonates with a growing consensus among a generation of youth that they have been disconnected from productive activities in Senegal. Locked out of circuits of production and exchange, youth experience alienation in a world that they say appears to be spun of commodities. The creation of new needs is essential to capital expansion and it is accompanied by the frustration of unmet desires as the increasing availability and visibility of commodities changes the structure of wants.
Young Senegalese make a world for themselves through the forms of affective, spiritual and commercial community that Muridiyya offers in diasporic locations. In this chapter, I focus on the construction of vast circuits of wage labor and capital by adherents of the Murid order in the context of economic liberalization and state restructuring. Muridiyya have taken up the possibilities in the current globalized moment to forge a community that is differentially situated, temporally and spatially. Through cash offerings disciples mark their submission to the shaykhs and are “plugged into” the Murid circuit of blessings and prosperity. For these disciples, these circuits of wealth represent all that Amadou Bamba, the founding figure of the Murid way, has provided for them, as aspirants to his path of divine union. The disciples return this wealth to the shaykh who in turn re-distributes it to the congregation and so unfolds the cycle of sacrifices that comprise the Sufi path (tariqa) to salvation. These multi-layered connections of prophets and profits motivate the practices of Murid disciples in the Murid da‘ira in Chicago. To be “plugged in,” offers not just the promise of eternal prosperity but access to the forms of trade and production through which that prosperity is crafted in the present world. The exchange of these cash offerings can also be contextualized within the circulation of commodities and religious texts and images. Here, I focus on two particular moments of this circulation whereby cash offerings constitute new social relations and possibilities. The first is the circuit of “blessings” (baraka) into which disciples enter through their relations with shaykhs: blessings that are both spiritual and

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2 For further discussion of Murid iconography see Allen Roberts and Mary Nooter Roberts 1998.
material at once, for through them disciples gain access not merely to eternal prosperity but also to the this-worldly wealth whereby they are able to create themselves as social adults in the absence of viable local and national economies. The second is the circuit of sacred development by which shaykhs convert their disciples’ cash offerings into the material forms of the spiritual metropolis Tuba: a feat of architectural and economic development that aims to realize the vision of the order’s founding saint during his exile under French colonial rule. Thus globalized economic processes contain within them new possibilities as well as anxieties.

The moral terms in which economic realities are apprehended is an enduring theme in the ethnography of Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, 1997; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Hutchinson 1996; Weiss 1996). In Senegal, money is a medium of sociality through which relations are constituted through prestations during ritualized events. For the Murid disciples, money earned by the “sweat” (naq) of their labor is equally socially productive not only because it will enable them to participate in these ritualized exchanges through which social relations are produced, but because labor in and of itself is viewed as socially productive. This view is commensurate with the general view that the production of wealth is tied to “producing oneself by producing people, relations and things” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:143). Money is used to extend oneself by entering into relations with others, and these relationships are seen by Muridiyya as sources of value (Munn 1986, Mauss 1950). Thus the Murid pursuit of wealth, as a sign of the viability of their vision of an Islamic modernity, involves the construction of a range of social relations and the extension of influence over others
through exchange (Munn 1986, Comaroff 1997). By tracing these processes empirically the surface features of this process of circulation and the process through which these features are produced is illuminated.

The ethnographic data shows that money in the Senegalese context, does not diminish the person nor does it necessarily stand as a sign of an encroaching rationale of market exchange, it signifies the person and the exchange of cash offerings stands as a moment of social production (Fajans 1993, Mauss [1950] 1990). This is crucial because I am arguing in this thesis that in many cases remittances and merchant goods stand in for absent male kin. Much like Marx’s discussion of the commodity, the cash offering links production and exchange. It indexes a set of relations and its circulation constitutes them as a social world. Cash offerings then highlight the production, transformation and representation of value for Murids (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Fajans 1993, Munn 1986 and Turner 1984). Murid ideas about the expansion of networks of social relations through circulation are central to the development of their particular form of social value and their vision of the Murid way as a community that contains a future. Following the movement of money across spheres of commodity and non-commodity exchange, from merchant capital to religious offering, brings into relief how value is generated through this movement and how money’s purported power of effacement checked (Hutchinson 1996, Zelizer 1989).

Through the circulation of cash offerings and the series of ensuing conversions, which enables disciples to parlay their earnings in the diaspora into salvation, disciples constitute the self, others and the community. For these disciples, money signifies a
particular social relationship—that between oneself and one’s spiritual master—it is this social relation that is the source of value motivating the circulation of money. In Sufism, it is only through the spiritual master that one is able to know the path to divine union. The shaykh stands at the gateway to salvation and submission to her/him in this world is the lifeline of the disciple.

Against the backdrop of a history of value extraction that has shifted from peanut production to transnational trade in merchant goods such as cosmetics, the Muridiyya restructure both domestic and productive processes and offers its adherents new forms of community and prosperity. However, Muridiyya, like many in Senegal, view the monetization of symbolic forms of submission to the shaykhs in terms of the gradual monetization of Murid lives in general. Debates, disputes and discourses surrounding the monetization of the offerings are linked to concerns with the commodification of all strands of life in Senegal and to the distress that people express over their ability to get the money and the commodities to meet their expanding social and material needs. Following Simmel (1978 [1900]) one can see how disciples appraise and experience money’s “enigmatic qualities” as well as its capacity to produce persons through giving and receiving and how disciples deal with the two sides of money in an era of dramatic expansion of global capital—its potential for “alienation” as well as for “liberation.” Murid efforts to contain the movement of wealth within the circuits of blessings by linking these offerings to circuits of sacred development are contrasted with wider Senegalese concerns that the order is commodifying forms of sociality that previously remained beyond the purview of the market. Thus these offerings reveal at once the
construction of an entire moral universe as well as the tensions in Senegal more generally over the direction of that development. Although the development of Tuba is a modern vision of a spiritual community, the roots of this vision lie in the desire of its members to return to the original perfect community of the Prophet Muhammad to be “reabsorbed, body into soul, soul into Spirit, and Spirit into the Divine Presence” (Lings 1973:35).

Recent literature on Murid overseas migration focuses on their economic success (Carter 1997; Ebin 1996; Salem 1981). The order has expanded its spiritual and administrative capacity as well to control these new markets of disciples. Although Tuba’s economic prospects dwindled with the peanut crops, after Dakar, Tuba is the second fastest growing city in Senegal. “Thus Touba was gradually invested, not only with the quality of the Murid sacred city but also with the attributes of a significant place reevaluated by a postcolonial liturgy that emphasizes resistance, autonomy, and the creative cultural and economic capacities of a society freeing itself from the grip of colonialism and from the bearers of imperial modernity” (Diouf 2000:688).

In these new regions, disciples remained loyal to the order by founding da’iras and making the annual contribution to the Khalife-général in cash rather than in labor. These cash gifts, made throughout the year at regular meetings devoted to Murid litanies, and presented possibility of an audience with the shaykh. The principles underlying the da’ira derived from the Koranic education that Murid children acquired in the schools founded by Bamba called daara. Rather than rote memorization of the Koran, Cheikh Anta Babou (2002) argues that Bamba’s teachings emphasized science and action, that his idea of the daara-tarbiyya, encompassed work, prayer and instruction. Through these
institutions masculine virtues such as patience, humility, endurance and sharing were conveyed. Today there are the daara schools to which Murid families send their young children. Some of these institutions function like day schools, places where children receive a moral education, but ultimately remain within the sphere of parental authority. Other children are sent away, to live in the shaykh’s compound where they beg for alms among the community and receive an education in discipline from the shaykh. It is this latter type of upbringing that da’ira members in the diaspora claim conditions them for the hardship they face abroad. There are also larger communes of adult workers also called daara where peanut crops continue to be cultivated. These communes are located in rural areas and continue to attract Murid youth, mainly men, seeking employment and to escape from family obligations. These daara are considered to be a noble form of employment and spiritual training for youth that would otherwise be idle.

Babou argues that the da’ira structure, which emerged in the urban areas after the Second World War spurred urbanization and the economic transformation of the Muridiyya from farming to trading (2002:154). When Murid farmers and crafts person migrated to the urban areas they were associated with “fanaticism, ignorance and vagrancy” (Babou 2002:156). The da’ira not only provided refuge, but practical training in urban ways, such as business skills for those lacking a French education. Virtues learned from the daara such as solidarity and discipline translated into mutual assistance in trade, dealing in second hand goods, and porterage.

The institution of the da’ira has transformed disciples’ relationship to the state. Through the forms and virtues of social organization embodied in the da’ira, Murids
pressed the state to meet their demands. Since, Murid shaykhs have mobilized the *da’ira* structure deliver the vote to the Partie Socialiste in exchange for state agricultural investments and to oppose unfavorable state policies (Babou 2002:155). Murids dominate the import-export sector as well as local markets due in part to an ethos of flexibility (Roberts 1996) and an imaginative approach to hardship and to shifting state economic policies since the 1980s under Abdou Diouf’s presidency. In 1986 the state rescinded its policy of protecting Senegalese manufactured goods. Diop (1981) argues that this decision by the state contributed to the emergence of the import-export and the service sector; these are sectors in which the Murids are dominant. In the 1990s the state curbed quotas and monopolies on many products such as rice, (which is grown in Senegal) (Diouf 692:2000). Both Diouf (2000) and Ebin (86:1992) suggest that these measures—oriented towards the law of the market rather than public decision-making—provided an entry point for Murid faithful.

Historically, for male disciples, the central value transforming activity that that they participate in is the cultivation of the shaykh’s fields in exchange for blessings, thus transforming the economic value of their labor into social value. Today, overseas male disciples turn their wealth towards the sacred development of Tuba through home construction and village social projects as well as through offerings to their shaykhs. Their overseas remittances are not merely intended to build homes, but to tie adepts to a spiritual path and a social community. Disciples are motivated in their commercial activity by these forms of consciousness and value. For Murid disciples, the spiritual community of Tuba as iconized in its central mosque, clinics and schools is a form of
social value. “Thus Touba became the place where the Murid memory and imaginaire were elaborated, the place where their economic, social, architectural, and cultural successes were inscribed” (Diouf 2000:688). The motivation and the outcome of disciples’ transnational labor lies in the multi-layered connections of prophets and profits in the Muridiyya consisting of a circuit of blessings into which disciples enter through their relations with shaykhs.

Tuba is a particularly important node in the transnational trade in commodities and merchant goods for several reasons. It is an independent administrative district, somewhat akin to the Vatican. The colonial authority granted Tuba this special legal status and Leopold Senghor continued to grant the city this exceptional status in exchange for their support of the state. And for this reason Tuba lacks state institutions such as a police force and taxes. The moral and spiritual authority of the Khalife-général holds the city together.

Tuba links into overseas markets through Sandaga market, in the center of Dakar, the capital and a major port city in Senegal. Because merchant goods arrive in Senegal via maritime shipping, the location of a major Murid market in Dakar is necessary. Sandaga is the largest urban market in Senegal and serves as a gateway to hundreds of smaller markets throughout Dakar and its periphery. Diouf suggests that its enormous growth resulted from Murid trade networks abroad (Diouf 2000:692). Forming the skeleton of the market area are hundreds of cinder block cantines with tin roofs, which are owned and often operated by Lebanese as well as Murid merchants. These merchants specialize in high end imported goods, damask cloth, luggage and housewares. Currently,
Sandaga offers an impressive selection of electronics equipment imported from Jeddah and Hong Kong (Diouf 2000:692, Ebin 1992:86). Spilling over these cantine sidewalks are tables and tarps where many more Senegalese men and women sell tablecloths and napkins, bras and slips, as well as imported and locally manufactured cloth. In the streets are the numerous vendors walking with their wares on them, tissues, toothpicks, umbrellas and the like as well as the young men who lead tourists and others to the cantines of their employers.

Sandaga is host to numerous market associations organized by female traders of local produce, millet, peanuts, bissap, as well as some medicinal substances and local beauty products such as henna and handmade soap. It is also home to numerous tailors located near cloth stalls and a large Murid da’ira meets in the mustard colored French orientalist inspired central market structure bearing a large billboard for Maggi seasoning. Market women, tailors and traders all belong to numerous credit associations which are also located in the market, many of which are organized along lines of Murid affiliation. Merchants and tailors dominate the Murid da’ira in marché Sandaga. In fact, da’iras in Senegal are in general organized according to adherence to a particular shaykh but also along the lines of occupational groups—such as the da’ira of government fonctionnaires, students and doctors—as well as along the lines of age and gender. Babou argues that the logic of specialization behind da’ira formation follows the logic of the non-governmental organizations. For example, the da’ira Hizbut Tarqiyya represents university student interests in textuality. The da’ira Matubul Fawzayni encompasses disciples in Spain and Italy interested in development projects. The da’ira Maam Jaara Buso, is comprised of
women in New York (2002:155). And it is worth noting that the interests and intentions of these organizations at times comes to a head as the current tension between the University students who would like to make the Muridiyya more textual and the merchants who are interested in developing Tuba as a homeland (see also Beck 2001).

Located in the heart of Sandaga market is Kara International Exchange, a money transfer business of which Serigne Mansour Tall has written about. Tall (1996) has worked on the systems of informal banking developed by Murid traders which enable them to send remittances back to their families in Senegal circumventing many of the fees associated with banks and the state. He argues that the success of this and other informal money transfer institutions is based on Murid ethics of trust and mutual aid, family ties and a declining financial sector in Senegal. Tall points out that commercial bank accounts are unwieldy for those living abroad, they often require intervention by a third party who is present in Senegal, and their regulations are complicated for the many illiterate traders who make up a large contingent of the overseas traders.

The process involves depositing a sum plus commission with an agent in a New York apartment that serves as the headquarters. The sender does not need to complete paperwork, show identification or sign papers, acts that illiterate persons and those without the appropriate legal status may shy away from. Kara International however, does take a hefty commission; in 1996 Tall reported a commission of $20. The agent then faxes his corollary (often a brother) in Senegal who disburses the sum in local currency to the recipients in Senegal. The recipients need only arrive and answer a few identifying questions to receive the money. In most cases the remittances are regular and thus the
recipients are regulars and there is no hassle. Kara International and other informal banks like it rely on family connections as a principle of organization and as the institutions grow they come to rely on the *da'ira* structure of membership.

Kara International is also an import/export firm. When the agent in Senegal desires to travel to New York, usually for commerce, he already has money in place there without having to carry money across borders. In addition, the New York agent may already have worked out deals with Pakistani and Korean wholesalers for his partner. Kara Dakar receives electronics and cosmetic products from New York, which it will resell in its stores in Sandaga market. The Dakar correspondent reimburses the New York correspondent by paying the transfers to the reach the sum spent to buy the merchandise. Thus, Kara International is at the same time a center of international commerce that gives credit to commercants during their stay in New York and those who reimburse Kara Dakar find thus sources of complementary liquidity. In addition, those who find themselves in need of larger sources of cash, for a holiday feast for example, can obtain short term loans from Kara International.

Kara International also provide storage space for migrant traders who may be staying with numerous other traders in an apartment and lack the space and the security to store their stocks. Kara International also provides shipping services. A shipping container is purchased and the space inside divided up and rented out in ever-smaller portions commensurate with each traders’ stock and means. Moreover, because Kara International caters to Senegalese traders who may have come from other European destinations they also specialize in currency exchange, enabling traders to avoid costly
fees in formal currency exchanges. Due to the volume and regularity of Kara
International’s shipments, the company has established preferable relations with customs
agents in the port and has mastered official circuits and has established relations that help
to mediate. Unlike the *Modou Modou*, slang for the country trader, who move their
merchandise in the large blue and red plastic woven bags and who carry numerous shrink
wrapped suitcases through airports, Kara International’s commerchants carry themselves
like modern businessmen, with neither large sums of cash nor baggage on their person
they move freely through international airports.

There is no accounting for the various creative ways in which Senegalese become
involved in Murid circuits overseas. Many young Senegalese begin by migrating from the
countryside often staying with urban relatives and selling small inexpensive items that
they can carry in a box to sell on busy auto routes and up and down market streets. With
such low overhead, these young traders can hope to quickly trade up—earning a job in a
cantine, or perhaps acquiring a space on the sidewalk. The Senegalese police force
monitors such ad hoc growth carefully; it has in the past razed these spaces and mandated
taxes and permits for vending. Eventually, the vendor may have some success acquiring a
carte de commerçant from the government ministry which can be parlayed into a
multiple entry commerçant visa to the US.

Victoria Ebin (1992) researched the networks of the Fall family who began
trading by selling goods on the streets in Sandaga market. By 1992 the male members of
the Fall family were importing cosmetic products from the UK, the US, Rome and Milan,
shoes from Taiwan and manufacturing hair extensions and wigs in Dakar with Korean
partners. The Fall’s also import jewelry from New York (often bought from Indian and Korean merchants), Hong Kong, Jeddah and Dubai, as well as radios and televisions from Dubai and Hong Kong. The Fall family relies on Murid contacts in foreign cities to establish commercial relations. As I mentioned above, and as both Diouf and Ebin argue Murids succeed in forging extensive trade routes by their strong social and religious organizational structure, by connecting distribution points in Dakar with the establishment of Murid communities in international wholesale centers, and by “complex circuits of buying and selling that allow Paris or Strasbourg street merchants to sell merchandise bought in New York’s Chinese neighborhoods or in Hong Kong, and merchants in Brussels to sell copper articles from Morocco to the city’s Muslims” (Diouf 2000:694 and Ebin 1992:87). In the ensuing chapters, I argue that family relationships are a key factor in the cohesiveness of Murid business ventures (as does Diouf 2000:694).

The proceeds from this trade at every level is invested in acquiring new stock, is given to friends and relatives to establish ties of debt and mutual obligation, provides housekeeping money for host relatives or one’s wife, and is donated to the Muslim clergy in the hopes of amplifying one’s prosperity.

*Murid Marché Mobile and the Rural Market Cycles in Senegal*

As most men have turned to long distance trade, women remain in the rural areas to farm spice crops, scotch bonnet peppers, garlic, and parsley. These items are sold in the market where women now purchase imported foodstuffs such as rice from Thailand, onions and potatoes from Holland and fish, caught in Dakar, frozen and trucked up to the
rural villages once a week to places as far away as Mali. These staples replace the items once grown by men on family plots such as millet, black-eyed peas and manioc. Because these staples are now purchased rather than grown, the family economy is increasingly dependent on remittances from members abroad for their subsistence. The market place has changed considerably as well, these rural markets, which met once a week in a central location, now meet along the road according to the schedule of the delivery trucks, marché mobile as they are called. While women once made a profit moving their goods between markets, young men now take that profit as they drive their trucks from village to village creating markets in their path. These marché mobile drivers are the first link in the long chain of international trade organized by the Murid order.

**Diasporic Spiritual Economies**

Returning to the video of the pilgrimage to Tuba mentioned at the outset, the scene now shifts to the custodian of the Murid archive who describes the pious comportment of a good Murid and of a good Muslim. After talking at length, the scholar lights upon the subject of adya offerings, supplicated to the shaykh to signify submission to a path in the hope of achieving salvation. The scholar explains that the person who holds money in his/her hand has nothing: s/he has no njerin that is power, value of efficacy. But given to the shaykh, the money will take on these qualities. And in return, the disciple will benefit from the baraka of the shaykh.

The camera then takes in the offerings prominent prayer circles devoted to the shaykhs. In Senegal there are many da 'iras composed of professionals, bureaucrats and
students; however it is the contributions of the overseas disciples who sell their wares on
the streets of major Western cities that are the focus of this video. These translocal
organizations send yearly offerings to the Murid clergy from places such as Milan, Paris,
New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Not only do they send cash, but they also send
crates of bleach, ammonia and toilet paper. The camera records hospitals, sewage
systems, port-o-potties, and rural electrification projects made possible by the “work” of
disciples abroad. The video continues in this manner shifting back and forth from scenes
of the masses filling the streets and their prayers, to the myriad ways in which the have
contributed to developing the sacred city, to the long lines of dignitaries greeting the
shaykhs. It culminates in scenes of food being prepared for overseas dignitaries and
Senegalese government officials, some seventy bowls of rice and a shot of a herd of at
least fifty head of cattle. Condensed in the forms of wealth that circulate on the day of
pilgrimage, food, money and transport, is the work of the disciples, the magnitude of the
shaykh’s blessings and their capacity for generosity, all made possible by the grace of
God sanctioning the Murid way.

These overseas disciples are replacing the agrarian based of the Muridiyya. The
vast majority of these overseas disciples reside in New York (Babou 2002:153). Through
early Senegalese migrations targeted France, the 1970s oil crisis led to stricter
immigration laws propelling migrants towards the U.S. In addition, the immigration
amnesty granted by the US government in 1986 led many more hopefuls to zero in on
New York. Moreover, African American interest in African art and culture provided a
market in the U.S. for Murid cultural and material wares.
Early migrants to New York, and Chicago as well, were single men in their thirties, many had already been trading in Europe and many came from the depressed agricultural regions in west-central Senegal (Babou 2002:159). By the early 1990s women began to migrate to the U.S. to join their husbands whom they had already been married to or whom they married from afar. In the last few years however, many more divorced women and women seeking divorce have chosen migration as a means of autonomy. Babou discusses tensions surrounding divorce in New York and suggests that divorce rates among Senegalese in New York are astonishingly higher than those in Senegal (2002:162). Babou provides a provocative discussion of these tensions in his essay below:

Men and women disagree in their explanation of the causes of the problem. The men blame the women for neglecting their duties as caretakers of their husbands and houses by devoting too much energy and time to making money. Furthermore, the men reproach their women for refusing to participate in the household expenses, citing Wolof and Islamic traditions that exclusively assign this responsibility to men. Male immigrants also criticize the women for taking advantage of the rights and opportunities that women enjoy in the United States while refusing to bear the constraints that come with these benefits. Women immigrants, on the other hand, assert their refusal to be confined to the kitchen, and emphasize their right to work, to earn money, to support their parents back in Senegal, and to make provision for the future. They accuse the men of being jealous of their better financial situation. Moreover, the women suspect that if they allow their men to save money by sharing the household expenses, the men might gain the financial capacity to marry another wife. (2002:163)

Babou points out that the brotherly ethic of solidarity and mutual aid inherent in the da’ira structure has not yet been mobilized to solve marital tensions and other problems facing Senegalese who attempt to establish families in New York. And in fact, it is much more common for men and women to move back and forth between their work...
in New York and their family relations in Senegal. Children are most often sent back to family members in Senegal to receive and education both because parents may lack legal status in the US and because they desire to give their children a moral education, either in urban Koranic schools or in rural daaras, and within the extended family structure.

Murid aspirants have been employed as students, wage laborers and itinerant traders, often inhabiting the trader role during transition to the other two occupations (Carter 1992, Ebin 1993, Salem 1981). Though antiquities and objet d’art were a Senegalese niche, developments in the world economy made it profitable for Senegalese to sell an array of items such as umbrellas, t-shirts, socks, purses and the like which they obtained from Korean, Indian and Pakistani wholesalers. As in Senegal, these migrants relied on a rotating credit system to parlay their earnings into larger endeavors (Babou 2002:160). Through the da’ira, Murids could hope to receive assistance with airfare and visa arrangements; new members were hosted by those already in the states and were socialized by them. In the last ten years, Murids have developed shipping, travel, communications and money transfer operations to facilitate their business ventures.

Money, Sweat and Salvation: Circulation and Value in Da’ira-Tuba Chicago

Although travel for Sufis, is rife with sacred meanings as it is the principle metaphor used to describe the experience of revelation, young Senegalese in the Chicago da’ira voiced ambivalent feelings towards their predicament. Their remittances to Senegal enable them to enjoy prestige by providing luxury items for their families. They are able to constitute marriages through the cash and objects they send as bridewealth,
and to invest in land and bricks for homebuilding. But the demand for these things keeps them tied to their overseas lives. Thus their presence in Senegal is felt more in terms of the things that their labor provides and the relationships the exchange of those things contracts, but not by their actual person. And this absence does in fact seem to be unique to this particular globalized moment.

While Babou estimates about eleven da’iras in New York (2002:165) in 1997, there was but one da’ira meeting in Chicago. Da’ira Tuba-Chicago, like other Murid da’iras in the United States, is a meeting place for disciples devoted a particular shaykh. Although all Murid disciples claim allegiance to the Khalife-général, the supreme spiritual and administrative leader of the order and a direct descendent of Bamba, disciples concurrently serve younger shaykhs who are more accessible for their routine needs. Members of Da’ira Tuba-Chicago pay homage in particular to Cheikh Mortalla Mbacke, who is the last living son of Bamba. Cheikh Mortalla is particularly popular in the United States due to his efforts to provide for the communities spiritual needs directly, thus he as built a mosque at 125th street in Harlem near the African Market and he visits each American da’ira once a year during the summer months. His movements overseas point to the growing significance of these communities for the hierarchy based in Tuba.

The da’ira links the locality to the Murid hierarchy. The da’ira enables participation in the broader life of the Sufi way and places the shaykhs at the center of well-organized networks. Though not all Murid disciples are “travelers” (salikun) seeking esoteric knowledge with the guidance of spiritual masters, Sufism is nevertheless able to
penetrate the outer world of Islam. In addition to "travelers," there are the initiates
(diebelou) who pledge allegiance to these scholars and hope to benefit from their baraka.
Those who intend to submit (diebelou) to a shaykh will be taught the litanies of the order
that will be recited in addition to the standard five daily prayers. The remaining disciples
are the greater numbers of men and women who reside at the fringe. These marginal
followers are the uninitiated seeking the baraka and the guidance of a shaykh. Uninitiated
disciples may request guidance with respect to the performance of voluntary worship
beyond what is obligatory in Islam. Shaykhs may fulfill this request by offering the
transmission of a litany for regular recitation.

Sufism may be understood as a movement from the outside of a circle to its
center. In Sufi doctrine, every being is conscious of being at a point in their lives; the
exoteric side of Islamic thought considers this point in isolation. However, those who
seek esoteric knowledge consider the point at which they find themselves with reference
to a radius that joins every point on the circle to the center—thus the reference to da’ira,
or circle in Arabic. Mysticism begins with the consciousness that from the point at which
one finds oneself extends a radius to the one Center.

The da’ira functions informally as a community association; it is a place where
younger disciples seek advice from older members on any range of issues from problems
with the police to advice on a pending marriage or visa. For all, it is a place to exchange
the latest news on events in Senegal, sales trends in the market, and an association that
sanctions marriages, organizes baptisms and arranges for the burial of its deceased in
Tuba. The current President of Da’ira Tuba-Chicago arrived in Chicago in 1972. He
began meeting with three of his Murid friends but it was not until 1992 that they established Da’ira Tuba-Chicago. Initially, the da’ira was held in disciples’ apartments, as in Senegal. The impetus to secure a permanent location for the da’ira came when a member of the Mbacke clan traveled to Chicago and decided to settle in the city. The disciples rented a basement apartment in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago, a diverse area encompassing Loyola University, a private Catholic university, as well as an Arab and Indian business district. The disciples moved the da’ira to a basement apartment because they were concerned that their qasa’id, or recitation, was so loud that it would disturb the neighbors. They still have problems however; Chicago Police often stop by the three story walkup building and question disciples about their gathering. The number of cars parked outside the building at night seems to draw the attention of the police who fear that Senegalese gatherings may signal drug commerce that is present in the Nigerian community.

The disciples transformed the Chicago apartment into a Murid da’ira, rendering Chicago an extension of Tuba. The institutionalization of this domestic space through the incorporation of the da’ira in the City of Chicago has turned this space of domestic reproduction outward. Tuba encroaches on Chicago through the disciple’s collective thorough cleaning of the unit, their coat of pale green paint on the walls and the placement of a selection of new prayer rugs depicting Islamic themes. A disciple painted “Thank you, Cheikh Amadou Bamba” in Wolof using the West African Arabic script (Wolofal) on the north wall. Both the north and the east wall commemorate Bamba and his lineage with framed photographs of Bamba and his sons as well as posters of Tuba.
and Mecca hanging side by side. The frames encompassing the Sérir’s photos were crafted in Senegal and depict images of Bamba, his miracles and the words of God in Arabic.

During the weekly gathering Murid disciples chant the litanies penned by Bamba. Murids practice remembrance of their saintly leader in the Sufi tradition through the recitation, or dhikr, of Bamba’s poetry, or qasa’id. Bamba’s qasa’id expresses three major themes: his love for God and His messenger the prophet Muhammad, the ascetic quality of labor in a calling, and his exile by French colonizers. During exile, Bamba experienced karamat, or miracles, which disciples narrate to attest to his saintly status. Karamat, unlike miracles or mu’jizat, which only the Prophet Muhammad can perform, are the workings of God through holy men that attest to the existence of God. Disciples regard Bamba’s texts as a moral itinerary for action in the world, especially concerning their ideas of travel as a form of knowledge. Remembrance plays an important role during the da’ira as disciples recite the qasa’id and contemplate its themes and the commentary accompanying this body of poetry. But as they apply this commentary to

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1 A Sufi term meaning “remembrance,” dhikr is the prayerful repetition of the Name of God (Hiskett 1984:327). Dhikr is practiced with fikr, or meditation. The two practices are complementary (Lings 1993:88).

2 The equivalent of the miracle of the Prophet (mu’jiza) exists in the charisma (karamat) of the saint (wali) because the latter is the heir of the former. The prophets are proof of the existence of God and the saints are the signs that his religion is the true one. The prophets are spotless and the saints are preserved and honored. Both share in divine immunity (isma), as shown by the Gnostics. Immunity is only necessary for prophets, not for the saints. (Cheikh Amadou Bamba, Masalik al-Jinan quoted in Monteil 1969:89).
their daily experiences, they add yet another layer to its meaning that is not cumulative but transformative.

During the da’ira meetings, the disciples chant the most popular qasa’id, the Mawahib an-Nabi, which praises Mohammed (Monteil 1969:95). Reciting the qasa’id is the primary means of concentrating on God and the essence of the Sufi spiritual path. In West Africa, in particular, even Sufis who know very little Arabic practice recitation in the form of remembrance or dhikr Allah. In effect, the recitation becomes a long drawn-out invocation of the name of God. Like the Koran which is a “flow and ebb—that it flows to them from God and that its verses are miraculous signs (ayat) which will take them back to God,” (Lings 1993:26) so too the qasa’id is a way of returning to Bamba and that is precisely why Murids read it.

The weekly practice of the qasa’id, the recitation of Murid litanies at the da’ira, is an embodied narrative of travel that enables participation in the Divine word as well as a means of taking part in the “Man of God.” In reciting the qasa’id, Sufis use outward motions, a back and forth swaying in a circular motion, to achieve inward concentration (Lings 1993:60). Unlike most Muslims who strive to achieve a state of blessedness following death by carrying out prescribed works to achieve indirect and symbolic “participation in Divine truths” (Burckhardt 1995:15), Sufis believe that it is possible to achieve direct knowledge of the Divine in this life. Direct knowledge is to be achieved by traveling to the center and being met with revelation at each progression. One “travels” by deep study of the Koran and recitation of Sufi litanies.
In addition to the recitation of liturgical texts, disciples also collect cash offerings (Wolof: adya, Arabic: hadiya) during the da’ira. These disciples insist that their commercial success is a result of not only the commercial networks that membership in the da’ira opens up to them, but also of the mystical power of the shaykhs. Adya are collected by local da’iras offering their disciples assurances of salvation—of ultimately being in God’s presence—in an uncertain moral terrain. Today cash offerings are the work of disciple and itinerant trader and occasional wage laborer condensed in the money form.

Although many West African Muslim societies have practiced adya, some argue that it did not become a popular practice among Senegalese Murids until 1957 when it was collected to complete the Great Mosque that was begun in 1927 following Bamba’s death (Khadim Mbacke, personal communication, June 1997). The collection of adya in the 1950s also coincides with the movement of Murids off of their agricultural base to the towns and the founding of the early da’iras. Murids maintain that the practice of adya is sanctioned in the Koran and further commentary on this practice is given in verse forty of Masalik-al-jinan, a well-known qasa’id written by Bamba.

