The Poetics of Relationality: Mobility, Naming, and Sociability in Southeastern Senegal

By Nikolas Sweet

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This dissertation is dedicated to Doba and to the people of Taabe.
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PREFACE

Orthography

Within the literature on Francophone West Africa, there are many place names, patronyms, and other terms that are written alternatively with or without French accent marks. I will include accent marks where it helps distinguish between two possible pronunciations. For instance, the last name Kane is pronounced with a silent final e (kān), while names like Kanté are pronounced with a final [e] (kānte). While I follow conventions for phonetic notation of written Pular drawing on the special symbols I detail below (ɓ ɗ ɣ ɲ), in some cases I follow the most common local conventions, which are often drawn from French orthography. These often include patronyms such as Diallo, in which the initial cluster “dia” is pronounced as the sound [j]. At other times I follow the most common local conventions for language names. Note that vowel length is phonemic in both Pular and Wolof and for these reasons the notation of single and double vowels (e.g. tutugol (to plant) vs. tuutugol (to vomit)) indicates meaningful distinctions.

Special Symbols

This dissertation employs several commonly employed special symbols to write local languages that are adapted from the IPA alphabet.

Ŋŋ voiced velar nasal
Ɓɓ voiced bilabial implosive
Ɗɗ voiced alveolar implosive
ƳƳ liquid velar implosive
Ññ palatal nasal (I prefer this symbol to the one used in the PA (ɲ) because it is more commonly employed and more legible to non-specialists)
Xx voiceless velar fricative (most often in loanwords from Wolof, and occasionally written as a kh).

Transcription Conventions*

ºº degree signs indicate speech that is softer than the talk around it
[ ] square left brackets indicate a point of overlap
equal signs indicate latching, utterances following one another with no perceivable pause
(.2) numbers in parentheses indicate a pause in between utterances, measured in tenths of a second
( . ) a micropause less than .2 second
: an extended vowel ( ye: )
( ( ) ) double parentheses indicate transcriber notes
( ) empty parentheses indicate that something is said, but it cannot be discerned
( ) speech in parentheses indicates uncertainty on the transcriber’s part, due to interference or unintelligibility
- as in “ma-” indicates speech that is broken off

*NB: Transcription conventions are adapted from Sidnell’s symbols from conversation analysis (Sidnell 2011).
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ABSTRACT

The Poetics of Relationality studies linguistic routines through which increasingly mobile communities manage sociability and interpret one another in a borderland region that is the site of expanding gold mining, the risk of Ebola in nearby Guinea, and infrastructure expansion. It begins with an interactional analysis of sanakuyaagal, a so-called joking relationship of categorical license (i.e. teasing or insults) between individuals based on patronymic, generational, or ethnic grounds. However, this research subsumes these routines within larger strategies of verbal creativity through which interlocutors reinterpret principles of relationality across West Africa. As such, ostensibly distinct practices such as teasing and honorification offer analogous principles of sociality through which mobile individuals cultivate social networks across increasingly dispersed sites. This research draws on the analytic of routine to show firstly, how interlocutors may adopt strategies to insulate themselves from these powerful routines of social inertia through which their names or origins may be implicated into larger webs of relationality. Secondly, this research pays attention to moments of breakdown, precarity, and negotiation as moments of dialogic reflexivity in which particular relationships between signs and social types, or other naturalized assumptions come to be objectified. For instance, the sociality of road travel provides a particular frame through which changing forms of social evaluation are mobilized. In so doing, this research examines routines of linguistic creativity that might have been categorized as mere verbal art as situated modalities of social action through which individuals negotiate status, bait others into participant frameworks, or contest access to material resources.
CHAPTER ONE

General Introduction: “Routines of Sociability in West Africa”

“The social relations of communities are not a natural resource, a simple direct outcome of birth and contiguity as naturalistic “subsistence” assumptions about “communities” tend to imply. They constitute an achievement of Byzantine complexity, built up from myriads of attentive acts, imaginative rethinking, interventions by the powerful, and selective avoidances by the powerless.” - Jane Guyer (Money Matters, pg. 24).

An Opening Scene: The Risk of Speaking One’s Name

On the first trip to Kedougou City to conduct field work in 2014, our overland bus broke down and we were left stranded for a day in an uninhabited stretch of highway. For the past decade, this route from Tambacounda to Kedougou City had been a priority for the Senegalese state, who wanted to maintain a vital route to the growing gold mining regions and onward to Mali’s capital of Bamako. Previously isolated in southeastern Senegal, Kedougou region had recently become the site of a gold mining boom, a new regional center, and the center of a transportation network between Mali, Guinea, and Senegal. However, lorries weighed down by heavy cargo made quick work of road work in Sénégal Oriental (Eastern Senegal), poking holes into the shallow asphalt. Soon after departing Dakar, our bus blew a tire and skidded abruptly to the edge of the road. Within hours, our group was abandoned by the driver and his assistant. Trying to find a place to sit and rest in the narrow strip of dust and gravel on the side of the road, however, our shared plight soon led to commiseration and a sense of shared solidarity among the fellow travelers. We quickly formed momentary friendships, sympathizing with one another in our state of abandonment. Indeed, such experiences like breakdown or failure have the capacity
to break down social barriers and encourage interaction and *communitas* (Turner 1967). This breakdown also foreshadows a theoretical contribution of this work which views moments of breakdown or precarity as modes of objectification through which interlocutors may be brought to reflect upon signs and phenomena which might have remained under the level of awareness.

One individual I met on this trip was an electronics technician from Dakar who specialized in repairing metal detectors. He had played a central role in our night of abandonment, organizing efforts to contact the transportation company and confront the driver once he returned later the next morning. Duke, as he was commonly called, was now living in Kedougou, down the road to the mining areas. He had spent many of the past years *en brousse*, working himself into teams of gold miners that used heavy machinery to excavate sites in Kedougou’s emerging gold industry. Now living in a set of apartment buildings that attracted a host of characters involved in the mining business, Duke occupied a small office down the hall from his room where potential clients visited him throughout the day. He was a shrewd businessman, capable of fixing some of the most recalcitrant metal detectors and renowned for his ability to bring back cell phones from the dead.

Individuals drawn to this remarkable ability to bring broken things back to life would visit Duke in his small office and bring in an array of electronic equipment that had fallen in disarray from dust, sun, and extended use. One day as I was catching up with Duke in the weeks after our fateful bus ride, two Pular speakers walked in, wearing colorful but slightly worn robes that hung to the floor. Approaching Duke, one of them displayed a broken phone in his open

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1. Overland bus routes rapidly expanded from Kedougou to coastal Senegal in the past ten years when the transportation industry was privatized. As with the Victorian railway carriages examined by others (Sapio 2013), new modes of transportation such as this provided frames for social actors to conceive of themselves in particular collectivities, or as particular subjects. In later chapters, I insist upon the role of travel and mobility as a mode of social evaluation that shapes the way increasingly mobile populations evaluate and typify one another.

2. In this dissertation I have chosen to use pseudonyms for personal and place names that would be able to lead to individuals’ identification.
palm. After receiving a short greeting in Pular performed in a hopeful tone, Duke soon realized that neither man spoke Wolof, whereas he himself spoke only halting Pular. Pular was a widely spoken lingua franca of the region, and while Duke understood some, he was more comfortable in Wolof, a language of coastal Senegal, and French. Duke wanted to repair their cell phone, but they could not agree on a price. After a minute of difficult negotiations in which Duke refused to budge, one of the Pular speakers shifted his footing, and asked of Duke: "ko honno inneteɗaa?" ("What is your name?"). Duke pursed his lips and responded in a brusque but energetic repartee: “Way yooy il faut même pas commencer avec ça” (“Oh boy don’t even get started with that!”).

How are we to understand this moment when Duke refuses to utter his name to these potential clients? What was the “ça”, the “that” to which Duke was alluding? This momentary refusal from Duke encapsulates many of the questions that drove my curiosity about how my West African interlocutors wove first and last names, purported ethnicities, or affinities into routines of social connectivity. Was Duke fearing that, in uttering his name, his interlocutors might be able to reveal some connection and then wield it as leverage to advance their aims? I suggest that this seemingly simple moment of identifying self and interpreting others foretells what I will show to be highly productive routines of everyday social identification through which mobile individuals linked names, ethnicities, and kinship categories to one another through performances of verbal creativity.

By avoiding the disclosure of name or other social identity, Duke insulates himself from possible routines of social relation-making. His refusal is telling and hints at the potent social connections that his solicitors might have been able to open up given the affordance of his name. To reveal one’s name is to open oneself up to a myriad of possible social connections drawing on a shared given name (i.e. namesake), patronym (last name inherited from male relatives), or
joking relationship partner (*sanaku*\(^3\)) based on ethnic group or patronym. Indeed, after the two clients left, Duke admitted to me that he had wondered whether they had identified him as a Serer (which he indeed was) and were hoping to play off of a Serer-Pular *sanakuyaagal* correspondence to plead their case for a preferable price.

As noted by Goffman, public displays of semiotic action entail an inherent risk where one’s utterances can be characterized and drawn on to evaluate speakers (Goffman 1981; Keane 2015). Given the existence of myriad genres of social connectivity in West Africa, speaking one’s name offered others an affordance in relation making. As such, information about oneself was routinely drawn upon by interlocutors to do interactional work, to form connections to imagined collectivities and social types. Through the relational sociopoetics that I examine in this dissertation, social persons were mutually constituted through names and affiliations that emerged in relation to one another. Since these routines had inertia, I pay particular attention to forms of refusal and negotiation whereby individuals managed to insulate themselves from these forms of social action.

**Dissertation Overview**

This dissertation draws on the analytic of routine as a way to examine everyday relation making within mobile social contexts of social change such as I witnessed in southeastern Senegal from 2014–2016. By looking at routines, I examine interactional practices of interpretation among individuals with varying degrees of mutual knowledge meeting one another in an area undergoing significant social and economic changes. Building upon literature from

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\(^3\) In Pular, *sanaku* can be understood as a joking partner or joking cousin, and *-yaagal* is a productive nominal suffix that refers to practices or routines of (e.g. *denɗiraawo* (cousin) and *denɗiraayagaal* (cousin joking)). Malinké uses this construction in similar ways.
verbal art, genre, and linguistic ideologies, I focus on routines of verbal creativity partly to emphasize their situatedness with patterns of mobility. As I later detail, examining them as routines also helps conceptualize how one might dismantle a threatening interaction or how interactional friction is mitigated at the same time that it offers possibilities of reflexivity on things that might be taken for granted. Not mere “art”, these dialogic routines contributed to learned habits of typification, contested access to resources, and offered important forms of labor recruitment. In so doing, I eschew a piecemeal, textual analysis of distinct genres and instead develop an economy of speech genres as they are embedded within mobile networks of actors. This approach demonstrates how the practices of teasing and honorification, which ostensibly stand as distinct genres, offer complementary forms of recruiting labor and building reciprocal relations with consociates. Although these routines of verbal creativity are learned and patterned, they also offer points of departure for navigating diverse relationships and presenting oneself within wide social networks across dispersed social sites.

Many of the routines I examine draw on idioms that had a marked quality, invoking histories of relations that date back to the founding of the Mali Empire, as well as invoking the qualities of affinity, kinship, and hospitality. Interactionally as well, these routines had a social inertia that made them powerful, compelling modes of interaction. Given this fact, analyzing ways that interlocutors resisted and insulated themselves from such routines offers important contributions to analyses of face-to-face interaction within linguistic anthropology. For instance in the scene above, Duke was able to insulate himself through a forceful performance of refusal, which invoked his privileged position as the purveyor of expertise. Other practices of insulating oneself from webs of relationality were grounded not only on verbal repartees, but also the weight of government office, the materiality of uniforms, sunglasses, and veils, as well as Ebola
as a biosocial disease that had interactional implications. I return to these issues later in this introduction.

Ethnographically, this dissertation offers a reinterpretation of so-called “joking relationships” known locally as sanakuyaagal. These routines of ratified verbal teasing were based on patronymic, ethnic, or generational correspondences. Rather than a structural operator, an analysis of these routines in interaction shows that interlocutors creatively (re)contextualize sociopoetic elements to manage interactions, thereby changing and not merely expressing them. The interactional analysis of these linguistic routines offers tools for examining the increased dispersal of West African communities across sites where individuals came into contact with strangers, kin, and those with various degrees of overlapping identities. The research I conducted in the region of Kedougou occurred during a unique moment in the region’s history marked by economic opportunities and increased mobility. Forming the borderlands of Guinea-Conakry and Mali, the Kedougou region had formerly offered a multilingual shatter zone at the interstices of administrative and economic activity. Composed of part savanna, partly forested areas in the first reaches of the Fouta Djallon mountains with limited roads and infrastructure, only in the past decades had Kedougou become more articulated with the Senegalese state. Within the past ten years, it had become a new administrative région, a stop on the new Kedougou-Bamako international highway, and an established site of a mining boom that saw the influx of thousands of regional workers. The Ebola epidemic in nearby Guinea-Conakry further added to the stakes of increased mobility and articulation within the region.

This research is based on twenty months of ethnographic field work in the region of Kedougou in southeastern Senegal. Although I was not trained as an anthropologist at the time, it is also informed by several earlier years of living and working in Kedougou and Senegal.
beginning in 2006, at which time I began to serve as Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal. The evidence I employ in this dissertation is based primarily on interactional research which combines ethnographic observation with audio and video recordings. Situating my research in Taabe, a village in the foothills of the Fouta Djallon mountains, to Kedougou City as well as the space in between, I conducted research along many of the social networks I had developed during my time in the Peace Corps and during subsequent work in Kedougou Region. I thus observed interactions in places like busy downtown markets, the homes of my interlocutors, and ritual ceremonies, since the kinds of linguistic practices I was interested in were widely deployed across a range of contexts. Although metapragmatic interviews were not a focus of my research early on, in the latter months of my field work, I integrated more such interviews into my analysis. However, a majority of my observations come from interactional analyses which were not infrequently followed by clarificatory questions and subsequent discussions with research assistants or friends.

Sanakuyaagal and Other Routines of Sociability

This dissertation research was first inspired by a highly common practice known locally as sanakuyaagal. During these routines, interlocutors grounded teasing in correspondences on the basis of ethnic, patronymic, or generational identification with their sanaku (roughly translated as “joking partners”). These routines of teasing often included calls of idiocy, theft, slavery, and otherwise “insulting” or “obscene” language that was often rendered innocuous within the frame of sanakuyaagal. Understood as a joking relationship in much previous anthropology in Africa, this was a salient practice in everyday face-to-face interactions. In structural-functional anthropology, joking relationships were most commonly viewed as a
structural system of patterned social alliances. However, joking relationships presented only an initial entry to a rich world of verbal creativity in southeastern Senegal. Therefore, I view them not so much as a distinct practice, but as one possible routine of social recognition that is intertwined with many other forms of social interaction. *Sanakuyaagal* routines were not a distinct practice, but offered a matrix for embedding a number of other relational idioms, including negotiating license amid senior and junior in-laws, on namesake relationships, or taboo nicknames.