During the da’ira meetings the collection of adya is a highly ritualized activity. “Bamba worshiped labor;” a da’ira member said, “in the Koran it says, may you eat on the sweat of the forehead; labor, pain and sweat.” Another broke in “the three most important things in Muridism are work, worship God and adya. Working is worshiping God too. Muridism is the five pillars of Islam plus adya. The principle of adya is very important in Muridism, it is a very important act. Murids have been praying to Sēriñ
Tuba [Bamba] to give them money and power so giving *adya* is just giving some back.”

The *da’ira* in Chicago meets every Wednesday and on that day it is expected that a certain amount of money will be collected according to schedule and the fundraising portion of the meeting continues until that amount is secured. Through debate, negotiations and lectures the *da’ira* secures an acceptable amount of contributions at every meeting. The contributions are not gained easily; long pleadings to Murid principles are necessary to sway the generosity of the members. Every meeting, after a discussion of salient business, one member circles the room collecting wadded bills for *adya* in his closed hand. As he snaps his fingers, he snatches contributions, unrolling the bills and praising Murid principles. The collection of the offerings continues until the *da’ira* president determines that enough money has been obtained for the evening; usually three rounds must be called before enough money is collected. The total sum then is recorded in a book each week and deposited in the *da’ira* bank account. An average contribution by each member each round ranges between five and ten dollars, although it is not uncommon to see a twenty-dollar bill unfurled triumphantly. Nor is it uncommon to hear the donor ask for change for his bill.

These offerings are one among several means of signifying submission to the shaykh, such as laboring in his fields or reciting the litanies. The forms of these offerings called *adya*, are not only offered in cash, but in kind as well—as I mentioned as crates of bleach, ammonia and paper towels donated by *da’iras* for the maintenance of the mosque in Tuba—and what these substances convey about the donors. The analysis of their exchange provides a way of getting at the construction of an entire moral universe, as
objectified in Tuba. Although some attention has been given to the spiritual importance of these offerings, it remains to be theorized as important to the disciple, not for the things in themselves that this relationship brings, but for the particular kinds of social relationships that this exchange enables which in turn opens up an entire social network to the disciple in which things like family, community and salvation are possible.

The exchange of the *adya* offerings encapsulates a moment of social production (Fajans 1993). A willing disciple first initiates a relationship with a shaykh by an offering that is merely meant to demonstrate “hospitality” (*tarranga*). The aspirant’s aim is to move the shaykh to reciprocate, perhaps at a later date, perhaps with increment. In return for the offering, the sacra of the order are revealed to the disciple overtime, such as the litanies to be recited after each of the five daily prayers and so forth. This initial exchange of cash and knowledge sustains the possibility for future exchanges. The disciple constructs the self and the recipient in the process and each in terms of the action and the relation to the other that it entails. The disciple constructs her/himself as a good Muslim, because of the view of her/himself created in the other, hence the boasting of disciples concerning their capacity to sacrifice to the shaykhs, and ultimately by the action of the other towards her/himself. Therefore, being a good Muslim is in essence constructing oneself as a candidate for salvation, which translates into prosperity in this life. These are the ways in which the disciple constructs and controls her/his social world.

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3 Donal Cruise O’Brien noted that disciples often “boasted” or inflated the amounts of *adya* that they gave to their shaykhs during their interviews with him.
It is only with the advent of the long-distance da’ira that money becomes the direct object of Murid labor and the principle means of signifying submission rather than the acquisition and recitation of the litanies and regular transmission of the sacra of the order. But this is not to assume that this social relationship has been commodified. The disciple attains salvation, not through accumulated wealth, but by constantly divesting her/himself of money. Consequently, Murids say that the disciple who holds money in her/his hand has no njerin, which is power, value or efficacy. But given to the shaykh, the money will transfer these qualities to the disciple. In return the disciple will benefit from the baraka of the shaykh. Thus in many ways the shaykh is the disciple’s lifeline. The disciple plugs into the shaykh’s energy through litanies and cash offerings. Like the words of the qasa ‘id, the cash offering is a miraculous sign that will take disciples back to Bamba. Money ebbs and flows and disciples believe it returns to them with increment from Bamba. Thus, the adya offering is a means of participating in the order’s spiritual path. Only through the cash offering is the distance between the shaykh and his disciple diminished. Practices of supplication and travel construct a spatial and temporal domain in which both the shaykh and the overseas disciple can dwell. Thus, the exchange of money constitutes a set of social relations.

The shaykh, in receiving the money, is constructed by the disciple as a spiritual master of sufficient baraka, one who can deliver the benefits of salvation in this world and in the next. The shaykh establishes his status as such through his following who constitute his authority by attesting to it. His capacity to move money through his congregation attests to his baraka. The cash offerings of the disciples of Da’ira Tuba-
Chicago and the social relations they contract are not made, however, without moral danger. Once the shaykh accepts the offering he accepts moral responsibility for the salvation of that disciple. On the one hand the shaykh is the perfect vehicle for salvation because he is able to transcend this world, guaranteeing the efficacy of the offering. On the other hand, the shaykh’s transcendence of this world is jeopardized as they are dragged down by the bond, that the offering creates between themselves and their disciples. Consequently, accepting the offering opens a shaykh to the charge of an offering un-reciprocated because his immersion in this world prevents him from delivering the full benefits of salvation to his disciple (see Parry 1989). This is the central tension posed by the Murid soteriology. In principle the shaykh is not tainted with the money his receives because he is expected to return all that he receives with increment as a sign of his baraka. The idea that exchange adds value with each transaction is crucial to ideas about the potency of the money form and beliefs about the mystical power of the shaykhs. But in fact, it is quite impossible for the shaykh to maintain his authority by exemplifying his wealth in the form of multiple wives, cars and general largesse and redistribute all that he accepts from his disciples. The shaykh’s house is never empty, the bowls of rice and fish flow endlessly as he receives disciples daily who out of poverty or piety turn to their shaykh for nourishment. The development of the community is measured by the development of Tuba as an objectification of this entire process of circulation and especially the re-distributive aspects.

The monetization of this process and the problems posed by the invisibility of money as opposed to labor in direct service of the shaykh fuels the need to establish the
distinction between commoditized and non-commoditized transactions. To return to the
question I posed at the outset, how is it that money’s purported power of effacement is
checked (Hutchinson 1996, Zelizer 1989)? Early arguments over the monetization of
African economies held that communities would lose their ability to distinguish between
different systems of value (Bohannon 1959). Contrary to Bohannan’s formulation, it is
not things in themselves, such as brass rods or cattle, which distinguish different spheres
of exchange. Rather, it is the “social relations through which they flow, [that]
differentiate spheres of exchange” (Hutchinson 1996:90). Rather than corrupting
religious value, the money form is invested with moral, social and religious meaning. For
the disciples money has come to stand in for their labor on the shaykh’s fields linking
money, sweat and salvation. Despite the heavy commoditization of Murid life through
their trading activities, Murids maintain certain distinctions on different types of
exchange. Murids never “buy” (jend) sacred texts, such as the qasa ’id or images of
Bamba even though these transactions are monetized transactions that take place in the
market. Rather, these sacred objects are “exchanged” (wecc). As well, Murids distinguish
the use of cash as an “offering” (adya) from cash used as development assistance of
mutual aid (dimbali) and the commodity form of money (xaalis, the same word for
silver). Murid disciples make these distinctions to mark transactions, as they occur not as
mere ideological distinctions, but produce, simultaneously, principled distinctions
between market and non-market exchange.
Cheikh Amadou Bamba Day and Traveling Shaykhs

The City of Chicago declared 13 August as Cheikh Amadou Bamba Day. In Chicago, Mayor Richard M. Daley holds up the Murids as an exemplar immigrant group, which, through collective organization, resists the vagaries of urban life in America. Murids’ emphasis on the merits of self-reliant labor translates into an American discourse of self-help. The highlight of Cheikh Amadou Bamba Day for Murids, their African-American converts, and students of the Muridiyya like myself, is a visit and lecture by the Murid scholars traveling with Serigne Mortalla M’Backé, second in line to the Khalife-général and the son of Amadou Bamba. During the 13 August 1996 visit, the title of the lecture was “Cheikh Amadou Bamba, man of God.” Each da’ira member contributed $200 to cover the cost of his visit. A special carnet, (record book) tracked contributions. Mortalla’s scholarly entourage delivered a lecture at the Embassy Suites Hotel and then Mortalla briefly visited the da’ira. After his departure, members spent the next few da’ira meetings assessing the financial success of his visit.

During Cheikh Mortalla’s 13 August 1997 visit, the address was perfect belief in the unity of God, or tawhid. About 150 people attended, veiled women sat on the left side of the room while men sat to the right. Seven Islamic scholars from Senegal addressed the gathering in a conference room at the Embassy Suites Hotel while Cheikh Mortalla himself remained in his hotel room to receive important visitors. Those visiting Cheikh Mortalla’s room would be asking for special prayers and offering cash gifts to the shaykh.
The conference was an attempt to find common ground, spiritual cohesiveness and to send the message of peace. For Murids an interfaith conference means opening up a dialogue between Arab Muslims, African American Muslims and themselves as Sufis. The organizers explained that since they did not have the funds to send Americans to Africa so that they could understand their cultural history, they would bring education to Americans through their scholars and religious leaders. The lecture began with a discussion of the judgment day and the life cycle and moved into the duties of those on earth asking, “are we limited to working for our families or are we called to perform other duties for God?” The listeners were then asked to think about Cheikh Mortalla’s “world tour” in this light. The lecture then continued on the subject of Cheikh Amadou Bamba and his poetry which reveals that although he was in the midst of enemies, he maintained perfect belief in God: “Bamba, man of God, in midst of his enemies, proclaimed oneness of God, he was a perfect Muslim what he writes emanates from the exalted pen of the preserved tablet.” The speakers maintained that the saintly status of Bamba could be verified through the trials he faced during French colonialism and that “even though he was in a position to declare jihad, he did not do it by taking up arms but by a spiritual revolution to inculcate the intellect of individuals.” As those selling photographs ceaselessly snapped photos and the two videographers captured each other on film, the lectured continued: “whoever knows God, knows himself, we follow Cheikh Amadou Bamba because we want to get closer to God.” The nature of the Sufi path was explained and the drive to attain different levels of going back to the original nature even in an alien environment.
The Murid hierarchy in Senegal recognizes the importance of overseas remittances by sending shaykhs to the da’iras abroad. In fact, an entire class of these traveling shaykhs has sprung up recently. Perhaps this occurrence is due in part to the profitability of the practice in terms of amassing income but also in terms of making one’s prestige known but it is also due in part to the over saturation of the market for shaykhs in Senegal. A da’ira can be sure its importance will be recognized by the hierarchy by contributing large sums of money to the shaykhs who visit them. The money that is given to the Khalife-général during the Magal, the annual pilgrimage, is adya but money given to a traveling shaykh can also be adya. Many disciples may refuse to give adya to a traveling shaykh if they do not recognize his status, that is if he does not convince them that he occupies and important place in the Murid hierarchy or if they are convinced that he is not capable of rendering sufficient baraka to them. Thus disciples would not give a shaykh a cash gift because his status would not be sufficient in their eyes to render the gift efficacious.

A traveling shaykh attended Da’ira Tuba Chicago in the fall of 1996; he was one of many who had visited that year. He listened to the Murids affairs, he participated in the qasa’id and he led prayer. Individually people told him of their problems, and he counseled them accordingly. The names of the sick and those who had passed away were read and prayers were said. Following dinner he was taken to wash and the da’ira collected funds for his visit. After three rounds of sparse contributions, the da’ira president reproached the disciples for their lack of commitment to the principles of the Muridiyya. Perhaps his anger was due in part to the fact that it was he who must approach
the shaykh, who had returned to the room, and explain to him that the da'ira had very little adya, or cash gift, that evening for his services. The shaykh received the small amount of money gracefully and offered his prayers. He told the da'ira members to continue working hard and to pray. He also told them to give adya to the shaykh because it makes you rich. The passages of adya offerings are thus at the heart of Murid efforts to constitute a uniquely Muslim and African modernity within the opportunities, and the obstacles, posed by post-colonial society and its complex insertion into globalized networks of trade.
CHAPTER FOUR

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS: FILIAL PIETY, COQUETTERY AND CREATING WORK IN SENEGAL

Rama and I rented a room together across the dusty corridor from the hectic family home. Our peers coveted its pink walls and lime green satin coverlet; they mentioned how nicely the black wooden bed frame matched the awesome black armoire that spread out along one of our walls from floor to ceiling. What they remarked upon most however, was the privacy these four walls afforded us. This is what every woman our age wants, her own room where she can reflect, rest and gain respite from the daily household obligations plaguing junior women. It was as though the geist that Virginia Wolf had written about,¹ the angel in the house, which guides women’s desires and material possibilities, were alive and well among the Wolof and it was the room which stood in the collective conscious for the kind of autonomy that enabled one to develop a plan for extracting oneself from daily social and financial obligations in order to get ahead. The contradiction being of course that it was those same obligations that were

viewed as dragging one down that young men and women alike yearned to fulfill as a matter of personal pride and public esteem.

Woolf’s insight into domesticity is not only as the management of household affairs, but as the “difficult arts of family life,” as the way in which women are always the hostesses, always first in making everyone comfortable and seeing to their happiness, in affairs of hospitality, family life and interpersonal relationships. There is a long literature on male political authority at the level of the lineage in West Africa, but what are the ways in which women manage the desires, hopes, passions and material well being of their families, neighborhoods and religious community? And what are the politics—along the axis of both gender and generation—of this domestic management of the household interpersonal and economic affairs? And though men are enormously hospitable and this is especially true of Murid ideas about masculine virtue, it is in large part, the labor of women that enables displays of male generosity. I will pick up on this argument in the next chapter. In this chapter I will look at the points of value transformation whereby women convert domestic value—fulfilling family obligations and coquettish practices (mokk pooj)—into commercial value, the capacity to participate in long distance trade routes of the Muridiyya. I argue thus for a dialectical relation between commercial and domestic value, whereby commercial value testifies to one’s grace, or baraka, as potential for both future salvation and future prosperity.

The private room that Rama and I rented jointly enabled us to engage autonomously in acts of hospitality and mutual aid to friends and family. The distance made it easier for us to slip out at midnight to revel in the numerous balls, or discos in the
clubs and households around Dakar. The ability to close the door, the privatization of household space, gave Rama discretion in personal and financial matters. By concealing her affairs in the material boundaries of the room Rama constructed a public personae of movement, mobility and motion, that gave others confidence that the things her motion attracted—money, merchant goods, people, would flow through her—the essence of value creation. Thus by giving food (hospitality), mutual aid and loans—all aided by the symbolic capital of the room—Rama’s actions yielded future returns of hospitality and gifts of cash and merchant goods during family ceremonies. The relationship between material and symbolic action along Murid circuits of wage labor and capital with respect to the lines of age and gender are important for what they reveal about how a community constitutes itself across a globalized time-space horizon.

The ethnographic narrative in this chapter centers on two sisters and the sources of rivalry between them: Rama who is an ndaw si, an unmarried woman of thirty and Jigeen, her older sister who is in her early forties and divorced. Both sisters view overseas Murid trade networks as providing the means to participate in localized ritual networks consisting of marriage, baptismal and funeral feasts and gift exchange. Their experiences are remarkable, as women ideally are linked into Murid trade networks through marriage. In addition, it is through the marriage process, a woman’s first big feast, that women gain entre into cycles of domestic gift giving. The younger sister, Rama, goes the traditional route of deferring marriage, generating her social capital through representing her family at various feasts and benefits for the generous support of her older brothers. The oldest sister, Jigeen, who is worldly and sophisticated, uses her
feminine wiles, or mokk pooj, to ingratiate herself with former trading partners through whom she migrates to opt out of the system all together by getting tied into long distance trade networks. She also employs the assistance of local diviners attract money and to influence people. Jigeen’s standing in the family home came from her own trading efforts, and overrode the poor reputation she had in matters of love and marriage. Of the many paths to autonomy, the path of marriage had not boded well for Jigeen. For older divorced women and women who had remained single into their 30s and 40s, migration and trade provided an out from societal pressures and new options for autonomy and control over one’s wealth.

Room to Move

And though we shared the same bed, it didn’t feel crowded; four of Rama’s teenage sisters shared a single bed in the family home, and her older sister Jigeen slept in the same bed with her three children. Moreover, I was often traveling with other women in the family to Mbacke, the natal village of Rama’s maternal grandmother, to attend baptisms, weddings and funerals, or simply to visit maternal kin, or on the myriad pilgrimages to the rural shrines of the shaykhs of the Murid Sufi order. Rama’s maternal grandmother was an Mbacke Mbacke, her surname was Mbacke and she had originated from the village of Mbacke. Founded in the late eighteenth century by Mame Marame, a renowned jurist, Mbacke is the birthplace of his great grandson and the founder of the Murid way, Amadou Bamba (Ross 1995:249). Rama’s maternal grandmother claimed to descend directly from this saintly figure. And thus, Rama and her siblings like her mother
and her mother’s sisters were devout disciples of the Murid way. Their respect for their elders and their husbands mirrored their respect for Amadou Bamba and the clerics (Wolof, sëriñ) who descended from him and presided over the spiritual and material realms of the lives of his disciples. Rama was known as a daughter who am kersa, that is she had respect.

Rama was also known as a daughter who am faayda, that is as one who is responsible. More often than not, I thought of her as naxari, or hard, difficult, because she was shrewd in business and real estate matters. She used the room that I considered to be a manifestation of our camaraderie—how many times in the last seven years had we reached out to each other in a hardy handshake upon hearing that the other was yet unmarried? How many times had we said to each other, it is good to have your own money before entering into marriage, eh? But for Rama, I quickly realized, the room was also an important means to gaining a foothold in the housing market in Dakar. The owner of our building was a gentle older man, for me that meant showing a degree of respect and distance, for Rama, his age was all the more reason to move in closer with displays of affection. I often spotted them holding hands and was confused by her behavior, more becoming of a diskette, like a teenage girl shrewdly throwing her sexuality around. It was no wonder she was particularly fond of the portrait of herself cloaked in a white veil at a Muslim conference.

Rama was particularly skillful in extracting rents from other inhabitants and dealing deftly with our more quarrelsome neighbors. Rama kept a ledger of rents paid and not paid. Her ability with numbers—perhaps seen as some kind of complex
numerology—her interfering and meddlesome way of intruding into other’s affairs, and her affectionate demeanor towards the elderly man who owned the building, whom she called “Pa,” led our neighbors to give in to her demands when confronted with her commanding figure robed novel and expensive tailored pantsuit ensembles with the long flowing jackets popular in northern Muslim countries. It was thus that she earned a position managing the dwelling for “Pa” who lived in a government financed SICAP villa. She had cautiously deferred an offer of marriage from this same man, who as it turned out, had four wives already. But his fondness for her, and her family’s respect for him, which was displayed by their bowed heads each time he descended from his pale blue early model Mercedes in his old fashioned boubous with the point yellow baboush shoes, ensured that she was well cared for. Rama carefully and quietly invested her earnings from the arrangement in a rotating credit union organized by a local NGO with the aim of building a home on a piece of land that she had bought in a seaside town a bit out of Dakar. Though she owned a taxi and had hired a driver to work for her, per her father’s arrangements, he worked in the hired car business and spent his days catering to tourists; she was quick to remind neighbors, “taxi du dox,” that taxis couldn’t make any money these days. To say that something does not dox, is to say literally that it does not walk or move and is commonly a way of saying that business is either doing well, dafay dox or not well, du dox.²

² Interestingly, the same expression is also common in French, ce n’est marche pas, and used in Senegal.
Rama on the other hand, had the unfortunate luck of falling in love with several doxkat, or men who are literally “those who walk,” which is to say, that they have numerous lovers but in other contexts, a doxkat, is also a voyager. Recently she had fallen for a broad shouldered man from Guinea Bissau, who was fond of sport coats and cravats and who now avoided speaking the Wolof slang he had grown up with. Their families inhabited opposite corners of the same intersection and their mothers shared membership in a ritual association; her father offered them Tabaski lamb and they offered his family Easter ngalax, or peanut, milk and millet porridge. She had grown up with him and his family—they were early immigrants from the conflict there—and she had recently become more aware of him since he returned from Portugal. She joked that she ought to return with him to Portugal to avail herself of the opportunities there, but he was not reliable and her fear of offending her father by marrying a non-Muslim kept her yearnings in check.

Rama’s carefully culled income, small but regular, and the way in which she wedged herself into a good situation in the building across from her family home, earned her the praise of her mother, Sokna Géer. Rama had excellent credit among her peers who would willingly extend her favors and among the various market vendors and boutique owners. I was part of the reason for her good credit, how could she default on any loans with a toubab in her room, she was the reason other’s hesitated to ask me for money—for they recognized that Rama already had a claim to my resources. Rama also

\[3\] A Muslim holiday.
exelled in the art of bringing others under her patronage, a neat replication of the neopatrimonial political economy replicated in a female gendered sphere of action.

In addition, Rama was a model daughter because she fulfilled her family obligations. Rama relished opportunities to represent her family in the various feasts—baptisms, weddings and funerals—through which she rose higher in the esteem of her peers and those of her mother. Always in a new outfit, always talking about this or that new enterprise she would undertake grace of the generosity of her brothers who sent her cargo from their overseas trade or money. She smartly finished her program at a private business school grace of another brother, deferred several offers of marriage arranged by her father and thus managed to remain within the sphere of her brothers’ responsibility. They were liberal with their gifts, for how would she attract a suitable marriage partner without the latest imported fashions?

It was the room rented beyond the prying eyes of her siblings and parents that enabled her effortless movement across the social landscape. Here she held private meetings discussing this or that transaction, kept her notebooks delineating various social payments, and the loans she generously made available to those in need. Here she hid in her locked armoire her own savings and “pots” of numerous rotating credit unions in which she and her mother participated, which she drew from and replaced in an honorable and timely fashion. The room was in a four story dwelling with various rooms rented out to families, single mothers, and male immigrant casual laborers from Guinea
Bissau and Mali. Our monthly rent of 30,000 F CFA⁴ was average for the neighborhood, an area in which one found many multifamily dwellings—a working class neighborhood in the urban periphery of Dakar. The rooms opened into communal hallways with cooking space, and an open central courtyard and a Turkish toilet and shower stall. Water was available in the first floor courtyard for ten CFA a bucket, though I could never seem to keep much of it in the bucket as I climbed the stairs to our second floor room. Rama and I first secured the room during the previous year, in the summer when I had visited. We were fond of the petite balcony, which enabled us to yell across the street at the girls whenever we needed something brought to us, I liked to ask for water myself. Rama was more complicated; she wielded her age based status well—commanding the girls to buy her bread at the boutique, to bring her laundry over and to bring up buckets of water and rags to wipe her floor down, a daily ritual of keeping the sand at bay despite heavy winds.

Through Jigeen, Rama’s older sister, I was made conscious of the merits of having a room of one’s own. She had heard Rama complain that I liked to keep notes late at night. Jigeen understood, she said that I was like the Murid mystics; jinn visited me in the night with revelations, a reward for toiling during sleeping hours. She was the first to point out that all travelers merit a room of their own. This was often one of the first things that male migrants did when they returned to Senegal—build a room onto the family house, or even homes of their own. Sufis, she explained, think of themselves as travelers, participating in the experience of the spiritual quest of the founder of the Murid

⁴ In February 2000 700 F CFA = U.S. $1
order, Amadou Bamba. I was more worried that Rama’s collection of cosmetic products—bottles, jars, misters, creams, jellies, and cakes—ranging from full, half-full to empty shells of their former glory, and the careful way in which she arranged, dusted and rearranged her beauty supply after moisturizing, straightening and coloring her body in awkward and time consuming ways. Her growing assortment of portraiture, portraits of herself taken at Islamic conferences, white scarf tied around her demure face, family ceremonies, concerts and other events, were filling up the room and crowding me out.

Pilgrimage, Commerce and Coquetry

Though Rama and I had bonded briefly over the idea of being thirty and unmarried and schemed jointly to defer questions about our future status, it was Jigeen who hit upon the solution, and it was partly my building my own room on the unfinished second floor of the family home that inspired Jigeen. Jigeen had found herself in an uncomfortable position in the house. The building of my room between December and February had sparked something that had been brewing in her in the last year. Rama and Jigeen were jubbo-uno, which means that they did not speak; they did not greet each other or acknowledge the other’s presence. When Jigeen returned from the Cote d’Ivoire after her second divorce, it was Rama who opened her room up to her. The two weren’t able to get along and it was decided that Jigeen was too quarrelsome, that she lacked the qualities of mun ak kersa, patience and restraint prized among Wolof women.

“My warsek, my luck,” Jigeen Geer said despairingly, “is in Abidjan.” “Dakar,” she declared with raised eyebrows and puckered lips, “here there is no luck.” Those who
would have turned their back on her when she returned from a ten year stint in the Ivory Coast divorced with two daughters celebrated her return to Dakar when she arrived with dual armoires, one for her mother and one for her father. She said that it was the trading capital that she had amassed in the Ivory Coast that ensured her continued respect in the community. She held a brief hope that her third marriage to a young Murid shaykh, an *Mbacke Mbacke* as they say, whose family were directly descended from the founding saint of the order, in the periphery of Dakar on the road to Tuba would bolster her status as a grand dame of the market, despite her divorce. He dealt in auto parts and she couldn’t but hope that she was going somewhere with him. But the marriage had ended badly, she clashed with her co-wives and he had eaten her fortune, or at least that is how her family relates the story, and left her with another daughter and another divorce.

“It isn’t normal,” she would say, that a daughter her age, around forty with three children should live under her parent’s roof, and under her mother’s thumb. She lamented, “I’m tired, and every time the phone rings it is another baptism and another feast, every week.” Her mother would tell her, “*yow, begg-uloo sa famille,*” you don’t want your family, but its not that she was reluctant to represent the family at feasts, she was not. But she complained that she lacked the money for the gifts and that shame (*gacce*) kept her at home. Her mother would yell and wag her index finger in her direction “*doom-u-xaram*” or unwanted daughter, though each of the daughters could be expected to receive such an insult from time to time, Jigeen was stung by the complaint. Jigeen would say that if you are without money, people would not show you respect. She complained that when it was time for decisions to be made in the family that she would
not be consulted, despite the fact that she is the oldest child and quit school to raise her younger siblings. She talked about commerce as the only thing in Senegal right now; for some it moves and for others it doesn’t. Mostly, she talked about her desire to get her own apartment and buy an entire carton of goods from Dubai and Hong Kong. No, in fact, she would get a cantine in marché HLM, a suburb of Dakar with government financed homes and market her wares there.

The room gave form to her imagined possibilities. There were parallels; I had built the room with money that I had garnered overseas. People regarded me differently in the neighborhood after I built the room, people wanted my opinion, visited me more often and the children wanted to clean my room most, it was new and responded well to cleaning, but it afforded and escape for all, it was my domain, one could shut the door and one’s words didn’t travel down the stairs.

For Jigee the period leading up to Magal 2000 was filled with frequent trips to various diviners, visits with an elderly woman from Tuba who threw cowry shells for her, and alms and sacrifices (Wolof, sarax) of sugar, rice and sour milk. Such sacrifices, she explained, amplify prosperity; only by giving money away can one attract money. Jigee spoke of the Magal as the big sarax, the moment when one’s sacrifices would be bound up with those made by disciples from “the four corners of the world.” It would be a potent time to make demands as people struggled to find ways to amplify their sacrifices by serving others.

Jigee would frequently say that she does not have any luck if she doesn’t give sarax or alms and that it is her fate to sarax often. Jigee had massive debts and had been
viciously gossiped about among her female kin for spending considerable amounts of money on diviners, their *gris-gris* and their medications, rather than repaying her debts to friends and family. Her situation with one woman in the neighborhood had gotten so bad that she was *jubbo-uno*, or shunned, by her younger sisters who refused to speak to her. Her long time friend Demba Ba, whom she had met in the Ivory Coast and who now resided in New York, sent her money to cover this debt, but even he feared she would squander it on her cadre of diviners rather than repay the neighbor so he sent a Western Union money order directly to her younger brother who called the woman to the house and paid her back on Jigeen’s behalf, to save the family honor with this outsider, as men do. Jigeen was in dire straits indeed. She had gone to the Gambia in December with money given to her by another trading partner from the Ivory Coast, El Hadj Lo who was now living in Tuba. His young son had suffered from a deadly combination of yellow fever and malaria that had devastated Tuba during the rainy season. When Jigeen attended the funeral he heard of her divorce, which had taken place a year earlier. He grasped her hand, flattened it, and placed a roll of banknotes into it, gently folding her fingers back over the bulk, perhaps to honor an old obligation, and perhaps to turn his ill fortune away through generosity. With this money she traveled by bus to the Gambia, a frequent way in which women trade, and benefited from trade liberalization following reforms undertaken by Senegal in the late 90s in the midst of World Bank adjustment programs. She had brought back bolts of cloth and sold them on installment to her female kin but by the time the Magal rolled around in May, most had failed to pay her. Her long history of debt and lack of repayment spurred no one to repay her quickly or with honor.
With this Magal, the annual pilgrimage to Tuba, Jigeen was going to change her fortune, not by hanging on to her hopes that her ex-Murid marabout would press banknotes into her hand as he had on so many other occasions when she had been to visit him despite her family’s protests that she ought to have more fit, or pride, that she shouldn’t have trusted him with her fortune in the first place. Rather, Jigeen was preparing to call on the homes of the wealthy Murid traders she had known through her second husband in Abidjan.

The Magal, like the pilgrimage to Prokhane and the hundreds of smaller pilgrimages that Murids make to the birthplaces of important saintsly figures, is not only a spiritual journey, but an opportunity for families to reunite, as migrant sons often return home. Women make these pilgrimages the premier opportunity to shop for and to vend novel merchandise such as housewares and beauty products. As the Magal approached the nature of goods traded within Murid households shifted, no longer pots and pans popular during the feasting season of Ramadan and the hajj, but now sewing notions, scarves and other religious paraphernalia for the yearly Magal to Tuba.

Regular television programming was often interrupted with announcements from a military commander standing in front of a series of maps diagramming traffic patterns and water allocation during the pilgrimage week. Jigeen Geer prepared her wardrobe for the four-day trip—deciding which ensembles to wear and which to give away to the women of the house when she departed. It was during this time that a middle aged male friend of the family returning from France paid a visit to the Geer household with his wares, hoping that the devoutly Murid women would be making the Magal this year.
After exchanging greetings on behalf of those abroad and asking about the members of the household, a second son now in Italy and a second son now in New York, he opened a medium sized briefcase and out fell packets of embroidered notions, three inch wide cotton ribbons embroidered in pink, blue and yellow pastels, all white, the preferred color of the Magal garments.

Jigeen’s mother, Sokna Geer and her younger sister debated the selling price of these notions—their quality, place of origin and novelty. He said he expected to sell them for 13,000 F CFA a packet, roughly $18, having bought them for 9,000 F CFA in France. Ten to twenty packets would be strung together against a white poplin cloth to make a dress and underskirt. Sokna Geer contended that the notions were worth 4,000 F CFA, her other daughter scoffed at her cheapness, spoke of their French origins and that these were not the typical embroidered notions one finds in Dakar markets. New goods come into the market so quickly that the price of goods is a significant subject of discussion among women.

Jigeen’s sister reflected that this was indeed the best way to do commerce, not to open a cantine in the market, but to travel back and forth, selling en gross. She said that if one acted as an importer, not necessarily working on the selling end, a large profit could be made. She talked about the women who were importing goods from Dubai and Jeddah, that they were able to get good airfares on Ethiopian Air and that they belonged to rotating credit unions which helped them finance shipping containers. She said that several women would often share a container to offset the cost. This, she said, was the trade route that only the wealthiest commerçants could participate in. Sokna then pulled a
suitcase out from under her bed, it was full of scarves, some white, others striped and polka dotted, white organza embroidered with white floral patterns studded with crystals.

These scarves had been sent from her younger sister Maam Dara who had remained in Jedda well past the Umra, the smaller hajj, as she had met someone, a man, who presumably was assisting her in exporting scarves to Senegal for sale. They were happy for her, suspicious, but nonetheless happy. Maam Dara had begun construction on the second floor of the family home. Yet they were worried because Maam Dara had recently been engaged to marry an American airline pilot who was stationed in France. She had stayed over her three-month visa, nine months in fact, banking on the engagement. But he was mugged by an African, got scared, and just before returning to his family in Los Angeles, he sought her out in the short term occupancy hotel where she kept a room. The deskman told him that she was not in, suspicious that she was using her room as a based of prostitution, which she wasn’t, but her pilot got the wrong idea and coupled with his recent mugging, fled without a word. She had waited for him in France but her family brought her back to Senegal where she sent him letter after letter.

Sokna took the cargo to the NGO that sponsored her rotating credit union hoping to vend the items to the ladies there. She and her second youngest daughter agreed to price them between 15,000 to 35,000 F CFA, though this daughter balked that they were older styles and that 35,000 F CFA was too high. The daughter was pleased with the project, she was proud to be selling scarves from an aunt who had gone on the Umra, proud to peddle the wares of a woman so holy that she had stayed on in the sacred city and so honorable, that she remembered her family in this way, incorporating them into
her trade routes. Jigeen scoffed at the plans of her mother and sister, which excluded her, and set herself to following Maam Daara’s example.

Jigeen Geer did not begin her Magal on a particularly auspicious note. Less than an hour outside of Dakar, in the village of Bargny, a middle aged man, dressed decorously in a brown grand boubou, desperately pounded on the door of the taxi she and several friends had hired for the three-hour journey as it slowed to a stop in traffic. Opening the door he said, “I pray you, my whole family was on that train.” Wedged sideways into the rear passenger seat the events of the train wreck unfolded as the taxi driver maneuvered past hundreds of cars, busses, and passenger mini-vans their occupants sprawled out on the road as the taxi spun in and out of the sandy ruts between the train tracks: hundreds of young boys enthusiastically riding on top of the passenger cars, packed with pilgrims, partly because there is no charge for riding outside of the train, a practice normally prohibited but during the pilgrimage season considered part of the collective spirit, of the fervor, of being a young Murid disciple, had turned over several cars crushing those who rode the roofs. President Abdoulaye Wade’s special Magal 2000 helicopter had been hovering over the scene at the time, reporting on the Grand Magal de Tuba, on the special trains commissioned by the government for the event, the truckloads, busloads and other forms of urban transport all turned towards Tuba from the “four corners of the world” for the event.

Jigeen intended to pay a visit to several Murid men she had known through her second husband while they were living in Abidjan. Jigeen lodged in the home of El Hadj Lo, a trader she had known in the eighties when she lived in the Ivory Coast with her
second husband. Her husband had imported gold from Italy; he bought the merchandise there and sent it to her in the Ivory Coast, she sold it and pocketed the profits. Lo’s home, like many others in Tuba, fulfilled the *ndiguel*, or order, of Cheikh Abdoul Ahad commanding disciples to build a home in Tuba. The *ndiguel* was ordered in response to the migration of disciples towards the urban centers and into diasporic locales in Europe and North America. The Lo compound consisted of a two story white cement villa with archways and pillars on the second floor terraces encircled by a cement fence; its facade facing onto the street. Entering through large double doors in the fence around back where the cars are kept on a cement lot that also boasts a well, and courtyard for cooking. The second half of the courtyard is separated by a short wall and is tiled with broken tile. It has a shelter and two buildings that are storerooms for cooking. The house itself was of grand architecture but the furnishings, once grand as well, had now slouched under their dusty covers.

Jigeen considered the Lo household to be a fine example of what a Murid household should look like. As a man of generosity and means, Lo gave each of his four wives 5,000 F CFA a day for depense, or housekeeping. Each of his wives has a suite of rooms, a bedroom, bathroom and salle. All in the same enclosed villa structure opening out into a hallway that opens out onto terraces. And each of them sells goods in Marché Okass, the Tuba market that he imports from Belgium, France, Cote d’Ivoire and sometimes Italy. The house is clearly old, but has the feel of a newly constructed home as some things were never really finished, wires still hung where outlets and switches were planned but not executed. The bathrooms were built in the European style with sink,
bathtub and toilet fixtures, yet the plumbing is incomplete and the water is carried
upstairs from an outside well. His sons bring drinking water to the house each week from
Dakar, as the water in Tuba is naturally salty and cannot be consumed. He buys coffee,
rice and oil in bulk. Each of his four wives, who among them have twenty children, cooks
two days a week. Lo had four sons, all of who had work, and all of who had begun to
take responsibility for providing housekeeping money. Only one had refused this
obligation. Likewise two of these sons had married and brought their wives to live in
their father’s home and these women would take over the cooking obligations of their
mother in laws. One of his sons worked for a shipping company in the US for seven
years. With an American passport he had just returned to Senegal to open a cantine in
Marché Sandaga, in Dakar with his father. He travels to the US and imports containers of
goods to sell. But the US is not his only destination; he also has plans to import goods
from Dubai. He rents an apartment in Dakar with other Murid traders and on the weekend
he retires to Tuba to be with his family in his father’s house.

Lo swelled with pride waxing on about the changes he had seen in Tuba since the
disciples began leaving in large numbers following the famines that struck the area in the
1970s. He talked about the new villas and new neighborhood springing up outside of
Tuba on land devastated by the groundnut crops, but now fertile ground for Murid
families. Serign Salilou, the current Khalife General of the order allocated each disciple
overseas about a quarter acre of land urging them to build homes in and around Tuba. For
young traders seven is the magic number of years one plans to spend in the US, seven
years of exile paralleling the experience of the founding saint, Ahmadou Bamba at the
hands of the French colonizers. Traders send home housekeeping money while entrusting someone to set aside money for land on his behalf. Then he will build a wall around the property a few years later and eventually the first floor. Each time he has some money, he will send a little back to build his house. Then he will begin sending money for a wife.

After making her ziyara, or visit to the tomb of Amadou Bamba, the founder of the Murid order, Jigeen set about visiting the home of each of her contacts. Over long afternoons of tea and cold beverages or during elaborate lunches and dinners, for Tuba residents each slaughtered a cow for the hoards of guests they would receive during the pilgrimage, Jigeen assessed who would be best suited to assist her in her quest for an American visa. She flaunted her single status, coquettishly announcing her interest in resuming trading, spoke of her various friends and relations abroad, and recalled with sincerity how she had aided these traders when they were youth, struggling to get into the Ivorian trade networks, of the meals and kind company she had provided them in Abidjan. She spoke of her connection with Demba Ba and of his success in the media business in New York. He makes and exports bootleg video and audiocassettes. In Abidjan, Jigeen and her husband had rented a room to Demba Ba who had just come from Libreville. Ba was involved in selling airline tickets. She fondly remarked that he had been an excellent tenant, often bringing home meat for her to prepare and fruit for her daughters. She hoped that when she made it to New York, she would be able to call on him and that he would help her get settled. One among these contacts had been particularly generous in helping her younger brother apply for a student visa for the US
by providing a bank statement and an affiliation of support. And it was Ba who housed him when he arrived.

By August 2000 Jigee found herself in New York enjoying the hospitality of her Demba Ba. She lives in a restaurant owned by a distant female relative of her mother who was raised in Gabon and braids hair in one of the thousands of salons outside of Manhattan.

**Circuits, Circulation and Value Creation outside of the Marital Realm**

Ideally, a junior woman engenders her networks of trade and gift exchange though marriage. Through her own marriage and the marriages of her peers, a young woman generates circuits of gift exchange through which she constitutes her relations with kin and community. Rather than marriage, Rama relied on family networks, in particular those of her brothers in Milan, Paris, New York and Houston and of her aunt in Jeddah, to integrate herself into Murid trade networks. Her older sister, Jigee inserted herself into Murid networks by employing a combination of culling personal favors and seeking out diviners who offered her medications to repair and regenerate her relations with others. In addition, the ways in which Jigee talked about money and engaged in divination to attract it tells us about the kinds of economic changes taking place in Senegal in the last ten years. For these two women then, Murid circuits of gift and commodity exchange offer new social possibilities. These two daughters inserted themselves into circuits of gift and commodity exchange in unconventional ways—but
ways that are increasingly common given the propensity for male and female youth to defer marriage (Antoine et al 1995).

Rama was unable to migrate abroad; her father would prohibit her traveling overseas, except perhaps to visit an aunt in Paris or New York, but not to stay on her own. For her, marriage remained her best hope of moving abroad, though she chose to stay in Senegal, to build a house there and to work herself through female and familial circuits of ritualized exchange. Moreover, Rama was not a devout follower of the Murid way, she chose a more orthodox, though certainly not anti-Sufi, view of Islam therefore would not participate in Murid networks to the extent that Jigeen sought to participate.

Ethnographic narratives, such as these around which the ensuing dissertation chapters are organized, bring into relief gendered and generational constructions of movement within the circuits of wage labor and capital organized by the Murid Sufi order in Senegal and its North American diasporic communities. As I discussed in chapter three, these “circuits” consist of both the ambit of spiritual power by which blessings (Arabic, baraka) radiate outwards from God to those who have submitted to him through homage to Sufi shaykhs as well as the circuits of cash that Murid disciples remit as offerings (Wolof, adya) to their shaykhs from their earnings as merchants and workers of the diaspora in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East. For disciples, these circuits of wealth represent the baraka of Amadou Bamba, the founding figure of the Murid way.

Rama and Jigeen saw the potential for their individual propensities to be amplified by participation in Murid circuits that are at once sacred and material. But what
is the relationship between the circulation of money in the form of remittances and religious offerings and merchant goods as objects of exchange (both commodity and gift exchange) and ideas about the moving, circulating aspects of the person? How do people talk about another's character as naxari, or hard versus sawar, or active; or a person or event as xumbana, or noise as in make public, spread or talk about or have notoriety; or things, persons or actions that have njerin, or value because they set things in motion? How do people talk about success in business, as I mentioned as dox, or moving/walking, or money that circulates as having njerin, because it attracts more money versus money that is pocketed? And how do Senegalese men and women talk about changing these aspects of themselves through participation in the Murid way?

In the ethnographic narratives of Rama and of Jigeen both women consider their movement across the social and physical landscape to be at the same time the motivation for and the outcome of their spiritual quest. Thus the moving aspects of the person, extending oneself in space and time through establishing exchange relations with others (Munn 1986, Mauss 1954), as well as migration is understood as being a manifestation of baraka, grace, or warsek, luck. For Rama, the portraits of herself at Islamic conferences are displayed side by side with the portraits of herself at conferences on development initiatives at the local non-governmental organization and portraits of herself at family ceremonies. This coupling of religious and secular realms of social experience exemplifies her understanding of the flow of baraka as grace and as prosperity. For

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5 See Munn (1986) for the way in which she talks about aspects of fame in a Massim society.
Jigeeen it is through ziyara, or religious pilgrimage to the tombs of Murid shaykhs that she is able to break her cycle of bad luck and eventually migrate to the U.S. where she hopes that her luck will be located.

That Jigeeen considered the moving aspects of her self to be blocked as well as her migratory ambitions by an excess of bad luck points to one of the fundamental features of economic and social reform informed by neoliberal international and state policies. Rather than articulating her lack of economic and social opportunities—such as her lack of education, employment and housing—as a failure of the Senegalese state, Jigeeen spoke of her difficult position as a personal failure. Her narrative of her experience is a story of struggle, which parallels the experience of Ahmadou Bamba who was exiled by the French colonialists. For Jigeeen, that struggle is part of the process of self-knowledge and knowledge of the divine for which she will ultimately be rewarded either through salvation or through this worldly wealth.

**Gender and Movement along Murid Religious and Commercial Circuits**

For Murid disciples, travel, migration and the formation of new diasporic communities are not really new at all; their movement is part of a longer history of Muslim expansion and exile. Islam, rather than being an exogenous factor in migratory processes, is like Tuba incorporating diasporic locales into its center. Thus, contemporary global circuits are recast in terms of a major world religion and theorizing diaspora in a novel way by treating religion as the symbolic and material motivation behind movement and migration and thus as integral to the analysis of social processes. Though migration
and the establishment of diasporic communities is not a new process for members of this community long on the Muslim periphery, there are racialized and gendered aspects of travel to North America that are new. For example, there are categories of travel in which men have a longer tradition of participating in such as spiritual quests and long-distance (especially overseas) trade. Men’s travel is characterized as tank bu gudd, that is long-legged and women’s as tank bu gatt, short legged. Though women on the coast of present day Senegal have been involved in trans-Atlantic trade since the eighteenth century (Brooks 1976), women’s movement overseas is a relatively recent phenomenon tied to their participation in Murid trade networks. The narratives of movement in this chapter are not merely local stories; they are critiques of a larger global reality characterized by multiple bureaucracies of mobility emanating from the religious hierarchy, the Senegalese state and other national governments whose borders are increasingly seizing up in response to anxieties about extra-state activities.

The idea of home, as both a physical space and an ideal place, surfaces as source of comfort in diasporic studies, yet how constant and consensual is this idea of the home? As I discussed in the introduction, in Murid households, the home is a site of competing gendered projects. Male trader/disciples posit their salvation in the creation of an Islamic hereafter. They figure their social persona through the religious hierarchy of the Muridiyya and their myriad social projects. In contrast, female personhood is tied to the gift economy through which bonds of kin and community are constituted, envisioning merchant goods (housewares, clothing and cosmetic products) provided by male trade networks, as standing for complete families that in reality are nothing more than a
collection of broken bonds. The ensuing chapters discuss how women are connected to Murid circuits of wage labor and capital through the marriage process, such as through arranged marriages between commercial families and through other life cycle events such as naming ceremonies and funerals.

I began this piece with a discussion of the room, which engendered a conversation between Rama, Jigeen and me about ideal forms of the home and family life more generally. This dialogue about home, family and respect culminated in the homecoming of the overseas disciples of the Murid way for the annual Magal to the sacred city of Tuba. In ruminating about the room Jigeen was speaking imaginatively about the best way to earn the respect of her siblings and elders—evoking ideal notions of home, family, community—and how the male traders who worked abroad and came home to build homes inspired her. It was this discussion that inspired her to embark on the Magal. For not only would she amplify her prosperity by making offerings of cash at the tombs of the deceased saints of the Murid order, but she would also earn the respect of her family and peers for fulfilling her religious obligations and from their recognition of the potential such a pilgrimage offers. Such sacrifices like the expensive transport and as sundry gifts required in undertaking such a journey were known to contain future rewards. I looked at how she employed coquettish behavior during the Magal pilgrimage to get tied into Murid trade circuits in North America. In contrast to men who often get hooked into Murid circuits through allegiance to a shaykh, Jigeen employed her personal connections—favors, debts and social obligations owed to her ex-husband—to obtain a visa to the United States.
For all disciples the Magal equally provides an opportunity to participate in the spiritual vision of the Murid community. In the account that I provide, the Magal also offers the possibility for Jigeen to reconfigure her trading networks to ultimately place her within the North American trading circuit. In so doing she is also able to extract herself from weighty day-to-day kinship obligations tied to family ceremonies and to reinsert herself into cycles of domestic gift giving at crucial moments. Tuba is the ideal place in which to effect such a transformation as it is encircled by the sanctity of the shrine of Amadou Bamba located there. In general, for all disciples the Magal presents the opportunity to produce and reproduce relations to one’s spiritual leader and the religious community more generally. As Mamadou Diouf argues, “attracting more than a million believers in recent years, the Magal repeats the community’s memory and actualizes its mission, rejecting permanent establishment elsewhere as improbable” (2000:695).

A central component of the Magal is the performance of the ziyara. The ziyara consists of praying at the tomb of the deceased shaykh, making a cash offering (Wolof, adya) by throwing coins into the area around the tomb, praying for oneself, one’s family and relations, and visiting the descendants of the shaykh and offering adya to them as well. Visits to pay homage to family elders are also called ziyara. Ziyara, and the practices associated with it, give form to relations between men and women, old and young. As a ritual moment, it both holds the potential to reinforce hierarchies of age and gender as well as the possibility to alter those hierarchies (see for further discussion of ritual and power, Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). Ziyara, as a ritual practice involving
greetings, hospitality, prayers and offerings, engenders spiritual and material returns as well as opportunities for transforming as well as generating social relations and material possibilities. Ziyara as a gendered category of movement has been well documented in many communities on the Muslim periphery (see for example Tapper 1990). And Murid women are not alone in practicing ziyara in Senegal. Female disciples of the Tijani Sufi tariqa travel to Fez, Morocco for the religious experience but also for the opportunity to trade that such travel offers.

Elsewhere I have analyzed the cash offerings (adya) that Murid Sufi disciples make to their shaykhs from their earnings as diasporic merchants as a manifestation of ideas about salvation and self-sacrifice (Buggenhagen 1997). The Murid way offers its adherents new forms of community and prosperity in the wake of neoliberal reform: devaluation, privatization and structural adjustment. Murids talk of economy in sacred idioms, and of the sacred in terms of economy, an inversion that points to both the possibilities and the anxieties that arise from the vectors of value in a rapidly deteriorating social and physical landscape. Jigeen and Rama’s narratives illuminate a dialectical relation between circuits of wage labor and capital and cycles of domestic production. The migration of young Murids is not only motivated by a shared spiritual vision, but by the domestic strategies of families experiencing a crisis in social production as the youth are failing to form new households through marriage and children are born to single parents.

6 For a further discussion of ritual and power see Comaroff and Comaroff 1993.
Pilgrimage or ziyara

One way in which the Murid way offers its disciples new forms of community and productive possibilities is through the annual Magal pilgrimage to Tuba. The Magal is not only a spiritual pilgrimage to the tombs of Murid saints, it is also the moment when disciples and overseas Murid da'iras, or religious circles, make cash offerings to the religious hierarchy. These offerings constitute new social relations and possibilities. The annual pilgrimage offers a moment when the relationship of disciple and shaykh is re-established as well as the myriad of social relations emanating from ideas about greeting, hospitality, prayers and supplications. In addition to offerings and sacrifices, the Magal pilgrimage is also the time of requests and entreaties. Like the impoverished in Aminata Sow Fall’s, *The Beggars’ Strike*, the Magal is also an opportune moment for those at the bottom of social hierarchies to enter into patron-client type relations because in order for disciples to practice qualities of generosity and munificence, qualities of those destined for salvation, they must find recipients of their actions.

Jigeen was able to take advantage of the Magal, as a ritual moment, to extract commitments from former trading partners of herself and her ex-husband because their prospects for prosperity are tied to their generosity during the Magal season. She was also able to amplify her prospects of receiving aid by visiting the tomb of Amadou Bamba and offering prayers and cash to the religious hierarchy in addition to numerous other alms prior to her departure.
Jigeen talked about the Murid trade networks in sacred idioms constantly trying to locate her luck along the circuits of wage labor and capital. But how she incorporated herself into these circuits involved a high degree of pragmatism and scheming. Jigeen not only called in favors and old debts during the Magal, a potent time of sacrifice and displays of Murid solidarity, she also deployed the art of *mokk pooj* to influence her trading contacts. To display the qualities of one who is *mokk pooj* is to be considerate, to foresee the needs and desires of male companions and to be docile and obliging. While it is said that men are *boroom ker*, or the heads of households, women are *boroom neeg*, head of the bedroom, which is to say that they influence men’s decision making in matters private and public in the intimacy of their bedrooms. These bedroom secrets enable each party to save face in public by relegating contentious issues to private conjugal space. Senegalese women deploy this kind of old fashioned feminine mystique by lighting incense, preparing delicious meals, and wearing *bin bin*, or waist beads to bed. By preparing for the conjugal visit in this way, women wield their power of influence to so that their spouses will be more willing to consider their requests for numerous things, a trip, an addition to the house, or an increase in the housekeeping budget. In general, *mokk pooj* is the person who is an expert (*mokk*) in managing the social dance (*pooj*) (Underwood 1988:50). In her 1988 study of Wolof women in the village of Niaga, Underwood recounts the story of a woman who thought that her husband had been mis-managing the income from the potato harvest. During a nocturnal performance of *mokk pooj* she convinced him to go to the boutique the next day and purchase supplies of peanut oil, rice, coffee and sugar for the family en gross.
Women also perform as *mök póøj* in less intimate settings as Jigeen had done with her former husband’s business partners to garner their assistance with her immigration visa. Her coquettish demeanor showed respect for hierarchies of age and gender as well as a more traditional way of doing business in Senegal, through culling personal favors, debts and obligations which are meted out in various formal and informal ways. Most importantly because she approached these traders in this way, they could trust that she would keep their dealings confidential; for example, a woman who extracts large sums of cash from her husband for baptismal payments the next day never announces her husband’s generosity. What is discussed in the privacy of the bedroom is rarely divulged publicly.

Unlike the male disciples who would send their remittances to their mothers and wives for housekeeping and to the spiritual hierarchy to invest in infrastructure, Jigeen would hold on to her earnings and return to Dakar every six months according to the restrictions of her visa and upon her return, participate in female ritual circuits. Her honor would be restored as she appeared at baptisms, weddings and funerals in her new garb with a fist full of banknotes to gift.

*Spiritual Travel, Murid Litanies and Religious Idioms*

Various categories of movement, of the person, her reputation, or even the success of one’s business are articulated through a religious idiom. Rama was apt to receive a larger share of goods from her male siblings as she was viewed as someone who is active and is able to attract many to her networks. Thus things sent to her, money and
commodities would have *njerin*, or value because she would continue to put them into motion. In contrast, Jigeen was known as one who “ate” or *lekk*, the things that were given to her.

It is Jigeen who begins to speak about travel as a solution to her social impediments, her financial woes and her lack of luck because it is her inactivity, her being stuck in her parent’s home and in Dakar that can only be solved through movement. In addition, Jigeen is devoutly Murid and decidedly Sufi, most of her income is spent on Muslim diviners in search of *gris-gris* and medications that will activate her relationships with others or attract money to her so that she can ultimately travel abroad. As I discussed in chapter three, travel is in particular for Sufis, rife with sacred meanings, as it is the principle metaphor used to describe the experience of revelation. And the categories that Muridiyya construct as historically salient, such as travel and self-discipline, point to the *karamat* of Bamba. Jigeen, like many Murid adepts, would often frame her opinions by reciting the *karamat* of Bamba. When she would ask her mother or her grandmother for assistance she would quickly follow their refusal with, “what God gives me alone is enough, I don’t need any thing else.” She would later refer to *karamat* that tell how Bamba survived exile in Gabon at the behest of the French colonial government on an island full of snakes and devils, or how he was placed in a cage with a hungry lion. She would say that she could withstand any difficult situation, except being motionless.
CHAPTER FIVE

HOME ECONOMICS: HOSPITALITY, DEBT AND THE CRAFT OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

Compared with the history of goods, the history of how goods were paid for appears tedious in the extreme.

Lendol Calder, (1999:13)

The Géer household fell silent in April 2000 after celebrating four rituals in two months involving hospitality, feasting and gift giving. Through ritualized exchanges of food, merchant goods and cash, members of the Géer household had sought to create relations of reciprocity, obligation and “debt” among kin, neighbors, business associates and members of the Géers’ religious organizations (Muslim da’ira). An extensive social circle and good family relations (am jam) are not only counted on to secure credit, trading capital and to provide security against future ills, but are said to belong to one who am baraka, or one who is a recipient of grace or blessings. Sokna Geer, the matron of the Geer household (ker gi), was a devout Murid, she followed the teachings of Amadou Bamba, and could claim to have descended from him through her mother. The feasts and relations of reciprocal gift exchange that took place in the Geer household bring into relief how Murid global circuits of trade and their spiritual vision relate to the household economies of this trade diaspora.

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While members of the Géer household had spoken of the importance of fostering gift exchange and providing hospitality, at the same time they had bemoaned the cost of the feasts and lamented afterwards about how they had overextended themselves to host the events. Moreover, rather than generating a sense of obligation in the guests who benefited from their hospitality, household members complained that they found themselves in “debt,” social and financial, following these events and each had their own solution for extricating themselves from the moral and material ties that bound them. What these familial financial strategies raise, however, is the question of how is it that the feasts failed, and for whom where they a failure?

The Géers’ expanding network of kin and community is reflected in their escalating home: a stairway leads to a second floor where stacks of cement blocks and bags of cement lay in anticipation of new construction. The Géer household is one of the most popular and populous in their neighborhood of Grand Yoff, a working class neighborhood (quartier populaire) on the periphery of the Senegalese capital of Dakar, owing in part to their good fortune of having five sons abroad sending regular cash remittances and in part in to honoring their obligation towards rural kin who frequent their home for extended visits. These relatives are either youth fostered to receive an education and to work as maids or impoverished adults migrating from the countryside to receive medical attention at Hôpital Principal and those looking for work. Many of the relations who pass through this home do so with an eye towards the five eldest unmarried sons who live and work abroad remitting cash. The second eldest son, Abdoul Aziz, an itinerant trader in durable goods, brings cargo regularly from Milan to Dakar. The
merchandise that he imports, second hand cars and computer equipment, and the clothing
he dons, designer quality Levi’s and a trim cell phone, embody the kinds of affluence that
Senegalese transnational trade networks make possible. Unlike commerce in the
information economy and financial markets such as derivatives, which is largely unseen
and immaterial, Abdoul Aziz’s cargo is highly visible.

As a large family with ties overseas, there is a sense of “honor” (daraja) and
“reputation” (bayre) bound up with opening the home to distant kin and neighbors
through feasting and mutual aid. As with all of the brothers in the Géer family who
remitted cash from abroad to help their parents hold the feasts, Abouuld Aziz, took
seriously his agnatic (askan) obligation to honor the family name and its “generosity”
(terranga) (see for example, Bara Diop 1985:25) and feared the prospect of unmet social
and financial obligations incurred in the hosting of these feasts. Thus following the
second feast in the middle of March, as Abdoul Aziz became unable to honor mounting
requests for money from family and friends, he prepared to return to Italy. Having sold
the merchandise he imported and having spent the proceeds on two of the four feasts and
quotidian household expenses, Abdoul Aziz bided his time for several weeks until he
could procure the cash for a plane ticket. In Milan, he would sell imported African art,
work in a factory or perform any number of odd jobs to build up capital or he would rely
on personal connections to obtain credit to purchase durable goods for importation to
Senegal on his return trip.

Abdoul Aziz’s departure is telling: he concealed his preparations, his late night
flight facilitated a quiet departure, and the only sign of his travel plans was a chicken
carcass on a greasy aluminum platter on the pantry floor offered as protection against witchcraft. Such concealments are a fundamental aspect of Wolof households, debtors leaving their homes and communities to spare the family honor, which bank on the projection of prosperity to garner the trust for the kinds of credit that enable households to remain in good relations with the community. Abdoul Aziz was particularly eager to return to Italy prior to his father’s return from the pilgrimage, or hajj, to Mecca, which would be an occasion for a large feast. He did so with the intent of earning enough money once there to send a substantial remittance for the celebration. With his departure his friends and partners ceased to visit the house as well, a dismal prospect considering that his age-mates (masse) were also potential suitors for his six younger sisters. When the traders were present, a feeling of affluence surged through the home. Abdoul Aziz’s auto, a sign of the height of circulation the Géers had achieved in their community, now sold, was no longer parked in front of the Géer home, an indication that the traders were returning to Europe for the summer tourists and that the season of prosperity had passed.

The rituals of the past two months and their spiraling costs had interfered with Abdoul Aziz’s plans for entering into a marriage. Abdoul Aziz was approaching thirty-five and he was anxious to complete the construction of a new home in Parcelles Assignée, an ocean front suburb in the periphery of Dakar popular among emigrant males. Abdoul Aziz could not get the money together to complete his home or to put forward bridewealth. In principle, Abdoul Aziz’s father, Mawdo, could loan him a portion of the bride payment or offer him a piece of family land for cash crops. However, Mawdo had neither the financial means as a hired driver nor land that could be profitably cultivated
and thus, his (Mawdo’s) participation in the bridewealth transaction would be merely symbolic. For the moment, both parents depended on their sons’ remittances to run the household and to take care of their seven younger siblings. Sokna Geer, the matron of the family, understood the forces and motivations for her son’s silent and rapid nocturnal flight, she too was overextended, financially and socially, and uncertain as to how she would extricate herself in the coming weeks, she took to roaming through the home heaving sighs and shaking her head as she muttered “dama bare bor,” or, “I have many debts.” With reference to Abdoul Aziz she could only say “xaalis rekk, xaalis rekk,” or “only money, only money,” a reference to the Wolof adage that, “xaalis, menna fajj gacce,” that “money can cure shame.”

The celebration of four feasts should have been a sign to the community that the Geers were enjoying great prosperity: a result of their sons’ labor overseas, they said, and of God’s grace. The Geer household had sacrificed two sheep and two cows in two months time. The first sheep was slaughtered on February 28 to feed the guests who came to offer blessings for Mawdo’s departure for Mecca. The Geers had also slaughtered a sheep for Tabaski on March 17 and participated in the slaughtering of a cow with the men’s association affiliated with the local mosque on April 16 to commemorate the feast of Tamzarit, to mark the Muslim New Year and the day on which God is said to decide who will live and who will pass away in the coming year. On March 23, the Geers

1 The cow purchased for the feast following the father’s return from Mecca cost 175,000 FCFA. In March 2000 the exchange rate was US $1 to 700 FCFA.
slaughtered another cow for the feast celebrating the father’s return from Mecca. Many families in the Géers’ urban neighborhood struggled to obtain a single ram to slaughter for Tabaski each year that the Géers had slaughtered four in two months is extraordinary.

The abrupt stillness that Abdoul Aziz’s departure cast over the Géer household became grim when Sokna took sick. Sokna was physically, morally and financially exhausted by the time that the feast marking her husband’s return from Mecca rolled around. Two of her sisters and spouses of the members of her ritual association had also made the pilgrimage and their collective return had overrun her organizational, financial and social abilities. Sokna’s illness and her absence the community for nearly a month signaled a fundamental shift in the moral and material underpinnings of this household and its rituals of re/production. Sokna experienced a sense of crisis as her feast was spoiled by guests conditioned by economic liberalization and spiritual enchantment to expect exchanges, social and material, to proceed at a more rapid pace. Knowing full well the workings of Western Union and more informal money transfer organizations, Sokna’s guests said that they had expected a xeew bu mag, that is, a very large feast.

The ritual feast marking the return of Mawdo Géer from the hajj also elucidates the domestic aspects of his spiritual journey—chiefly the social and financial obligations one experiences towards relatives and community members when undertaking a pilgrimage. An event, such as the feast commemorating Mawdo’s safe return from the hajj, ideally ought to have generated good will and a sense of obligation in the future from those who received the Géers’ hospitality. In this chapter I am also concerned with further developing the Maussian (1990 [1950]) problem of the gift. According to Mauss,
the gift fosters reciprocity because it contains the expectation of a return at some
defined future time, thus creating an obligation between the giver and the recipient. In
the case of the Geer family, the inadequacy in number and size of the gifts and
hospitality; that is, not everyone who gave a gift to Mawdo on his departure received a
gift of equal or greater value on his return, including hospitality (meat and milk), created
a sensation of debt-like obligation in Sokna towards her guests. Moreover, that her guests
demanded a complete and rapid return on their gifts in the form of counter-gifts and
hospitality (milk and meat) perplexed Sokna and her family. I argue that the logic of this
rapidly changing system of exchange can revealed by untangling Sokna’s debts, debts
that she herself considered more cumbersome than the reciprocal obligations her
exchanges created. Thus this chapter considers to theoretical implications of failed gift
exchange such that a gift, rather than engendering a future return, itself makes one a
target of unmet demands and dashed expectations. Though much has been made of the
the pressures faced by the Geer family also point to the limits of this prosperity within
Murid households.