This was not merely “art” or “play” that stands in contrast with “consequential” or “political” talk. I show instead how these often overlooked routines were surprisingly flexible and useful forms of formulating relations and negotiating access to resources or wealth. In a borderland region undergoing significant social and economic change of recent years, these routines of social interaction provided a lens for studying how increasingly mobile individuals evaluated and placed one another. Even strangers from nearby regions were quickly extended the tools of relation making. Interlocutors often placed one another by picking up on and deploying namesake relations, interpreting patronymic *sanaku* relations, or invoking relations of affinity. These routines of respect giving and teasing present practices through which West Africans thought through social and economic change, offering particularly supple resources for reformulating kinship and affinal relations as well as relative statuses.

In West Africa, *sanakuyaagal* is remarkable because roughly shared pragmatic norms extend over a large area across the Sahel and bordering regions. As such, these routines may

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4 As such, it might be argued that typifications produced during the course of *sanakuyaagal* exchanges do not constitute “serious” indexicalities, in the sense that they are framed as “humorous.” I return to this question later in this introduction, and argue that these kinds of typifications do not carry their own metalinguistic frames, and if we compare them with other “jokes” about Native Americans (Meek 2006, 2013) or Latinx in the United States (Hill 2008b), even such “humorous” portrayals impact how certain groups are viewed.

5 Mortenson, for instance, refers to the degree to which speakers share linguistic and semiotic resources as *semiotic sedimentation* (Mortensen 2017). Previously the sharing of norms had been understood through discussions of *Sprechbund*, a speech community
often be established among interlocutors who come from very distant regions and can draw on a system of equivalencies and correspondences between patronyms, generations, and ethnic groups. *Sanakuyaagal* presents an interesting case of the distribution of roughly shared norms for the deployment of conversational teasing that are independent of any particular code.\(^6\) While scholars have long looked at how social groups are constituted through notions of shared language or ethnicity, practices like *sanakuyaagal* or *jammoore* (taboo name play) afforded interesting modalities of group formation in contexts of mobility. *Sanakuyaagal* routines were salient not only among autochthonous populations, but also among visitors like myself who were actively recruited into these routines of teasing and social recognition.

Variations on joking relationships have been noted by numerous ethnographers across the globe (Lowie 1912). In the tradition of structural-functionalism, correspondences between groups were largely seen as a mechanism for mediating societal relations between affiliated groups. Not merely operating as a function of kinship and social structure, my research indicates that this web of social connectivity is a site of verbal creativity in which connections can be constituted in repeated acts of recognition and evaluation across linked social sites. While other analyses might look at the routines of joking relationships featuring language of gluttony, servitude, and hierarchy as an expression of ethnic relationships, my ethnography shows that these social indexicalities circulate more flexible models of social types that emerge in interaction. Chapter Three begins by examining this intellectual history of joking relationships and places them as an emergent practice through which interlocutors ground relationships in the

\(^6\) While much of my data is in Pulafuuta and French, and some in Wolof, joking insults were performed by multilingual speakers across many varieties spoken in southeastern Senegal. As such, they further demonstrate the futility of trying to delineate shared cultural practices based on the analytic of discrete linguistic codes, as in “one language, one culture” language ideologies (Hymes 1968).
present. In this way, joking relationships are as much about voicing oneself within a world of contemporaries as they are about performing a history of ethnic relationships in Africa. Indeed, this attention to the dynamics of social interaction rather than to the static social structure better explains the ethnographic phenomena. For instance, in Chapter Three I show how two joking partners, a Serer and a Pullo, can initiate a sanakuyaagal encounter and end up in a common state of stance alignment because of their shared understanding of the stylistics of the routine—i.e., the chronotopic narrative world of characters and plots that allows them to defuse conflict through cooperative storytelling.

**Theoretical Contributions**

This dissertation contributes to the field of African studies by documenting forms of social and relational play that transcend the domains of kinship, host-stranger relations, ethnicity, and affinity. As the conceptual home for descent theory in the study of kinship, Africa had long provided an image of insular ethnic and linguistic islands. While later disciplinary turns have reframed (neo)colonial approaches to Africa and to the global South by scrutinizing ethnicity, by stressing mobility, and revisiting precolonial African history, this research shows that even seemingly “traditional” routines of sanakuyaagal, affinal teasing, and name play offer interlocutors resources for furthering new mobilities, for conceptualizing the self in plural ways, and for responding to social change. Communities in southeastern Senegal flexibly interpret kinship and in-law relations, thereby building social networks and placing themselves within a changing social and economic context through the verbal art of daily interaction. Increasingly

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7 Particularly within the British school of the mid twentieth-century, continental Africa posed a critical site in which anthropologists had to come to terms with large, distributed societies unlike the “island” societies that had previously provided the locus of ethnographic field work (Evans-Pritchard 1950; Fortes 1940; Gluckman 1940).
scholars looked to new social media, radio, and cell phone connectivities in order to account for global flows, for modernity, and for non-bounded approaches to social change (see for instance Larkin 2008). I suggest that ostensibly “traditional” genres of face-to-face interaction such as *sanakuyaagal* routines also provide routines through which subjects are able to conceptualize themselves with respect to changing social, economic, and political circumstances.

Particularly on a continent where urban youth languages are increasingly becoming the face of social and linguistic change (Kiessling and Mous 2004; Newell 2009; Brookes 2014), an increased attention to how these linguistic practices articulate rural-urban spaces or how language innovation impacts mobility is increasingly necessary. Often it is in the continued movement between social sites that social signifiers, ways of speaking, or experiences are translated and rendered meaningful. In this dissertation, I therefore show how routines of face-to-face interaction were widely deployed to reconceptualize relationships among individuals as they navigate movement between linked sites.

This research sits alongside many other approaches to kinship and affinity behavior as not merely expressing existent kinship structures, but rather as affording interlocutors possibilities to impart a broad range of social relationships with significance or to embed them within patterns of exchange (Agha 2007; Nakassis 2014). African societies have strongly informed anthropological approaches to descent theory within studies of kinship (Holy 1996; Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1950). While kinship in the form of categorical relations (in the case of Fulɓe Fouta based on blood, *yîyâŋ*) does play a large role in the social lives of individuals who feature in this ethnography, I use this as an opportunity to feature other ways in which socially innovative West Africans interpreted and extended principles for linking and conceptualizing others. Significant among these is the principle of hospitality and stranger-
landlord relationships which has framed thinking about prehistorical Africa (Brooks 1993; Lentz 2013). Many West African societies have processes for converting strangers into kin, if not over the course of one generation, then certainly over the course of generations. Changing one’s ethnic group, name, or social identification more broadly presents social strategies for avoiding curses and as part of healing ceremonies.

Connections based on namesake connections, patronymic correspondences, in-law calculations, and constructed (or “fictive”) mother-daughter relationships not only provide idioms for evaluating others in social encounters, but also build webs of dependency, exchange, and mobility. My interlocutors frequently spoke about the weight of such social relations. Not only did categorical relations provide strong social pressures to reciprocate gifts and physical presence to ceremonies and rituals, but the deployment of kinship, in-law status, or joking relationships in interaction could also provide a forceful way of proposing certain expectations. The term ānatigi, for instance, was widely used across southeastern Senegal (and indeed West Africa) to conceive of relationships that were increasingly based in intimacy and in patronage and dependency such as on a host or a local guide. Esiraabe (in-laws) referred not only to kin groups allied through the exchange of wedding partners, but also to a widely shared frame that individuals deployed to entertain relationships of aspirational mutuality. Local discourses on la famille élastique (the elastic family) and the kaakol jaabere (the wide-leaved taro plant) conceptualized this expansive and encompassing view of relatedness that became the subject of increased scrutiny within Kedougou’s changing social and economic contexts.

This dissertation examines practices of verbal creativity involving teasing, honorification, and naming under the analytic of routines as a way to examine how individuals build, refuse, and reflect upon social relations in contexts of social change. In so doing this dissertation explores
how individuals with varying knowledge of one another come to interpret and place one another within mutually entailing social idioms. This study thus offers perspectives on stranger sociability, which draws on Simmel’s famous essay “Exkurs über den Fremden” (“The Stranger”) (Simmel 1950). Simmel’s stranger, one who comes today and stays tomorrow, offers a platform for examining how individuals make commensurate frames for understanding one another. It is through such routines that interlocutors could refuse or extended social (and poetic) idioms in the processes of interpreting and making inferences about one another.

This approach of social relations viewed through routines\(^8\) thus investigates how individuals with different or partly distinct practices do the work of understanding one another—of developing trust, building cooperation, or managing potential conflict.\(^9\) Much recent work in linguistic anthropology, for instance, has focused on how norms are managed in heterogeneous contexts (Lønsmann, Hazel, and Haberland 2017; Lønsmann 2017). In West Africa, this management was often the work of sociopoetic creativity, achieved through interpretations of name-based, affinal, or kinship based correspondences in interaction (McGovern 2012).

As a linguistic perspective on the cultivation and negotiation of networks of personal contacts, this research has implications for linguistic approaches to mobility. Within linguistic approaches to network analysis, for instance, scholars such as Lesley Milroy (drawing on Granovetter 1973) have shown how weak personal ties in contrast to strong ones are often the site of creativity and innovation within language. This research shows that making contact and establishing ties as connective work is itself the site of categorical creativity, where individuals

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\(^8\) Conceiving of such practices as routines usefully distinguishes between the relationships brought into relation in interaction on one hand, and the verbal performances on the other hand. In the following, I discuss five ways in which routines provides a productive analytic.

\(^9\) More broadly, this research has a different orientation to work on multiple ontologies which has emphasized fundamental differences in terms of personhood or nature-culture divides such that they constitute different worlds (Viveiros de Castro 2001). Instead, this research asks how individuals make one another commensurate through idioms of kinship, affinity, and patronymic correspondences, or instead, how they erect barriers to such relational labor.
attempted to imbue relationships with the weight of particular affinal, kinship, or collegial valences (Milroy 2000). That is, ties themselves cannot be viewed as inherently transitive and unchanging, but are themselves the result of social connecting as creative labor. Other scholars of network analysis have noted that in related fields of social geography, the articulation of ties based on shared sociological characteristics has largely been assumed (Verne 2012). Routines thus provide useful ways of understanding how speakers constitute collectivities and communities that are not merely imagined based on purported ideologies or ontologies. My research thus addresses some of the same problematics as research by Michael Lempert, who has shown how the existence of a “community” of diasporic Tibetan Buddhist exiles is not an entailment of shared culture or history, but enacted and renewed through routinized performances of histrionic debate (Lempert 2012a). Rather than simply positing a large Sprechbund of shared pragmatic features, for instance, tracking routines shows how particular social figures and correspondences are invoked and shared by speakers (Hymes 1968). This is particularly important in this part of West Africa, where sanakuyaagal could be invoked in a range of different linguistic varieties.

By examining routines of social identification, this research offers new ways of thinking about the sociability of strangers and social interpretation in the context of social change. Routine may at first glance appear to be an unconventional analytic through which to examine contexts of social change and heterogeneity. However, it offers a useful lens for examining how interlocutors negotiate and adapt learned practices of social evaluation in novel contacts, and perhaps most significantly, when these learned practices might break down and fail. It is at moments of such disjuncture that I found individuals began to make explicit particular kinship
categories, posited correspondences or pragmatic norms, thereby negotiating dialogic opportunities to recast social relations.

In what follows, I bring together several significant theoretical orientations offered by the analytic of routine. Firstly, viewing routines not merely as verbal art, but as forms of route-making, I draw attention to ways that routines are embedded within and afford strategies of mobility (see Chapter Seven). Invoking sanaku relations offered a means of relating to others across great distances in West Africa. Effectively managing social relations through routines of teasing and honorification empowered individuals to move, to take advantage of opportunities, and to expand their intersubjective space-time (Munn 1986). In a region where travel was difficult and movement required individuals to manage contingencies and benefit from diverse social networks, being able to make oneself legible within webs of social connectivity could afford greater mobility and access. These emergent interactions occurred at busy roadsides, along trajectories of movement, and in momentary moments of recognition in market places. Routine thus invites analyses of verbal behavior that does not merely begin and end in so many neatly bounded speech events (Wortham and Reyes 2015; Gumperz and Hymes 1991).

Analyses of how talk affords and mediates movement also crucially contribute to ethnographic understandings of mobility that stretch across anthropology, social geography, and related fields (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Lentz 2013; Verne 2012). In Chapter Six, for instance, I outline the interrelations between mobility and social evaluation, in which road travel affected how individuals interpreted one another. Figures of personhood were thus not limited to physical bodies but based on forms of respect interpreted into human-vehicular entities. In the borderlands of Guinea during the Ebola epidemic, communities were driven to scrutinize movement and strangers within a context of heightened risk. This Ebola epidemic of 2014 was
thus not only a physiological disease, but also shaped practices of evaluation and social interaction in the borderlands. Signs of “Guineanness”—including ways of driving and traveling that were considered Guinean—became marked during this time. Relatively, even owning national identification cards mediated one’s time-space capacities and fundamentally altered one’s orientation towards certain others, including one’s capacity to circulate.

Secondly, alongside previous work on service encounters, market cries, and greetings (Fisher 1976; Irvine 1989; Bailey 2006), routine draws emphasis not only to relationship work at a “virtual” level, but also to practices of contact making (phaticity) shaping space through talk, and mobilizing exchange. As in John Haviland’s work in Mexico or Lawrence Fisher’s work in Barbados, the verbal hooks of contact making in the form of insults could bait bystanders and draw them into participation (Fisher 1976; J. B. Haviland 2011). First pair parts such as greetings or teasing invocations thus entailed the assessment of responsibility for offering and returning greetings (Sidnell 2011)—for instance, between those who stand at different distances along a path of movement (Irvine 1989). Examining these forms of contact making entails not only an examination of “positive” forms of attunement or participation (Sidnell 2014), but also “negative” strategies of withdrawal, insulation, and refusal.