Additionally, by concentrating on the two feasts surrounding the hajj in particular,
I aim to show how families finance large gatherings given the uncertain and difficult
economic conditions in Senegal at present. An analysis of feasting illuminates how
“good” social relationships are crafted to create obligation, which carry these
relationships into the future. In the first part of this chapter, I discuss the feasts
surrounding the hajj in greater detail to elucidate the kinds of relations the Géer family
sought to create through hospitality. I then discuss how principles of exchange are extended to non-kin through rotating credit unions and ritual associations. In this ideal type of exchange, credit is extended on the basis of trust and mutual interest. For women similarly situated socio-economically as Sokna, these associations play a crucial role in staging elaborate feasts through which non-kin are made intimate and distant kin are brought into the family circle. I then discuss the exchange of cash gifts in the context of the household budget. My aim is to sketch the household economy and to show how social exchanges figure prominently in women’s financial plans and household budgets. In the second part of this chapter I look at how these practices of gifting have been used in post-colonial Senegal to extend kin-like obligations to non-kin. For example, I will discuss how the notion of the gift is used to access and negotiate bureaucracy and how gifting is an intrinsic part of the logic and practice of patron-client relations. With the breakdown of patron-client relations through the implementation of structural adjustment programs mandated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, devaluation of the currency and decentralization of state functions, Senegalese use gifting to move resources laterally among age-sets and religious brotherhoods to close the gap left by the Senegalese state, now largely bankrupt, and an inadequate local economy.

That these chains of indebtedness are now being created laterally points to a fundamental change in the principle of Wolof social organization, ideally hierarchically based on generation and caste, but now shifting to a laterality that has always been there, if latent, that is increasingly useful in the present. In the chapter on Da’ira Tuba Chicago I discussed how male kin organize transnational trade networks based on their membership
in the Murid order. Their access to credit and their household economy depend on a notion of “solidarity” founded in Murid religious principles of brotherhood. In this chapter, I will focus on how women move resources between rotating credit unions sponsored by international non-governmental development organizations and their neighborhood based ritual associations.

Whereas chains of indebtedness were once created to reach up, hierarchically, to obtain resources from the state, especially in the era of large development projects related to infrastructure, chains of indebtedness are now being cast across “equals.” One reason for this shift is that the production of wealth no longer takes place on family agricultural plots, but is organized by the Murid way through transnational trade networks and through participation in rotating credit unions. In the latter form of organization, value is created from velocity; traders aim to move capital quickly through a wide network of kin and non-kin. This heightened circulation is achieved through the creation of credit and debt.2 Imported commodities are sold casually among kin and community members on the basis of credit. This credit can be recalled in any number of pressing situations.

When wealth trickled down from the state it followed well-established lines of distribution; one used gifts to incorporate oneself into the paths of wealth. Today, remittances coming in from overseas go directly into the hands of female kin as housekeeping money who face numerous claims on these sums. Women’s use of these

2 I am thankful to Ismail Moya who first pointed out the significance of debt in relation to baptismal payments in Senegal.
remittances has produced much contestation. Female elders use these remittances to construct a version of sociality that is at odds with the endeavors of male disciples to create a sacred community. Whereas women invest in the creation of large social networks, men invest in the construction of homes, mosques, clinics and other concrete forms of value in line with their view of their activity as creating a specifically Islamic community.

The Hajj Feast

Embarking on the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the rites associated with it, is a spiritual obligation but it also involves complex social responsibilities within lineages and among others in the community. For Senegalese, such a journey also means opening the home to those who come to offer blessings for a safe journey prior to one’s departure and welcoming friends and family back into the home upon the return to receive the baraka, or grace of the new al-hajji or al-hajja. The hajj is a fard, a duty and one of the five pillars or rukn, of Islam. “Allah has enjoined the Pilgrimage of (His sacred) House (at Makkah) on those who can easily afford the expenditure thereof” (Al ‘Imran: 97). As a condition of departing on the hajj, a pilgrim must either have his or her debts paid off or be forgiven by the lender and the pilgrim must leave sufficient expenses for his or her family (Hussain 1997:7). In fact, destitute pilgrims are prohibited from entering the holy land, as the pilgrimage is not required of those who are without means. One is instructed to put one’s affairs in order and to secure a living for the family should one die en route
due to the physically demanding rites associated with the hajj and the harsh conditions of travel and residence during the month long observance.

J. Spencer Tringham (1959) suggests that the returning hajj pilgrims suffered a diminished status in their communities upon return prior to the twentieth century. The hajj was much more difficult as West Africans had to cross the Sahara. Many pilgrims undertook the hajj late in life and in their absence their financial status diminished in their communities. Moreover, one often made the pilgrimage very late in life and used the proceeds of land and home to finance the journey. The pilgrim embarked on the hajj to become a better Muslim, having suffered for spiritual fulfillment and having relieved himself or herself of worldly possessions. However, when pilgrims returned to their families financially and physically exhausted they could rely on neighbors and relations to care for them because they were advanced in age and because they had acquired the baraka that would merit such attention.

Those who embark on the hajj in Senegal today are younger in general than those described by Tringham and speak of the opportunities the pilgrimage affords for enlarging social networks. With improved conditions of travel and expanded means through which one can finance the pilgrimage, the new regard that peers have for one as an al-hajji or al-hajja is accompanied by renewed respect for one’s financial capacities as well. And thus the expectation that one will be able to distribute offerings and circulate cash accompanies one’s return. Community members flock to benefit from the pilgrim’s grace and prosperity. The returning pilgrim is honored by the use of the title hajji/a and becomes part of the circle of elders in the community who have also made the pilgrimage.
and who share a bond of suffering. S/he is also accorded a degree of deference commensurate with religious dignitaries (Ruthven 1984:24). Certainly the anticipation of an augmented stature in one’s community also motivates one to undertake the hajj.³

When Mawdo returned from the hajj, before he even entered his own house for the first time as an al-hajji at least one hundred guests who had been gathering that night to greet him immediately surrounded him, crying, laughing and trying to touch his person as though they could take a piece of his grace with them.

The day that Sokna fell ill was the fourth day following Mawdo’s return from Mecca. On this morning as Mawdo sat on his sheepskin mat dunking bread into a tall glass of sweetened Nescafe, Sokna turned from his dark bedroom towards the sunlit courtyard intending to take stock of the kitchen pantry. She paused wearily in the doorway where her white head wrap unraveled about her body—tugged to the floor by an energetic granddaughter who claimed it for her own bare waist. Visiting kin had finally returned to their natal homes in Louga and Diourbel. Sokna had seen each of them off with handshakes conveying 1,000 to 5,000 F CFA notes. Visits from acquaintances and business partners calling on the home to pay homage to the patriarch and to benefit from his spiritual grace had also dwindled.

³ Mary Byrne McDonnell’s research among hajj pilgrims in Malaysia reveals similar trends. Malaysian pilgrims today enjoy a higher status upon return than in an earlier period. Moreover, state sponsored savings and investment plans enable pilgrims to finance their journey without jeopardizing their financial stability. Pilgrimages are also less arduous than in the previous era due to air travel. Most importantly, Malaysian pilgrims who once were sent off with a feast and prayers for a safe return, due in part to the high mortality rate of pilgrims, now are feted with offerings of cash from those who hope to benefit from the blessings of the newly honored al-hajji.
The three-day feast celebrating Mawdo's return from Mecca had exhausted her. She mentioned that the event afforded was important for it afforded her the opportunity to honor the "debts" incurred by her husband's pilgrimage. Upon her husband's departure, family and friends had brought him gifts in cash and kind. These visitors had come to say prayers for Mawdo's journey, and by giving money; they were asking to be remembered in Mawdo's prayers in Mecca. For Mawdo would name each person individually in his prayers as is prescribed by Islam. The well-wisher's cash would not only defray the expenses of the father on his journey, but also help the mother keep house in her husband's absence. The gift of money conveyed the givers' hope for grace and prosperity.

During the festivities many people had brought not only cash, but other symbolic prestations as well. Fatou, who was fostered to this family many years ago and married by Sokna and Mawdo, brought "sow pure," unpasteurized sour milk, from her rural home in Mbour. The milk was redistributed among the many guests during the feast. Ibrahim, who drove one of Mawdo's taxis and would take Mawdo's third oldest daughter as his second wife, also made offerings to him. He brought loaves of French bread, which also would be shared among the guests. Kin from Tuba brought sacks of dried millet and café Tuba to offset the cost of the feast and to amplify their baraka. Mawdo not only received cash gifts from family relations, business associates and community members, but his shaykh, or religious leader, also gave him a substantial gift of 30,000 F CFA.

Many relatives had also brought Sokna money. Although she replied to each donor, "why are you bringing money to a woman meant for a man?" meaning that it was
Mawdo who was making the pilgrimage and to whom gifts should be given, she folded the 5.000 F CFA and 1.000 F CFA notes into her money belt between her two wrapped skirts. To complicate matters, many of these offerings were not consumed by the Géer household at all but were put back into circulation. As I mentioned, the sour milk that Fatou brought to Mawdo was redistributed, some of which was sent to the home of Sokna’s mother when she came to give her blessings for a safe journey to Mawdo.

Additionally, the guests and family members who offered these gifts were not necessarily in a position to be giving gifts at all. Sokna’s oldest daughter Jigeen explained that she herself had given her father 50.000 F CFA and her maternal aunt 20.000 F CFA for her pilgrimage. She said that had she not done so people would have said that she had no njerin, or value and that she was naxari, or unpleasant, difficult or hard. However, Jigeen only gave her other maternal aunt 10.000 F CFA because this aunt had not been very helpful in solving her problems. Ultimately, Jigeen complained that her productive efforts were going into these exchanges but that she herself was not able to purchase her own land or build a house.

These gifts ought to be returned in kind with souvenirs from Mecca conveying grace: silk scarves, prayer beads, Muslim hats, prayer mats and the like. Thus on the night of Mawdo’s return from Saudi Arabia, the immediate family gathered in his bedroom behind a closed door. He unpacked his suitcases and gave each of his sons and daughters a gift of cloth or a kaftan and Muslim hat and a bottle of zam zam water from the sacred spring. Gifts were laid aside for each of the sons abroad as well. Then one of the sons took a notebook and recorded gifts as the mother and the father sorted through
the remaining articles placing them in piles earmarked for particular individuals or groups. This sorting process was repeated each time it was realized that were not enough gifts among the three suitcases full of cloth and other assorted sacred items. The sorting process was started again and each time it was discovered that someone had been forgotten, that so and so had brought 10,000 F CFA to Mawdo when he left and that a gift had not been laid aside for her. The tenseness in counting and measuring, in making equivalences suggested the anxiety that Sokna and Mawdo held in not being able to return gifts to everyone who had brought cash prior to his departure. For these were not just souvenirs from afar; these gifts were subject to the quintessentially Wolof ideal of not just returning the gift, but doubling the gift in return. Sokna repeated numerous times, “there are so many gifts here, how can this not be enough?” sometimes defiantly and other times in a gesture of defeat closing her eyes and falling back into the chair. The pile of prayer beads must have numbered at least 100, and the scarves 50 in addition to gold bracelets, hats, prayer mats, posters of Mecca, plastic mats, incense, and dates. Earlier in the month, Mawdo’s second oldest daughter, who had just returned from a trading trip in Mali and the Ivory Coast, bought 50,000 F CFA of “gifts” from marché HLM, a cloth market in the periphery of Dakar, to dole, or strengthen the stock of articles to be handed out during the feast, saying “yipp Mecca le joge,” or, “its all from Mecca.” In addition to sacred articles, money was also given back to guests to gerem, or to thank them for the gifts they gave prior to Mawdo’s departure.

Sokna had been well prepared for the feasts; her ritual association (mbotaye) displayed great loyalty enabling her to show her guests the highest amount of hospitality
through supplications of food and drink. Her family generously distributed gifts from Mecca conveying grace and future prosperity to her circle of kin and community and her adult children provided liberally for the event. She also had the family griots (gewel) present to help prepare the food and to facilitate the more public exchanges of cash gifts that would take place the afternoon following Mawdo’s return. During this time guests would give their cash to the griot, who would turn it over to Mawdo praising the Géers’ family name, their honor, and their hospitality, all of which was captured on video by a hired cameraman. The women griots were well compensated for their work by Sokna who not only gave them cash, but articles of her own clothing as well.

Upon Mawdo’s return the house was flooded for three days and in the frenzy to serve everyone, often the most significant of relations were served equally as the most distant. Consequently, a lack of distinction, of special attention, of recognition, failed to produce the hoped for feelings of indebtedness and obligation that normally accompany gifts and hospitality. Sokna had initially tried to keep the number of guests present at Mawdo’s return feast to a minimum. She did not rent a tent, a signal to neighbors of a large feast, or call the da’ira, or religious organization, to recite the Koran for Mawdo, as they would have to be repaid in sarax, or sacrifice, and that meant more cash, milk and meat. And she did not rent a PA system. Sokna tried to keep the celebration as low key as possible because she knew that she had overextended herself during the feast preceding his departure.
The Feast Prior to Mawdo's Departure on the Hajj

The fiasco of the first feast started early the morning of Mawdo’s departure. On this morning Mawdo’s male relations, neighbors and co-workers recited the Koran collectively and were offered lakk or millet porridge with sour milk as terranga or hospitality because they had come to offer him blessings for a safe pilgrimage. The stream of visitors that began in the morning did not lessen by lunchtime such that when the porridge ran out by noon, visitors were served lunch, which normally would have taken place at 2:00 pm. As the lunch of fried rice and meat gave out, visitors were served a dinner of millet couscous and meat sauce as early as 3:00 pm such that by early evening bowls of millet couscous were being served with sauce that was devoid of meat. Because the distribution of meat was not a sarax, or sacrifice, but a terranga, or welcoming and/or showing respect, the deficit of meat undermined the family’s attempts to enter into relations of reciprocity.

For example, Abdoul Aziz returned at lunchtime only to find that the meat had already been given out and that no bowl had been set aside for him and his friend/business partner. All commented on the dismal discovery that the son who had bought the sheep to be sacrificed for his father’s journey did not receive a share in it, and that his colleague should be there to witness it. He very graciously replied “duma exigent,” meaning whatever there is I will have, if there is nothing that is fine too. Sokna and Fatou scraped the leftovers from three already eaten platters into a bowl and stuck bits of meat and bone back together for him. Meanwhile young homeless boys sat on the roof scarfing down rice with bits of meat and bone that Sokna had prematurely discarded.
A younger son returned his bowl away saying, “amul dole” that is the bowl lacked “strength” because there was not enough meat. At 2:00 pm, the usual hour for lunch, the elder neighbor, Diambar, a veteran of World War II, came to pay his respects to his age-mate Mawdo. Mawdo received him saying, “I hope that you have had lunch.” Diambar replied, “no” to which Sokna with great shame replied “an bi jeex ne,” there is no more lunch. Sokna struggled to correct the slight with kind words. She had told him that “bennen yon,” or “the next time” he would receive and especially large helping of meat and she promised to save him a large bowl if he should come back at dinner time. For her part Sokna said to Diambar that he would have to dax, or “chase” her out of his next feast. Diambar accepted the jest and left somewhat disappointed.

Though able to smooth over the conflicts that arose during the feasts marking Mawdo’s departure and arrival with incredible rhetorical skill, and though continuing to be very highly esteemed by all concerned, Sokna had a great feeling of personal failure, of not achieving her objectives and of really feeling obligated and indebted socially and financially to a wide circle. Her doubts of ever repaying and meeting these obligations were so severe that she actually took “sick” for the bulk of the month of April.

The hajj, normally an event that would have enabled Sokna to establish and fortify her social relations through the creation of debt-like obligations ended differently than she anticipated. What Sokna did not expect was that the circle of well wishers would be so expansive and so numerous that her preparations would be spread too thin among too many people. That this household and its exchanges came to a month long halt is significant and I will show in this chapter how these structures of limitation, made
emblematic by inadequate food, drinking water and utensils for guests, are in themselves significant.

The Aftermath

Recalling the extraordinary outlay during the last three days, even the last two months, Sokna headed towards the pantry in despair as she intended to take stock of the food stored there. Sokna paused to look into her eldest daughter's room where she found her still curled under the covers with the curtains drawn. "Yow, amulo benn njerin" she said with scorn to her eldest, "You have no worth" she had said. Jigeen was to have represented the family at a baptism that morning. Sokna's bad humor stemmed from her unease that she would not be able to participate in her ritual circuit for some time, her resources being completely spent on the feast following the hajj. As Sokna headed for the kitchen pantry, she already knew that three days of consuming meat would mean many more days of dark oily fish and broken rice met with her children's demands for naari ciin, or two bowls, meaning rice and sauce. For the grandiose displays at the fête meant that this family would eat from a single bowl (bennaciin) of fried rice and fish for the next month. Sokna eyed the pantry from its doorway, the sacks of onions, rice and potatoes now lying empty on the concrete floor, a reminder of the tab to be paid at the corner boutique, for the end of the month was approaching and the items—now eaten—must be paid for.

Jigeen was reluctant to attend the baptism that day because her cousins had exhausted her means by the end of the feast following her father's return from the hajj.
Her father’s nieces demanded money and clothing from Jigeen in return for their labor during the feast, cooking and cleaning, as their kinship relation of jamm, or slave, obliges. Being short on cash necessitated more gifts of clothing. Jigeen neither had clothes to wear nor cash to present at that day’s scheduled baptism. Moreover, she still had to pay the school fees for her middle daughter; her ex-husband resided in Italy and rarely remitted funds for his daughters. And thus she remained in bed, having her own debt-free dreams. She dreamed that her armoire went up in flames and all of her clothes were burned. Winged jinn came to her in the night and told her to sacrifice gold for protection. On this morning, she planned to go to the ocean where she would drop a pair of her best gold earnings off of the rocky cliff. Her dream conveyed both a fantasy of being free of the burden of debt and a fear of not being able to participate in patronage relationships.

Sokna’s illness would carry well into April and prevent her from attending her usual round of baptisms and marriages. These ceremonies normally preoccupied her schedule and her budget three days out of any given week. The other days were spent visiting kin and friends, attending the weekly, biweekly and monthly meetings of her rotating credit unions and the various development related activities at the non-governmental organization, ENDA T.M., to which she always brought her circle of acquaintance as a ready audience and captive constituency. During her illness, Sokna avoided these events as well, opting to stay at home most days to rest and regain her strength. She had trouble at home too, the family had not been able to hire and keep a mindaan, or household worker, she complained and thus she herself managed the cooking
and cleaning for the household. She figured that she could get by without assistance for a little while, especially since events would not draw her from the home. Since her eldest son had returned to Italy she did not feel obligated to cook elaborate meat and sauce dishes for him, she returned to serving typically Wolof food for lunch and reheating the leftovers for dinner.

Sokna, brooding and bewildered, dismissed the mindaan, the young Cassamance (a region in southern Senegal) girl who worked in the kitchen whom she could not pay this month, heaved a sigh and headed back to her room where she threw herself down on her bed one hand shielding her eyes and the other dropped to the floor. She listened to the radio endlessly and spoke of the meningitis epidemic spread through Senegal by pilgrims who had been on the hajj. In her bed she would stay for the next three weeks avoiding her ritual circuits, denigrating her adult daughters for not filling in the gap she left with their person and their resources, and warily eyeing the merchandise passed around her room by the women who visited her, kin and close neighbors, who relied on her as a steady client, and her daughters who unfolded, tried on and pressed her for the goods.

Meanwhile she calculated and recalculated her obligations and her means of repaying them. Sokna’s mounting debt was not only social but also financial. Sokna had made numerous trips to the market in preparation for the feast. She bought serving platters, made improvements to the home, and had a new gown sewn. She painted Mawdo’s room and hung new curtains across the walls and over the doorway. She also had a new brown satin bed spread sewn with matching throw pillows. She had a gown sewn for her husband’s return that was of a brilliant white Darou Khoudous cloth with a
damask weave. This gown was composed of layers of white lace embroidered in pink; the
eyelet lace was a gift from her brother who exports goods from France where he has been living for the past 30 years.

Sokna also faced the burden of repaying her “debt” to the woman of her ritual association and rotating credit unions, all of whom had helped her both finance and prepare food for the feasts surrounding the hajj. Sokna’s neighborhood ritual association, the very same women who had assisted her in her performance of the hajj ten years earlier, (she became an al-hajja long before her husband by joining a rotating credit unions specifically designed to help women save for the pilgrimage) financed the feast that celebrated Mawdo’s safe return. Members pooled their labor, their money and their enormous cast iron pots, engraved with the name of the association and the date of its founding. Nearly one hundred well wishers had been through this tight house on this post-hajj weekend, all of whom were served bowls of meat and couscous, yogurt and millet porridge as well as beverages, Coke and Orange Fanta and Kola nuts.

“Repayment” would mean attending her neighbor’s family ceremonies and bringing cash and cloth for ritualized exchanges. Sokna’s week usually included an appearance at two to four baptisms, weddings and/or funerals. She would also continue to make her regular weekly, biweekly and monthly payments for her participation in numerous rotating credit unions and her neighborhood ritual association.

By April 22 a hint of the oppressive heat that would characterize the coming rainy season returned drawing Sokna out of her windowless room into the evening air. After she sat silently for some time on the front stoop, she said to her oldest daughter, Jigeen, “I
would like to attend a funeral on Monday,” and after a prolonged silence added, “If I have a little bit of money for my jaxal (funerary payment).”

**Good Housekeeping: Keeping Records and Creating a Client Base**

Sokna said that through the feast, she aspired to not only return the gifts of cash with blessed items from the holy land but to counter gift with double the material value of what she had received. She gave two reasons. First, there is a sense of honor attached to gift giving and to distributing blessed items from Mecca that would certainly amplify the family’s baraka as any act of giving, liberality and generosity would. Second, by returning the gift with increment, she would be creating new “debts,” and thus the receiver would be beholden to her in the future. Once one enters into this kind of relationship, and Sokna had been in a lifelong relationship with most of the guests, it is only honorable to sustain it. Moreover, for the recipients, to be indebted to Sokna would be good because one wants to be a client of a large woman.

Though Sokna’s displays of hospitality were generous beyond her means, she was bewildered that her guests left somewhat disgruntled. Many guests came to the feast with the hope of receiving an entire bouhou, or ten meters of cloth, and received only a string of prayer beads with dashed hopes. Exchanges are often intentionally asymmetrical, capacities are limited at different points in time for a myriad of reasons and if one is skipped over at one point there will always be a “next time” (*bennen yon*). People count on these kinds of “debts” to elicit assistance (money, labor, mutual aid etc.) over time. Sokna would see these guests on an almost daily basis and her ties to them were multiple
so she should have been given more leeway with her exchanges. Thus, though Sokna intended to return the gifts with increment, her material possibilities were surpassed by her guests’ expectations. In the next section, I will discuss how Sokna’s guests came to have such high expectations with respect to the volume and velocity of her social exchanges.

Many of Sokna’s guests belonged to one of her ritual, neighborhood, religious, political or credit associations. Through these associations she sought to establish social connections based on mutual interest and benefit, on favors and obligations, to create a sense of indebtedness and reciprocity that is to be “repaid” in the future. At one time Sokna herself had belonged to upwards of forty associations. Sokna’s strategy of creating debt and credit is called lebble-bor, which is to act as a creditor by putting another in the position of debtor. Lebble-bor, comes from lebb, meaning to lend and bor, meaning debt; “-le” denotes the beneficiary of the lending (Mottin-Sylla 1987:21). For example, Sokna’s daughters would give merchandise, which Abdoul Aziz sent to them from Italy, to their friends and relations on credit. Though no money was actually exchanged, she was effectively lending them a debt. The debt would be repaid when the recipient would lend Sokna’s daughter money, labor or merchandise in the future. One “lends debts” with the intention of recovering credit. As Mottin-Sylla describes it, one sows debts with the intention of harvesting them in time for a family ceremony (1987:21).

The significance of lending debts lies in the role this practice plays in creating and sustaining social relations with non-kin amidst an unstable state economy and a frequently devalued currency. Through lending debts, women can circulate goods and
money more rapidly, ultimately consuming more goods than they as individuals or households are capable of producing. The kinds of commodities that get circulated in these associational networks are those that can be worn on the female body to be read as the signs of wealth, prosperity and the baraka of Amadou Bamba, such as shoes, handbags, cosmetic products, jewelry and cloth. Though wigs have since the colonial era distinguished married women from unmarried women, today they play and increasingly important role with adolescent girls imitating pop music divas and fashion models. In adorning the body with imported commodities, women aim to convey the depth of their social network, again, in itself a form of social value in times when social relations are difficult to contract given the dearth of resources in the context of inadequate local economies and an ecosystem devastated by decades of peanut production.

As I mentioned, Sokna’s daughters relied on their brothers and their brother’s friends (again, potential suitors) to “gift” them merchandise, which they in turn would extend to family and friends on credit. In fact, matrilineal kin are obligated to accept merchandise on credit to show solidarity and support for struggling young commerçant women, that is, family ought to help family. In return, Sokna’s daughters could rely on their matrilineal kin to help them fulfill their own social obligations in the future. However, these transactions based on mutual aid are being transformed into retail debts as women desperate to garner the cash for family ceremonies and social prestations demand repayment in full and in cash and threaten to sully the reputation of the borrower in default, who only became such through kinship obligations. A borrower who may have
offered her lender a piece of cloth or some other item appropriate for ritual exchange is met with the demand for cash, ever more scarce and far more difficult to come by.

Wolof women record these transactions in numerous notebooks, which they refer to in the French as cahier, often stored under their mattresses. Most of the women in Sokna’s neighborhood and age group were not literate and thus their various notebooks were kept by their sons, whom they paid a small allowance for their record keeping. One such son remarked with astonishment that his mother could remember who gave her what as many as five years ago, but that she often asked him to check the notebook to make sure that she was correct for the shame of miscalculation would be too great. Such miscalculations are the subject of viscous gossip among women and could lead to the breakdown of social relationships. The ledgers then contain the name of each woman who belongs to a particular association—be it ritual, family, rotating credit etc.—in one column are the things that she has given on a particular date such as meters of cloth or amounts of cash and often times, but not always, in another column a woman may write down how much she gave in return at the next event. Thus the names are listed vertically and each event and payment is listed horizontally over time. A woman would keep a notebook for each group of women with whom she is involved. Though women tend to keep the notebooks over time, such groups can be ephemeral and thus their notebooks can be lost, destroyed or worn.

Though women reported using these notebooks as long as they can remember, which often meant as many as thirty years (that is one begins this kind of record keeping with marriage), the idea of double entry book keeping, by which I mean in this case
recording debts (gifts received) as well as credits (gifts given) may be an emergent practice. I would like to consider here that the idea of recording gifts given suggests a concern for unbalanced payments whereas conventionally one would want asymmetrical accounts, that is either a credit or a debt, both of which would sustain the relationship over time. Sokna was meticulous in consulting her numerous notebooks and having her son write and re-write the list of gifts each time they came up short. It seemed as though the notebooks were the real source of tension.

Such an overt emphasis on record keeping beyond the niceties of “thank you” gifts and kind memories stems in part from women’s increasing involvement with non-governmental organizations and foreign lenders who organize and support their mutual aid associations. Not only do these organizations provide matching funds for women’s economic ventures, such as micro-credit but they also offer classes in business management such as literacy and accounting. Through these courses, women have developed a kind of neo-liberal approach to what were for the most part, social exchanges. Outstanding social debts, rather than tying households together over time, are now regarded as a source of private shame. Moreover, NGO’s organize these social debts by tying them to rotating credit unions on a larger scale tied in with the state and international lenders who match funds and keep accounts balanced such that neo-liberal reforms really hit home.

Though cash gifts are presented, counted and recorded publicly, women are discreet about how they garner the cash to make these prestations. The process of “harvesting” debts for a family ceremony is called liggente xaalis. A woman will leave
her home in the morning saying, "Damay dem liggente xaalis," or "I am going to gather money." Women frequent each other's homes to borrow money from their network of kin and confidants. Though a welcome obligation that embodies the good will of the family, social calls are dreaded by debtors. Women travel great distances and spend entire afternoons to convince their friends and family members to pay for merchandise extended to them on credit. This kind of installment selling is increasingly the norm in Senegal as families are strapped for cash and unable to pay for goods in full. This kind of credit is essential to building up a culture of consumption (Caldor 1999:9). Cloth and cosmetic products, sent from overseas relatives, become stock for women's trading. Social visits call not only for hospitality and showing respect (terranga) for long time relations but also for initiating new people, strangers and/or guests, (gun) into one's networks by graciously providing an abundance of food and drink. Supplications of food and drink are opening exchanges intended to secure future exchanges, also to "activate" (sawar) latent relationships.

During the hajj feast, Sokna's ritual association said that to show respect for a guest (terra-al ko) one provides food, drink, conversation, rest and peace. If one has the means, one should also escort the guest to transport and pay the pass for her/him to return home; all of which, the association claimed, was said by the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was walking one day with a single date in his palm. Upon encountering a hungry stranger he offered him his one and only date. By sundown, Muhammad was blessed to find more dates. "Its in God," the ritual association explained. If one is short on cash, then one should offer a boubou (robe) or a ser (skirt), if nothing else then one
should go to the corner store (where one has a monthly tab) and take two kilos of rice to offer to the guest for sweetened porridge for the children. Each of these women had brought something to Sokna’s feast to show her respect (terranga), such as cases of soda and bags of candy, and to assist her in extending her hospitality (terranga) to her guests. In return donors benefit from thiyaba or God’s blessings. To receive thiyaba is to be a recipient of good things, of God’s thanks so to speak. As one woman definitively explained, one should not pocket wealth, one should spread it around, you will be happy, your family will be happy and God will also be happy with you and this is the essence of hospitality.

These associations not only assist in the performance of rituals and the holding of feasts, but membership crosses over along with obligations and become a client base for women’s trading ventures as well as for commodities imported through Murid transnational networks. Overseas traders find prosperity abroad not only because their “luck” (the warsek of Amadou Bamba) is always located elsewhere, but also due to the efforts of the maternal kin to promote the family’s business interests producing a strong family network, ensuring that filial obligations are met, providing credit, honoring debts, keeping the family’s financial foibles private (satuura) and maintaining their solvency.

Through mutual aid societies and neighborhood ritual associations such as tuur, mbotaye and natt, women are able to finance large family gatherings and to purchase merchandise or to finance a trading venture. A tuur is organized by matrilineal kin, often junior and newly wed women. Each woman contributes a fixed amount at each gathering. Transactions are recorded and at each meeting one woman “wins” the pot. These
meetings take place at the home of one family member who as host provides a DJ and music, food and drinks. However, there are strict limits on the amount that the host is to spend on hospitality to prevent competition among the women. An mbotaye is a neighborhood ritual association; though in rural areas where extended kin reside nearby, matrilineal kin may organize an mbotaye. In an mbotaye women help each other pay for the cost of holding a ritual feast: renting a tent and music, food and other supplies. Women in an mbotaye also jointly prepare the food for feasts or provide the funds to hire young men or griots to cook and clean for a feast. There are other exchanges among women as well such as ndeye dikké, which means the mother of my choosing. This is a relationship of patronage established between two women.

A natt or tegg is a rotating credit union. Women determine collectively the order of rotation, how often payments will be made and the amount of those payments, and the time frame for the rotation and life of the union. Sokna’s largest rotating credit union meets every Wednesday at her house. She is currently the President of this union, which receives matching funds from ENDA T.M. a non-governmental development organization. She lays plastic mats down on the roof and calls one of her sons to bring her accounting books. This son is paid a small amount to keep the accounts for the group who are largely illiterate. One woman sitting in the center of the gathering collects the contributions from about sixty women present of 1.100 FCFA. This woman collects the money in a calabash, a symbol of fertility. One women’s name is drawn each gathering and this woman takes home the pot. Women often participate in many of these organizations, in the market, in her neighborhood and among kin. There are special
purpose rotating credit unions geared towards pilgrimages and the like. Women aim to always be drawing on the pot of one of their credit unions, to buy and sell merchandise as quickly as possible and to always have cash for their ritual payments. Often the money to participate in these unions comes from male remittances. In fact, many women skim this money off of the top of remittances intended for other expenditures, as male kin often disdain such activities as *gaspillage*, or waste, because the money is taken out of general circulation and put into a specialized circuit where it does not earn interest, is not used for productive purposes until she wins the pot and does not therefore create real economic value. When a woman is in arrears to several of her unions it is not uncommon to telephone her spouse or brother abroad and explain that a child is sick and that he must send money immediately for hospital attention and medications. Shame and gossip follow the woman who does not honor her payments because default violates matrilineal principles of solidarity and cooperation, the unwritten rules of participation in these associations.

These associations are formed primarily between matrikin in the extended family but in urban neighborhoods associations may also include immigrant families from surrounding countries, Guinea Bissau and Mali most commonly. While these associations have operated in the region of Senegal before non-governmental organizations became involved in actively organizing them, the appeal to traditional Wolof values of matrilineal solidarity and cooperation is new. Though principles of age-set alliance have always existed, they have done so in tension with kin principles (see for example, Bara Diop, *La famille Wolof*). However, it is only just now that the principle of solidarity among women
of the same age-set, that is lateral solidarity, is recast as an icon of the totality, that is to say that lateral gender based solidarity is an indigenous Wolof value.

Though the matriline is traditionally responsible for preparing family feasts and making social prestations during them, these activities have taken on an associational quality since the early 1980s when development organizations began to consider them as possible conduits for grassroots development schemes. Mbotayes and rotating credit unions were organized into groupement féminine or women’s groups sponsored by the Partie Socialiste (PS). These groups organized registration for elections, voting and provided an audience for PS officials often captured in the media. When women’s mbotaye’s became groupement féminine they acquired the status of a form of civil society with the state’s recognition of them through financial support and matching funds for their rotating credit unions (Patterson 2000:5). State-recognized women’s groups (groupement de promotion féminine–GPF) pay a fee to register with the state receiving in return access to bank credit, government technical advice, and recommendations from state officials for international donor projects (Patterson 2000:5).

Rotating credit unions have become big business for Senegalese women due in part to decentralization and to the feminization of development. President Abdou Diouf created the GPFs in the 1980s as part of his decentralization reforms. Decentralization of the Senegalese state began in 1996 as power was transferred from the central state to

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4 Patterson looks at how women use these associations to pressure political parties to include women on the electoral ballots and to mobilize women to vote for female candidates.
locally elected government institutions. Since the 1980s authority has been redistributed from the central state to local governments as a means of increasing efficiency and limiting corruption. As the global market price for Senegal’s primary exports, groundnuts and phosphates, declined and state revenues decreased, Senegal borrowed from the World Bank and IMF. In exchange for these loans, the Senegalese state adopted free market reforms such as privatization of a myriad of state functions, devaluation of the currency and liberalization of trade. The reasons for such actions include: trade liberalization, declining profits from groundnut cultivation, inflation and loss of jobs related to the implementation of SAP programs, and the fact that Muridiyya moved into international trade. Again, as I discussed in previous chapters, these macroeconomic trends have also had a significant impact on the nature and operation of Senegalese households, most notably, in terms of refiguring gendered and generational authority.

Though in theory decentralization moves both the resources and the political authority to local level institutions, O’Bannon (personal communication 2000) has shown that for the region of Bakel, those resources have yet to be transferred from the state to the local level. As a consequence, many local level groups turn not to local level state structures for assistance but rather to fostering links with international donors, through NGO’s, thus giving women’s groups in particular special access to resources.

Decentralization has lead to increasing investment by the government and international donors in women’s development. After twenty years of male labor migration, it has become apparent that women are often the only permanent residents in rural areas and increasingly in urban areas as well (cf Patterson who conducted field
research in the rural community of Ndoulo in the region of Diourbel as recently as summer 2000). In Senegal, international donors have shifted from funding primarily “male” development projects, large irrigation schemes, dams and the like but rather have turned to small local collectives, most of which in Senegal are organized by women. The feminization of development programs, due again to recognition of male absence and neoliberal economic policies enacted by the Senegalese state at the behest of international lenders, gives women greater economic latitude in the management of the household budget by diverting these sums of money into associations, trading ventures and ultimately into social prestations, women alter the productive structure of the lineage and community.

Women’s associational membership gets mobilized in varying contexts. Members are called on to circumvent the state and bureaucracy to obtain a Carte de commerçant (a permit to sell and import merchandise, usually a prerequisite for obtaining a five year multiple entry visa to the US for the purpose of conducting commerce), a visa or resolving disputes (especially if a fine is involved). Patronage relationships are also relationships of obligation, though as discussed previously these kinds of hierarchical relationships are breaking down with decentralization and an overall lack of cash and resources at the state level. These networks are used to obtain loans/start up capital for trading ventures and for building a client base. Good business practice depends upon skillfully giving and receiving gifts through which obligation, indebtedness and reciprocity is created. As mentioned above family ceremonies are financed through such reciprocal interests. Finally, these relationships form the basis for a system of social
security to which people can turn if they need financial help in an emergency: hospital, death, fishing boat crashes, etc.

When Sokna’s oldest son developed kidney trouble and could not receive dialysis in Senegal she mobilized her network to send him to Paris for medical treatment. In Paris, he resided with her older brother, a trader. Her next two sons obtained French visas to donate one of their kidneys to their brother. Neither was a match but each was able to stay abroad. Her fourth son also received a French visa to donate a kidney. This son turns out to be the perfect match. His story is extraordinary, however. Sokna mobilized her social network and working through the members of her groupement feminine, managed to get her younger son a seat on the state aircraft carrying the Minister of Women, Children and the Family. He now works in a glass factory in Italy. The fifth son abroad is the only one to have succeeded in obtaining a student visa and departed under those terms. However, in order to get that visa he needed a bank statement demonstrating adequate funds to pay for his education. His oldest sister, Jigeen, mobilized her social network, business partners of one of her ex-husbands whom she had worked with in the Ivory Coast, to provide these papers. It turns out that his male friend had been the one designated to take care of Jigeen in the Ivory Coast while her husband was traveling back and forth to Italy. The marriage ended but the relationship of obligation between her husband’s friend and business partner endured.

Evans-Pritchard emphasized that for the Nuer, exchanges with neighbors were equally important, especially in cases where kin may reside in remote locations, as kinship exchanges (1940). He suggested that lateral exchanges with those residing in the
same locality are in tension with hierarchical exchanges among kin. In Senegal today, though productive activity is nominally organized hierarchically along the lines of caste and generation, there is a shift towards organizing productive activity along the lines of age-sets.

**Neo-liberalism and Social Debt**

At the feast marking his father’s departure for the hajj, Abdoul Aziz stood outside the house leaning on his black BMW sedan with his arms folded across his chest, the silky pale blue sleeves of his kaftan flapping in the wind. He said, "gaspillage...jel rek;" or “waste...people only come to take.” Abdoul Aziz continued to explain that the problem is not terranga or welcoming and showing respect through hospitality. The problem is that many of the recipients of the Géers’ hospitality had come to benefit from their prosperity but contributed little to the overall strength of the network. Abdoul Aziz’s complaint reveals his frustration with a system of exchange that is ideally based on an investment in social relations but that in practice diverts families of their wealth and productive capacities. In particular, it is a system of exchange that diverts junior men of their productive capacities as their earnings support a system of exchange that creates and sustains elders. Though these junior men aspire to become elders, they convey a feeling of being blocked somehow in their productive capacities by elders.

Sokna had been pressing her third oldest son, an engineer in the Southwest United States, to increase his monthly remittance in the coming months, which they agreed, would cover the household expenses, water, electricity, telephone and foodstuffs. This
son had financed his father’s pilgrimage. Following his completion of engineering school he aspired first and foremost to send his father on the hajj. Earlier in the year he purchased a hajj package for his father on Air Afrique and sent his sister to stand in the line at the Grand Mosquee in Dakar to secure a place and a visa for him through Ravan Mbaye, a Muslim scholar at Institute Islamique de Dakar who heads a pilgrimage to Mecca annually for those fortunate enough to secure a place in his group. Sokna’s son was emphatic that he had agreed only to purchase the hajj package and that he could not possibly send money for the feast as well. Reading his reaction as the austere comportment of an emigrant male, what Sokna did not know was that her son had his own cycle of debt in the US: credit cards, car payments, mortgage etc. He wanted to provide for his family and community but could not submit to spiraling ritual costs.

Though feasting and gift exchange offers the prospect of new and renewed social ties among households these practices impose an enormous burden on the productive efforts of the family. Many feel encumbered by social obligations. Chains of indebtedness, such as unpaid bridewealth, which tie households together over time, are now being broken by families that look to the immediate and complete repayment of these obligations to stay afloat financially. The sullen silence that Abdoul Aziz’s departure cast over the Géer household conveyed despair over these broken bonds, the Géer household had not been able to turn over the gifts fast enough, and in fact, expressed dismay that their friends and neighbors should demand such rapid exchange. The inability to return the gift immediately, the need to insert a span of time before returning the gift (as noted by Mauss) is part of the craft of gift exchange. For Abdoul
Aziz and his family, these “gifts” were now just bor, or debts. And thus the refrain that filled the Géer household for the month of April was “dama bare bor;” or I have many debts.

Senegalese households are always running at a deficit, so “debt” is the economic and social imperative that keeps diasporic communities tied to a homeland. But debt, too, is gendered: in a household, male and female kin argue about the proper use of household resources because there are multiple kinds of “debt” to be repaid that families incur in the social and material construction of the household. The changing nature of household production, and rising household debt, is not unique to West Africa; personal debt is a crucial aspect of transformations in the global economy, the nature of work, and emergent neoliberal politics.

There is not only a gendered disjuncture in the management of the household economy, but also in the very nature, purpose and the very idea of the home itself. Processes of production and exchange are deeply embedded in the social organization of the household. Abdoul Aziz wanted to invest his wealth in constructing a home, an inheritable form of wealth that cannot be easily liquidated. Sokna spend her wealth on ostentatious displays of wealth during family ceremonies, hers would not be inheritable and thus she had no reason not to spend it. In addition, with fluctuating exchange rates and devaluation, putting her money towards the creation of social relations was a realistic hedge against currency instability. Thus Sokna demanded her son’s remittances not only to run the household, but also to finance feasts and family ceremonies—baptisms, marriages and funerals—and the social payments that accompany these occasions. These
payments are called "debts." And these "debts," men argue, are one of the principal reasons for the demand for their remittances and the fact that their household budgets run short.

Ideally, chains of debt link disparate households together into a community with common interests. For example, bridewealth in Wolof families is not paid in full to a single household but rather is distributed patrilineally and matrilineally, across many households, linking these households together through a common debt. It is through debt that such alliances between households of non-or distant kin are made. Evans-Pritchard argued for the Nuer that bridewealth claims were ideally never expected to be met, holding two households in relations of reciprocal obligation indefinitely (Evans-Pritchard 1951:84). Moreover, he observed, not every Nuer had the cattle necessary to pay bridewealth but this did not necessarily prevent the alliance (Evans-Pritchard 1940:180).

Likewise in his 1971 article "Kinship and Credit among the Nuer," Glickman argues it is not patriliney that is the lynchpin of social organization, but debt. Likewise, though Wolof families make every effort to garner cash for social prestations such struggle is not necessarily a condition of "crisis" for the lineage. Rather, the sense of crisis the family is experiencing in relation to its ability to re/produce itself and the recognized forms of value that underpin it is revealed in Jigeen's mantra, "heure bi, dafa gowul leggi," or "time moves quickly now," meaning that one experiences these exchanges as taking place with greater speed.

If the "debt" has always been a fundamental aspect of social organization and recognized as such by all involved, then how is it that in the present, Senegalese women
experience debt not as a mere social obligation but as an actual financial burden? How is it that with the prosperity generated by overseas trade that these households are overwhelmed with debt? Glickman argues for Nuer that it is at the point that the colonial courts become involved in adjudicating disputes over unpaid social payments such as bridewealth (1971). Courts enforced the idea that these were actual financial obligations that require repayment for the resolution of communal conflicts. In fact in Senegal there have been numerous attempts by Muslim clergy and colonial officials to fix and even to abolish these payments all together because they created social disharmony and were seen as blocking social production. Every year a the Code de la Famille or Family Code is updated listing the caps for social payments, which in most cases over time, Sokna and her peers were certain to surpass.

The relationship between gift giving practices and changing political and economic conditions has been taken up elsewhere in other parts of the globe. Mayfair Yang discusses this art of forming social relationships in China in Gifts, Favors and Banquets, and Elizabeth Eames discusses Nigerian bureaucracy and gift economy. Gift exchange in Senegal shares the qualities outlined by Mauss [1990 (1950)] and Malinowski (1961) in their discussion of gift economies in non-market societies and the reciprocal elements of gift exchange.

In Senegal, gift giving and other social exchanges come to have increasing importance in the context of an inadequate local economy. The forms and signs of wealth are everywhere visible in Senegalese communities that send out male migrants. It is not uncommon for women to wear broderie or richly embroidered eyelet cloth imported from
France, to have at least one male relative dealing in imported automobiles and to carry 10,000 to 60,000 CFA a day to family ceremonies. At the same time women lament “fii amuul daara,” “there is nothing here,” that is there is no work, there are no men and there is no money. These households bemoan high levels of debt: merchandise taken on credit, monthly tabs to be paid at the boutique, the corner store, and social payments promised or expected. Elders complain that bridewealth payments, once intended to cement relations between families over a lifetime of exchanges of labor, goods and persons, are made too slowly or not at all. Elders seem to focus on extracting the payment entirely and are critical of grooms who hold on to those sums to tightly and for too long.

Social aspects of debt are an under-explored feature of economic liberalization and the rise in household debt in many parts of the world. These household stories about overextending oneself to hold a feast, contracting marriages with absent husbands and baptisms with unwed mothers are as much critical narratives of the neoliberal moment as the more direct and public arguments of NGOs calling for relief of the national debt to free up state money for investment in “human development.” Though Senegal remains at the bottom of the World Bank’s list of least developed countries, its GDP of $4.8 billion places Senegal as 161 out of 200 countries in terms of economic output (World Bank) has been placed on the list of poorest countries eligible for the Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative (HIPC) of the G7. The HIPC initiative was started in 1996 as a way to use debt relief to combat poverty and is contingent upon compliance with IMF programs.

In Grand Yoff in 1994, the average household was comprised of twelve persons, four adults and eight children. Of these twelve persons, three had some means of income
(Ndione 1994: 116). Sokna’s household in 1999 counted six adult member that were more or less permanent, four children and three grandchildren as well as the several children who had been fostered from village kin and various adult kin visiting Dakar from time to time, often for months on end. Adult women engage in trading activities in the smaller markets in their neighborhoods for the most part, and adult men are generally “retired” or working in Dakar. Young men are often more idling than young women who engage in some form of trade among their peers such as making jewelry, hairpieces or braiding. In Grand Yoff in particular, their are two tiers of families, those with male kin working either as government employees or more recently, overseas traders and those without such ties.

The Géer family inhabits a neighborhood in the periphery of Dakar that is commonly characterized as a quartier populaire or a densely populated neighborhood. Quartier populaire does not only refer to the number of families packed into this densely built settlement, but to the stagnant quality of the homes: adult children residing with parents unable to find work, contract marriages and produce children, divorced and unwed daughters with children of their own and the numerous rural poor, often youth, who come to Dakar to find work and reside with urban relatives in the interim. The Géer family not a wealthy or even middle class family, is in many ways a newly prosperous family, as a result of the remittances from abroad, they can hold four feasts in two months. However, like those who live around them, their household economy is also characterized by instability and deficit.
Because these households are overextended, rarely bringing in enough income to cover their daily basic needs and because the state economy has been so bad for so long, Senegalese, and especially Wolof, rely heavily on a gift economy to keep cash in circulation. And this economy of exchange based on social relationships has benefited enormously from remittances from kin working overseas. Remittances are an important part of the strategies of a household to close the gap between different kinds of debt, social and market. Those who do not have kin abroad ingratiate themselves to those who do through gift exchange hoping to marry a daughter to an emigrant trader or to benefit from the blessings of prosperity of these households.

Social payments, which would have at one time been made over a lifetime to bind two households together through the creation of reciprocal obligations, are now being demanded as the need for cash to satisfy the everyday requirements of life increases. Because people are demanding payment of these obligations Senegalese experience these social obligations as “debt” as something that is owed and when not paid, in full, at once, destructive of social bonds. Where “debts” were once seen as good because they held two people in a relationship over time, they are now seen as negative because the debtor is viewed as holding on to money that the creditor would like to put into circulation. Bridewealth rather than establishing a relationship of obligation over time is now counted, measured over time, and discussed in market terms such as delinquency. Long distance trade networks provide male traders with greater access to cash and as such many social payments that once were made in kind, cloth, soap and grains, are now made in cash. For example a payment of cash made between two male kin on the morning of a
baptism is called a *ruy* and symbolizes the millet porridge that would have been brought to the family called *ruy*. Because these payments take the form of money, it is a simple matter to turn that payment towards a market transaction such as giving a loan or buying a sack of rice.

As I mentioned at the outset of this section, people have gone into debt trying to come up with the resources to participate in “gift” exchange to create and maintain these relationships. However, these debts are also accompanied by changing moral evaluations. As I discussed in the prior section, good debts are those contracted between family members such as taking merchandise on credit is good if taken to help out family members engaged in commerce. Good debts are also those based in rotating credit unions and ritual associations. These debts have a positive moral evaluation because they are visible debts and because they are debts of honor because based on Wolof principle of kinship and extreme solidarity in the matriline.

Debts that receive a negative moral evaluation are those such as secret debts outside of the family with boyfriends, female patrons, and diviners. Negative debts are also those based in commodity relations—an unpaid tailor, hairdresser, or merchant (taking merchandise or services on credit), called *puukare*, which is borrowing for self-presentation (clothing coiffure etc.). Muslim diviners pose a particular problem related to diverting cash (and not creating debts within the family) to pay a diviner. Many women caught in these cycles of debt seek relief from Muslim diviners who prescribed sacrifices—the cost of which often sunk women more deeply in debt. Money given to
diviners is also seen as a diversion from money that should have gone towards social re/production taking place through ritual.

The irony of debt is that on the one hand everyone wants to be a lender and a borrower to locate oneself on paths of exchange but on the other hand everyone wants to be relieved of their debt obligations and junior men in particular struggle to free themselves from burdensome duties towards elders. They want to be in good standing with kin and community. Ultimately, one wants to be able to distribute more than one is borrowing. At the same time, people want to be free/liberated from kinship obligations. But in so doing, they are alienated from known/recognized forms of value underpinning community and family. In Wolof households, people seek cash to solve their debt crisis, which is liberating, but this freedom brings with it alienation as people cease to have ties of obligation to others in the community and within their family.

Ultimately debts and their moral evaluation are related to different visions of what society is. Though social and retail debts have different material effects and a different rational, or moral framework underlying them, the net effect of the “culture of neoliberalism” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000) is a conflating of these distinctions as neoliberalism works to “replace society with the market” (2000:305). In isolating different kinds of debts that happen in different contexts we can understand the logic of a changing system of exchange. Yet social debt makes sense given the extreme instability of the CFA currency, holding cash does not insure liquidity if the value of the currency is unstable, rather it makes sense to invest in social relations to achieve financial liquidity (Berry 1995:311). Decentralization, migration and the feminization of development
contribute to the rise in female-headed households in Senegal. Development initiatives geared towards women disrupt social relations and domestic reproduction. The current crisis of masculinity experienced by Senegalese youth is not only the result of an inadequate local economy but also changing relations of gender and generation wrought by macro level shifts in IMF, World Bank and NGO development initiatives. Though gifts are exchanged in the domestic sphere, in the home and in family ceremonies, they are not merely social; they have political and economic dimensions. The shifts enacted through gift exchange in the domestic sphere, such as reworking relations rooted in gender and generation, reverberate out into the wider world of market exchange and vice versa.

Migration transforms local communities socially, economically and politically. The prolonged absence of male kin and the emergence of female-headed households in many parts of Africa and in other labor-exporting countries in the developing world is a significant, if often overlooked, aspect of international migration. For example, the movement of Senegalese into transnational trade networks, hoping to supplement an inadequate local economy, has unanticipated consequences for women’s authority in domestic and other spheres. The proliferation of female-headed households in Senegal has profoundly altered the distribution of wealth as well as the social and political structure of Senegalese communities. These gendered shifts in social and political authority are centered on the household, at once a physical space and an ideal place.
CHAPTER SIX

DOMESTIC OBJECT(ION)S: THE INFLATION OF MARRIAGE PAYMENTS, THE IDEA OF HOME AND AN EMERGENT “IDEOLOGY OF LOVE”

*With what intense desire she wants her home.*
—Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*

“But, I don’t love Musa Mbacke,” Bintu whispered with her eyes downcast, her legs folded under her slender body, as her maternal aunt, great-aunt, uncle and mother pressed her to explain her refusal to marry a seemingly prosperous Senegalese Murid trader in Milan. Bintu’s impertinent reply to her elder’s inquiry ran counter to her docile (*kersa*) and patient (*muñ*) manner, qualities of a “good woman,” (*jigeen ju baax*). “I love Abdoul Aziz,” she continued impetuously, her voice faltering only slightly as she looked up towards her “aunt,” Sokna, seated on the bed. “Eskeiye!” her aunt cried out and the elders each looked away in turn, a weighty silence falling about the tightly packed room in a rural village on the outskirts of Tuba, Senegal. A few days later, the elders dispersed to their homes in the urban capital of Dakar, unsure of how to untangle the web of obligations woven by the series of marriage payments sent by Musa Mbacke over the previous year.
Bintu’s imprudent reply and lack of “etiquette” toward her parents would be a source of agitation within the family circle for some time to come. Her story was bandied about when the family gathered at baptisms, marriages and funerals. Astonished listeners repeated the same refrain, “If she had just said that she did not want to marry Musa, then the matter would have been dropped...xam lépp, wax lépp baaxul...It is not good to know all and to say all.” Bintu could have chosen a number of discreet, prudent and acceptable ways of backing out of the arranged marriage. Her maternal kin might have helped her to settle the matter privately saving face for both Bintu and for her mother, whose own character would be sullied by Bintu’s public refusal to go through with the nuptials. Bintu recklessly threatened the family honor (darraja) by refusing the union after the marriage money had been received. Bintu’s recourse to the idea of love rejected the maneuverings of her maternal elders altogether, which defied their ideas about family obligation and social virtue. Moreover, when Bintu replied that she loved her cousin, Abdoul Aziz, she cast doubt on her own virtue as well as that of her Aunt Sokna. Bintu’s protest was an assertion of her inner feelings, which ran up against family commitments, an assertion of the desires of the self in the face of community, thus astounding the elders with what they took to be a shocking display of selfishness and lack of generosity (terranga). And because she made recourse to the idea of love as a personal right, her elders responded

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1 By the use of the term “etiquette” I mean to refer to Radcliffe-Brown’s definition as the “conventional rules as to outward behavior” (1950:11).

2 It is said that the maternal parents mend private shame (within the home) while public shame is lifted by paternal parents (gacce biir kêr, meena koy faj; gcacce pênc, genoo koy faj).
that she was capricious, that she had her head mixed up (jaxas) and that she was mixed up with someone else (jaxasoo). In choosing to frame her rejection of Musa in terms of “love” Bintu showed her parents that the marriage payments and the rights and obligations they conferred were not meaningful for her.

Bintu’s protest goes to the very heart of gendered and generational ideas of love, romance and desire here and elsewhere. Bintu’s lament points to the degree to which young women’s expectations in love and marriage are at odds with senior women’s ideas about matrimony and marriage prestation. Bintu, Abdoul Aziz and the ill-fated Musa shared a generational consciousness of romance and an ideology of romantic love (nappante). Though this idea of romantic love can be traced back to the showing of Indian films in Dakar in the 1950s, Bintu and her age-mates (maas) read French romance novels, follow Brazilian soap operas and have fallen in love with the Hollywood movie, The Titanic. Like the heroine in Titanic, Bintu understood “love” as a way of being in the world beyond cunning and calculating elders. “Love” appealed to Bintu not in the least because she was acutely aware of her vulnerable position in a social landscape colored by the increasing monetization of social payments. Her recourse to “love” expressed not only a desire for self-promotion, but also critiqued a system in which she was a hostage to bridewealth prices. Though Bintu saw marriage as an affective connection between two autonomous individuals, she and her female cousins also talked about the institution as a means to obtain their own home, an additional route to autonomy. Ultimately, Bintu doubted whether Musa and the system of bridewealth that he represented would be able to fulfill her aspirations on either of these accounts.
Through this ethnographic case of an elaborate exchange of marriage payments that did not secure a lasting marriage alliance, I aim to show how men and women, young and old, have developed different ideas about selfhood and social circulation, and by consequence the rights and duties that characterize kinship relations, in the context of increased male migration abroad which has converged with deep structural changes in the Senegalese economy. Marxian accounts (Meillasoux 1975) hold that these exchanges reproduce the social order, especially structures of dependency, linking control over production of the house to reproduction of the social order. Musa and Bintu’s case can be understood within this framework, with one exception: Aunt Sokna had eagerly accepted the initial payment and even went so far as to divert portions of it to her own ends confident that the remaining installments would be forthcoming. The initial payment and the remaining installments were counted on to create “debt” which would form the basis of affinity. Through this marriage, she reckoned, she would become an elder and thus draw on the productive capabilities of the young household. It is thus that she reasoned as she racked up extensive social and financial “debt” during the marital transaction. But those future payments never arrived, in part because Bintu ran away several times in the course of the marriage proceedings, and in part because Musa was not “creditworthy,” he never managed to deliver the promised sums. The Marxian account sheds light on how relations of hierarchy and generational submission are produced and reproduced, however, it does not account for the experience of social dislocation in emotive, affective or personal terms when these orders fail to get reproduced. In this chapter then, I try to
get at the meaning of these kinds of social obligation and the relationship between meaning making and a rapidly shifting economic and political terrain.

I focus on exchange as a moment in a process of social transformation; the meaning of these exchanges derives from their relationship to wider processes of social and cultural production and reproduction. My goal is to look at how bridewealth exchanges simultaneously illuminate surface features of the social landscape and concomitant symbolic meanings embedded in these exchanges, and to understand the source of these surface forms and meanings. Thus I understand exchange as not only mediating social relations but also as generating social relations.

We can understand fundamental transformations in the structure of Murid and Wolof households by focusing on the changing relations of its members to the objects that they exchange, such as marriage payments in the form of money. Within the context of male migration, social payments such as bridewealth potentially reinforce the dominant social position of senior women. These monetary exchanges, when directed towards elders also reduce possibilities for autonomy for junior women. Thus it is not merely coincidence that the increased monetization of bridewealth has gone hand in hand with an ideology of love. Nor is it surprising that there is a generational struggle over the sexual and emotional desires of young women and their reproductive capacity. Individuals shape social networks to their advantage and seek to control persons within them through marriage payments. Mothers often seek to further their own moral, political and economic objectives through their daughters’ marriages. In Wolof society in
particular, marriage alliances offer a crucial arena in which class (caste and order) based ideas about proper social relations play out.³

Bintu was a shy outsider to the home of her uncle in Dakar who had married well, to a Jolof Jolof, a descendant of Jolof nobility (an 18th century Wolof kingdom) who was gēn juddu, or of superior birth. Thus it was her uncle’s wife (Aunt Sokna) who arranged Bintu’s marriage in the hopes that an alliance with a prosperous Murid merchant would contribute to her posterity and good name. Although the marriage that Aunt Sokna had arranged for Bintu was by no means “noble” (though it was one of set derat, or pure blood as Bintu and Musa were both géér, or free born and somewhat higher than casted artisans) she hoped to profit from the alliance by commanding a high bride price at the outset and she banked on the continued flow of wealth from Musa’s trading activities abroad into the future. Generally, in the last ten years in Senegal, marriage payments have escalated rapidly (or are alleged to be) with the influx of remittances from male traders and factory workers abroad eager to seek wives, but dependent on parents to carry out their plans in their absence. It is thus that older women are often accused of being the culprits in the rising cost of marriages, many of which go awry, and are criticized for transforming an exchange once meant to help defray the costs of the wedding feasts into a conspicuous display of banknotes.

³ G. Balandier distinguishes between castes, as professions (blacksmith, griot, leatherworker etc.) and orders, as hierarchical relations between aristocrats, free persons and slaves, each of which has its specific forms of hierarchy and stratification in the regions of Senegal and Mali (1967:100).
Changing ideas about bridewealth also point to deeper concerns about the nature of marriage as a whole. Young women, in particular, have contradictory feelings about marriage to migrating males. On the one hand, many allege that young women will ignore any suitor who is not an overseas trader. Young women are charged of having a dominant interest in the affluence and social position that such a marriage promises. Young men bemoan the expansive and expensive demands of those they court: porcelain figurines, insulated bowls, richly embroidered cottons and brocade silks, and imported furniture. Young women say that they prize union with a migrant because it allows for more autonomy, the husband often being away, and the wife being able to put his remittances, which arrive monthly, to her own use. The possibility of control over remittances of cash and goods (such as cloth and cosmetic products) is appealing in the context of an inadequate local economy. On the other hand, young women resist the idea of a marriage based on the amount of bridewealth, because the money rarely falls into their own hands. Furthermore, they fear the possibility that they may be placed under the care of their in-laws in their husband’s absence and feelings of abandonment and loneliness can be intense. Though young wives may benefit from what he sends, more often than not, these payments go directly to the mother-in-law who is in charge of running the household. Brothers-in-law will monitor the new bride’s movements being aware of the high incidence of infidelity. Dependent on her care, her in-laws will stand in the way of her demands for a divorce. Thus, for Bintu, the idea of love appealed to her as a means of conveying her desire for an autonomous union in which she, not her elders, would be the major agent and beneficiary.
For his part, Abdoul Aziz was extremely worried about Bintu’s future. Though cognizant of his obligation towards his matrilineal elders, he was not in favor of a marriage that would cause Bintu to suffer. He said on many occasions that he felt obligated towards his younger cousin, as she had been the one to prepare his morning coffee, his afternoon tea and always remembered to reserve a bowl for him when he missed lunch. He respected her kersa—her deference and her gentle nature. And in a few months time, he began to declare to himself that he was in love with Bintu. However, as an overseas trader, Abdoul Aziz was reluctant to cut himself off from his matriline (men or mother’s milk). Marriage to Bintu would mean defyng his parents and blocking the path of bridewealth that had already been circulated. Not only did Abdoul Aziz rely on the relations sustained by bridewealth payments for his livelihood as a trader, but he had a close and loving relationship to his mother and father and took pride in supporting his large family as a son. Marriage to Bintu would cause him to choose between two very different social landscapes between which he oscillated uneasily. At issue then are changing forms of personhood, relations and social production in a moral and mobile economy of a global scale.

The Politics of Courtship, Love and Alliance

Though it is conventionally recognized that two decades of structural adjustment programs and other austere economic policies have adversely affected the Senegalese state, the impact of these measures on the domestic domain and one processes of social production are less well understood. In this section, I present an ethnographic case in
which I discuss the politics of bridewealth distribution among three families to illustrate the impact of emergent transnational trading networks and a general liberalization of the state and its economy on the production and reproduction of Murid households. I analyze a bridewealth transactions that took place over at least a year, leading up to a marriage feast in autumn 1999 between a Murid disciple trading between Italy and Senegal, and a commerçant family in Dakar. I home in on the details of this particular marriage because the difficult alliance illustrates anxieties over and tensions within the changing nature of social relations that many Senegalese express. Bridewealth payments have become important as objects in and for themselves. These payments are subject to multiple claims and are often diverted for other ends than stated. As Senegalese households become more cash dependent for material needs and desires, as well as for social payments, they are increasingly burdened with debt. Thus they have come to rely on receiving ritual payments, such as bridewealth, to cover their obligations and quotidian needs (see Hutchinson 1996). The fact that these ritual payments are now more widely regarded as burdening households with hardship, rather than generating positive social ties over generations, is a fundamental feature of the neoliberal moment.