While not presupposing the a priori primacy of any stretch of context, I call for an increased attention to the material, spatial configurations that shaped participant frameworks in interactions, drawing frequently on Goffman (Goffman 1981). In Chapter Six, I draw on ethnography from Kedougou’s downtown market to call for greater intersections between

10 Use of certain forms in Kedougou City, for instance, could provide signs of identity as Pulafiuta speakers. Shibboleths of group membership were often read into ways of speaking, and in particular, greetings. A response of jaawu to a common greeting like “unj jaاراصام” marked its speaker as from Senegal, that is definitely not from Guinea. The use of a nasalized liquid, “hii,” often betrayed one’s Guinean origins. These kinds of evaluations were not unchanging correlations between kinds of sounds, words, or constructions and social personae. Rather, these forms of evaluation were impacted by shifting frames of typification that could be activated by events such as the nearby Ebola epidemic, which rendered salient certain kinds of group identities, or particular spaces, as in borderlands paths that led between the closed Senegalese and Guinean borders.
linguistic anthropological work on participant frameworks and interdiscursivity on one hand, and infrastructure and the built environment on the other (Simone 2004). The market setting, for instance, provided a setting in which talk was exchanged with kola nuts and where the spatiality of managing spots in the market impacted one’s interactional prerogatives. In short, talk is material and helps build space and circulate bodies as effectively as walls, alleys, or shade structures. In so doing, this research engages with other work on participation that emphasizes bodily orientation and materiality (Sidnell 2014; Goffman 1981). While previous work has looked at how individuals orient to objects in interaction (see for instance Streeck 1996), the management of objects such as kola nuts could themselves bring individuals in and out of participation frameworks (see Chapter Eight).

Thirdly, routines allow for the analysis of linguistic practices without drawing a priori distinctions between forms of talk as in particular genres of verbal art. This approach stands in contrast to previous approaches to verbal art and in particular folklore, which often analyzed in separate units such as stories, jokes, riddles (Briggs and Bauman 1992). In Chapter Five, for instance, routines of visiting scattered kin and colleagues in the Fouta Djallon mountains by a village chief necessitated the deployment of linked performances of teasing and honorification. Not at all contradictory, these are intertwined practices of recognizing others within webs of verbal reciprocation. Likewise, routines of name play—converting, extending, and linking the poetic forms—provided routinized onomastic strategies that were deployed across ostensibly separate metapragmatic categories (Chapter Four). Even more flexible than verbal exchanges such as greetings or closures which mark the beginning or end of talks, routines of teasing like sanakuyaagal or jammoore played an important role in providing ongoing cues for the broader interactions (Gumperz 1982; Irvine 1989; Duranti 1997). Not relationships through all spaces
and times, these were invoked through performed routines which gave others cues about how to interpret teasing talk and also opportunities to themselves join the fray with certain expectations.

Fourthly, I suggest that routines offer additional grounds upon which interlocutors performed the linguistic ideological work of differentiation among varieties. Not only distinguishing among differences in sounds, morphology, or lexical items, my interlocutors frequently made distinctions among varieties of Pular in ways that drew on particular clandestine routines monitoring and restricting access to participation frameworks. In Chapter Two, I suggest that distinctions made between two varieties of Pular: Pulafuuta and Pular Bande, while often made in terms of geography or particular differences, were often made in reference to interactional routines involving honorification and secrecy. It is not only that Fulɓe Fouta employed a greater range of honorifics (something I detail in Chapter Five) but moreover that their linguistic routines were secretive, self-interested, and drew on obfuscation. Fulɓe Fouta, I often heard, employed not only byzantine kin terms and honorifics, but also performed them as part of secretive routines such as *gundagol* breakout sessions in which a smaller, ratified group shared information in private.

**Disrupting Routines: Practicing Social Insulation**

Finally, routines as forms of habitual action provide tools for tracking metalinguistic awareness and objectification in interaction, i.e. how individuals reflexively draw attention to particular phenomena that may have remained under the level of awareness. Drawing inspiration from Heidegger’s distinction between *Vorhandenheit* (presence-at-hand) and *Zuhandenheit* (readiness-to-hand), I extend his insight that breakdown, disruption, or friction often offer modes of moving from habitual to objectifying modes (Heidegger 1927). Whereas *Zuhandenheit*
conceptualized a relation with objects or signs within habits of being and doing, and rendered themselves present against the flow of a particular routine, Vorhandenheit was for Heidegger the taking of a theoretical attitude on an object. As social actors, we move between modes of estrangement and intimacy, often employing signs intuitively in routines of social action, while at other times becoming aware of particular problematic or salient moments (Keane 2003). Processes of disruption and objectification describe not only the work of anthropological methods, but of social action more broadly. While on one hand, speakers are socialized into communicative habits that they may not always be aware of, language also offers a reflexive stance on itself.

Given possibly contrasting learned habits of employing sanakuyaagal or of interpreting social signs, what happens when such practices are challenged or break down in interaction? I view these possible moments of rupture as productive moments in which individuals are publicly able to identify and reflect upon particular signs, practices or relationships. I refer to these moments of reflexivity as modes of objectification, productive moments of disjuncture that afford opportunities for (re)assessing relationships or drawing attention to things that might have remained implicit. For instance, the refusal of a sanaku relation by a market seller (interactions of Djiby and Lulu in Chapter Six) necessitates a vitriolic critique of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade writ large. This refusal thus affords a moment of disjuncture in which interlocutors were brought to reflect upon a routine that had previously remained implicit. Likewise, the unequal access and arguments regarding taboo names I examine in Chapter Six (jammoore) offer a frame for bringing reflexive attention to the pragmatics of interaction and to what kind of signs are to count as taboo.

11 Previous work in linguistic anthropology has viewed disjuncture as a productive mode of social interpretation (see Meek 2010).
Although *sanakuyaagal* and related practices offered powerful forms of tracing relations, at times interlocutors attempted to insulate themselves from the social inertia of these routines. Not only connection and positive relation, these routines allowed for a perspective on how social actors insulate themselves from or erect barriers to sociability. Although the categorical bonds of kinship or *sanakuyaagal* might seem given, my research demonstrates that interlocutors often found creative ways to resist or contravene them. An analysis of such techniques requires an attention not only to the poetics and stylistics of conversational routines, but also to the semiotics of refusal: veils as conversational barriers, Ebola as an embodied disease of scrutiny, or the infrastructure of vehicles or markets as insulating materialities. Such multi-modal refusals\(^\text{12}\) themselves afforded forms of social action, as was the rejection of a categorical *sanaku* partner outright, which could imbue other relationships with increased gravity (Chapter Six).

In a growing region with economic possibilities and emerging collectivities, such routines offered resources for contact-making (phaticity) and generating sociality in everyday life. While my ethnography from southeastern Senegal might appear to portray my interlocutors as inherently gregarious, social individuals, I don’t intend to posit such a culture pattern. Many could be taciturn, seek solitude, and enjoy the privacy of their own minds even amid intense social interactions. However, these routines did provide powerful tools for engaging others, backed by expectations of response. As such, learning how to deftly deflect or remove oneself from the inertia of such routines was an important social skill. Routines, like genres, provide a lens for studying mechanisms of responsibility attribution when speakers lay the blame upon

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\(^{12}\) Scholarship in Conversation Analysis, for instance, has demonstrated many strategies whereby interlocutors disagree with questions or firsts in such a way that they do not derail the interaction or insult others (e.g. by formulaic agreement) (Sidnell 2011).
routines or genres (Irvine 1992), and thus relatedly help eschew an over reliance on individual personality to explain behavior.

The perspective of routine thus allows for an analysis of how interlocutors adopted multimodal strategies for insulting themselves from or rejecting particular forms of interpretation and interaction. Duke in the opening part of this introduction was successful in closing off any possible routines of relation making by cutting short his part in the routine of exchanging names. However, the existence of other participants might have thrust him into such relations regardless. In this way, resistance often entailed the deft recruitment or avoidance of interlocutors and overhearers, a dynamic I examine in an interaction between a return migrant and village resident during a return trip (see Chapter Five).

The performance of piety could also provide a strategy of refusal. Although this research provides evidence that religious practice and the ribbing of sanakuyagaal are not necessarily antithetical activities, at times interlocutors could use the tools of piety to remove themselves as targets of particular verbal hooks. Since the Kedougou region had a small Salafist minority, veiling oneself as a pious woman (ibadu) offered a strategy of self presentation signaling that one was not to be approached with casual banter or solicitous remarks. Whereas Saba Mahmood has shown that veiling can be empowering and not merely a prohibition, in southeastern Senegal veiling offered way to insulate oneself from (possible revealing) social routines (Mahmood 2005). Analogously, the garb of administration could also afford embodied techniques of refusal when policemen wore sunglasses or official uniforms to hide parts of their bodies which might give off social cues, and operate within the office of the state to erect barriers to their personhood. Border agents during the time of Ebola protected themselves from routines of social connectivity by working through interpreters and by cultivating impenetrable personal space.
Likewise, vehicular travel through town by policemen and bureaucrats similarly had the effect of erecting barriers to the caprices of face-to-face interaction.

**Routines of Typification: Granularity and Scale**

Partly through the sociality of disjuncture, refusal, and negotiation, this research thus offers tools for understanding the cultivation of sociability in contexts of social change. If Simmel’s terms, the opposite of stranger was non-relationality, to be a stranger was already to be in a kind of relationality (Simmel 1950). A stranger is thus someone who may come to be incorporated through particular relational frames, even one who might receive openness through an air of objectivity. In West Africa, local signifiers or names were often extended to strangers by local residents, and once such signifiers had been ratified in interaction, participants drew on these poetic connections to place one another within social webs. Simmel alludes to the ways in which the identification of a stranger—and even one’s intimate relations—always entails the deployment of concepts and categories to interpret and characterize others.

The stranger is close to us, insofar as we feel between him and ourselves common features of a national, social, occupational, or generally human nature. He is far from us, insofar as these common features extend beyond him or us, and connect us only because they connect a great many people. A trace of strangeness in this sense easily enters even the most intimate relationships (Simmel 1950).

To interact with kin as with strangers was thus to draw on and deploy social categories which could be made to do relational and representational work. During the course of this research, my interlocutors adopted a range of granular perspectives not only on potential “strangers,” but also on intimate kin and colleagues. My research builds on research on scale (Blommaert 2007; Carr and Lempert 2016) where the evaluative work by interlocutors concerning the framing of social phenomena at various levels of granularity is considered to be
an achievement rather than a given. These forms of scale work were often at play in moments when interlocutors resisted particular ethnic or patronymic attributions, and and posited alignments at different levels of granularity (see Chapter Three). In a region where significant economic changes have accelerated in recent years, this approach enables an analysis that tracks how social actors render relevant such phenomena as Ebola, administrative shifts, or increased immigration.

Schutz, for instance, who situated typification as a central practice through which humans adopt attitudes towards others (as part of a They-orientation), proposed different levels of granularity through which humans could interpret others (Schutz 1967). While he understood intimate contacts to be interpreted through idiosyncratic, individual frames, those social others who were most removed—and indeed those who might never be encountered and only posited through their role in social life—were habitually interpreted through highly schematized, ideal types. Schutz’s example of the mailman presents a mere contemporary who is never directly encountered and is understood strictly as a type of person. Drawing on Schutz for instance, Berger and Luckman’s well-known work on the sociology of knowledge articulates this assumption regarding the loci of social life:

The social reality of everyday life is thus apprehended in a continuum of typifications, which are progressively anonymous as they are removed from the 'here and now' of the face-to-face situation. At one pole of the continuum are those others with whom I frequently and intensively interact in face-to-face situations--my 'inner circle," as it were. At the other pole are highly anonymous abstractions, which by their very nature can never be available in face-to-face interaction.” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 30)

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13 Related to this issue is the question of what social actors deem to be the primary social domain, e.g., that face-to-face interaction constitutes the “primary” social mode upon which all others are based. Berger and Luckman espouse this view, as in the following: “Compared to the reality of everyday life, other realities appear as finite provinces of meaning, enclaves within the paramount reality marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience. The paramount reality envelops them on all sides, as it were, and consciousness always returns to the paramount reality as from an excursion.” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 25). Coenen-Huther expands upon the view of how when categorical types are employed, they can undermine personal relationships: “certain forms of humor have a corrosive effect on the specificity of the dyadic relationship when they imply a process of typification, in Berger and Luckmann’s (1966 : 46-47) sense of the term. Hence the danger of jokes using regional, national or ethnic stereotypes.” (Coenen-Huther 1987, 37).
Whereas Schutz’s observations are useful in thinking through the different perspectives social actors may adopt on one another, his scale presupposes that an individual’s intimate relations are necessarily interpreted with more fine-grained levels of granularity, whereas consociates are understood in terms of ideal types.

Social interactions drawing on in-law and so-called joking relationship talk (sanakuyaagal), however, demonstrate that individuals adopt varying levels of granularity to interpret those around them. Playing with categories of in-law or joking partner demonstrates that intimate friends often use these categories for interpreting one another as performed through routines of social recognition. For instance, individuals with a very intimate knowledge of one another may very well treat one another as sanaku joking partners during the course of interactions. Furthermore, ideal-type relationships were creatively manipulated to turn strong affinal relations on their head. It is therefore not the case that increased intimate relationships necessarily lead to more fine-grained, and less ideal-type, interpretations. Interlocutors navigated forms of self-presentation and other interpretation through multiple genres of social identification that were reshaped and resisted at the same time that they rendered relevant certain forms of evaluation and typification.

Interpreting others could be provisional and contingent, such as the act of “purporting” someone’s ethnicity or geographical provenance based on a stretch of interactional display. After an initial production of teasing in the vein of sanakuyaagal, for instance, my companions occasionally offered guesses as to who their teasing interlocutors were. That is, interlocutors draw on models of joking correspondence to propose typifications (e.g. “This guy is probably a Serer” because he is insulting me, and I take him to think that I am a Pular). While at times forms of identification offered through patronyms or ethnicity were offered in interaction, at other
times they remained implicit, for which previous assumptions provided the grounds for future interpretive work. This kind of guess work was itself constitutive of models of social relations as linguistic ideological work, as in the case of assumptions about women’s speech in the work of modernizing Japan (Inoue 2006). Whether or not Japanese women, in point of fact, spoke as male ideologies of appropriate language supposed, was thus not at issue, but rather that certain indexical associations as posited social models were used to motivate and interpret other social phenomena.

**Routine, Play, Genre**

In what follows, I offer a more detailed discussion of how this research stands in relation to larger literatures on verbal art. Broadly, the approaches of folklore and verbal art have tended to view routines of teasing, joking and the like as a marked form of interaction that stands in relation to “normal” ones. Although this research uses the analytic of routine to examine forms of conversational social action, it draws upon previous literature on genre and verbal play as perspectives. In previous frameworks, *sanakuyaagal* as “joking relationships” figured alongside other work on verbal dueling, insult, and joking as a form of folklore (Dundes, Leach, and Özkök 1970; Luomala 1966). Within linguistic anthropology, however, scholars have studied such practices in context as a way to eschew textual classification, even as context provided another domain that could not be presupposed (see Blommaert 2001; Duranti and Goodwin 1992).