*The Marriage of Musa and Bintu*

Musa and Bintu were to be united in a marriage of gold and money; gold signifying the daughter of the groom’s mother’s brother, and money signifying the groom’s bridewealth. Musa and Bintu were matrilateral cross cousins, the preferred mode of Wolof marriage (A.B. Diop 1985). They were related on both the maternal and on the
paternal side, and thus had multiple ties of kinship to each other. Thus relatives in both households had staked claims to bridewealth payments, a situation which often causes conflict (see J. L. Comaroff 1980), as it did in this case. Because these payments would be made over many years, these claims were important for the financial prospects of the various households that became involved. Bintu’s parents were impoverished residents of a Murid village. They could no longer count on the agricultural output of their land and relied on the marriage of their daughters for their future income. When Bintu was a young girl, her family sent her to live with her Aunt Sokna in a quartier populaire on the periphery of Dakar. Her Aunt Sokna had married into the household of a disciple of the Tijani Sufi order as his first wife. Musa’s parents had also worked as farmers in a Murid village, but they now inhabited a villa in a wealthy Dakar suburb populated by “les émigrés” which Musa had built with his brother for their respective wives.

Given their kinship ties, Musa and Bintu had known each other growing up and knew of their arranged marriage. But when the time came for Musa to marry, he looked beyond Bintu to her older cousin Awa, a daughter of her mother’s sister. Raised in the same household, Bintu and Awa came to relate affectively as sisters. However, following the marriage of her older cousin, Bintu’s parents fostered her to her Aunt Sokna’s home in Dakar, which boasted three sons in Paris, Milan and New York who were second-generation traders. In this household Bintu assumed the obligations of a dependent niece: she cooked two meals a day, cleaned and performed other domestic chores for the household. Although she participated in the social and religious life of the family, her
aunt and uncle did not send her to school with her cousins and her aunt and uncle limited her outings to the markets in the highly populated urban neighborhood.

Musa returned to Senegal when Bintu was 23. He had been engaged in trade in Milan where he lived with his wife, Awa. Musa had built a new home in Dakar, which his parents and his brother’s wives inhabited, (his brother also lived in Italy where he worked in a glass factory). He now wanted a second wife who would make this house a home for him in Dakar, managing his social and business relations in his absence. And for this purpose he chose Bintu. It was thus that Musa greeted Bintu’s uncle and aunt with two kilos of kola nuts upon his return. This opening exchange of kola nuts called the greeting (nuvoo) marked the beginning of his courtship of Bintu. Bintu’s aunt and uncle accepted the kola nuts, and in so doing, the offer of marriage.

As I stated, Bintu’s conflicted feelings about Musa’s courtship thus points to her vulnerability in the current system of social relations. Bintu’s ambivalent feelings towards Musa were revealed each time she sneered, “he’s ugly” (dafa new) to all who congratulated her on her engagement. Many remarked on the unusual circumstances of the marriage. Awa and Bintu having been raised in the same home conflicted with an Islamic prohibition against a man marrying two sisters. Though Bintu did not object to polygamy, or to becoming a second wife, she rejected Musa because she did not want to be Awa’s junior wife, or to have her future children subject to the generational authority of Awa and her offspring. Additionally, as the most junior woman in a household already populated by Musa’s older brother’s wives and in-laws, she would shoulder the burden of domestic labor; she would prepare the meals, clean the house and child care, including
those who were not her own. Though these activities conventionally fall under the responsibility of a new wife, Bintu would not receive her own home within a larger compound inhabited by the extended family. Rather, all family members shared a single urban house. Moreover, Bintu would not receive housekeeping money from Musa—he sent this money to his mother who in turn apportioned it out among the junior women in the house. These responsibilities meant that she would not be able to engage in her own market activity or to attend family rituals much less entertain guests in her home. Thus she would not be able to establish her own social networks, which would forestall any social ambitions on her part.

Musa courted Bintu aggressively—bringing her a bedroom suite and housewares from Italy. She began to consider the fact that Musa was a prosperous trader abroad and that, if not over time, at least in the immediate present marriage to him would change her condition entirely. She could escape the immediate control of her relatives and hope for the possibility of future remittances from her husband. In her aunt and uncle’s home she slept on a foam mat on the parlor floor with the young children and grandchildren. Marriage held the promise of her own room in a spacious villa with a European style kitchen and bathroom.

Musa was not discouraged by Bintu’s initial refusal to go along with the marriage. He continued to send her jewelry in lieu of his visits to the home. Bintu became fond of these presents and was slowly acquiescing to the idea of marriage. Musa also sent small symbolic payments of cash to her aunt and uncle and to her cousins. Older generations have called such gifts *ndaq far*, meaning the gift that chases away other suitors, by
accepting these gifts, the parents give the suitor the sole right to court their daughter (A.B. Diop 1985:103). This gift is largely symbolic in the overall ritual process and signifies a joking relationship between the suitor and other male cousins who “lost” out to him. However, Bintu and her age-mates scoffed at such a notion, instead calling this exchange the *may gu jekk*, or the first gift. Bintu expected that unlike the *ndaq far*, this was only the *first* gift; others would follow and be given directly to her. Moreover, her use of the term first gift suggests an emphasis on the thing itself as a kind of value that can be diverted as personal consumption. In fact, it is increasingly common for young women to accept such overtures without fulfilling the obligation to marry making this more like a courtship with consumables. If a suitor fails to display extreme generosity during this period the bride and her mother may call off the wedding. It is said that these days men cannot really count on being married until the wife enters his house (A.B. Diop 1985: 104). The increasing use of the term *may bu njekk* by junior women signals a significant change in the nature of social relations. It suggests that the first gift is not in itself a symbol of acceptance and obligation but rather a competitive bid for the potential marriage, which may or may not ever actually take place. Because men travel for so long, and because they cannot sustain the relations they initiate, young women hesitate to take their interests seriously.

A short while later, Musa and Bintu’s uncle performed the first stage of the marriage ceremony in a neighborhood mosque and exchanged the modest sum of 25 CFA, which is fixed by the clergy, called the *takk* to signify the legal completion of the marriage. If the marriage money is paid in full at this time, the bride may follow her
husband to their new home, however this is unusual and was not the case with Musa and Bintu. It was almost a year after Musa greeted his prospective in-laws with kola nuts that he offered the bridewealth payment (*can, alali farati*) for Bintu. Her Aunt Sokna would function as the “mother” of her foster child. Musa gave the aunt cash, a radio and a gold wristwatch.\(^4\) This cash would go towards providing a trousseau for Bintu (clothing, household utensils etc.) and towards financing a host of gifts for Bintu’s in-laws. Aunt Sokna accepted this gift and proceeded to manage its distribution among the various households who held a claim to the bridewealth payments. The aunt called the members of her neighborhood ritual association (*mbotaye*) to her home and they collectively appraised the value of the offerings and planned for a grand event.

After Musa returned to Italy, the elders began making preparations for the *xew bu mag*, the big feast. Aunt Sokna telephoned her sons overseas to inform them of the modifications and improvements that she wanted to make in the house to accommodate the guests properly, and she demanded contributions from each of them. She used the bridewealth payment to purchase a cow (which would be slaughtered on the first day of ceremony to feed the guests) to prepare the bride’s trousseau, and to invest in her *mbotaye*, which also would help finance the event and prepare the feast. Aunt Sokna purchased bowls, hung new curtains, and sent satin fabric to her tailor to be sewn into bed coverings. The cement courtyard of the home was transformed from a space of household

\(^4\) Historically, this offering would be made in the form of livestock, ankle chains, bracelets, gold and even slaves, see A.B. Diop.
work to a receiving area with broken ceramic tiles, which were laid in a colorful mosaic pattern.

Not all of the household members agreed with this usage of the bridewealth and with the domestic preparations. Sokna asked the adult daughters to each pay a third of the cost of tiling the courtyard. Rama, her second oldest daughter, who was thirty but still single and thus living in the household, agreed to the arrangement. However the oldest daughter, Jigeen, refused to contribute money to the wedding preparations and argued that she needed the funds to pay school fees for her three daughters. In return her siblings invoked her two failed marriages, especially her recent loss of the trading fortune she amassed in the Ivory Coast to her last husband, a Murid shaykh. She was roundly criticized for having returned to the already overcrowded family home with her children, impoverished and unwilling to contribute to the household expenditures. Her siblings told her that she had no value (njerin) to the family circle. Thus her value and status were measured by her ability to fund kin-building rituals, such as Bintu’s marriage. In fact, as I will discuss below, Jigeen’s younger sister Rama was chosen to be the honorary ndeye (an institution that I discuss further in chapter seven) at Bintu’s feast and reception, an honor that conventionally would go according to age seniority.

During these wedding preparations, which took place over a year, Bintu ran away several times to her parents’ home in the village. Each time she said that she did not want to marry Musa Mbacke. On three occasions maternal and paternal kin persuaded her to return to Dakar and to carry out the nuptials, first her aunt, then her great aunt and finally her male cousin, Abdoul Aziz. Following her third flight, Bintu’s aunt, great aunt, mother
and mother’s brother (nijaay) met to discuss what should be done with respect to the bridewealth or her behavior had exhausted their patience. The elder women and the maternal uncle admitted that the bridewealth could not really be returned as the parties concerned had already consumed it. In addition to the modifications that had been made to the maternal home, the aunt had already skimmed from the payments to cover her obligations to rotating credit unions (natt) and to her neighborhood ritual association (mbotaye). She hoped to use her payout to finance the wedding ritual. She had also made appropriate exchanges with the groom’s family. She bought cloth for two boubous and many bowls for the paternal mother in whose home the bride would reside.

In the end, her great aunt and her mother’s brother (nijaay) said that they decided to force Bintu to accept the marriage. Though Bintu’s aunt sympathized with her plight, she could not return the bridewealth because it was no longer in her hands and she was already deep in debt preparing for the fête. None of the aunt’s other children was successfully married by this point, and the mother was eager to move fully into her own elderhood through the union of this foster daughter. The maternal elders thus told the bride that because she had initially consented to the marriage by accepting the first gift, she could not go back on her word.

Bintu began to slowly accommodate herself to the idea of marrying Musa and her two older female cousins took her to a cloth market to choose her trousseau. At first, she refused to select any cloth; she sat in silent defiance, only sneaking peaks at the cloth the sisters picked for her as they bargained with the vendor. Her cousins bought fabric for her including one grand boubou, a peach satin skirt with a layer of peach lace
embroidered elaborately and sewn with crystal beads to be worn over the top, for the reception with her age-mates. Another aunt, a trader in France, sent a deep green and deep blue brocade cloth with gold embroidery for two additional grand boubous, which would be worn at the fêtes at her aunt’s home, and on the following day at her husband’s home. Bintu’s three boubous were a modest number; Murid commerçant brides change their clothes as many as five times during a single gathering. In addition, Bintu’s cousins bought cloth for five complets, each consisting of six meters of high quality West African wax cloth to be sewn into dresses with skirts underneath to be worn during her first week in her new home.

Generational arguments about the appropriate distribution of the bridewealth surfaced in the event itself. For example, Bintu’s cousins intended her to have a grand boubou sewn not by her mother’s tailor, but by a couture seamstress known for her cutting edge fashions. However Aunt Sokna refused to release the bridewealth for the seamstress arguing that the dress would be too ostentatious. Rama fumed about the possibility that Bintu’s lack of couture and unique design would reflect poorly on her. She was to stand with the bride during the event. She fretted about the possibility that a guest might appear in dress more elaborate than Bintu’s which could damage the family’s pride. Unmarried and over thirty years old, she herself relied on such occasions for her value to the family to be realized; thus she had a stake in ensuring that the marriage proceeded, and proceeded well.

Caught up in the planning for the event—fashioning her clothing, her coiffure and the hor d’oerves for the reception with her age-mates—Bintu uneasily consented to the
final two stages of the marriage while her future husband remained in Italy. These two stages might commonly be stretched out over years, but in Bintu’s case, they took place in two days during which Musa remained in Italy. While Bintu was preoccupied with visits to the tailor, the salon and the photographer, female kin assembled at her aunt’s house on the appointed morning for lakk, a yogurt and millet porridge, and the slaughtering of a cow for the afternoon feast. In the evening, Bintu gathered with her age-mates for a Western style reception during which she received gifts of housewares and cash in envelopes. That night she entered her in-laws home in an elaborate ritual called the chet or the covering of the bride. Senior women dressed the bride in white and sat her on a mat where together with the father they administered marital advice. After prayers have been given, the bride was taken to her in-law’s home by her age mates and a few senior women. There she was presented to her in-laws who were asked to treat her like a daughter. Offerings were made of salt, cool water and grain, which are symbolic of “cool” relations, to ensure a marriage free from quarrels, and to encourage her in-laws to develop a “taste” for the bride (Gamble 1957:67). In Bintu’s case, these rites were performed all the while her husband remained in Italy. In the morning there was lakk (millet porridge), a sabar (drumming and dancing), and exchanges of meat and cash among her age-mates and her female elders. In contrast, some Murid wives might remain in the parent’s home after the marriage until their husbands, trading abroad could amass the capital to buy land and build his own home.

Though Musa intended to build a home in Tuba, he had not yet begun construction. Consequently, Bintu was moved into his house in Dakar, which was
occupied by her in-laws. There she was obligated to show elaborate forms of deference and symbolic submission. She did the housework and waited on her mother-in-law. She gave her money and occasional offerings of cloth and other forms of material assistance required of a good daughter-in-law to avoid her wrath. She refrained from speaking too loudly, too much and too aggressively. But her mother-in-law feared that Bintu would consume Musa’s earnings. In fact, Musa sent money to run the household to his mother, and Bintu was forced to ask her for market money each day that she cooked, taking turns with his brother’s wives. She spent her days caring for the offspring of the extended family (though she had no children of her own) and performing other quotidian household chores so that her mother-in-law could participate in ritual work.

By the time that Musa returned to Senegal several months later to consummate his marriage, Bintu had fled again. Musa went to her parent’s rural compound, endeavoring to woo her back. After three days he finally convinced her to return to Dakar with him, not to his parents’ home, but to a large hotel for the weekend for a “real” honeymoon (lune de miel). She consented, and he remained in Dakar for the duration of Ramadan during which she cooked elaborate dishes for her in-laws—fried chicken and lamb and okra stew—as a “good wife” should. During this time, Bintu’s foster family shunned her embarrassed by her running away during the nuptials; her cousins were prohibited from visiting her and her Aunt Sokna would not speak to her. Towards the close of the observance, Musa and Bintu made an official visit to the home of her aunt and uncle. Bintu’s aunt received them in her room but she did not offer the usual forms of hospitality, such as a special plate of chicken or large bottles of Coke. Rather, she
complained that she had no bowls for guests as so many had gone out during Bintu’s marriage celebrations full of meat and rice and sour milk and millet, and none had come back. Finally, her oldest daughter sent a child to buy four small bottles of soda. Drinking the beverages quickly, the newlyweds went home. After their departure Bintu’s aunt exclaimed, “He is too cheap (*nay*). He did not even offer to purchase a soda. He just returned from Italy and what did he bring me, the mother of his bride? Nothing. Cheap.”

In fact, Musa himself had been caught between two sets of generational expectations. Bintu desired her own home, as he had provided for his first wife, and she valued a marriage based on mutual love. Musa’s parents expected that he would bring a wife into their home that would care for them in his absence. Bintu’s Aunt Sokna expected that the bridewealth would initiate a series of exchanges that would tie the two households together and enable each set of elders to profit from the trade of the commerçant son. The elders, eager to constitute themselves as such through the receipt of his payments, were angered that he contracted the marriage without due attention to the exchanges that would be necessary to sustain the alliance.

Musa himself expected that Bintu would adjust to his absence; Murid women raised in commerçant families accustom themselves to these long absences being told, *il faut munn*, that is, it is necessary to be patient. But Bintu’s sense of abandonment and disappointment remained strong, and shortly after the New Year she left the arrangement. She did not benefit from Musa’s remittances, she saw no prospects of her own home and felt less autonomous in the house of her mother-in-law than in that of her uncle. This had not been her “idea” of marriage. Had she loved Musa, she said that she would have cared
for his in-laws out of respect for him, but she did not. As I mentioned at the outset, she never failed to point out as soon as he left a room that he was ugly. Though she had hoped that as her cousins said, her status would change completely, it had not. If her husband had been the head of the household (boorom genyo), then she would have had the socially sanctioned means of asserting her desires (such as mokk pojj). What is more, her situation was worsened by the fact that Musa, like many Murid traders overseas, pooled his remittances with other traders and made one transfer of money to keep the fees down. Bintu and her mother-in-law argued over the amount of the remittance that each was entitled to. Like other Murid wives, Bintu resorted to asking her husband to send her remittances secretly and aroused hostility and discontent within the household. Musa did intend to build up his own household in Dakar (and later, in Tuba) of which he would be the head. In his absence, he brought his parents into his home to occupy the land and to supervise Bintu. Consequently, Musa found himself remitting his income to his parents (primarily his mother), no longer producers themselves, but they themselves consumed his remittances and other payments. By virtue of their occupancy in Musa’s house, Bintu was subject to the control of her mother-in-law. This control was the central reason for failure of the marriage alliance for it forstalled the younger generations bid for a socially validated adulthood.

Musa, eager to assert himself as the head of a prosperous household with two wives, rushed into a marriage in which he did not actually have the means to sustain. Indeed the ethnographic narrative suggests that for a newer generation of traders, it seems as though the lucrative era of transnational trade is coming to a close as economic
liberalization opens up markets that were previously only accessible to a small class of
elite commerçants with close ties to the political leaders who had a hand in the national
economy. At the same time, expectations have escalated. Nonetheless, young traders
struggle to provide their households with much needed cash, their remittances expressing
their loyalty to their wives and extended kin.

**Generosity and Reciprocity: General Principles of Circulation**

Evans-Pritchard has long argued that kinship is not merely a genealogical
relationship, but that kinship is a relationship of reciprocal social obligations (1951:77).
As I discussed in chapter five, mutual obligation is created through hospitality, feasting
and gifting. The exchange of gifts (*maye*), cash gifts (*ndawtal*) and food in the context of
marriage preparations and celebration defines, confirms and creates bonds of kinship. In
addition, non-kin and distant kin are brought into the lineage through the exchange of
gifts such as bridelwealth. The principle of reciprocity (and generosity in reciprocal
exchanges), especially between socially stratified groups such as nobles and griots, is said
to be definitive of Wolof character (A.B. Diop 1981:8).

Women say that as Wolof women, they take pride in their reputation for fantastic
exchanges because these gifts of food, money and goods are exemplars of liberality and
of their desire for social harmony. Gifts and abundant displays of hospitality and feasting
one affirms one’s “state of grace” (*gerem*); the individual who gives generously will
receive generously because their guests are pleased with them, so too God will be pleased
by their actions. Giving and sharing food *generously* is a divinely sanctioned practice in
Mouride communities and thus there are rich stories of the liberality of Amadou Bamba and the Prophet Muhammad. Thus guests are extremely important in this regard because they provide an opportunity for the host to express her generosity. Giving will amplify one's chances for prosperity, thus charity is as crucial as generosity.

*Symbolism and General Principles of Exchange in the Context of Marriage*

Though the marriage of Musa and Bintu had economic consequences for the families involved and the elders were fully cognizant of the financial implications of the alliance from the outset, economic motivation alone does not fully explain how the marital process unfolded (see for example, Comaroff 1980:11). Rather, in telling Musa and Bintu's story, I have attempted to convey not only how Senegalese think about and experience marriage payments with respect to their age, gender and social position, but also I have tried to suggest the affective, emotional and meaningful aspect of these exchanges. Bintu's spoken thoughts and actions express her conflicted and contradictory view of her position in the marriage negotiations. Her marriage is representative of profound changes in the marital process in Senegal. Though prospective grooms have always been expected to court young brides and their families with goods and services, grooms today court women by sending gifts and cash to convey their intentions—remaining abroad fulfilling work obligations or unable to travel because of their illegal immigrant status.

It is worth noting as well that an analysis of marriage payments in and of themselves alone would be insufficient. These payments had profound economic as well
as social implications for the families involved because they would be used to “repay” the various kinds of social and financial “debt” that I described in chapter five. Thus marriage exchanges here are meant to be understood as part of a total circuit of exchange (funeral payments, sacrifices, gifts, labor, hospitality etc.), exchange itself being only one aspect of the production, circulation and consumption of social and material value (Comaroff 1980: 31). Finally, in this chapter, I have chosen to focus on the marriage to demonstrate how society is reproduced and transformed through this process. Musa and Bintu’s marriage brings into relief intergenerational struggles over the nature and composition of the household.

There are numerous exchanges of food among men and women as well as among their maternal and paternal parents in the context of the marriage prestations (kola, bread, meat, milk, millet). Marriage exchanges do not merely reflect a hierarchical structure of household relations based on gender and generation; they are the very process through which these relations are constituted (see J. L. Comaroff 1980; Goody 1958). Wolof marriage payments consist mainly of may bu njekk, or the first gift which is given to the bride, takk, a token sum given in the mosque to signify the legal marriage, alali farata/can, which is also given to the bride, gooru, which means kola nuts that are given to the bride’s family, and ndaq far, which means “to chase away other suitors” and which is given to the cousins who were also in competition for the bride. However, there are many more exchanges of cash and other gifts that will take place throughout the marriage process that are symbolic of the hopes and the good wishes for the fiancées and their families. These payments were once made in kind, in livestock, gold and slaves. Today
these payments are made in cash. Each of the major payments that I listed above are important for the kinship relations that their exchange codifies. Thus they provide an ideal arena in which to look at the shifting basis of power and authority between men and women, young and old. Ideally, young men assume the position of head of household through bridewealth exchanges while simultaneously constituting his father as head of the lineage (see Turner 1984). Both the nuclear and the extended family are produced through the matrimonial process, which relies on a series of monetary transactions and counter actions between the families that will increase in value over time. Participants are brought into relationship to one another as full social beings bearing a particular kin relation to one another that is recognized through these exchanges.

In the case of Bintu and Musa, their respective families not only fought over the distribution of the bridewealth payments, and the practicality of returning them when the marriage failed, but they also questioned the value of bridewealth as a social practice and institution. On the one hand, bridewealth payments place disparate households in relation to each other across space and over time. For senior women, these marriage payments are part of a social system based on mutual obligation and responsibility. But for junior males bridewealth payments impose a financial burden and they support what young men consider to be an outmoded and impractical system of exchange that depends on wealth in people and gift giving. This structure of relations, they contend, inhibits their attempts to manage their income, savings and investments to achieve a desired mode of being in the world, which is signified, by investment in their own homes and endeavors. Both Muslim and French colonial authorities codified these social payments as early as 1946 in
an attempt to limit them (ANS 23 G/12, 17). As I will discuss in chapter seven, the
Muslim clergy, while not opposing these payments today, have made significant attempts
to reduce them. These social payments (including payments to respective kin, the mosque
and the griots (gewel), have since been capped in the Code de la famille. In fact, Musa
himself had invoked these enactments in his defense.

Changing Views of Exchange

Relations of mutual dependence and independence between youth and their
parents, men and women, are undergoing a fundamental transformation as men seek out
productive activities farther from their households over longer periods of time. Since the
agricultural output of households has given way to dependence on trade families have
become more dependent on cash for their common needs. Thus, more than ever,
generosity in gifts and cash during family ceremonies are desired, valued and
appreciated. Though these cash gifts are widely thought to convey respect for one’s peers
and one’s parents, Senegalese lament that cash, rather than kinship, seems to be taking
precedence in determining interpersonal relations.

Not only have there been fundamental shifts in the symbolic and material basis of
gender relations across generations, but blood, money and food are experienced and
valued differently along the axis of gender and generation. While women’s experience of
personhood and sociality in the present are tightly bound up with the circulation of cash
among them, senior men’s autonomy has been sharply reduced. As I discussed in chapter
two, male control over the allocation of land was one of the central factors in determining
their dominance over the definition of kinship ties and marriage alliances. Since then, senior men have had to grapple with the increasing power of junior men as the primary holders of wealth (i.e. cash), the increasing monetization of social exchanges and declining systems of patronage as a result of an ever more impoverished state. Thus, the hold that senior men have over the productive capacity and earnings of junior men has become in the last twenty years, largely symbolic. Junior men often give money to their mothers to cover the household expenses—gas, water, electricity and foodstuffs—in the place of their father. Actual gifts to their father’s are largely symbolic in nature, kola nuts, tobacco, religious paraphernalia and upgrading their living accommodations. Senior men are thus symbolic placeholders, occupying the land in Dakar and Tuba to prevent it from reverting back to the national government under the domain nationale. However, Senegalese, especially the youth, express reservations about the potential to define their social relations through the exchange of “gifts” and in fact, are ever more critical of the monetization of social, political, and affective relations in Senegal. One can view these developments as indicative of a disarticulation of the institutions of marriage and alliance and age.

I have thus far considered changing perceptions of courtship and marriage through the prism of the conflict that the marriage payments aroused between Bintu and her maternal kin. However, the idea of marrying for love is not new to this generation of young women. Mariama Ba, in her novel, So Long a Letter, tells the story of Ramatoulaye, an aging school teacher who steadfastly remains married to her husband even after he has taken a second wife, the school mate of their daughter, because—"The
truth is that, despite everything, I remain faithful to the love of my youth.” Her statement is doubly meaningful, for the love of her youth is in the first instance her husband, and in the second her belief in the power of individual choice over the machinations of others.

Ramatoulaye has only pity for her new second wife whom she portrays as “a lamb slaughtered on the alter of affluence.” She is the victim of her own mother’s maneuverings to acquire a SICAP villa in a middle class Dakar neighborhood, a fancy car “swallowing up double mouthfuls from the trough offered her.” The young girl is mocked by her baccalaureate bearing age-mates for having dropped out of school to be wed to such an old man. She frequents the nightclubs of her age-mates with her new husband, sitting in the most visible tables with bottles of beverages lined up to display her form of success, “but when the moment of admiration passed, she was the one who lowered her head at the sight of couples graced with nothing but their youth and rich in their happiness alone.” The young girl is eventually left destitute when the husband dies suddenly of a heart attack. For her part, Ramatoulaye rejects a subsequent offer of marriage made by her deceased husband’s brother as is the custom (i.e. the levirate), “You forget that I have a heart, a mind, that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand. You don’t know what marriage means to me: it is an act of faith and of love, the total surrender of oneself to the person one has chosen and who has chosen you.”

Dwellings, Domesticity and Value

Musa and Bintu’s failure to continue the marriage speaks to the way in which the appearance of wealth produced by large feasts and generous prestations is at odds with
the actual ability of household members to maintain the social relations that engender wealth. It also signifies a dangerous gap between inflated expectations and the ability of traders to deliver in the neoliberal era. The dissolution of the marriage speaks in addition, to the gendered and generational projects that are emerging out of a globalizing economy that draws young male workers abroad. For Musa, the marriage was an important part of making his claim, in absentia to be a head of the household in his homeland. However, the role of his parents in his stead, and the material impossibility of financing a second home forestalled his intentions. For Bintu, marriage failed to fulfill her desires for personal, social and material autonomy, and a “modern” marriage. The household was subject to Musa’s and his mother’s incompatibile designs, demonstrating distinct gendered evaluations of wealth and value that coexist in Senegalese Murid households at present.

Though men may build the house, building the household is a process ultimately controlled by senior women through their management of the rituals and exchanges of domestic life. The construction and production of these households the exploits the labor of junior men willful activity brings them into being and who count on the houses to reflect their prosperity to the community. In this way, the work of male traders overseas fosters the creation of social hierarchies that drive production, in particular the authority of elder women. Because these elder women control the means of production, at least, those in the nuclear family are obligated to produce for them in addition to producing enough to reproduce themselves and the elder women are thus tied into a ritual economy of prestige production that requires resources. Consequently, men, young and old, protest
the lavish feasts and ostentatious displays of wealth in the form of social payments by senior women. Men often invoke Islamic principles to argue that practices such as gift exchange are not a fundamental aspect of life cycle rituals such as marriages, baptisms and funerals. This argument will be taken up more fully in chapter seven.

Large feasts and ostentatious social prestations are made possible by access to cash earned by male labor abroad. Though Musa and Bintu’s marriage alliance eventually collapsed, the wedding feast was sufficiently sumptuous to enable Bintu’s Aunt, Sokna, to create ties of reciprocity and obligation among her guests. Thus, the marriage itself brings into relief one of the ways in which male cash remittances have altered the basis of women’s power and authority over younger men and women, and to a lesser extent, elder males. Moreover, elder women have the option of not allocating any money to junior women in the household, especially daughter in laws, and senior men, by concealing and diverting their cash remittances.

In particular, the remittance of a monthly lump sum of cash makes it possible for women to spend largely in capital intensively ways. In general, a remittance of cash from afar affords women far more opportunities for diverting sums of money intended for specific purposes by males. Women often invest a portion of male remittances into rotating credit unions and ritual associations through which they finance their own local trading activities, the purchase of housewares, and family ceremonies. With these remittances, female elders also acquire the clothing and the coiffure that indexes their prosperity and draws newcomers into their networks of exchange. Clad in the cargo of their male kin, female elders participate in exchange contests driven by ostentatious
displays of wealth and conspicuous consumption. Young women, however, in return, seek to transfer such consumption into more individual things.

During these fêtes, women enhance their role as powerful members of the lineage and in the community through ostentatious displays of multiple changes of clothing, or sanse, and offerings of food, drink and cash. But commodities are important in that they index the depth of one’s networks of exchange. The form of Murid trade is salient: their trading activities provide cosmetic products, cloth and accessories, which play into the promotion of female beauty as a social value and which women circulate as an important media of social relations. Murid traders are thus the vehicles providing both the means and the forms of new economies of prestige.

Intense public debate surrounds the private and domestic sphere in Senegal, and coalesces around the practice of social payments. Both the state and the Muslim clergy have attempted to reform the particularly Wolof practice of hefty and highly competitive ritualized exchanges among female kin. Remittances have utterly changed the class status of households and neighborhoods, and have given new life the domestic sphere of life cycle rituals and exchange among female elders. However, these commercial families are vulnerable to countless claims on their prosperity, which often leaves them heavily indebted. Strapped for cash, elder women face the immense social labor of putting off demands on their revenue while maintaining amicable relations with kin and community. They shoulder the burden of maintaining the family’s good name to ensure their financial

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1 See for example, Deborah Heath’s work on clothing and heteroglossia in Senegal.
solvency, promoting family business by judiciously extending credit, and accepting debt not only for their commerce, but also for massive social prestations in the domestic sphere.

Relations between men and women, young and old, no longer seem to be worked into alliances through family rituals but rather, seem also to become disarticulated, as least in terms of the production and circulation of key social values. Scholars have suggested that a “crisis of the family” is occurring in Senegal today, and, they note the high degree to which marriages are being “delayed” (Antoine et al 1995). Not only do youth suspend their entry into adulthood, but they also foreclose opportunities for their parents to become elders. Senegalese youth express alarm at their own inability to garner the resources for material subsistence, and the lack of employment and opportunities available to them. They despair as they remain idle in their parent’s homes. They are, in addition, anxious about the dissolution of recognized forms of social value, the inability to put together households, to participate in the social life of the community and generally, to realize adult masculinity.

Though Musa was structurally no longer a “youth” because he was already married to Bintu’s cousin, the episode speaks well to the predicaments of their “young” generation. Through a discussion of Bintu and Musa’s failed marriage, the different stakes that family members have in the proceeds of globalized processes of production such as marriage payments are foregrounded. On the one hand, men use marriage payments to embed themselves in local social worlds, even if from afar. On the other, elder women to whom these payments are given, use them to construct a domestic social
order, which depends on the labor of junior men and women. The incomplete homes in
and around Tuba may be the signs of thwarted social production, they stand as symbols
of male potential, yet they are incomplete and have yet to become households.