Performances of jokes, stories and the like have often been identified as forms of verbal art (Hymes 1966; Briggs 1988; Sherzer 2002). Although work on verbal art is wide-ranging, this analytic similarly tends to analyze different pragmatic domains in separate spheres, for instance organizing chapters on teasing, jokes, praise oratory, or storytelling (Briggs 1988). This often
creates a piecemeal view of verbal practices that associates particular performances with particular people and places. Further analytical work—for instance as intertextuality—is required to reconnect and view relationships between these genres moored at different social sites (Sherzer 2002; Briggs and Bauman 1992). This dissertation thus picks up on Bauman and Briggs’ call to approach genre as a perspective on intertextuality in order to gain purchase on social power, by tracking how speakers combine and interpret relations between performances (Briggs and Bauman 1992). This approach opens up an analysis of routines of interaction in which seemingly opposed modes of teasing and honorification happen alongside one another as analogous tools for cultivating relations. Not a monolithic practice to be analyzed in interaction, sanakuyaagal routines provided interactional matrices through which a range of styles and social idioms were deployed in relation to one another.

Viewed in terms of verbal art, joking relationships or teasing talk have often been viewed as a marked pragmatic categories that sit in contrast to “normal” or serious ones (Bauman 1975). Bauman makes note of such views by influential scholars such as Austin, who had noted

Language in such circumstances is in special ways-intelligibly-used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use-ways which fall under the doctrine of etiolations of language” (Austin 1962, 21–22).

Scholarship of “verbal art” has had to reclaim practices like joking, teasing, and the like as serious objects of study, which stand in contrast with “serious”, “normal”, or “unmarked” communication. (For a more detailed discussion of teasing, see Chapter Eight.) More broadly in the literature, joking relationships and similar “ludic” genres are understood in the frame of play (Turner 1982). Scholars of child language socialization have likewise used play frames as a broad umbrella term to understanding joking and teasing (Lytra 2007). While play provides a useful staring point of analysis, it entails a great number of analytical perspectives that can often
be difficult to disentangle. I interrogate the concept of play here to point out that this analytic has often smuggled in implicit social dichotomies that divide the world between a world of play and the normal or real world (and relatedly the humorous and the serious).

Assumptions about play, the serious, and the embeddedness of the world have consequences for how we think about human agency and the ability to reflect on and respond to social change. Ideological divides between play and seriousness or between verbal art and unmarked normal speech carry implications for how individuals evaluate responsibility and the consequentiality of representations. In the West for instance, “humor” has developed as a sensibility, a way of seeing understood as a sense of humor (Wickberg 1998). When the sense of humor discriminates between those representations that are merely play and those which count, such ideological work can drive the intertextual circulation of what might otherwise be objectionable characterizations in "serious” talk (e.g. ethnic slurs). (Although I only briefly discuss humor in this introduction, I discuss some of my research findings’ implications for understanding humor more broadly in the conclusion.)

In anthropology more broadly, scholars have treated play—and relatedly, the ludic, humor, or joking—as a separate world that stands in contrast to a “normal” one (Droogers 2005). Play thus often motivates many social interactional dichotomies that pair consequential and nonconsequential terms such as serious and joking, real and fake, or play and non-play. These dichotomies are reinforced by overlaps with categories of humor which are often posited in order to contrast two separate worlds: such as the world and ludic counter-world (Droogers 2005), humorous and serious worlds (Mulkay 1988), play as a physical space apart from other activities (Huizinga 1938), or indeed play as a separate reality to be distinguished from ordinary life (Berger and Luckmann 1966).
This counter-world sometimes is conceived of as a particular event such as a carnival, a highly saturated frame which can motivate meanings opposing “standard” forms of signification. While Huizinga’s *Homo ludens* (Huizinga 1938) provides a fascinating entry into play as a fundamental part of the human condition, into ways in which play is conceived of as distinct from everyday life in location and duration, a delimited and secluded act risks breaking the world into two separate planes of play vs. the normal that then necessitate certain analytical work to relink the two. Play was often a way of understanding which kinds of rituals or practices were to count as transformational of social worlds and processes, as in Turner’s distinction between the mere *liminoid* and the *liminal* (Turner 1995).

Dichotomies of play-serious, or light talk-serious talk are furthermore conceptually linked to other naturalized dichotomies like the private-public distinction (Gal 2005). In many of the works I cite above, play also bleeds into many related concepts, such as joking, insults or humor. Placed alongside one another, approaches to play encompasses an often cumbersome range of analytical perspectives on social interaction. These include an emphasis on metalinguistic play (Attardo 1994); play as metalinguistic signals about how social action is to be interpreted (Bateson 1972); play as highlighting ambiguity (de Vienne 2012); or play as spatially distributed\(^\text{14}\) (Abrahams 1962, 1989). Research on conversational humor continues to draw on the concept of play in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish from humor more broadly. For instance, the “frame of play” is often used as a stand in for humorous, joking exchanges in face-to-face interaction. With this in mind, this dissertation investigates the pragmatics, poetics, and social significances of routines of verbal creativity rather than lumping them all together simply as play. Indeed, semiotic processes which appear to be distinctive of play are in fact a part of

\(^{14}\) For instance, Roger Abrahams’ analyses of verbal creativity among African Americans make a spatial distinction between the home sphere, a site of serious restrained talk, as compared to the street, a place for play and talking broad (Abrahams 1989).
signification and social life more broadly. In the words of Hanks, “linguistic meaning is inherently indeterminate or underspecified with respect to the experience meanings of utterances.” (Hanks 1995, 121).

Purporting two different spheres of play and real life thus generates consequences for the way that social indexicalities are understood to be consequential. The frame of play also can have serious consequences for how conflict as a collective action unfolds. As McGovern has argued, “play” may have influenced the recruitment of fighters in Cote d’Ivoire, but it might also have limited the death toll (McGovern 2011). In linguistic terms, characterizing a stretch of talk (e.g., an unfavorable stereotype in jest) as “merely joking” thus does nothing to inhibit future (re)entextualizations, since stretches of talk (as with any semiotic signs more broadly) do not carry their own context (Derrida 1982).

Scholarship by Hill and Meek, for instance, has demonstrated how jokes drawing on Native American and imagined Spanish indexicalities can have real consequences for social perception and action, and often function under the level of awareness (Hill 2008a; Meek 2013). Through a systematic analysis of the adoption of Spanish-language in a mock style that often relies on hyper anglicization, on bold mispronunciation, and on the borrowing of Spanish morphology, Jane Hill has convincingly argued that Mock Spanish registers entail social indexicalities that motivate negative stereotypes of Mexicans (Hill 2008b). Hill thereby argues that the semiotic inputs animating racist views come not only from the first-hand experience of direct observation, but rather “indirectly,” in the way that stereotypes as negative social indexicals are embedded in Mock Spanish and humor more broadly.15

15 Since joking and teasing rely on the creative deployment of social indexicalities for effect, approaches to joking and teasing routines have examined the deployment of stereotypes in interaction. Queen, for instance, demonstrates how teasing provides a dialogic imaginary of reversing sex/gender roles in which lesbian becomes the unmarked. Drawing on stance and stereotype, she furthermore looks at how interlocutors aligned themselves along stereotypic models that emerged in canned lesbian jokes. "Such an exploration necessarily focuses on how being "in" on a joke relates to the collaboration between social actors and social
Meek likewise shows that embedded stereotypes are generative, as in the case of Hill as covert racism. (Meek 2013; Hill 2008a). Looking at the embedded social indexicals marking Native North Americans, Meek argues that “conceptualizations of American Indians are entextualized and entitled (rendered interpretable) discursively, showing that the semiotic elements deployed across media can and do re-inscribe old-fashioned stereotypes.” (Meek 2013, 357). The most successful jokes then are ones that rely on highly recognizable, embedded stereotypes of social groups, in the case of Native North Americans a “primitive, incompetent” or “silent noble” routine. Contrary to certain scholars of humor, it is thus difficult to say that there are certain indexicalities built into jokes that are understood to be “just play” and therefore do not work more broadly into people’s cognitive schemes for understanding race, gender, and group formation. Once disseminated and public, routines of performance such as joke telling, joking relationships, and the like are thus co-constitutive of social indexicalities that are part and parcel of the language-culture nexus (Silverstein 2004).

I maintain that play provides a useful analytic starting point, but in highlighting the above issues, I suggest we disentangle its manifold implications, including frequent implicit assumptions of play-serious dichotomies. More often than not, what might be considered “play” constitutes routines of action and counter action—laminated histories that are often to be understood against past expectations and interpretations of social action between individuals. As such, there is no privileged site of creative manipulations free from histories of meaning or broader consequences. Rather than stable frames or worlds, play provides a way of contextualizing interactional dynamics that may be momentary, fleeting, and unstable\(^{16}\) at the evaluations necessary for a joke's reception and on how humor, teasing, and joking activate social personae that are recognizable.” (Queen 2005, 240).

\(^{16}\) In Abrahams’ analyses of Playing the Dozens, an insult duel with highly patterned insults and style provides an example of a deceivingly stable frame of play (Abrahams 1962). Labov argued that ritual sounding could quickly turn into actual insults, and that Abrahams relied on an overly stable view of what is in fact a porous frame of play (Labov 1972). Bauman and Briggs (1990,
same time that they are deeply consequential and entailing of new social types and indexical associations.

Alongside conceptions of play, joking relationships have been likewise described as (verbal) license (Radcliffe-Brown 1940). While it may initially appear easy to imagine what “verbal license” sounds like, I suggest that this tag is not always useful in understanding the interactional dynamics of routines of verbal creativity. License in the case of “you can say anything to your joking partner” masquerades as a state of free choice and action which permits the utterance of insults, epithets, or topics that might otherwise be withheld. License would thus appear as a measure of linguistic freedom. However, analyses of interactional routines like joking relationships reveal that talk is not just more or less restrained, but patterned in particular ways, following histories of expectations and use. Indeed, even the act of arguing, as Goffman famously remarked (Goffman 1981), necessitates a common collaboration and recognition of a shared state of disagreement. For instance, sanakuyaagal exchanges often feature talk of gluttony, slavery, stupidity, and hierarchy in patterned repartees and puns. In some cases, these could be very formulaic, or even patterned through certain poetic formulas that preserved formal similarities “e.g. Serer koerreur”. Indeed the “license” of particular individuals to utter each other’s taboo nicknames was itself the topic of conversation, a moment of social negotiation that occurred before or after the utterance of “verbal license” itself (e.g. whether they had paid a ratification fee or were present at the original folly). The separability of utterance and evaluation parallels ways in which insults necessitate the insult itself, and the charge of insult in subsequent talk (Irvine 1992).

63) note that “play frames not only alter the performative force of utterances but provide settings in which speech and society can be questioned and transformed.” The frame of play thus constitutes an initial point of departure for looking at ways in which public performances are transformed through forms of responsibility attribution (saving face, “just joking” with an emphasis on form rather than reference), participation, and the like.
Indeed, this ostensible “license” coexisted alongside strong pressures for interlocutors to coordinate talk dialogically, as a social encounter of a particular kind was mutually negotiated. For instance, when established joking partners “insulted” one another, the interactional pressure for returning insults was as high as were the social risk and difficulty in avoiding any such ludic repartees (see Chapter Three). On its own, the license as descriptor often gives little idea of the dialogic stylization and generic organization of linguistic practices. As this dissertation further points out, understandings of license furthermore sit in relation to other pragmatic categories such as praise, deference, or respect with which they are contrasted, often providing analogous principles of interaction. The perspective of joking or teasing as social action is not merely an interpretation of the interior states—whether individuals believe certain propositions or not—but more importantly also about public processes of negotiating responsibility, significance, and stance. Not encompassing of different worlds, routines of play like *sanakuyaagal* provide particular frames for evaluating and assigning responsibility that can be invoked in interactions.

**Summary of Chapters**

Beginning with the practice of *sanakuyaagal*, so-called joking relationships, this introduction has presented what might have been analyzed as separate genres of verbal art as routines. I show how this analytic allows for important perspectives on stranger sociability and social interpretation in a context of social and economic change. I view moments of disjuncture, refusal, and friction as productive modes through which interlocutors dialogically make explicit particular practices, connections or ideologies. In the following, I offer a brief summary of each subsequent chapter of this dissertation.
Chapter Two of this dissertation offers a framework for understanding routines of verbal creativity in the regional context of Kedougou. It begins by discussing how linguistic varieties and discourse types are evaluated across my research sites in southeastern Senegal. It offers an overview of commonly articulated rural-urban distinctions, which conceptualize “deep Pular” and orient to the production of honorific language. Rather than narrowly linguistic concerns, local understandings of respect and sociability—more broadly the ways one is socialized to relate to a world of others—provided a framework through which residents evaluated socioeconomic change. Routines of secrecy and the play of participant frameworks, for instance, were often drawn on to characterize differences between two linguistic registers. I thereby place these forms of evaluation within the regional history, which includes a discussion of the Ebola epidemic, administrative restructuring, gold mining, and transportation investments that have contributed to new precarities in the region.

Chapter Three argues that sanakuyaagal as routines constitute an emergent site of navigating relationships through which interlocutors are able to perform social types in interaction by drawing on poetic connections and alternative social principles. Rather than a “given” relationship, it is useful to think of them as performable routines that contextualize ongoing talk. This chapter concludes with the recognition that sanakuyaagal “joking relationships” offer not a unitary practice of alliance-making, but a practice that is cross-cut by a wealth of social idioms. Chapter Four picks up on this point by showing how sanakuyaagal offers one part of the broader practice of creativity in naming through which interlocutors use names to build forms of personhood and relationality access different kinds of social encounters.

Building upon this holistic analysis, Chapter Five more closely examines the ways in which teasing and honorification in many ways offer express complimentary forms of sociality.
It shows how the question of one’s status as in-law was broadly invoked as a frame through which returning migrants had to negotiate their status with those they left behind. By taking the village of Taabe as a locus, it examines how the categorical negotiation of junior and senior in-law, which implicates the performance of honorifics unique to Pulafuuta (a variety of Pular), constitutes a form of social negotiation. Building relations across this demanding region in the foothills of the Fouta Djallon mountains thus necessitates cultivating relations with a diverse range of people through the “pursuit of relations” (*jokkere endaj*).

After looking at how *sanakuyaagal* routines intersect with other forms of verbal creativity, I draw on an analysis of Kedougou’s downtown market as a locus of social activity in the region in Chapter Six. This chapter begins by showing how the circulation of talk, kola nuts, and money all contribute to the emergence of social collectivities and emergent infrastructures. This chapter shows how young merchants often employed highly salient *jammoore* taboo nicknames to evaluate one another’s success in their peripatetic selling. Through a detailed examination of these routines, I look at how mobile merchants make sense of precarious economic activity throughout the region. Routines of taboo naming and teasing in the downtown market constituted everyday conversations through which itinerant Guinean migrants kept track of one another, evaluated a sense of masculinity, and understood the economic and social challenges that confronted them.

Combining the verbal art of social interaction with multi-sited research allowed me to gain purchase on meaning making within the context of dispersed social networks. In Chapter Seven, I focus on the context of road travel in a time of economic growth to examine how mobility affects processes of social interpretation. As I develop throughout the dissertation, movement and mobility patterns afford certain routines of social evaluation, emergent frames in
which individuals drew on to interpret and understand one another. Therefore, not merely relationship work in the form of navigated stance or status in virtual terms, these routines mediated movement in physical across linked social sites as shaped through the materiality of roads, cars, and media. Encounters along bush paths between villages, for instance, rendered relevant certain kinds of questions about one’s comings and goings, national origins, and how one was understood as connected to local lineages or hamlets. Interactions in and across forms of transportation and in socially saturated spaces such as the market, significantly impacted forms of social recognition, as argued in Chapter Six. Movement by bicycle, by public transportation, and by motorcycle all affected the modes of self-presentation that emerged in relation to material affordances.

Finally, in Chapter Eight, I bring together an analysis of interdiscursivity, participant frameworks, and teasing to show how naming rituals themselves were sites through which individuals navigated their inclusion within the village community. This chapter draws in many strands from earlier in the dissertation, by showing how a seemingly localized act of teasing mediates relationships with a range of others across time and space. In it, I show how women performed subversive nicknames to insist on their place within community rituals even when they were excluded from participation frameworks. Access to rituals, moreover, was contingent and changing, and I view these as sites through which increasingly dispersed social networks measured and evaluated links with one another. These moments of gaining access to conversations and participation frameworks were achieved slowly, but through individual acts of conversational finesse.
CHAPTER TWO

Articulating a Borderland: New Precarities of Social Change in Southeastern Senegal

This chapter places linguistic routines and language ideologies in the context of new precarities of social and social change in the borderlands of Kedougou region. Using routines of verbal creativity as a lens, I show how individuals place themselves and interpret themselves within this context of increased mobility. A central argument of this dissertation is that sanakuyaagal joking relationships do not constitute a single practice as much as part of broader strategies through which West Africans interpreted one another across great distances.

Examining routines of face-to-face interaction and metapragmatic assessments allowed me to study how my interlocutors were formulating social models across these spaces, for instance, interpreting differences between speakers based on usage of honorific registers of deep Pular. Rather than neatly distinguished regional dialects, speakers often distinguished between varieties through metapragmatic attention to the production of registers such as honorifics. As I suggested in my introduction, perceptions of change, breakdown, or precarity within the larger region provided opportunities for individuals to articulate relationships between signs, social types, and linguistic varieties.

Language, Mobility, and Social Change

While the region of Kedougou has seen significant recent changes in patterns of mobility due to transportation infrastructure, a gold mining boom, and political decentralization, cyclical
migrants and itinerant traders have long histories across West Africa. From a deeper historical perspective, trans-Saharan trade articulated places north of the Sahel and the forest region to the south, and more recently elaborated forms of mobility within the continent and the diaspora bring populations into contact (Whitehouse 2012). Approaches to the West African social landscape have changed significantly since a time when earlier colonial and ethnographic perspectives envisioned communities as ethnic islands scattered across West Africa. While this chapter examines linguistic evaluation in the context of social change and does touch on the issue of mobility, Chapter Seven takes up the issue of mobility by examining its implications for social interaction.

While other scholars have shown that African communities have already long been part of a globalized world (Piot 1999), this dissertation examines how individuals perform and place routines within new patterns of social and economic change. To this end I offer perspectives on cultural life in West Africa by interrogating the interstices of social contact and examining processes through which individuals utilize relational resources to maintain or contest social relationships across linked sites. Sitting at the crossroads of trans-Saharan trade and at the interstices of shifting Sahelian political centers that drove regular migrations fed by environmental change, religious expansion, and economic opportunity, West Africa has long been the site of exchange and contact (Brooks 1993). In an area where diverse populations have grown and prospered amid a shortage of labor, idioms such as stranger-host relations, patronage, conversion, and affinity have provided strategies for communities to invest in wealth in people (Guyer 1993).

Other models of social relations in West Africa have attempted to conceptualize practices of circulation and dispersal. Kopytoff’s model of the African frontier, for instance, posited a
broad fission-fusion movement in which segments of populations moved in and out of urban, rural, and uninhabited lands where they built new communities at the same time that they had to negotiate relationships with autochthonous inhabitants and neighbors (Kopytoff 1987). In his view, many of the splinter groups attempted to institute idealized visions of community as they founded new towns and hamlets in lesser occupied zones in the peripheries of settled lands. Indeed, in my own experience in talking with elders from villages along the Guinea border and around Kedougou City, I often heard similar stories of searching and founding—tales of brothers losing track of their families as they traveled in search of economic opportunities. In turn, brothers and uncles went in search of their lost kin, and in so doing begin to build communities, to intermarry, and to negotiate contracts with local populations. Indeed, as Kédovins increasingly build familial and professional networks across Senegal, West Africa, and the world, we need better ways of accounting for how individuals build communities and navigate social relations within these dispersed networks.

In historical work on West Africa, joking relationships were often understood as a mechanism through which this phatic labor was achieved. For instance, according to Brooks, whose touchstone book, *Landlords and Strangers*, provides a framework for understanding trade and mobility in precolonial times: “…Western Africans opportunistically redefine their identities in response to changing circumstances. Removed, even fictive, kinship ties, special bonds between groups such as “joking relationships” indeed any social or cultural advantages one can claim or contrive have for centuries facilitated human relationships and expedited trade, travel, migration, and settlement in Western Africa.” (Brooks 1993, 28). Similarly, Bird and other scholars have pointed at ways in which last names were drawn on and “made local” as individuals travel across distances:
When a man from Korhogo whose family name I know to be a Watara greets the Juula of Korhogo, they address him in return as a Traore, a freeman Juula clan name. When a Mande Keita goes north among the Soninke, they may address him as Konate, a name of royal clan. Keita might be thought of as a slave name among those same Soninke. These clan name exchanges are deeply rooted in the social history and practices of the western savanna. It is not difficult to see this exchange as a way of making outsiders insiders. It is a ticket to mobility, a soothing of the way down the road. If these people were not moving in and out of each other’s lives, there would be no need of such practices. Some of that movement was initiated by farming and trade, some by war. (Bird 1999, 276)

Formulating my research along the pathways of cyclical mobility, I use the perspective of verbal creativity and performance to study how people typified others and drew on entextualized practices of social identification like sanakuyaagal as they navigated social relations across sites. Living in cities away from natal villages, individuals often had to engage in flexible social bricolage to build or contest relationships that would help them live, work, and thrive in new settings. This dissertation has practical implications for understanding the diverse mechanisms through which people produce and reconfigure social collectivities in moments of rapid economic change—for instance, by rendering the unfamiliar familiar by transforming strangers into kin.

In conducting this dissertation research across village and town settings in the region of Kedougou, I point out that neither sphere is a privileged site of relatedness, kinship, or identity construction. In the past, anthropology of Africa has implicitly treated social relations at the village level to be the “true” status of relationships which are then expanded and extended in urban contexts (Amselle 1990). Beyond this, urban contexts were often viewed as complex, byzantine places that lacked the coherency of village life (Ferguson 1999). Questions of how to interpret rural and urban social organization occupied early Africanist anthropology of the Manchester School (J. Clyde Mitchell 1956; J C Mitchell 1959; Gluckman 1940, 1955), and
even recent scholars have presented different kinds of tools to deal with urban social relations, such as an emphasis on “urban kinship” as a distinct category (Bjarnesen and Utas 2018).

Moving in between villages, regional centers, and distant economic sites, migrants evaluated language competencies and social knowledge acquired while away. In this context of cyclical migration, individuals evaluated one another as rural or urban subjects in myriad ways, drawing on language and deportment, often expressed and objectified in the banter of conversational teasing. Young Pulafuuta speakers, for instance, often teased one another in response to perceived missteps in wielding Wolof back in the village. In the past decades, the youth of villages like Taabe had significantly declined—at least during certain times of the year. Increasingly, such hometowns have become social anchors that attracted their sons and daughters at festivals and key moments throughout the year. Rather than positing analytical categories of rural villager or urban dweller, the distinction of rural and urban was often something that was negotiated in interactions. Informants evaluated and policed each other’s comportment and looked for the signs that the world left upon people. While many made their way from villages to mining areas, not all were able to convert their resources and knowledge of the world into status and new conceptions of themselves (Fioratta 2013).

In West Africa one’s capacity to move and take advantage of opportunities across developing economic centers was predicated upon one’s ability to build solidarity groups in new cities, to negotiate kinship ties, and to negotiate host relationships with the landlords of various towns and cities. In this context, I view movement as a mode of social negotiation through which interlocutors placed and recognized one another in relation to concrete, material pathways of movement (more in Chapter Seven). Building the capacity to travel and thrive was a form of social investment and labor. Looking beyond dichotomies of kinship and friendship, other
scholars have shown forms of friendship networks to be significant resources through which individuals expand economic and geographic opportunities (Guichard, Grätz, and Diallo 2014; Warms 2014). Scholars of West African mobility have moreover highlighted the importance of studying internal forms of mobility within Africa, whereas a majority of the research has examined international diasporas (Whitehouse 2012). While looking at hometowns, cyclical mobility, and the sociality of staying put (Gaibazzi 2015) has been useful in approaches to African mobility, this dissertation contributes to an understanding of how communities draw on linguistic practices to evaluate one another, negotiate identity, and build belonging within social contexts that are increasingly located across linked social spaces (Whitehouse 2012; Gaibazzi 2015).

Local conceptions of social relations stressed the work involved in maintaining contact across vast spaces through phatic labor. Kinship was something that had to be sustained through physical, linguistic practices of exchange and mobility, understood in Pulafuuta as jokkere enday (the pursuit of relations). Village residents, for instance, would often name their children after medical professionals, entrepreneurs, and colleagues in urban centers and draw on these relational poetics to cultivate visitations and contact. Timely phone calls, trips to visit neighbors and relatives, the ability to sift through crowds in the market and establish webs of trust all provided important forms of social labor built through routines of recognition which were not given but cultivated through attentive acts. West Africans attempting to build social networks were thus confronted with the question of how they could maintain links with home communities and distribute themselves across social space.

**Respect, Teasing and Secrecy: Discriminating Among Linguistic Varieties**
As individuals navigated social networks between these increasingly articulated sites in Kedougou region, particular distinctions between varieties, often based on understandings of license and respect, motivated practices of social evaluation. In the region of Kedougou, the ways in which individuals balanced respectful and familiar relationships with others was a more fundamental part of how speakers articulated linguistic and social differentiation (Agha 1998). Agha more broadly understands such reflexive action as *enregisterment*, through which particular semiotic forms are associated with particular social figures. In what follows, I offer a preliminary discussion of how the linguistic variety of Pulafiuta was partly constituted through metapragmatic understandings of license, respect, and secrecy. In this capacity, linguistic performances often were interpreted within assessments of provenance, ethnicity, and character more broadly. Rather than merely ideas about languages as distinct entities as objectified through metalinguistic talk, this dissertation views language ideologies as processes that examine forms of evaluation, connection-making, and scale work through which reflexive actors evaluate links between people, routines, and relationships (Irvine and Gal 2019).

Nestled between the borders of Guinea-Conakry and Mali, the region of Kedougou is multilingual area of contact between multilingual speakers of what were locally described as Pular, Malinké, Toucouleur, Jaxanké, Jallunké, Bassari, Bedik, Saraxulé, and Coniagi among others. French and Wolof were also commonly spoken, particularly among members of the administrative class of *affectés* (stationed professionals) and merchant classes. Sitting in southeastern Senegal not far from the Mali-Bamako and Guinea-Conakry borders, many Kédovins trace their family history along routes of migration that originated in neighboring countries, primarily Mali and Guinea-Conakry. While speakers of Malinké, a variety of Mande,
dominated in many regions around the city of Kedougou, Pular\textsuperscript{17} nevertheless serves as a dominant \textit{lingua franca} across Kedougou City.\textsuperscript{18} As such, almost any urban residents would learn Pular and various levels of French, depending on their level of schooling, in addition to other varieties at home.

In a strongly multilingual African context, Lüpke and Storch have convincingly argued against the conception of multilingualism as merely code-switching between autonomous codes

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} A note on terminology: I use the term Pular to refer to language varieties spoken in southeastern Senegal in the region of Kedougou and northern Guinea. In French, this language is sometimes referred to as Peul, or Peuhl as are speakers. This contrasts with ethnonyms Pullo (sg.), Fulɓe (pl.) even though the language is also sometimes called Pullo or Peuhl. In eastern West Africa (Nigeria, Chad), related language varieties are often called Ful, or Fula, with the corresponding ethnonym Fulani. A specific variety spoken in the northern reaches of the Fouta Djallon (along the Senegal–Guinea Conakry border) inhabitants often referred to the local variety as Pulafuuta (Pular of the Fouta Djallon). Similarly, varieties from the neighboring Bande in the region of Kedougou were called Pular Bande, or Pular spoken in Fongolimbì Pular Tangue. More broadly, Pular has occupied a peculiar place within West Africa linguistics, fascinating linguists due to its “complex” noun morphology that can feature close to thirty noun classes. So famed are its grammatical complexities that Pular has often been used as the textbook example for language complexity (McWhorter 2001). As such, Pular’s grammar has been used to make the case against biological analogies that would read streamlining or utility into linguistic change over time. Varieties of Pular are widely diffused across the Sahel from Senegal to Chad (and even to South Sudan, for instance see the “lost Arab nomads” (Hamer 2015). Pular is variously presented as a cohesive language and cultural group, as in the case of a 1963 book \textit{Die Sprache der Ful (Dialekt von Adamawa)}, which portrays a language qua culture split by other people and languages:
\begin{quote}
Original: Die Sprache der Ful ist in Westafrika von der Küste des Atlantischen Ozeans in Senegal, Guinea, und Sierra Leone bis über den Tschadsee nach Osten hinaus verbreitet. In diesem ausgedehnten Raum leben die Ful aber nicht in einer zusammenhängenden Masse, sondern sie sind oft durch Voelker mit anderen Sprachen voneinander getrennt” (Klingenberg 1963).
\end{quote}
Translation (my own): “The language of the Ful spreads across West Africa from the Atlantic coast in Senegal, Guinea, and Sierra Leone beyond Lake Chad to the East. In this broad space, however, the Ful do not live in a united cluster, but rather are often separated from one another by other peoples (Völker).