Senior women recognize that the success of male commerce abroad has
reinvigorated prior systems of exchange by rendering them as highly monetized
exchanges a process that has given them more authority, despite a faltering economy. In
this chapter, I have argued that there is a disjuncture between men investing in homes and
not households, and women investing in households through ritual activities that are
viewed by young men as being socially counterproductive. Though young male traders
take advantage of overseas commodity networks to extract themselves from lineage
obligations, the incorporation of their cash remittances in the domestic sphere serves to
reformulate the relations of gender and generation that drive social production. These
domestic rituals drive the production of female-headed households and ultimately
lineages. There is a strange silence about the role of senior men in all this; a tacit
recognition that young men have succeed in displacing localized production which would
have been under the control of these elders. The battle appears to be among junior men
and senior women who implicitly pit a more traditional system of exchange based on
mutual obligation between social equals and among hierarchically ranked kin relations
against a “modern” system of production, the proceeds of which are intended to support a
male vision.

In the transition from male-headed to female-headed households, young women
have not benefited. Their ideas about marriage, which can be characterized as a discourse
about love and providing commodities, are at odds with senior women’s conceptions of the nature and significance of bridewealth transactions and marriage alliances. The domestic and moneymaking labor of unmarried adult daughters and married daughters-in-law supports the ritual activity of elder women. Thus many posit that the domestic order in Senegal is marred by social payments, which are escalating out of control with no real productive outcome.
CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT THE MOTHERS EAT: THE ART OF DISPLAY AND SYMBOLIC PRODUCTION IN GIFT-EXCHANGE

*Jigeen day yaatu.*

Women must give proof of their generosity.

On a Friday in March of 1996, El Hadji Ousmane Gueye, the permanent secretary of the National Association of Imams and Oulémas of Senegal, distributed a sermon denouncing *gaspillage*, or squandering which was to be read simultaneously at the Friday sermon, or *xutba*, in mosques throughout Senegal. “God prohibits squandering,” the sermon read, condemning large gifts of cash exchanged by women during family ceremonies.\(^1\) Gueye’s denunciation however, was not targeted at the countless symbolic gestures of exchange made to forge bonds of kinship and marriage. Rather, he targeted large prestige prestations made between women who were as often not kin as kin—age mates in rotating credit unions, neighborhood, ritual and political

\(^1\) *Dieu proscrit le gaspillage*

associations—gifts given at naming ceremonies, weddings and funerals to show sympathy, aid and support to family and friends. Rather than squandering their cash at family ceremonies, Gueye urged women to support the zakat, funds collected by the Muslim hierarchy for health clinics, classrooms, and the poor.

Gueye’s sermon followed on the heels of a national declaration in 1996 condemning excessive expenditures during family ceremonies. The declaration was issued by the participants in a forum organized by the le Ministre de la Femme, de l’Enfant et de la Famille commemorating International Women’s Day. The forum addressed the changing fortunes of Senegalese families following the 1994 devaluation of the CFA³ currency. Members of the forum resurrected the popular 1980s epithet—les Senegalais sont fatigués (Senegalese are tired), which captured the national mood following the implementation of structural adjustment programs, and this time applied it to the practice of hefty sums of cash exchanged during naming ceremonies, weddings and funerals. The forum faulted the uniquely Wolof practice of returning the sums received at one’s own feast in double at their peer’s celebrations. Listeners were reminded of the Code de la famille, which has capped social payments since 1967. Ironically, the very same women who issued the declaration against gift exchange—leaders of women’s rotating credit unions—were responsible for the inflation of these gifts. Through participation in credit unions sponsored by development organizations, which matched women’s investments, they gained access to lump sums of cash to circulate at family

³ Communauté financière africaine
cereonies. The central contradiction these women were facing then was how to work the NGO's, with their liberal, grass-roots bias towards promoting women's groups, a source of women's political empowerment following state decentralization in the late 1990s, and how to masla, to respect the tradition of gifts. The masla is a hierarchical institution through which women forge their reputations for largesse enabling them to establish patron-client type relationships. What better way to masla than through massive sums obtained from rotating credit unions, which could only enhance the remittances of migrant brothers, husbands and sons?

There had also been calls by a prominent male psychologist to hold an ndëp, or exorcism, for women who continued to produce spectacular prestations of cash during these events. An ndëp involves the appearance of a masked figure representing a lion, which is said to scare the transgressive behavior out of an individual to cure social, mental and moral illness. This seemed like a strange prescription for an event that is rarely practiced overtly in the urban neighborhoods of Dakar. In fact, the ndëp has become more closely linked with youth associations who often sponsor an ndëp with its scary and funny lion chasing disobedient children through the streets to raise money for local soccer leagues. Thus calls for an ndëp to cure women of their financial ills seemed rather condescending.

Emergent social discourse, as reflected in the print media condemning women's give giving, suggests both moral outrage at these conspicuous and visible forms of

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4 See for further discussion of Ndep, Zempleni 1966.
monetary exchange in a society where money conventionally changes hands in the famous closed handshake known as the "Murid greeting" and suspicion towards female circuits of exchange, closed and impenetrable to the male clergy and elders, government ministries and non-governmental organizations. These ostentatious displays however, are particular to the urban areas and are attached to notions of Wolof honor. In Murid villages and in Tuba, family ceremonies are feted by the exchange of coins, not numerous bills, with the exception being the Tuba households of prosperous migrant traders who host many Dakar guests. Women however, rather than responding to the negative moral discourse developing talked of their fear that the visibility of their wealth made them targets of male youth who sought to steal these sums during chaotic and crowded feasts. Thus some women moved gift exchange into closed bedrooms separated from the crowd attending the feast.

These thefts suggest that discontent with women's wealth is not just an issue for the male-dominated religious clergy seeking to extend its influence over the domestic sphere, or a declining state budget interested in promoting "development;" but also deep-seated frustration on the part of the youth with the inability of the elders to provide for them. Though the debate over gift-exchange is about moral evaluations of the creation of wealth and the way in which value is bestowed on persons, relationships and objects.

To many, it may not seem like a bad idea to encourage charity towards the poor by donating sums to the Muslim hierarchy. Senegalese men invest heavily in the forms of

\[ nue murid \]
infrastructure, mosques, clinics, schools, and even porto-potties that bear their names and the name of their prayer circles abroad. Such generous displays of charity are the lynchpin in their quest for prestige—a sign of their ultimate salvation. Masculine grace is based on self-deprivation, turning one’s profits over to the Muslim clergy—stewards of their salvation. And indeed Senegalese women, like Senegalese men, devote money to the Muslim hierarchy in the name of charity. For men and women, wealth, or alal, which is expressed through generosity, is an essential aspect of honor and respect (Heath 1992:23). However, feminine grace is born out during family ceremonies: feasting and gift giving bring honor to a family who strives to reciprocate meals eaten and gifts given. And it is often said jigeen daay yaatu that women must give proof of their generosity. A woman’s good character, her jikko ju baax, is expressed in terms of her honor, restraint (in words and actions), patience, hospitality and generosity, jom, kersa, mun ak terranga. God will provide for those who give generously in charity and in hospitality.

Like men, women also link their notions of grace, of baraka and warsek, to larger transformations in the material world, the effects of which are seen not in large scale infrastructure projects in Tuba so much as in the distortion of gift exchange at home. Though women are still concerned with qualities of generosity underscored by reciprocal exchange, many are unable to match inflationary sums set by their peers triggered by the influx of remittances from overseas male kin. Reciprocity is increasingly deferred.

Though these migrant households may appear prosperous, networks of debt underpin such appearances. Therefore, women rely increasingly on qualities such as feminine beauty, underscored by conspicuous consumption, to signal ties to long distance
trade and the imagined possibilities of reciprocal gift exchange.\textsuperscript{6} For in fact, health, wealth and beauty are signs of grace. And it is the women who must transmit male honor at home.

As I discussed in chapter two, unlike localized agricultural production and dry season trading which characterized the early twentieth century Murid communes in which one knew who one was trading with—Muslim clerics from the north, Peul pastoralists, or French colonialists—trading today takes place in distant locations misunderstood by those at home. And as I discussed in chapter five, for women, housekeeping money appears in monthly lump sum remittances at the Western Union or is delivered by a visiting friend; they know little about the conditions in which it was earned. For men, this money is garnered by standing over tarps of hats, t-shirts and cassettes in wintry, hostile environments. For women the money is tied to notions of good fortune, for men, to ideas about suffering and eternal salvation.\textsuperscript{7}

An analysis of gift exchange in the context of a naming ceremony in a Murid household demonstrates how the currency of social relations—cloth, banknotes and other forms of value—speaks to shifts in the relation of production to consumption in contemporary urban Senegal. Despite the persistence of relations characterized by a

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{6} Appadurai (1999) describes a trend in gift exchange in the west based on the mail order catalogue “where gifts are imagined but never given or received...where all social reciprocity is imploded into the possible gift, and the possible relationship (1999:39).

\textsuperscript{7} There are, of course, numerous Murid women traders abroad. Eva Evers Rosander has researched Murid women in Tenerife, Spain and similarly argues for their emphasis on ostentatious exchange in contrast to more austere male investments.}
social hierarchy of caste, order and religious society based on principles of inequality and
domination (see for example A.B. Diop 1981, Irvine 1973, Biaya 2000), women also talk
about an influx of cash remittances and commodities (like cloth) and an appearance of
wealth enabled by these new sums and how that appearance is affecting relations of male
to female, young to old. The ethnographic material suggests a complicated relationship
between a concern for reciprocity based on the assumption of debt and pretensions to
consumerism based on the assumption of surplus. Chapters five through seven taken as a
whole show how debt, produced by cycles of gift giving, gets worked out through
borrowing cash and cloth for gift exchange and for display. In fact, the wealth that
women display on their bodies is often borrowed from kin or obtained through credit. But
what this borrowing permits is the expansion of a vast culture of credit upon which male
trade networks depend. For the men, it is not actual wealth in the form of material objects
that they are trading, but rather, reputation. Thus Senegalese women respect each other’s
honor, they have suutura, and they keep one another’s secrets like debt. For in fact,
money transfers often occur through informal networks of family and friends and one’s
word, one’s reputation and honor form the basis of credit not one’s actual solvency.
These households do not have enough money to meet their liabilities.

The ethnographic excerpt tells the story of a respected woman of means in the
community who is chosen to be an honorary mother for a child at a naming ceremony.
The newborn is conceived out of wedlock. When the pregnancy is discovered, the
marriage is tied quickly in the mosque but the feasts and reciprocal gift giving associated
with entering her husband’s home are delayed until the evening of the naming ceremony.
As the bride prepares to enter her husband’s home that evening her mother obstructs her departure. The ethnography then focuses on talk about the pace and sequence of the marital process and the naming ceremony and on how the crisis in domestic reproduction is resolved through symbolic means such as gift giving. The circulation of symbolic commodities during the naming ceremony and talk about the imagined possibilities of gift exchange becomes a form of symbolic production in the face of what could be characterized as a crisis of social production.

I focus on the ndeyal, a cash gift given to honorary mothers during family ceremonies, because it is emblematic of female grace, honor and reputation. The Senegalese print media has been rife with negative representations of this particular form of women’s gift-exchange. It is not uncommon to read headlines such as “Pourquoi de telles folies?” or “Lekku-ndeye: les dessous d’un commerce lucratif,” “Une violence contre les démunis,” or “La tyrannie du lekku-ndeye.”

The lekku-ndeye however is not a new category of gift; it has been given since Njajan Njai, the twelfth century king of Jolof Empire. The ndeyal is popularly criticized as the lekku-ndeye, the mother’s food. The lekku-ndeye, comes from lekk meaning food, u being possessive and ndeye, or mother. Many Senegalese cite the lekku-ndeye as the paramount example of the perversion of the system, of distorted gift exchange. What was once meant as a form of mutual aid has become a source of grave competition between age-mates and generational groupings.

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8 “Why this madness,” “Lekku-ndeye, beneath this lucrative commerce,” “A violence against the destitute,” and “The tyranny of the Lekku-ndeye.”
The lekku-ndeye is presented to the honorary mother for whom the newborn will become her namesake, or turrondo. When the namesake becomes engaged she will present her ndeye, or fictive mother, with 5.000 F CFA (for example). When the namesake has her first child, her fictive mother will “reimburse” her five or six times the amount.

The inflationary practice of the ndeyal goes hand in hand with the emergence of the urban feminine ideal of the drianké. The woman chosen to be the guardian of the namesake, and on whom the lekku-ndeye will be bestowed, is often a drianké, an urban Wolof woman and a local socialite. She is woman of beauty and largesse, her girth a sign of her wealth, who will incorporate the host family into the “jet-société.” T.K. Biaya, in his article on eroticism in Senegal (2000:715) describes the drianké as “a titillating, plump, and mature woman expert at thiuraye [a kind of insense].”

The word drianké, is a kind of slang term taken from the Wolof radical diri, which means to pull a load behind one or to keep on a leash and the pulaar suffix yanke or nke (soninke) which means the person who (Ndiaye 1999:274), so it is the woman who keeps other’s on a leash. Very often, this drianké, wearing the latest fashionable cloth, supporting enormous amounts of jewelry, a European handbag and shoes, appears at feasts only to encounter her hairdresser, manicurist, tailor and cloth vendor reeling in her line of credit. She is guilty of what is referred to as puukare, or borrowing for self-presentation, rather than participating in nesting hierarchies of patron client relations. Unlike the Mama Benz of the Togo marketplace, there is no real material basis underpinning her largess, she may trade shoes, cloth, handbags, perfume or jewelry, but
she is not known as a large and powerful controller of the market, she comes by her wares by the men she knows. She is a Dakaroise, known for her leisurely attitude and days filled with feasts and festivities.

The *drianké* stands in contrast to the ideal feminine type referred to as *sokna*, a senior woman, pious and virtuous, of noble origin; *sokna* characterizes the qualities of a woman in the post-monarchic, colonial agrarian epoch (Ndiaye 1998:274). It may seem like a contradiction, but for woman generally regarded as a *sokna* among her family and peers, to be chided about acting or looking like a *drianké*, especially when one is en route to a feast, is almost a compliment.

**The Art of Being a Drianké: The Naming Ceremony**

Sokna Geer’s\(^9\) son, Abdoul Aziz, drove her to the naming ceremony one morning in February three weeks before her husband would be departing for the hajj. Her son dropped her at the sandy bottom of the neighborhood whose homes with their high cement enclosures formed a maze up the hillside from which the residents of this cosmopolitan settlement looked down. His car, with the perpetual “for sale” sign on the rear window would go no further in these sandy ruts. Square cement homes, half-built icons of the wealth to be garnered abroad, formed a compact neighborhood popular among this new class—families dependent on remittances from migrant sons. These

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\(^9\) Sokna signifies a senior woman, pious and virtuous, of noble origin, a sokna characterizes the qualities of a woman in the post-monarchic, colonial agrarian epoch (Ndiaye 1999:274).
parents preferred their traditional compound style homes with open courtyards to the
government financed SICAP villas that had been popular among the *fonctionnaire*, or civil
service.

The PA system was already jolting the neighbors to attention with the high
pitched chanting of Murid litanies called *khassaid*, intermittently interrupted by *gewel*, or
casted praise singers,10 courting arriving guests. The loudspeakers signaled that this feast
was not only a celebration, but a *xeew bu maag*, a large event. The presence of a noted
Murid *rabb*, or religious *gewel* devoted to the litanies penned by Amadou Bamba, put the
early attendees, mainly senior men and women, in a state of spiritual bliss. In the course
of the day’s events, Sokna, sought to further her reputation as a person of means and
generosity—signs of grace—as the patron of the newborn and through the gifts she
would lavish on the birthmother’s mother, her age-mate. For she would be holding her
own feast in less than a month to commemorate her husband’s hajj and her honor would
be reflected in the guests who came to wish him well.

Sokna dressed in deeply hued folds of damask cloth, drunk with indigo—its rich
depth of color a product of the number of dippings into a mystical vat renowned for its
age and the fine skill of those who “feed” it. One could tell that this boubou was
debuting at this event by the deep creases in the length of the fabric caused by the heavy
starching of the gowns of seniors. Entering through the front gate of the home with its

10 “A caste of verbal specialists” (Irvine 1973), gewel praise for money and are attached to
particular families and/or their primary vocation is to find new patrons.
rooms facing the inner courtyard of fine gray sand, Sokna took in the white tent erected in its center, the large sheep tethered to the acacia tree, its gum Arabic once formed the foundation of this land’s wealth, and the several communally owned pots lying about in anticipation of the meal. These preparations spoke to the copious amounts that this modest household had spent to hold the naming ceremony. The birthmother’s father, Cheikh Caaya, a devout, but impoverished Muslim seriŋ, or scholar, sought both to sanction the birth of a child born out of wedlock, and to reach out to the prosperous migrant trader, Modou Baxa, the birthfather. Though the marriage had been “tied” (takki) with haste at the mosque upon discovery of the pregnancy, the day’s naming ceremony was planned to coincide with the departure of the adolescent birthmother, Penda, for her husband’s home (mur).

As the newborn was to be her namesake, Sokna Geer was the honored guest at this naming ceremony. Her relationship to this child would be like that of a paternal aunt. Sokna would provide her turrondo with clothing on her naming day and her first headscarf at puberty (Irvine 1973:272) as well as many other gifts as she deemed appropriate. Though she would be given money when her namesake became engaged to be married, the ndeyal, she would be expected to return to the family five or ten times that amount during the wedding feasts. Moreover, many would view the character of this

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11 Caaya are voluminous traditional pants worn by Wolof farmers.

12 Baxa is the color blue of the 5,000 F CFA note.

13 For further discussion of the marriage process, see chapter 6.
newborn girl in relation to Sokna’s character (Irvine 1973:272). Indeed, she was named after Sokna in the hopes that she would develop fine qualities of a *grand dame*—*jom, kersa, mun ak terranga*—honor, respect, patience and hospitality. Thus the Caayas had, like many others, named their grandchild after someone they esteemed to be of superior social rank, moral character, and material assets. The alliance pleased Sokna who had spoken warmly of Modou Baxa and his prospects. Her hoped for prosperity would be both a product of the grace she acquired from fulfilling her social duty and the sense of obligation that Modou Baxa would feel towards her for her guardianship of his child.

Traversing the courtyard in her tall shoes, which allowed her heel to dangle artfully off the back revealing its hennaed imprint, Sokna stopped occasionally to rearrange the voluminous white headscarf that had slid down the back of her glossy boubou. Gathering the ample cloth under her arm, Sokna headed towards Penda’s room where she found the newborn swaddled in strip cloth, which at one time would have been exchanged like money (Ames 1955)—the very same cloth worn by boys in circumcision school, by brides to cover their heads upon entering the bridegroom’s compound for the first time, and to shroud bodies for burial. Embracing the newborn, she looked up to see that Abdoul Aziz had entered the compound to pay his respects to the family and offer his hopes for continued health and prosperity. He departed abruptly speaking of some business contacts he had to make that morning and chuckling to his mother that the naming ceremony was *affaire-u-jigeen*, or women’s business.

As she began to shave the infant’s head in preparation for her naming, she heard that Penda had gone to the salon with her age-mates. She pursed her lips and made a
hissing sound to convey her displeasure. The tight bedroom was crowding with Sokna’s peers—members of her extended family, of her ritual association, and of her rotating credit union—in addition to those attending on behalf of the Caayas who had ties of kinship and affinity, residence, age and friendship. Restless, these women began to ask if they had missed the lakk, a millet and sour milk porridge prepared to welcome guests to rituals.

Now, Sokna Geer was known to remind her own daughters when they balked that their home was crowded with unknown guests, that such prestations of hospitality, in combination with offering drink, rest and conversation to guests, amplify one’s blessings on the spiritual plane. They symbolize openhandedness and incorporate strangers into the community. She was known to recall the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad which advised “jullid, day terral gunnam...bo amee gun, dinge am lo ko terrale;” that is, if one welcome’s guests into one’s home, God will grant one the means to show them hospitality. If one has no money, one gives cloth, if one has no cloth one offers two kilos of rice. Each time she handed over a portion of the family’s already meager supply of broken rice to a passing guest she would recall a story about the Prophet’s selfless generosity. When her children complained that her generosity was the reason for their hunger she would reply thus: walking down the road one day the Prophet encountered a stranger who had not eaten. Though the Prophet himself had only one date left, he offered it to the stranger. By sundown, the Prophet found himself with another date. It is in God, she reflected. One must give in order to receive.
Sokna commented that Penda had not neglected to have purple satin frocks made for her beds. She said mockingly that Penda, like most junior women, envisioned her naming ceremony as an event requiring a fine hairdo and multiple changes of clothing. Sokna inquired about the ritual paraphernalia and was nonplussed to find that the household had neglected to make these arrangements. *Yalla!* she said to a young girl to whom she handed 1,000 F CFA to purchase two razors and seven kola nuts at the corner boutique. Sokna sent other girls for the remaining gear: a calabash bowl, water and millet (*suna*, the early millet), all potent symbols of reproduction. When they failed to turn up the millet, Sokna turned to her agemates in disbelief. A turbulent discussion ensued and it was resolved that rice would make an adequate substitution. Pouring a cup of water into the calabash and placing a handful of rice into it with some salt Sokna said, “*ku xumbana nun nyep nyungi ko begg, bu bare warsek,*” those who are in motion are desired by all, this person will have a lot of luck, and adding “*xoorum, yengu moo saaf,*” salt bodes well for her movement in life. Meanwhile, two women seated on the bed drew highly arched eyebrows on the small infant in reflection of their own beauty. Satisfied with their effort, they passed her to Sokna who then took her namesake and began shaving the right side of her head holding it over the calabash to catch the hair in the water. After a long delay the young girl returned from the boutique with red kola nuts for long life and white kola nuts for good luck, which were thrown into the calabash after Sokna pocketed one for long life.

Working quickly to prepare the child for the ceremony, for the men had long been assembled; she was bedeviled by yet another interruption: three gewel sang her praises.
from the entryway to the room, which was now teeming with late morning guests anticipating the *lakk* porridge. Ready to dismiss these bards as profiteers, as those who travel from feast to feast and praise those whose family histories they do not know hoping to receive cash, or worse yet, those urban griot who steal bowls of food from the feast, Sokna looked up only to recognize her own family jewel standing among them. This woman would play an important role in facilitating Sokna’s participation in this feast. As people pushed in and out of the room, Sokna distributed the kola nuts now lifted from the calabash. The kola nuts were *sarak*, or alms (Gamble 1957:62). She then turned to Penda’s agemates and handed them a 5,000 F CFA note.\(^{14}\) The girls formed a barrier and watched the banknote fall to the floor. They demanded more. Then Cheikh Caaya pushed his way into the room shouting, “*damay mer,*” I’m angry, in response to the racket on the somber occasion of baptizing a child born to an unwed mother. He told Sokna to leave this “*affair u jiggeen,*” or women’s business and bring the child into the men’s room. Astonished and insulted by the young girls, Sokna handed over yet another 5,000 F CFA note, but they held tight, one among them demanded an additional 1,500 F CFA. The older women looked at one another in utter dismay. To save her honor, another older woman succumbed to the young girls demand and pulled three wadded 500 F CFA notes from under her waistband while the girls clapped and danced, pulling up their skirts to reveal their undergarments and stopping on the ground.

\(^{14}\) In February 2000, U.S. $1 = 700 F CFA. Sokna would spend about 1,200 F CFA a day to feed her household of about 12-15 persons.
Sokna pushed her way past the insolent girls heading towards the parlor. The deluge of sandals in the entryway spoke to Cheikh Caaya’s stature in this community. Sokna moved between the men seated on the floor mats towards the elder seriñ seated on a bed in the center of the room. She sat below him and held the newborn swaddled in its newly woven cloth. An imam sitting across from her on the floor leaned over and blew the baby’s name into its ear, then spat. The call to prayer was whispered into the newborn’s right ear and the lihan into her left. Sokna circled the room as the name was announced out loud so that others could touch the newborn’s head and exchange their blessings while kola nuts were passed around as alms.

In Penda’s room again she was met with a parade of offerings: Modou Baxa thanked her kindly with 10,000 F CFA note. Behind him Penda’s mother, Fatou carried in a lime green plastic washtub containing the butchered lamb with its feet pointing skyward and was followed by her gewel holding the stomach lining high over her head announcing the terranga that the family was showing Sokna Geer. Another senior woman followed them with a large bucket of sow, or sour milk and yet another woman brought an enameled bowl of millet porridge. The sow and millet were placed over the armoire where they would remain until evening and the meat, left below for guests to see, was protected with the stomach lining. As the newborn was spirited away, lest she fall prey to bewitching eyes, Sokna discovered that in the mayhem, she had neglected to shave the left half of the newborn’s head. Overextended and harried, she caught her family gewel and whispered instructions to her handing over a boubou (ten meters of
cloth), two 
pagnes, or strip cloth skirts, and 4.500 F CFA meant as 
dimbale, or assistance
for the new mother.

Large bowls of lamb and rice were placed in front of the women gathered on the
beds, in the courtyard and in the men’s room. The more quarrelsome women, impatient in
the confined room, but reluctant to take the time to move out into the courtyard,
positioned themselves around the platters, for most appreciated the respite from the daily
bowl of fried rice and fish. As one woman drew a spoon out of her handbag, the other’s
complained that the household could not provide all of guests with spoons, or at least
napkins for their gowns. Meanwhile bowls were also carried down the neighborhood
corridor destined for important neighbors and the destitute as alms.

Penda’s agemates rushed in with forlorn expressions. Their sabar, or dance with
the talking drums, had been cut short by the elder serîn. Cheikh Caaya reviled the
drumming that competed with his religious khassaid. He opposed these dances, which
consisted of highly sexualized challenges among age-sets and the passing of banknotes to
honor the victors. They were un-Islamic and inappropriate given the solemn tone he
intended to set for the awkward celebration of the child born to his unwed daughter.
Sokna took the opportunity to express her dismay at Penda’s prolonged absence. The
girls assured Sokna that they had been to check on Penda’s progress at the coiffure. In
fact they had videotaped and photographed themselves in the coiffure with Penda to
commemorate the occasion. Penda’s grandmother returned again offering to tibbal, or
give Sokna yet another bowl of lakk for her household. Pointing to the bucket already
over the armoire, Sokna thank her but refused the additional bowl. For a drianké was not
to appear too greedy; she always returned a portion of what was given to her with the
compliment that the giver had exceeded the requirements of honor and generosity.

By three o'clock most of the men had dispersed to perform their afternoon
prayers. They had fulfilled their obligation of bringing millet and small amounts of cash
to offset the expense of the ceremony, naming the child, sharing in the kola nuts and had
eaten well. For women, the naming was to really begin in the afternoon with the
formation of a large circle and a volley of prestige exchanges of cash and cloth. Women
continued to arrive only to meet rooms full of well-dressed women sporting flounces,
laces, embroidered and brilliantly dyed fabrics, their stacked hair-dos and pancake
makeup melting in the cramped, airless quarters. The only thing to do now is to wait for
Penda who was still at the salon. Women pulled various goods out of their bags—stands
of jell-jelli or bin-bin waist beads, pots of hand perfumed incense, skin lotions, and
sandals—which were admired and tried on. Women without wares talked of the cargo
they had stashed at home to sell, scarves from Mecca, insulated bowls from Jedda and
gold bracelets from India (though probably bought in New York). Women talked of their
various relations who had traveled to various places and the goods they anticipated upon
their return. They discussed what was and was not selling, what was fashionable and
what was new and never seen before. This was the seduction of the feast for the senior
women, they talked imaginatively of what they would wear given the means and of what
sanse, or dressing well, truly meant. What was not talked about however was that the
number of gifts they imagined giving and receiving would surpass their material ability to
reciprocate. And the gifts that did materialize were acquired through an expanding
culture of credit. This talk however, was enough to whet their appetite for the grand
exchanges that would follow once the birthmother arrived.

And arrive she did, like a runway model. This girl entered the courtyard with her
agemates licking at her heels pushing their heads into the various lenses of the cameras
and video recorders that young men in this burgeoning industry focused on Penda. Sokna,
to show honor and respect, raced up to Penda and threw down her headscarf. More
multicolored scarves fell to the ground forming a runway for Penda to sail down. Penda
sat at the center of the mats under the white tent next to her mother and a large suitcase
lying on its side. A circle of about 80 women closed in around them with the female
gewels working the outer reaches. Guests leaned forward to catch a glimpse of the
housewares and novel fabrics that were pulled from the suitcase, carefully, never lifting
the cover, never revealing its full contents. Gifts and cash flowed in and out of the
grandmother’s hands while one of Penda’s agemates recorded the transactions announced
by the jeweler in her notebook. Cash was placed on top of several pieces of strip cloth
rolled into cylinders as though the cloth were infusing the beholder’s reproductive
potential into the money itself. For these were lebbal, or debts and Penda would give
each of these women double the sum they had given her at the next naming ceremony or
marriage. Women gave their gifts (ndawtal) and received (njukkal) in kind, in double as
Wolof honor demands, and gave again, in kind or if willing, double. Now dark, women
complained that the tent eclipsed the light of the moon and cast shadows on the
exchanges. The event wound down either by the shear exhaustion of the women involved
or by the descending darkness.
The time had come to prepare Penda to officially enter Modou Baxa’s compound for the first time. Penda was young, too young her mother, Fatou had said, to leave her house just seven days following the infant’s birth. Penda was still in school she said and too young to handle the responsibilities required of a second wife, too new to motherhood and too new to marriage. Thus Fatou moved to obstruct the nocturnal rituals. Fatou protested the accelerated rate at which these ceremonies were occurring. By expediting the marriage, the groom would skip a major feast that would be held at Fatou’s home and the prestations accompanying it. Moreover, Fatou would be expected to bring various forms of “hospitality” to the marriage feast scheduled to take place the following day at Modou Baxa’s house, sums of cash in addition to Penda’s trousseau, things that Modou Baxa had yet to provide in the form of bridewealth payments. It was not agreed that the he had met these and other minor payments, such as payments to Penda for ornaments, to her mother, father, caste and age-group along with the provision of wedding paraphernalia like mats, that would occur during the courtship process. An abbreviated courtship process meant fewer payments of cash (which stands in for what would have been agricultural labor) to the future in-laws and fewer gifts of clothing and money to Penda (directly to her as opposed to bridewealth which is given to her mother).

Modou Baxa argued that the couple had already “tied” (takk) the marriage in the mosque and that it had been decided that following the birth of their child, that Penda would be moved to her husband’s home. It was on this point that the fight broke out. Sokna intervened on the side of the bride, for the baby was her turondoo, or namesake, and it was through the completion of social rituals like these that Sokna would inscribe
her eldership in the community. It was well after 1:00 am before Sokna Géer finally alighted from the taxi in front of her home. From the brown light of the taxi Sokna withdrew cylindrical packages of cloth while the driver pulled out the large green plastic washtub of meat from the trunk. Sokna threw two pieces of gauzy Khartoum cloth in her daughters’ direction. Her son took the tub of meat from the driver and as he carried it towards the pantry she admonished him to lock the door carefully for bandit—teenage thugs—were likely to make off with the meat during the night. She then lowered herself into a nearby chair to exchange her heals for the plastic sandals that would allow her to perform her ablutions, which she had missed in the days bedlam. She examined the two remaining pieces of cloth. One was a wax print and the other a chupe boubou, damask cloth dyed in red and blue triangles. She unrolled the chupe piece, held it up, and then threw it towards another daughter passing by; she had been given a petit boubou, to short and too narrow for her matronly body and social stature. “Cho rekk,” she said, the naming ceremony she had attended that day had only brought trouble.