Not only linguistically marked, Fulɓe, or Peuls in French, were often considered to be racially distinct, in view of what is often considered to be their “light skin and fine features”. Colonial sources and popular discourses frequently comment on the beauty of Fulani women.
\item \textsuperscript{18} In the Introduction to Directions in Sociolinguistics, Dell Hymes expresses the need for developing a common vocabulary for describing and comparing language practices comparatively. In so doing, he elaborates on Czech linguist Neustupný’s term \textit{Sprechbund}, often translated as “speech area,” which capture shared communicative norm among groups of speakers. This term is often contrasted with \textit{Spachbund}, or language area that refers to languages shared “genetic” traits based on proximity and circulation. Neustupný’s case had been central Europe, in which then Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Germany were held to share norms of greetings and casual conversation (Gumperz and Hymes 1991, 54–55; Hymes 1968). While more comparative research should be conducted, my initial observations suggest that southeastern Senegal, and likely an area encompassing parts of Senegal, Mali, and Guinea, encompass a common \textit{Sprechbund} in many respects. Just as cultural or biological differences do not always neatly and by default map onto languages, the fact that (often multilingual) speakers of different languages might share pragmatics norms should not present a conceptual problem. Whereas language ideologies based on Euro-American views of the nation-state often assume that cultural similarities follow linguistic boundaries, the term \textit{Sprechbund} posits the possibility of shared pragmatics that are not necessarily predicated on sharing a code in common. In the case of Kedougou, \textit{Sprechbund} helps explain social idioms such as seniority, hospitality, greetings, joking relationships, and views on names that are shared by largely multilingual speakers of languages such as Malinkè, Jaxankè, Pular, and Wolof, among others. For instance, most inhabitants of Kedougou region broadly share a conception of seniority in which elders have certain rights and responsibilities over their younger counterparts. Expectations of when greetings were appropriate, how to defer to administrative agents, or how to send children on errands were all practices for which linguistic actors in Kedougou learned similar patterns of interaction when they came into Kedougou City.
\end{itemize}

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and towards a consideration of repertoires\textsuperscript{19} as sets of linguistic varieties that speakers employ throughout various modes of social interaction (Lüpke and Storch 2013). This perspective importantly positions linguistic heteroglossia (M. M. Bakhtin 1981) as a starting point, rather than something to be explained through conceptions of “switching” or “mixing”. Secondly, it allows for a more nuanced view of how speakers evaluate relationships among varieties by not taking for granted formal linguistic distinctions made on the grounds of grammatical structure alone (most often on the basis of cognates rather than syntax or morphology). Rather than switching between autonomous languages, the perspective of repertoires is useful insofar as it captures how speakers navigate a contrasted set of varieties that are adapted to specific occupation and social contexts.

In the case of Pulafuuta and Pular Bande, which I detail further below, the existence or lack of honorific lexemes and the pragmatics of deference and secrecy more broadly provided grounds for differentiating varieties. Not merely distinguishing among varieties, the performance of respect and appropriate license itself became an important mode through which Kedougou residents conceptualized demographic shifts and economic growth in the wake of a mining economy. “Town” varieties of Pular also featured significant usage from Wolof, French, and English. Although Kedougou differs somewhat in character from the extremely multilingual region of Casamance that inspired Storch and Lüpke’s observations, repertoires are still a useful point of departure in conceptualizing linguistic practices in Kedougou City.

Assumptions about varietal differences were made when speakers evaluated metapragmatic domains. For instance, speakers across the region often made inferences about different linguistic

\textsuperscript{19} As noted by Lønsmann (Lønsmann, Hazel, and Haberland 2017), scholars have adopted a dizzying array of concepts to confront multilingualism from a perspective that does not reify, \textit{a priori}, distinctions among varieties. These include language crossing (Rampton 1995, 1999), metrolingual practice (Otsuji and Pennycook 2013), polylingual languaging (Jørgensen 2008), translanguaging (Garcia 2009; Garcia and Li 2014), and trans-idiomatic practice (Jacquemet 2005).
practices (such as forms of joking, conceptions of seniority) which drew equivalencies with the practices of speakers they assumed to be different from themselves. In this way, speakers were making assumptions about socio-linguistic phenomena in other languages based on analogies to their own. In so doing, speakers posited relationships among linguistic codes, rules for use, and implications these have for interpreting types of people. For instance, when speakers drew distinctions between rural and urban varieties, they often posited equivalent contexts in other languages such as Pular, Malinké, or Bassari, citing similar concerns of the loss of “deep” language in urban communities that were preserved across speakers of rural varieties. These moments of typification were also moments of social action, for instance when Bassari\textsuperscript{20} speakers likened their age set relations to sanakuyaagal, thereby facilitating their ability to enter into the sociopoetic relationality of these routines (see Chapter Four).

Significant here is the fact that speakers make inferences about each other’s language use based on analogies of similar practices across languages. In this way, practices of drawing equivalence among linguistic practices (seniority, joking relationships, etc.) across languages, regions, and groups meant that many evaluated each other based on the assumption of shared norms. I explain how such equivalencies were constructed between Bassari last names and patronyms that figure into the classic view of joking relationships correspondences. I found that this process of drawing equivalencies and comparisons and applying them in other contexts was part of a larger strategy of using relational idioms flexibly to make useful connections between oneself and one’s social consociates. Making these kinds of equations across metalinguistic categories was itself the work of language ideologies in practice by applying analogous thinking in relation to “other” linguistic practices.

\textsuperscript{20} A traditionally matrilineal Tenda-speaking group considered to be autochthonous in the region of Kedougou.
Linguistic varieties thus cannot be studied in isolation, but rather emerge from processes of distinctions by reflexive actors in a field of linguistic varieties (Irvine 2001). As I just mentioned, one of the most salient axes of comparison in Kedougou concerned a juxtaposition of urban and rural ways of speaking between Kedougou City and its hinterlands. Whereas rural varieties were commonly held to be the clean (laabi), or deep varieties (luugi), urban varieties, particularly for the youth, were often felt to be mixed and less clean. Although my analyses of this distinction are largely based on Pular, I have heard many Kédovins speak of Malinké and Bassari in very similar terms.

Kedougou’s strong economic and social changes of the past ten years were often perceived through the lens of language. These reflexive observations contrasting urban heteroglossic varieties with rural, pure languages are ethnographically familiar. Similar dynamics can be observed in across Senegal, as in the case of urban Wolof of Dakar (McLaughlin 2001, 2008), but also elsewhere in Africa (Spitulnik 2008) or indeed Latin America (Hill 1998). Reflexivity about social change was performed through the evaluation of talk, such as remarks about how youth mixed Pular with Wolof and no longer spoke correctly. These remarks thus provided one way that Kédovins debated the perils of the gold mining economy and perceptions of an increasingly disrespectful youth.

Speakers of Pular were adamant that learning deep Pular was not only a product of age, but that it was also a skill one could develop, even as a younger individual. Being an accomplished and deep speaker was something that required effort and ability, and not acquired as a matter of course. “Wana fow waawi,” I was told by the imam, referring to Pular luugungal (deep Pular). As such, evaluations of propriety and second order assessments (Silverstein 2003) of individuals were often made on this basis. In this way, several young men and women from
Taabe were very proud of their deep knowledge of Pular and roundly acknowledged by their peers.

The partial unintelligibility of deep Pular for certain urban speakers casts a fresh light on studies of cants and in-group speech. Linguistic research on urban youth languages such as Nouchi have often foregrounded creativity and novelty as productive of these emerging systems of in-group communication (Newell 2009; Kiessling and Mous 2004). Even while linguistic research on “contemporary urban vernaculars” increases in Africa (Nortier and Svendsen 2015), they must be analyzed in relation to existing varieties which may acquire new associations as they are contrasted with emerging urban languages like Nouchi. In one sense, the case of registers which are largely opaque to urban dwellers flips this standard narrative on its head if learning the “deep” Pular of the rural regions gave speakers the ability to manipulate euphemisms, deep words, and expressions that were out of the reach of urban Kédovins who increasingly employed alternatives taken from French.21 My interlocutors overwhelmingly expressed to me that knowledge of deep Pular from the villages was not something one acquired as a matter of course, but something that took skill and effort. An attention to the background assumptions about how speakers learn and acquire linguistic codes or pragmatic domains is itself an important dimension of language ideologies that impacts processes of evaluation and differentiation.

Indeed, this attention to regimenting knowledge was not only remarked upon in terms of linguistic code, but also in terms of how speakers managed participation frameworks. Rural Fulɓe Fouta who spoke Pulafuuta thus not only used secretive “deep” Pular but also restricted listeners by forming private “breakout” discussions whose participants were sifted out of larger

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21 A part of this vague, or secretive talk was the oft-discussed root duma-, which could be productively employed as a verb dumanagol, or a noun, duma on (the thingamajiggy, to thingamajiggy).
participation frameworks (*gundagol*). In this light, Chapter Eight’s analysis of a ritual naming ceremony can also be understood as an analysis of how speakers excluded from these secretive negotiations might contest their lack of power to participate through canny tactics of public teasing which offer highly (re)textualizable linguistic signs of protest.

At the same time that deep varieties afforded strategies for secrecy and self-presentation, for many Kedougou youth, inserting bits of Wolof, French, and English indexed valued knowledge of Senegalese national and global cultural forms and positioned them as hip. Kedougou youth actively adapted English words to greetings and in affective talk, words gleaned from American R&B songs that some would play from their phones. Even in the village of Takkopellel that sat in the heart of tourist treks near Taabe, village youth commonly greeted each other in Spanish, often calling each other “*hombre*”. In this way, incorporating French, Wolof, English, and Spanish into one’s speech in an urban context often served to index one’s contact to other broader cultural spheres. Whereas knowledge of only one language often positioned individuals as *fulawanaabe* or *kaw-kaw* (country bumpkins), competency in multiple varieties could mark speakers as well traveled. Knowledge of Wolof or Malinké, for instance, indexed itinerant life experience, *aventure*, and experience in gold mining in eastern Senegal and Mali.22

**Ideologies of Respect and Deference**

Residents of the village of Taabe, where I conducted my rural field work, predominantly spoke Pular of the Fouta Djallon variety, also called Pulafuuta.23 Pular spoken in my rural field

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22 Kédovins were very aware of and interested in learning other varieties of Pular. Most understood it to be a language that was spoken broadly throughout West Africa where one regularly encountered Futankōbē from northern Senegal, Pulakunda speakers from further West in Kolda, as well as Pular speakers from as far away as Niger who travelled through selling traditional medicine.

23 Most men and some women spoke Wolof in addition, and almost all had studied Arabic through in *düdal*, Qur’an schools. Residents of the plateau and in the lowland region spoke what was often called *Pulafuuta*. As Pular of the northern Fouta Djallon, it was often likened to the Pular spoken in northern Guinea in cities like Mali or Labe. Most families in the *hoore fello* consider
site was often described as *laabi*, or clean from individuals across the region. Often in contrast to town Pular, *hoore fello* Pular and that spoken by Guineans was often identified as the locus of deep, “clean” Pular, saying things such as “haala maɓɓe no laabi” (“their speech is clean”). Places like Taabe were known for avoiding French loan words and themselves reflexive of this fact. Assessments of Pular’s degree of being “clean” often involved other dialects. Many in the *hoore fello* area were proud of their clean Pular and found that other dialects such as Pular Senegal, or Pular Fouta Toro more specifically, were not as clean as the Pular they were speaking (*Pular laabungal*). Proximity to Wolof, as some explained to me, had affected the purity of some varieties. In town, Wolof and French were commonly held to be the culprits leading to Pular’s urban impurities: “no ukkondiri e français and wolof,” (“it’s mixed in with French and Wolof”) a Kedougou native who worked in the industrial mines told me.

To stop linguistic analysis at a village boundary, however, is to ignore ways that speakers adapt their ways of speaking to different contexts, and to ignore the relational constitution of language. While villages like Taabe provided a linguistic environment in which speakers routinely learned registers of “deep” Pular, many routinely traveled villages to urban, economic centers where they learned to perform different repertoires in each place. In later chapters, I demonstrate ways in which “village teasing,” or portraying individuals as a *fulawanaajo* (country bumpkin), often incite those living in Kedougou City to perform urban identities. The capacity to navigate a range of contexts as performances of self was a skill to acquire—and one that was strongly informed by genres of verbal creativity that I detail in this dissertation.

themselves to be Fule Fouta. In Taabe itself, and on the plateau as a whole, a great number of families carried the patronymic Diallo. In this way, remarking on the presence of someone with the last name Ba (the classic joking cousins of Diallos) often became a productive trope through which *hoore fello* Diallos defended their mountain. The area had also seen peripatetic communities of Jaxanké, though most of them had moved to Takkopellel where their descendants now resided and spoke largely Pulafuta.

24 For *hoore fello* residents, the epitome of clean Pular was *Radio Mali* which broadcast a radio program in the evenings that could be listened to in Taabe and even as far as Kedougou for those who had very good radios.
Regionally, Pulafuuta was often contrasted with Pular Bande which was held to be spoken to the northwest in cities like Ibel, Bandafassi, or Thiokethian. Although similar in many respects, some Kédovins claimed to notice subtle difference in rhythm and intonation, but when pressed it was difficult to identify stable, patterned differences. Instead, the most metalinguistically salient differences (Silverstein 1981) involved alternative lexemes and the absence or presence of honorifics. Rather than geographical varieties that might be easily identifiable on a color-coded map, I suggest that honorification itself presented a key metapragmatic node of differentiation between Pulafuuta and Pular Bande. Whereas Agha has argued that metapragmatic stereotypes about honorifics valorize languages in certain ways, intuitions about honorifics, pragmatics, and teasing also contributed to the differentiation among language varieties in the first place (Agha 1998).

Not only lexical differences, however, speakers often distinguished between Pular Bande and Pular Fouta based the pragmatics of secrecy, self-interest, deference that included different participant frameworks (Compare for instance the case of affect in Irvine 1990). Whereas Pular Bande were often held to eschew honorifics and allowed broad participation across status and age, Pular Fouta was performed in break out sessions of gundagol that distinguished among those in-the-know. In this way, respect, honorifics, and the intimacies of joking often became a frame through which residents interpreted social relations. In metapragmatic assessments,

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25 In the case of one family where the mother was from the Bande and the father from the Fouta, such distinctions often became the subject of metapragmatic discussions. While Fulɓe Fouta might refer to an intersection as date cele, a Bandenanké wife of a friend once insisted in conversation that the correct, Pular Bande term was instead laaɓi cele. Differences between Pulafuuta and Pular Bande were a salient topic of conversation, and the distinction of varieties of Pular thus became a way in which individuals often commented on the breadth and significance of Pular. Certain examples had a kind of representative status and were often cited as proof of the differences between variants of Pular. One such example commonly cited was one that foregrounds consonant alternation in other variants of Pular, but not Pulafuuta. In this way, entire varieties were conceptualized through the metonyms of a single address term’s variation: “wii mi,” others say “mbii mi” or “mbii ma mii.” Literature on metalinguistic awareness has tried to investigate what kinds of linguistic elements speakers become aware of (Silverstein 1981). In cases such as these, certain grammatical constructions are not only available to metapragmatic commentary, but often become metonymic of the differences between perceived variants (e.g. “mbii mi Pular” or “wii mi Pular”).
speakers frequently interpreted such differences as carrying the potential for misunderstanding and insult. Metalinguistic intuitions about Pular Bande and Pulafuuta involved not only narrowly “linguistic” elements but were intertwined with dispositional assumptions about their speakers as types of people. As Irvine demonstrated in her analysis of rural Wolof speech registers (Irvine 1973), evaluations of varieties of speaking could become rhematized when qualities of languages were transferred to types of people. In this logic, slow speech might betray individuals to be slow of mind, or less intelligent more generally. Indeed, in contrast to speakers of Pular Bande, Pulafuuta speakers are considered to be more respectful and to speak slowly in a manner described as doy.  

At the same time that Pulafuuta was linked with respect and soft speaking, however, its speakers were frequently held to occlude intentions and use language in self-interested ways. Through the deployment of secretive language and hidden signs, local language ideologies conceptualized Pulafuuta as prone to obfuscation and concealment. Viewed as less prone to joke, Fulɓe Fouta were perceived to be more reserved and respectful, even towards children. Children, it was often reported, would never call their parents by their names, and rather use kinship terms in direct address. Although their actions might appear to be respectful and considerate, in the view of many, they belied a narrow concern for their own well-being and concerns, attending to their own private affairs (sg: haaju). Particularly by individuals outside the community, this obfuscation and secrecy was viewed to be in the service of manipulating others and benefitting in-group members.

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26 The word used to refer to adolescent children in the Bande, payle déŋ, was identified by Taabe speakers as an insult in Pulafuuta. Likewise, pundi déŋ, supposed by Pulafuuta speakers to mean dust among Pular speakers in the Fouta Toro, is a derogatory term used for male genitalia, an insult often launched among young boys in Taabe: “pundi maa”.

27 These observations were articulated in conversations with Bandenanké living in Kedougou, and also in travels through the Bande with my research assistant, Mamadou Diallo who is a Bandenanké himself.
Bandenanké, in contrast, are viewed as less respectful and more prone to joke.\(^28\) With less attention to respectful talk between youth and elders, it was said that these groups could talk on more equal terms. They are quick to get to know, and quick to joke. Not as reserved as Pulafuuta, Bandenanké also are said to gesticulate more frequently and more actively. In cases where Pulafuuta would talk in euphemisms or split off into a splinter group to discuss sensitive issues in private or *gundagol*, Bandenanké were commonly held to state them simply and openly.

Thus, while local evaluations attributed to Fulɓe Fouta certain pragmatics and with them, evaluations of the speakers themselves, these ostensibly byzantine relations of affinal avoidance and respect giving, belie a field of play that Fulɓe speakers contested and shaped in significant ways. Indeed, while much linguistic anthropological research has been conducted on mother-in-law language and avoidance relationships, I found that the existence of such categorical relationships did not constrain social relationships as much as they provided principles of interaction that were often refashioned in interaction. And while many (including Fulɓe themselves) felt that Fulɓe Fouta addressed themselves with byzantine kinship terms that involved complex displays of deference, Fulɓe Fouta of the downtown market turned name calling into a highly productive form of insulting taboo play, replete with in-the-moment fines through which speakers were ratified into the calling of taboo nicknames (*jammoore*).

**Previous Work in Kedougou**

Having presented the linguistic stakes of conducting a regional analysis of social interaction in the region of Kedougou and thereby linking metapragmatic discussions to emerging social distinctions, in the rest of this chapter I offer a more detailed discussion of the

\(^28\) These assessments were gleaned through non-interview style conversations in trips to the Bande, and also in detailed conversations with my research assistant and members of his homeland association, who are all from the Bande.
new precarities of social and economic change which have characterized this region. While, as I highlighted above, cyclical mobilities and interactional creativity are not new phenomena, the expansion of transportation infrastructure, administrative decentralization, a mushrooming gold mining sector, and the Ebola epidemic of 2014 did provide new precarities that significantly affected day-to-day lives of Kédovins. In this dissertation, I do not merely examine disembodied relationship work but also linguistic practices and routines of social interaction as they emerge in relation to these material changes.

What follows provides a brief overview of my previous experiences insofar as they shed light on the kinds of relationships I cultivated with my interlocutors, an overview necessary because my time there since 2006 has spanned many of the changes that I describe. Before conducting my dissertation field-work in 2014-2016, I had spent approximately four years living and working in Senegal. I had first come to Senegal as a Peace Corps volunteer in 2006 along with a group of approximately fifty other American volunteers. At that time, I was placed in Kedougou City and lived for two years with a host family in one of Kedougou’s older neighborhoods, Daande Maayo “at the neck of the river”. I spent a total of two years working in Kedougou as a small enterprise development volunteer in which capacity I worked with women’s groupements, entrepreneurs, boutique owners, a community radio station, and also as a teacher in Kedougou’s Centre d’Enseignement Technique Féminin.29 Early on in my service, I

29 I spent much of my time in Kedougou on a range of individual and collaborative projects. For example, I developed relationships with a several women’s and village groupements, organizing marketing and accounting workshops in an effort to expand their activities. I also served as an instructor for a women’s technical school (Centre d’Enseignement Technique Féminin), where I taught business skills courses for young women who were learning vocational skills such as sewing, cooking, and home economics. In collaboration with other volunteers in the area, I also worked on mosquito net distribution campaign, which allowed me to travel widely in the region. As a group project, we also organized environmental youth camps for middle and high school students. I also collaborated with volunteers to provide business consultations with local campements touristiques in the rural areas around Kedougou that were attempting to draw in tourists. It is in this capacity that I met Mamadou Diallo, who would be my key contact for establishing relationships with Taabe, the village in the foothills of the Fouta Djallon mountains where I conducted my rural field-work. Many of the friends I made back in the Peace Corps were still around in the Kedougou market when I did field work from 2014 to 2016. The friendships that I made during my Peace Corps service largely defined the social networks along which my field-work was based from 2014 to 2016. For example, my research assistant, Mamoudou Diallo, who has helped me with transcriptions, is a friend that I met during my Peace Corps service.
began to notice a pattern of cyclical mobility in which residents would often travel back and forth from Kedougou City, or between larger economic centers and home villages. Much of my early time in Kedougou was spent learning Pulafuuta, and many initial contacts initially interpreted me in this capacity. As I returned to Senegal in the years afterwards, these networks became the basis for many of my subsequent anthropological research.

After my Peace Corps service in Kedougou from 2006 to 2009, I returned to Senegal several times. I had extended my Peace Corps service one year to work in a small business incubation center in 2009 in Saint-Louis where I began to learn Wolof. Even after my Peace Corps service, I returned to Senegal to work as an experiential study abroad instructor. In 2011, I co-led a semester-long trip through Senegal and Guinea with a group of seven students and two other instructors. Our group traveled to Kedougou and on to Guinea during these trips, and I managed to expand my contacts in the area, this time not as a Peace Corps volunteer but rather as a traveling educator.

My experience as a Peace Corps volunteer and study abroad educator strongly shaped my

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30 My interest in learning Pular was largely legible to Kédovins, who viewed language learning (e.g. Pular, Wolof) as a highly worthwhile exercise. The Peace Corps had been active in Senegal since the early sixties, and while the Peace Corps had not had as strong a presence in Kedougou as it had in other parts of the country, most were familiar the figure of the linguistically curious Peace Corps volunteer armed with a notebook. Indeed, while most residents learned many local languages from normal processes of language socialization in a multilingual environment, I not infrequently met Senegalese who studied languages themselves by carrying around small notebooks and asking for clarifications from those who spoke it. For instance, one particular young adult from Taabe was invested in learning Malinké and asked others who had spent time in the diouras (gold mining areas) to teach him what they had learned. In this way, linguistic ideologies pertaining to the value and methodologies for language learning at various points in one’s life inform linguistic anthropological work. Relatedly, not speaking languages deemed relevant and “normal” in particular contexts was itself often the grounds for teasing. Individuals in Kedougou City that did not speak Pular were relentlessly teased for this fact, and their personal and professional opportunities were somewhat restricted as a consequence. Similarly, not learning to speak the language of one’s spouse, or the in some cases a language frequently spoken in a particular quartier, were also frequently the grounds for evaluative comments. NGOs such as TOSTAN and others had been teaching Pular, Malinké, and other forms of literacy for some time in villages across Kedougou (mainly to women, in fact) and many Taabe residents had books of Pular literacy and writing that they avidly consumed. Many were books of varieties spoken outside of Kedougou, such as Pular du Nord, and readers were interested in scrutinizing the differences between these varieties and their own.

31 My co-leaders and I—both Senegalese and American—planned the itineraries, spending a lot of time in the regions of Kedougou and Kolda, as well as the Fouta Djallon in between Takkopellel and Labe. In this capacity, I continued to develop relationships with friends and interlocutors I had known in the Peace Corps. We spent much of our time organizing host family experiences for the students, providing language instruction in Pulafuuta and French, and teaching lessons on African history and culture.
choice of research sites and collaborations with my interlocutors. Many of those I spent time
with in Kedougou City and Taabe as an anthropologist had first gotten to know me as a Peace
Corps volunteer or study abroad instructor. Inhabiting these different roles during different times,
I came to engage with communities in Senegal in a slightly different way. Some knew me from
the Peace Corps and grew accustomed to my frequent returns to Kedougou in different
capacities, while I met others only as a study-abroad instructor, or later, as an anthropologist. At
times, these different levels of engagement were reflected in the names given to me by my host
families and friends.32

Kedougou Region, Reassembling a Shatter Zone

Much like other regions of the world that are partly inaccessible, located at the edges of
states and transportation networks, Kedougou has long occupied a position as a regional shatter
zone, an area that often provided refuge for those seeking to evade taxation, conversion, or
contact.33 Not unlike the highlands of Southeast Asia (J. C. Scott 2017) or the forest region of
southern Guinea (McGovern 2013), Kedougou had been a partly inaccessible, semi-mountainous
region that had attracted many at the edges of West African empires, the slave trade and
administrative control. However, recent developments have been increasingly marked by a trend
towards increased incorporation into broader state and economic systems. Figure one shows

32 During my field-work in Taabe and Kedougou in the years 2014-2016, I was known by names given to me in Kedougou:
Souleymane Diallo. Although most in the region of Kedougou had known me by the last name Kanté, during my years in the
Peace Corps, Mamadou’s family in village of Taabe was adamant about my taking their last name of Diallo. At certain times,
there was an ambiguity as to which was my patronym, and I on occasion responded to both in different contexts. The practice of
having Senegalese names is not uncommon for any long-term, Western visitors in Senegal, but also a particularly prominent
practice in Peace Corps culture. Having a patronym that figured in the joking relationships and social landscape of southeastern
Senegal, however, allowed others to incorporate myself into joking exchanges. In many cases, if I gave my “real” name, Nikolas,
many would ask what my other name was. However, for some of my closest friends, knowing and referring to me by my Anglo
name, Nikolas, became a strong mark of intimacy.

33 For instance, research by Cameron Gokee just to the north of Kedougou looks at populations occupying the Falémé River and
living at the periphery of West Africa’s major empires. While not a centrally located with respect to major polities, these
populations were nonetheless able to take advantage of long-distance trade routes (Gokee 2012).
some of these communicative and political changes. Political and non-governmental institutions often understood these changes within the language of the politics of décentralisation (decentralization) and désenclavement (regional integration). Yet these changes were unequally felt by all parts of Kedougou region. While certain villages and towns have been fully incorporated into transnational networks spanning across Europe and the United States, other communities have remained isolated from new economic opportunities of the recent gold boom. Viewed as forms of contact making and social network building, genres of social identification and practices of typification thus afforded individuals forms of self-presentation through which they might insulate or invest themselves in new networks.

**Figure 1 - Some Milestone Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Telegraph line installed in Kedougou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Cotton introduced to Kedougou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Kedougou gets its first internet connection (cybercafé)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Radio Communautaire de Kedougou founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 2008</td>
<td>“Soulèvement de Kedougou” a youth rally turns violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>La Département de Kedougou becomes la Région de Kedougou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Kedougou gets its first municipal police department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2015</td>
<td>Market sellers cleared from the front market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>Kedougou-Republic of Guinea border officially closes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 2015</td>
<td>Gold mining concessions (dioura) opens back up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the incipient field notes I wrote as a Peace Corps volunteer and in my memory, Kedougou City was a quiet border town that contrasted starkly with the Kedougou I came to know during field-work. These changes appeared incremental at first—news of a bank opening up, the founding of an overnight coach service, new restaurants with new products, or increased access to bandwidth in the form of cell phones and internet cafes. Indeed, when I had first arrived in Kedougou in 2006, the city had no internet cafes and cell phones were not yet widespread. Its first internet café, established a few months after I arrived, operated on a long-distance line that cost a fortune. Only in 2009 did Senegalese national banks establish themselves in the city. During this time, the radio stations multiplied from a single, public radio station, to
half a dozen stations in 2014, many of which were private.

Social and Economic Changes: Decentralization, Transportation, and Mining

Back in 2006, streets were often quiet, and bikes and pedestrians dominated its streets. Peace Corps colleagues, local friends, and I often went to the garage (the transportation center)—a rather calm place at that time—to eat lunch, relax, and try our hand at conversation. Years later, the thought of having a quiet lunch at the garage seemed like an odd idea, given its increasingly busy character. Many of Kedougou’s biggest changes happened through shifts in transportation patterns and infrastructure. In 2006 there were only a handful of residents who owned Japanese-made motorcycles most of which were known around town. Owning a motorcycle at this time was to be identified immediately as a certain kind of person, a development or administrative agent whose contacts to broader (inter)national organizations afforded them the use of such a motorcycle. I spent my time with this cadre of Senegalese technical and development experts whose social network felt small and familiar. Although some of Kedougou’s older neighborhoods have not dramatically changed, the central market and most recent neighborhoods have a starkly different feel from ten years ago. Large food shops, restaurants, and hardware stores have popped up, and migrant populations have moved into spaces transformed by road access, a gold mining boom, and administrative incorporation. For many residents these changes dramatically changed the way they interacted and interpreted one another on a daily basis. I suggest that the materiality of transportation—increasingly on the backs of motorcycles or and vehicles—impacted processes of interpreting and evaluating others.

Although gold mining extraction has a very deep history in West Africa where even Western exploration companies have been active for several decades, mining activities in the
region of Kedougou have significantly expanded in the years since the early 2000s. Extraction of gold from a part of larger veins that flow across the border into Mali and the discovery of gold deposits in Bantoko, Tenkoto, Sabodala, and in zones to the northeast have drawn in numbers of artisanal miners from all over the sub region (d’Avignon 2016; D’Avignon 2018). Although a number of exploratory mining companies had been studying Kedougou’s mineral deposits for decades, an industrial mine run by MDL (later renamed Afrigold) located in Sabodala, provided a locus of industrial mining activity which provided steady employment for some, although the politics of autochthony often favored foreigners and coastal Senegalese over local Kédovins in the formal mining sector. This mining economy spurred increased levels of cyclical mobility as residents of Kedougou City often made daily or weekly trips to mining towns around it where they sold food, ice, and manufactured goods or managed mining efforts.