The Currency of Social Relations: Cloth, Banknotes and other Forms of Value

Days after the feast, Sokna hashed over the events with her peers who frequented her home bringing with them the latest gossip, their newest trade wares and pleas for aid. The senior women dismissed Fatou’s protests against the hasty marriage. How could she expect a long and fruitful courtship for a daughter already pregnant? For Fatou then, the marriage of her daughter, rather than providing her a forum for prestige exchanges and gifts, served as a warning that even completed processes of social production, in this case
the success of her daughter’s marriage the wealthy Modou Baxa, would not ensure her eldership. Rather, Fatou wasroundly ridiculed among her peers for her machinations concerning her daughter’s unexpected pregnancy and swift marriage. And it was Sokna whose eldership was confirmed through the healthy payment following the marriage feast. Thus it could be said that it was Sokna who ate Fatou’s portion of the marriage payment.

The process of mediation underlying value forms like cloth and banknotes and the process of re-articulating value in a community fragmented by migration concerns me in this analysis. How is it that Sokna inscribes her role as an elder and a drianke among her peers? How does Cheikh Caaya ensure the marriage of his daughter and Modou Baxa all the while Fatou fights against the eclipsing of bridewealth payments and an accelerated pace of life cycle rituals? Where they are going structurally remains in question and it remains to be seen whether or not Penda will benefit from her marriage to Modou Baxa. Will she receive regular remittances that permit her to participate in redistributive networks such as gift exchange? Will he return to Senegal on a regular basis permitting her to continue to produce children? How are we to understand production in Senegalese Murid communities given the breakdown of a male centered model of development based in agriculture and state patronage and the emergent high visibility of women as the possessors and controllers of a family’s wealth? The ethnographic data demonstrates that domestic processes are proceeding not in terms of male hierarchical relations but rather in terms of home, women and non-governmental organizations.
The crisis of social production, in this case the naming ceremony that is held before the marital process is completed, is worked out through symbolic means. The coupling of the naming ceremony with the nocturnal rituals associated with entering the husband’s compound for the first time suggests that for Penda, the naming ceremony was the marriage. In fact, this feast marked Penda’s first foray into the arena of ritualized exchanges as a married woman, the exchanges were recorded in a notebook as her first set of debts which she would endeavor to honor at subsequent feasts, the obligation of married women.

The crisis of social production is also resolved through the consumption of emblematic commodities during gift exchange. The gift’s significance lies in its capacity to convey (jottali) the prestige and the reputation of the giver (Curtin 1975:287-8) as well as esteem and respect for the receiver. Here relations of kin and community are constituted and reconfigured. Phillip Curtin describes pre-colonial Wolof gift exchange as based on an idea of “one of each.” He describes the highest prestige gifts as being composed of the greatest number of different goods where even the multiplier had a certain ritual significance, since it was often divisible by either two or ten.

“Even the multiplier had a certain ritual significance, since it was often divisible by either two or ten, and the value of the multiple gift has extended down to the present, where a Senegambian gift consisting of two silver coins, two robes, two kola nuts and two sarooji (cloth) will carry much more weight than the same value in cash.” (1975:288)

Today, substances of local production associated with the domestic sphere, such as millet, and prestige items, which stand as spacio-temporal condensations of global cities, such as imported cloth, get exchanged together. One of each then suggests a
synthesis within a dialectic. Imported merchant goods serve as a global map. They work to locate one in the male trade networks, and the locally produced substances locate men and women, young and old within the domestic sphere.

In the domestic sphere today, (Curtin refers to ceremonial gifts made between Wolof aristocrats and the French colonizers) male guests make discreet presentations of cash intended to offset the cost of the ceremony. This sort of exchange takes place in closed handshakes and often in private. Male kin may also bring *rûj*, a millet porridge, for the newborn or its cash equivalent.

Women bring potent media of exchange such as bath soap, baby cereal, sugar, clothespins, laundry soap and other kinds of housewares to aid the new mother and to symbolize her reproductive potential. They also bring strip cloth, which is used to swaddle the newborn, its power lies in its ability to shield the baby and protect her from bewitching eyes. This is also the cloth worn as an underskirt by senior women, often in layers of two, three or even five and one sits with legs splayed out in front to make the various garments visible. Strip cloth is made from cotton woven by lower caste males, or *nënyo*, in narrow strips two meters long and 1.5 meters wide (depending on the width of the narrow loom), eight of which are sewn together to form two-meter lengths. In pre-colonial Senegambia strip cloth, *ser* in Wolof, *pagne* in French, was used as currency (Curtin 1975:237). Equivalences were made between the cloth taken as a whole or its constituent strips and other marketable commodities, such as livestock, and even bridewealth. These systems of equivalences, Curtin argues, contained a suggestion of numerology where the steps were almost always 2 or 10.
“Taken as a whole, these systems of equivalences contained a suggestion of numerology, since the steps were almost always multiples of 2 and 10, but each was also a system of comparative values that linked food, labor and social values.” (1975:239)

*Mechanics of Ndawtal*

These gifts are exchanged in the large circle formed for the *ndawtal*, the cash gift. First, smaller gifts are given to the birthmother and her mother such as those mentioned above—clothespins, baby baths, soaps, porridges (such as Gerber), and sugar. These gifts could also be given outside of the baptismal ceremony, during a visit to the hospital following the birth of the child or at home on a later date. Secondly, female guests offer the birthmother the *ndawtal* for which cash and cloth are often coupled together. As described in the narrative, the gift may be discussed beforehand with one’s griot who mediates the exchange, announcing the quantity and quality of the gift praising both giver and recipient. She either moves from the outer sphere of the circle to convey the gift to the inner sector, or forms a chain with other griots passing the gift to the center. Her praise is also rewarded with cash donations. This activity may take several hours in the late afternoon and while it is going on women have their portrait taken by roving photographers who develop the pictures at local photo labs within the hour and return them to the women for a payment of 500 FCFA to 1,000 FCFA. In addition, women often carry smaller goods on them, perfumes, waist beads and the like to show to their clients participating in the baptism.

A peer of the birthmother records the cash sum in a notebook, which the new mother will refer to on future occasions. For example, if Penda receives 5,000 F CFA (a
respectable sum, 2,000 F CFA being the minimum one would give in 1999) at the naming ceremony for her child, she will record 5,000 F CFA in her notebook next to the name of the woman who gave it to her. At that woman’s baptism (or funeral or marriage) she will give her 10,000 F CFA in return; 5,000 F CFA to repay the initial loan (lebbal) and 5,000 beginning a new loan to her agamate. If the recipient of the *ndawtal* is not able to reciprocate the sum at the next event hosted by the gift-giver, the “debt” is meted out in various ways, usually under more quotidian circumstances such as taxi fare and other forms of hospitality like buying colas or bissap, lending or donating one’s own clothing and jewelry, buying the gift-giver’s wares during social calls or simply giving her smaller sums of cash as the need arises for daily expenditures. Moreover, leniency or forgiveness in the sphere of social “debt” could spill over into mutual participation in a rotating credit union; one woman could cover another’s contribution as a gesture of friendship, an implicit nod to the debt still not worked out. Over time, these small gestures of respect and mutual good will could amount to more than the actual cost of “repaying the debt” in the context of the next family ceremony. Thus the desire of women to “repay the debt” at the next ceremony, if at all possible, to keep as many women as possible “in debt” to oneself so that it can be worked to one’s advantage in these small ways that make a difference in a difficult economic climate.

As I alluded to in chapter five and in the introduction to this chapter, the *ndawtal* is a highly contested form of gift exchange. Many women laud the capacity of gift exchange to produce ties of mutual solidarity, aid and reciprocity. It is after all this method of working out the debt that enables women to afford things they may not be able
to save up on their own to acquire. Many men attack the practice calling it ostentatious and wasteful.

The Muslim clergy encourages families to clip these extensive payments and to invest in healthcare, nutrition and sanitation rather than clothing, personal beauty (especially xessal or skin lightening cream, which is officially prohibited by the Murid clergy) and housewares. During the colonial era the Gouvernement General de L’A.O.F. attempted, in unison with the Grand Imanat de Dakar, to abolish these payments outright in a document, *Réglementation Générale*,¹⁵ which permits on 500 F CFA to be donated to the birthmother as “frais de soins sanitaires.” The document prohibits further payments permitting families only to slaughter a sheep, to prepare two large bowls of porridge, two large bowls of beignets and a pitcher of ginger beer. Furthermore, the document prohibits griots and members of the Lawbe (woodworking caste, also known for erotic dances during the baptismal sabar) from attending baptisms. Presumably, this latter prohibition is intended to stem large payments often given to these casted groups for their participation.

At the same time, the principles of female beauty and personal cleanliness, good housekeeping, hospitality and submission are the historical product of Islam. I will return to this discussion below. M. Savineau notes as early as 1939 the remarkable neatness of the Muslim persons and their compounds in the region of Senegal. And this neatness of

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the person and the home is itself a form of piety, of respect for oneself as a creature of
God, and of an urban cosmopolitanism ushered in by Islam.

*Fashion, Consumption, Consumerism and Eroticism*

Today, Curtin’s characterization of Wolof gift exchange, as “one of each” appears
to translate into an upwards-spiraling consumerist cult of gift giving. Not only are the
kinds of gifts spiraling, but the number of recipients as well. The *ndeyal* is often divided
among several women who have been chosen as the honorary *ndeye* and portioned out in
multiples of 2, 5, 10 and 12 for which there is great competition.16 The amount each of
these “mothers” receives will be multiplied by 2, 5, 10 or 12 (2 is currently in vogue) and
similarly returned at the next ceremony. Deborah Heath’s work on Wolof fashion in the
rural region of Kayoor suggests similar trends in consumerist practices, “*sanse*, as
fashion, certainly appears to reflect the hegemony of capitalist consumerism” (1992:21).
Roland Barthes (1983 [1967]) in *The Fashion System*, has similarly argued that fashion is
the creation of new goods and new needs intrinsic to capitalist commodity production.

As I discussed in three, an important aspect of gift exchange is the *suutura*,
concealing one’s and others indebtedness, to preserve reputation as a person of “means,
honor and restraint” (Heath 1992:23). Rising consumerist impulses and the inflation of
social exchanges hinges not only on remittances and overseas development funds from
non-governmental development organizations but also on the creation of social and

financial credit as well through personal relations. By lending one’s presence to a ceremony, one is participating in a kind of virtual exchange of reputation and creditworthiness. Credit worthiness can be expressed by the outward dimensions of self through clothing, coiffure and cosmetics. These luxe items can be obtained, as Heath points out, through reciprocal circuits of exchange, through friends and patrons or the Murid transnational circuits of exchange organized by male disciples. As Heath argues, “such gift-giving, like the performance of sanse that it may facilitate, is important to a woman’s reputation for largess” (1992:22).

“To have wealth and to dispense it generously are important elements of high social standing. To display it too ostentatiously, however, would run counter to the Wolof notion of kersa [restrain]. So it is that women, through sanse, may transmit (jottali—see Irvine 1973) the message that their male kilife are men of means, at the same time allowing the latter to behave with appropriate reserve.” (Heath 1992:24).

Machine made cloth, like other imported merchant goods, also sets up social hierarchies. One knows where to locate women based on the style of their garments, if it is an out of date fashion, one can bet it was passed down from an older sister. If it is an abaya, a more tailored version of the ten meter boubou innovated by the likes of Vivienne Ndour in her popular music videos, sewn from cloth imported from Paris, Jeddah, India and the U.S. then one can presume ties to a prosperous brother or husband. These cloths come into and go out of fashion on a monthly basis. For example, in January 2000 burned out velvet was the style, in February women had discovered painted silks from India and by the time pilgrims returned from the hajj in late March, women were vying for the gold embroidered sheer silks from Jeddah. In that time, French brocades came and went as well. Women’s prestige lies in displaying these imported and often
factory made fabrics—their uniqueness place of origin and that they can be seen on the person before they are found in the market.

The fashion conscious nature of a cloth’s popularity as acquired through diasporic networks suggests the growing role of conspicuous consumption and display in the creation of reputation and honor, in addition to one’s capacity to give and to reciprocate what is received. These commodities are intimately linked to ideas about women’s bodies and about reproduction; they embody a certain commodification of desire; class, status and prestige being tied to esteem for large families and social networks. For example, Penda received a set of three stacking insulated bowls with lids upon her marriage, which promise to keep food warm for up to twelve hours. Penda talked imaginatively of filling the bowls with rice and fish and setting them in her husband’s room to eat should he return late from the market and miss the family meal. These bowls, carefully and conspicuously placed over her armoire, would be the subject of much conversation during social visits. But her husband would not be eating his meals at home, because he would be living abroad trading. Yet, the bowls speak to her status as a married woman. The bowls also speak to her virtue as a good wife, one who has mastered the art of keeping house as well as of mokk pooj, or seeing to her husband’s needs, which I discussed in chapter four.

In the context of the naming ceremony, commensality and consumption are forms of sociality among these women. Borrowing, trying on and purchasing each other’s wares and flattery of the potential buyer by exclaiming that by possessing the object, she is “dressing well,” is a domestic art. Thus, these women are not just selling goods; they are
relying on the aesthetics of the commodity to convey social values such as honor, prestige and solidarity. Women are drawn to objects that are unique, to set themselves apart from others and to achieve distinction. Bourdieu’s notion of taste and distinction are relevant here in terms of understanding how women use these objects of beauty to draw class boundaries. Through the art of knowing what to consume, women set the terms of social relations, those who honor each other and their families by dressing well objectify their high status, but in order to do so, they must incur debt to others to obtain the goods.

That Sokna expressed misgivings about with Penda’s overwhelming interest in sanse, in the art of looking good suggests that junior and senior women configure their social persona differently in this context. This disjunction between age groups points to structural shifts and to generational shifts within a longer history. Sanse is about looking good to other women, and Penda, as a young woman initiating exchange relationships would certainly be held to a higher standard than an older woman who had already established their credibility. Sanse can also be a means of showing respect for those with whom you are endeavoring to enter into relations of reciprocity, of obligation, debt and mutual aid. Certainly, sanse is a means of conveying male honor. Sanse shows that sons and husbands are sending remittances, which is a source family honor. A woman who succeeds in the art of being a drianké shows that her male relations—her husband, her brothers and her sons—have provided for her and thus that she is in a position herself to distribute largesse.

However, Penda’s lack of deference towards her elders, with respect to ritual payments and the actions of her peers, and the way in which she understood hospitality as
beauty, a nice bedroom, rather than as liberality, showed a degree of self-interest. Penda is depicted by the senior women as displaying a kind of selfish consumerism even though Penda is doing exactly what the senior women are doing at the naming ceremony; she is creating a social persona. Penda’s model of beauty is not the senior women at the naming ceremony, nor is it a more traditional Muslim ideal of beauty emanating from the north, so much as it is American pop stars and of styles she has seen in the weekly television program “Style et Mode” and as such the consumerism of junior women points to a world beyond Senegal. Sokna’s exasperation towards Penda suggests uneasiness with a shifting between consumption and reciprocity in the contemporary moment.

The generation gap between Sokna and Penda does not merely raise the question of self-fashioning in the neoliberal era where identities are forged in relation to the consumption of particular brands. Sokna and Penda’s unease also points to fundamentally different approaches to sexuality, eroticism, reproduction and appropriate ways of attracting men. I began this chapter with a discussion of Sokna as a kind of drianké. Though fashioning oneself as a drianké absent the means to pay for the goods one wears is valued negatively by Senegalese men and women alike, there are also desirable aspects of the drianké figure such as her erotic mastery as discussed by T.K. Biaya (2000). Her erotic arts, or “thiuraye” as they are called referring to the sensual deployment of incense, include bethio, or scented waistcloths embellished beautifully with skilled embroidery, appliqué and cutwork, hardanger and drawn work or manipulating threads to create a design. These waistcloths are also sometimes embroidered with vulgar imagery, an erect penis or a woman’s reproductive organs. In addition, the drianké strings fragrant beads
known as fer about her waist, which are produced locally by older women from clay, cinnamon, myrrh, frankincense and other organic substances and sold in the market. Such erotic deployments do not necessarily run counter to Islam, or at least certainly not Maraboutic or Sufi Islam, of which the Murids are emblematic. It was through Muslim trade routes that perfume was introduced into the region. Biaya also suggests that incense used in Islam healing practices took on sensual qualities, stimulating “creativity in the erotic imagination” (2000:714). It was also through Islam that the idea of the fully clothed body came about. Though cloth has long been a sign of wealth in the region (see for example Curtin), with Islam its amleness now became an erotic tool. Beauty and sexuality are not found in the nude body but rather when accessorized and properly prepared “in such a way that blurs the distinction of the cosmetic and the organic” (Biaya 2000:788).

Penda, on the other hand, would scoff at such old-fashioned displays of sexuality. For her age group were known as the diskettes, a word derived from disco used to describe tall, slender, young beauties spotted in the big discos in the urban center of Dakar (Biaya 2000:715). Biaya tells us that her sexuality is crafted from images appearing in local magazines such as Ebony and Amina and television shows on TV5 such as Style et Mode. Biaya suggests that “less expert than the mature, full-figured drianké, the diskette nonetheless carries a double erotic charge: a body type with global erotic purchase, stamped with the thiuraye seal of erotic sophistication and craft” (2000:715). Young women like Penda wear their sexuality not in hand crafted beads but in “shimmering, multicolored pearls (bine bine),” (Biaya 2000:716).
From Sokna’s perspective, it was exactly this kind of representation of sexuality, emulating magazines and television that got Penda into trouble. As I discussed in chapter four, one who excels in the art of thiuraye is mokk pooj, which is to say that she as also succeeded in the art of seduction. Sokna was definitely, mokk pooj. And for older Senegalese men and women, seduction and submission are two sides of the same coin, which is exactly why as a strategy, mokk pooj is so successful. Penda’s sexuality was contained in her clothing, her walk and her waistbeads, not within the realm of marriage, mutual aid and support, and certainly not beholden to hierarchies of age and gender. It was an image and an appearance not a sentiment or a passion, the kind of which could lead to productive social relations.

In the context of this naming ceremony, women’s consumption becomes a form of production. The commodities do not stop at the person because women channel them into redistributive networks. Even if women cannot directly reciprocate the ndawtal, or cash gift, at a subsequent feast, it exists as an obligation and people will talk about it as a real debt and it will get worked out in lesser ways, as I mentioned, through mutual aid by purchasing one another’s merchandise. So the kind of commerce taking place at the naming ceremony as the women waited for Penda to arrive is an example of another form of sociality and working out of relations of debt, obligation and mutual aid. Forms of conspicuous consumption then don’t stop with the person they are tied to a notion of prosperity and to one’s grace or baraka. Consumption in this forum makes one a magnet for social relations but it is a double edged sword because these relations have to be sustained.
Conspicuous consumption is about the assumption of surplus that is at odds with the reality of rising household debt. In this way the sign of wealth becomes detached from its referent. Money becomes less linked to the material substance of wealth. And this process is one of the fundamental features of neoliberalism that ideas about debt and surplus are at odds with reality. Diaspora has changed nature and composition of family and social processes like marriage and naming ceremony. As an agricultural community these households depended on extended relations of kin and forging of alliances through marriage to cultivate the land. Today, these families rely on remittances from male migration abroad. Hence as young men spend longer periods of time overseas in order to support their households in Senegal, their marriages are occurring later in life (Antoine et al 1995) and naming ceremonies are often taking place outside of or before the marital process can be completed. One reason that these social processes are not being completed is that junior men lack the material means to sustain the exchanges required by these events, such as bridewealth. Due to these changes in the nature of work, commodities have come to play a major role as social media in Senegal as the home shifts from the primary site of production to the primary site of consumption. Furthermore, as the distance between wealth and work spreads male productive efforts abroad become ever more distant, vague and misunderstood.
CONCLUSION

THE ABSENCE OF MEN AND THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN

A young black man is selling stylish silver and organic stone jewelry behind a table and under a tent from which rods of silver necklaces fall. It is 11:15 pm at the Wisconsin State Fair and the midway is roaring with young men and women from the surrounding rural areas who, having shown their Belgians and Draught Horses and competed for prizes and a ride around the coliseum with the Draught Horse Queen, are now strutting down the midway in their new jeans and clean boots their pony tails swinging with every step. The young black man is wearing a non-descript clean black t-shirt and pressed jeans in an ample cut. Though he is also from a rural area, he is more familiar with the crowd moving along the midway, the brightly colored lights and the grilled foods than with the livestock exhibitions. The midway crowd takes him back to the festive atmosphere of the Magal de Tuba, when the young men and women come out at night to revel in the large carnivalesque crowd. He is not familiar with the swine pavilion or the pig races, nor is he familiar with the prize steers, hogs and sheep and the enormous impact those prizes have on the prospects of the farm families who raise them.

On the edge of this young man’s stall, a slender young Senegalese woman leans her shoulder against a post, her arms folded across her chest, her red floral
rayon boubou hanging from her tired frame. Her face conveys that she is ready to move on, maybe to the *ker Murid* where they will pass the night in the company of other Murid traders attending the fair, maybe to the next state or county fair, and maybe back home.

It is not so much the young man who catches my eye. He is one of several other Senegalese men I have passed on the midway all selling the same necklaces. These traders are a familiar part of the urban landscape of Chicago now, selling their wares at city festivals and farmer’s markets in the Loop business district. But the woman, standing off to the side draws me in; she is not wearing jeans and does not have her hair in braided extensions. Nor is she old or tough; she does not give the appearance of being a market woman. She could be any ordinary woman in any home in Senegal.

I do as I always do when I spot someone from Senegal; I walk up to her saying “*Assalam Malekum*” I pause, curtsey slightly with a cursory bending of the knees and extend my hand to greet her. The woman becomes erect, opens her mouth wide and placing her hand in front of it screams “*laaayyyyy*.” Her tired face falls into a warm smile. She calls to her partner, “*kay wyyu sa mbokk,*” she says to the young man, “come respond to your family” and though it is unclear whether she means me, as a *waα Mbacke* or a person of Mbacke or herself, as his classificatory sister, he looks at me and looks away. He too has seen many women like me, Peace Corps volunteer he says, or is it that she is from the University; they all speak Wolof he says abruptly. The woman is still holding my hands and I look around and have the double comfort of the midway and the livestock expositions, and shaking the hand of another *waα Mbacke*. I grew up on the scene of the
Erie Country fair, the largest of its kind in the country, I ask her if she has been and tell her that is where my ancestors are. I tell her this and more I am excited to meet another woman who can read the cultural terrain of my life as I have read hers. I am now the native informant, I want to take her to the goat pavilion and show her the Nigerian dwarf goats. I want to introduce her to the corn dog and to bratwurst.

She is no longer bored; she tells me that she is from Louisiana, New Orleans in fact. She and the other Murid traders are traveling together covering the state and county fair circuit for the summer. The tour was arranged by their shaykh in Louisiana. He has organized the itinerary, travel, accommodations, meals and fees. She said it is difficult to make money at the fairs because the fees for booths are so high.

This has become a cliché in anthropology of course, that our interlocutors are as involved in our worlds as we are in theirs. And indeed, Senegalese diasporics are bound up in complicated affairs that I have not discussed at length in this dissertation. For there are in addition to what I have written about, complicated love affairs, marriages, children and the accompanying sagas of immigration and other issues related to degrees of legality and illegality. Bound up in these issues of multi-national families are the concomitant issues of race and religion.

For example, Kuczynski (1988) writes about a French woman who visits a Senegalese shaykh in the hopes that he will be able to return her lover to her, a Senegalese man. The woman, whose Kuczynski calls Marie, agrees on a sum to pay the shaykh for his services. For Marie, the payment to the shaykh represents a binding obligation. He will intervene and produce some result within a given amount of time, the
efficacy of which is entirely contingent upon the price paid for the consultation. Marie expects a result in a reasonable amount of time and is not sold on the idea of waiting for the grace of God.

Shaykhs, however, do not operate openly; they conduct their work in secret, whether it be gathering materials for an amulet—hyenas hair, skins, teeth and medicinal powders—or preparing Koranic scripts to be folded inside, to be washed over the body or to be ingested with water. When a client asks how much the shaykh expects for his services he may suggest an approximate price, which price may or may not be open to negotiation. He may also refrain entirely from entering into this kind of commercial exchange. He will say that the amulet is very effective and the materials are difficult to procure and will require much scholarly labor, which usually means working at night and in secrecy, fasting and/or feasting but ultimately refusing to put a price on his mystical labors. He may also refuse to put a time limit on the efficacy of the amulet; he doesn’t know when it will begin to work its magic or when it will wear off. The problem this poses for the client is complex: she offers a price commensurate with the seriousness of her problem, and hopes ultimately that a higher price will result in a more powerful amulet. At the same time, the shaykh is wary of such approaches himself as his charms depend in large part on the grace of Allah, he says, and he can not promise that a large payment will result in answered prayers. What makes some accuse the shaykh of setting up a commercial relationship is not the acceptance of cash at all, but the guarantee of efficacy and the setting of time limits. The guarantee is what is being exchanged, it is what garners a higher price and it is the heart of the market relationship.
In general, shaykhs will refuse to set time limits or to guarantee efficacy saying rather that it is only by the grace of God that prayers are answered, but they will say that the materials that are most effective as offerings or sacrifices cost a given amount and suggest that the price be commensurate with the labor and materials involved, rather than the baraka of a particular shaykh. For example, the price may cover the cost of sacrificing an animal, most popularly a chicken. Of course everyone knows that shaykhs with the most demonstrated baraka command the highest payments for their labors.

Though Kuczynski’s article about love, African style, is based on a mixed marriage, between a French woman and a Senegalese man, it resonates with the themes raised in the dissertation. First, we are no longer dealing with a world—with communities and families—that are solely Senegalese, or even Murid for that matter. The worlds in which Senegalese traders make their lives are everywhere punctured by relations with those outside of the Muslim umma. Second, what I hope to suggest by incorporating this story is that the economizing logic that shoots through these narratives, what will be the return on my cash gift, am I getting my money’s worth with this shaykh, is tempered by a constant concern for attaining the Murid and Wolof virtues of patience, hard work, and confidentiality.

In addition to complicated family and love affairs, there is so much more to write about with respect to the Murid experience in the diaspora. Indeed, I have said little about how the Murids constitute themselves as a diaspora. In my next ethnographic research project I would like to return to New York as the Murid community has changed considerably since I lived in Brooklyn from 1993 to 1994. Restaurants that were located
in second floor apartments have moved down to the street level and opened up to the
wider community, selling the cuisine and the idea of Senegal and Amadou Bamba at
once. The Murids have built a house on 125th street and according to many, have been the
driving force behind the revitalization of that neighborhood (Beck, www.mica.org). As I
have argued, the idea of the house is a significant one for Murids. This house contains a
community center and a space for da’ira meetings on the first floor. It also provides a
space for prayer. The second floor is a residence for visiting dignitaries and shaykhs. In
addition to the concrete community structures that Murids have built up, a number of less
visible institutions have emerged as well. I am told that Murid women now hold major
feasts, naming ceremonies and weddings that rival those given in Senegal. Thus one
would want to inquire further into the relations of debt and mutual obligation that span
the Atlantic.

Additionally, many events have taken place in the Geer family since I first began
writing the dissertation in the fall of 2000. One of the sons had moved to Houston where
he met his wife, a Senegalese woman who had also been living in Houston. A close
family friend joined the Marines and was sent to the Middle East following the events of
September 11th 2001. And the oldest daughter, Jigeen has now been living in Queens,
New York for two years. As a commerçant, she returns to Senegal every six months to
renew her visa and shop her wares. She also spends time with her school-aged children
who are being raised by their grandmother, Sokna. Another son has left the family fold to
join his brother in Milan where they will work side by side in a factory.
Through ethnographic narratives I have analyzed gendered and generational stakes in transnational trade networks organized by the Muridiyya and manifold ideas home, both as a physical space and as an ideal place, by looking at varying ideas about the use of remittances by household members and the inflation, monetization and commodification of social exchanges. As a physical space, the home is a sign of male wealth and prosperity. As an ideal place, the home is a form of value because of the relations it houses. A home is made and kinship ties are produced through hospitality, feasting and gift giving during family ceremonies such as marriages, baptisms and funerals, all of which take place in the home.

The dissertation research cuts across a long-standing interest in African Studies (History and Anthropology in particular) in household production and the gendered division of labor (see for example Berry 1985). This project responds to anthropological studies of the gendered division of labor in Africa and the structures of production centered in the home that do not consider the domestic political and that do not consider the symbolic and moral dimension of the more mundane economic processes. The dissertation is also concerned with challenging studies of Islam in West Africa, which have principally been concerned with saints, clerics and chiefs but not necessarily the relationship between women’s and men’s Muslim practices and certainly not the relationship between the moral and material dimensions of these practices.

The historical literature on Islam in West African communities tends to focus on these shaykhs and their organization of economic production. French colonial ethnographies (Marty 1917) and studies of conversion to Islam in West Africa (Hiskett
1984) have relied on textual exegesis, biographies of men of God (wali) (Creevey 1979, Norris 1990, O’Fahey 1990) and a commitment to the charismatic basis of their leadership (Cruise-O’Brien 1975) to explain the emergence of Muslim social movements. The theoretical focus on the Murid Sufi order is almost exclusively on the relationship between agricultural labor and Murid religious doctrine. However, labor in the domestic sphere is equally important for the ways in which it shapes and is shaped by these wider worlds. The archival and scholarly literature offers rich description of the social world beyond the groundnut fields allowing us to re-read Murid history from the perspective of the changing composition of Wolof society in the context of wider developments affecting French colonial West Africa.

I want to draw together the insights from research in the area of gender, kinship and the family (Berry 1985, Collier and Yanagisako 1987, Rosaldo 1974), and studies of domesticity (Comaroff 1992, Hansen 1992, Mack 1992) and homemaking (Austen 1814, Wiley 1996) with the making of homes in Senegal by men and women and the very different idea of home that each has developed in relation to their particular insertion into global economic processes (i.e. men through migration and trade, women through feminization of development projects). As such, I take up gender and sexuality as primary category of analysis to illuminate transformations in the nature and operation of Senegalese households and the relations they encompass. The gendered disjuncture in the idea of the home and the gendering of forms of value (such as the home, housewares, and cloth), and consumption more generally (e.g. Auslander 1996) that convey different ideas about the community and its future, both informs and is informed by transformations in
the global economy such as the feminization of development, the changing nature of work, and the velocity of money and other commodity transfers that are a fundamental feature of the neoliberal moment. Virginia Woolf’s “angel” also embodies the unseen spirit of women’s social obligations, to maintain the home and to nurture those in it. For Senegalese women, merchant goods, porcelain figurines, bowls and hostess sets, come to stand for complete families that in reality are nothing more than a collection of broken bonds. For Senegalese men, the cement brick homes solidify their aspirations for elderhood. The dissertation project looks at the tension between male incorporation into overseas commodity networks and the incorporation of women at home into the development projects of non-governmental organizations.

In this dissertation I have argued that the domestic is political. I have also argued that the substance of the nation-state, religious institutions and global economic processes are intertwined with domestic politics. I have shown through ethnographic narratives that there is a politics of value at play here; women invest themselves with embodied, consumable forms of value such as clothing and makeup whereas men invest themselves in house-building. In addition, I have shown how domestic reproduction itself, as represented by these contentious forms of the house and the female body, is a value.

The neoliberal moment in Senegal can best be characterized as a set of contradictions: increased poverty has gone hand in hand with a noticeable rise in the number of “middle class” households. Yet, these newly “middle class” households are no more able to pull off large feasts by virtue of their access to cash remittances. These seemingly prosperous families carry a high debt burden; their debt is tied to both social
and financial obligations. How these obligations are fulfilled through movements across the Black Atlantic can best be understood by returning home in the double sense of home as Africa and home as the domestic sphere. For anthropology at least, I hope to suggest the value of the ethnographic method as both a mode of research and thus being in the world and as a means of writing about diverse and often contradictory and seemingly incongruent experiences.
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