Formerly insulated from neighboring infrastructural and administrative networks, Kedougou’s recent developments emerged at the intersection of three interrelated factors which I briefly discussed above. These are firstly, a policy of national decentralization that saw Kedougou turn from a département to a région secondly, the growth of the mining economy, and thirdly, the expansion of regional transportation infrastructure. A policy of decentralization turned what had been the Département de Kedougou into an administrative “Région”35. This administrative change had significant cascading effects that brought administrative officials into a place that had previously been at arm’s length from administrative and police oversight. Significantly, this increased an administrative scrutiny on the acquisition and ownership of land, resulting in a more formalized land market, an issue I return to later in this chapter. Whereas

34 Robyn d’Avignon’s dissertation (d’Avignon 2016) examines the deeper history of mining and geological exploration in the region of Kedougou. She argues that the category of “artisanal” miner emerged as a racialized category, and that industrial mining spread by benefiting from indigenous knowledge by so-called “artisanal” miners. I nevertheless, use the term “artisanal” in this dissertation, as it has significant local circulation in Senegal.

35 Senegal borrows from a French model of regional organization: (i.e. région, département, commune, etc.)
previously land could be claimed and owned by a policy of improvement as homesteading, the 
expansion of the administrative oversight slowly impacted the way land was controlled and 
allotted, such that it was zoned and sold by a land management office, for instance. Even land 
around villages, which previously had had unformalized boundaries, was increasingly being 
surveyed and brought into a formal land market. This shift of policy essentially gave more power 
to those who could accumulate capital and enabled coastal Senegalese or foreigners to buy up 
land in Kedougou and other larger towns.

The expansion of the police force, from a simple police frontalière that monitored only 
major international crossroads to a municipal police, also had significant impacts on mobility. 
Along with the arrival of the municipal police force and the regionalization of Kedougou came 
an increased emphasis on ID cards (cartes d’identité) for all residents which increasingly were 
used to control movement in the town and surrounding areas. Parts of Chapter Seven further 
explore the impacts of this increased police presence in the borderlands of Senegal and Guinea. 
The increase coincided with what many saw as a rise in crime due to the diouras (mining 
concessions), as well as with the increased monitoring of the Guinea-Senegal border area in light 
of the Ebola epidemic.

This aforementioned mining boom drew in large numbers of artisanal miners from across 
coastal Senegal and from neighboring countries such as Mali, Guinea, Burkina, and Nigeria. 
During the most intense phase, mining towns of tens of thousands of miners appeared in what 
had been a village of only several hundred (e.g. Bantoko, Tenkoto). National newspapers I 
collected at the time largely presented Kedougou as a kind of wild west mining town, a place 
defined by banditry and environmental degradation. By the time of my field-work from 2014- 
2016, the pace of mining had somewhat slowed down. Macky Sall, who became Senegal’s
president in 2012, increasingly instituted a policy of régularisation, or formalization of the mining sector. These policies in many ways attempted to redistribute the wealth generated from mining away from foreign workers and towards Senegalese. Indeed, one of Macky Sall’s critiques of the defeated incumbent, Abdoulaye Wade, was the view of many Kédovins that Wade had allowed too many foreigners to benefit from mining. One result of these policies was that miners had to—at least in theory—apply for and carry orpailleur mining ID cards. This interruption of mining activities coincided with the height of the Ebola epidemic, however, and as a result, many of the dioura were closed for significant periods.

A third significant development in the Kedougou region was the construction between Dakar and Bamako of an international highway routed through the heart of Kedougou’s downtown market—a highway which deviated significant road travel that had previously passed along a more northerly route through Kidira. Whereas travel from Tambacounda (a large urban center near the Gambia border) through the Parc National de Niokolo Koba and on to Kedougou had previously been largely devoid of traffic, lorries now streamed down through Kedougou and passed right through its downtown market. These newly paved roads rendered travel from Kedougou to Keñeba and on to Bamako an increasingly feasible journey. As a result, Kedougou’s downtown market changed in character from a relatively calm scene to a much more hectic constellation of mobile sellers, trucks unloading goods, and speeding motorcycles. While there have always been a community of transnational migrants working in the market, this economic boom attracted an even larger migrant population from neighboring countries such as Senegal.

36 In the case of many, after applying with the appropriate fees and forms, the distribution of these cards took over a year to reach their recipients. In many cases, miners had to travel to government offices all over the region of Kedougou in order to find cards that had been dispersed to these various agencies without a clear idea of whose cards were where. As part of the policy, mining was supposed to happen in teams, with various roles allotted to those with various national ID cards. For instance, each team theoretically had to have a local Senegalese member whose presence rendered legitimate the operation of the broader mining team. Senegalese could thus increasingly function as figure-heads for mining teams that were in many respects operated by non-Senegalese nationals.
Guinea and Mali. These infrastructural changes furthermore provided new opportunities for shifting commercial storefronts and arrangements for mobile sellers, a context I focus on in Chapter Six.

Some Kédovins viewed this economic boom with ambivalence. Although it bought new opportunities for many Kédovins, other long-time residents struggled to come to terms with the changes. While painstaking and often dangerous, artisanal mining could bring in previously unheard-of funds and was relatively accessible to individuals of any education level. However, those Kédovins who benefitted less from the boom-time economy also had to pay more for household goods and building material that were seeing steady price increases in the market. Issues of autochthony also crept into the city of Kedougou as many debated whether Kédovins were, in fact, benefitting from the new economy, and not only foreigners and other coastal Senegalese. A 2008 youth riot (soulèvement) that led to the death of a young Kédovin and the burning down of Kedougou’s municipal buildings were motivated by the central issue of whether Kédovins were benefitting from the industrial mining sector.37

Figure 2 – The Kedougou Riot
Photo of town hall after it was burned out during the 2008 Kedougou riots

37 D’Avignon writes about this episode in more depth; at stake was partly the fact that “Wolof” or other coastal Senegalese were being given both skilled and particularly unskilled jobs in the industrial mines which at the time were managed by MDL.
Many Kédovins thus felt that local youth were being passed over for jobs that were instead going to coastal Senegalese, an issue that has continued to cast a shadow over the region. This event stood out as a sign post amid a larger narrative of ambivalence towards coastal Senegalese and other outsiders benefitting from Kedougou’s growth. Along with the Ebola epidemic, I suggest that these recent events impacted the routines of typification and increased the stakes of evaluating others from regions outside of Kedougou. In addition to benefits from the mining sector, the status of autochthony was increasingly interpreted through the politics of land acquisition with increasing opportunities accruing to more affluent outsiders who possessed the funds to purchase large amounts of land that had previously been acquired through traditional practices of homesteading, i.e., claiming land by making material improvements.

While some Kédovins were able to build capital by investing in real estate and by renting out lands to coastal Senegalese and West Africans and others benefitted directly or indirectly from the mining industry, many I talked to were uneasy about outsiders reaping most benefits and about increased prices and crime. Those who were not lucky enough to make money directly from gold mining or from its secondary impacts on the regional economy thus found themselves paying significantly more money for everyday goods than they had several years ago.  

However, the enlarging mining economy did provide a diverse range of economic opportunities for many secondary beneficiaries. Many Kédovins provided cooked food to mining areas or brought bags of ice to sell in villages within several hours’ journey from Kedougou City. Mechanics saw increased demand for their services as overused generators and pneumatic drills made it to their shops. Significantly, these kinds of secondary markets increased regional

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38 The increase in price of basic commodities has historically been a flashpoint for protests in Africa as well as elsewhere. Thompson famously conceived of these movements as a moral economy and argued against facile analyses that used the language of “mob” and “riot” (Thompson 1971).
movement between Kedougou City on one end and dispersed villages and mining sites on the other.

Finally, the Ebola epidemic in neighboring Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone, and Liberia injected new social dynamics into the borderland region of Kedougou. As regards mobility and trade, Kedougou was the home to a large number of Guinean nationals, mainly Pulafuuta speaking merchants, who had long been active in Kedougou but had increased in number with the expansion of gold mining and related industries. The border closing for much of 2014, the increased fear of contagion from Guinea, and how this disease had ramifications for practices for evaluation are all topics I talk about in Chapter Seven in greater detail. Much as norms for joking relationship offer contextualization cues, the Ebola epidemic—not merely a physiological disease—carried social consequences for the way people evaluated the responsibility and uptake of greetings, contact, and talk more broadly.

Crime, Respect, and Social Change

Beyond the Ebola epidemic, many Kédovins were increasingly concerned with insecurities in the region and with levels of crime and banditry to which they had been unaccustomed. Indeed, these insecurities often grabbed the headlines in national news stories about Kedougou. National newspapers such as Le Soleil and Walf often ran stories that represented Kedougou as a lawless “Wild West” mining region run amok. For example, the following article from 21 January 2015 reads: “In the hell of the Diouras”. These concerns intersected with metapragmatic discourses on respect, honorifics and social change perceived by longtime residents.
As I arrived in Kedougou City in 2014 for instance, stories of a roving band of bandits circulated like wildfire, bandits who began sweeping their way across Kedougou region from east to west, robbing even small shops in small villages. Alarming news that prominent gendarme officials had been collaborating with bandits further heightened public outrage. Perceptions of increased crime in Kedougou City and, in particular, banditry along the roads towards the mining areas troubled many established residents of Kedougou City. Alongside concerns with crime, Kedougou’s moral character concerned many established Kédovins. While Kedougou had always had an active nightlife, especially for the youth, longtime residents I talked to were concerned with a perception of prostitution and crime that came with it. Making quick money from gold mining also brought with it tales of profligate spending, of overconsumption of alcohol, and of the expansion of the sex industry (Shipton 1989). Issues of respect, license, and familiarity were thus central to Kédovins’ perspectives on recent social

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39 Many Kédovins, and in particular the international development community, were deeply concerned with the environmental impacts of artisanal and industrial mining. Miners commonly use mercury to extract gold from the surrounding substrate which is often burned off in a hut and disposed of near areas of habitation. Many NGOs have attempted to implement the use of retorts that capture the burnt off mercury which can be disposed of away from habitations.
changes. In this way, local interpretations of these novel, negative influences were strongly interpreted through the lens of respect and deference. Village communities broadly discussed border incursions by Guineans in an idiom of honor and deference rather than of unlawfulness. Moreover, “urban” talk, devoid of the honorifics and deference of “rural” youth—at least in the view of many city residents—was fingered as the culprit responsible for performing this increasing disrespect in the interactions of day-to-day encounters. In view of these issues, I suggest that performances and evaluations of respect and intimacy provide lenses through which regional residents conceptualized social and economic changes.

**Land: From Homesteading to Commodification**

Although southeastern Senegal had long been at the crossroads of trade and migration from neighboring Mali and Guinea, the economic changes elaborated upon above attracted as a concomitant a significant increase in transnational populations from surrounding countries. The past decade has seen a strong expansion of banking networks, hardware shops, small grocery shops, and of stores that sell household goods. Areas around Kedougou City that had once been fields and zones for hunting wild game became populated suburbs over the course of a decade. Years before Kedougou’s status as région and before the significantly increased population pressure, its residents could more easily claim land through a homestead-style system. Individuals who thus “improved” and built upon land could effectively own it. Since there was almost no land market, individuals would generally only claim as much as they could farm and make use of in extended family groups or cooperatives.
Since 2006, the previously uninhabited land—especially land along the roads that lead to satellite cities—became increasingly claimed by prospecting families. Enterprising individuals would construct mud and straw-thatch huts in the hopes of claiming lands before they were accounted for by the land administration or claimed by others. Arriving in Kedougou from Tambacounda, one first glimpsed a field of mushroom-shaped huts dotting a flat plain, each abode aspiring to stake a claim to the small, still undefined plot of land around it. Some aspiring residents painted their huts bright colors, posted handwritten signs with their names and contact information, or built rudimentary fences out of cleared brush and bamboo. Claiming land furthermore constituted a performance of ownership, of spreading common knowledge of one’s stake, of inhabiting the character of a local, and of placing material signs in the form of dirt lines, written signs, and fresh foliage. Land thus constituted an investment and a stance on the future of the region and attracted families from villages surrounding Kedougou City as well as migrants from neighboring Mali and Guinea.

Field Work in the Village of Taabe
Having provided an overview of the new precarities of social and economic change in the region of Kedougou, I offer in what follows a more detailed discussion of research sites in question. The region of Kedougou sits in the middle of a borderland region nestled between Mali, Guinea, and—as the common local joke went—Senegal itself.\textsuperscript{40} Located on the Gambia River, Kedougou City was situated as a hub and spoke system of rural hinterlands that encircled it. My initial research took place primarily within the village of Taabe which is located thirty kilometers to the south and west of Kedougou City, approximately five kilometers from the Guinea border in the Communauté Rurale of Takkopellel. I spent the first part of this field-work in the village of Taabe, and the remaining time between Kedougou and Taabe, and alternated weeks or days in each location. When in town, I ventured out, visiting contacts and families I had met in previous trips, and beginning to do ethnography and recordings in the market. As Taabe residents returned to Kedougou, I often followed along with them and spent time in their homes and followed along on their errands. I visited frequently in the home of the village chief and his

\textsuperscript{40} This joke thereby plays upon Kedougou’s long-time isolation from coastal Senegal.
extended family, a home which served as a meeting place through which *hoore fello* residents often filtered through and spent down-time. Kedougou’s downtown market often served as a first stop back into Kedougou City and provided a meeting place where travelers would cross paths.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 6 – The Village of Taabe**

I resided the first seven months primarily in Taabe, a village of approximately 350 individuals, depending on the time of year. Taabe was known to me since a friend who I had known since my time in the Peace Corps, Mamadou Diallo,\(^1\) a tourist guide, had grown up there. Although I had visited this village several times before, I first presented myself and my work to the village representatives at a meeting that is often called, *hunagol laawol*. Meaning to “show one’s way” or explain one’s business in a particular place, these kinds of meetings provide

\(^1\) I had first come to Taabe in 2007 as a Peace Corps volunteer. At that time, I had befriended a young, aspiring *guide touristique*, Mamadou Diallo, who was from this village. I provided him with English instruction and provided consultations for his business plans in eco-tourism. Although I was based in Kedougou, I followed Mamadou back his natal village several times during my time in the Peace Corps and met his father who was the village chief at the time. I mentored Mamadou on his slowly growing *campement rurale*, a ring of mud huts in the village that he was using to rent out to the tourists whom he brought to the plateau area. At that time, Mamadou was slowly developing a network as a guide who took tourists to sites throughout the region, occasionally having the opportunity to bring them to his natal village. On top of one of the first rises in the foothills of the Fouta Djallon mountains that grew into northern Guinea, there were a few sites of interest to tourists. These included a cave, where inhabitants had previously manufactured black powder, some beautiful outlooks over the lowlands, a large waterfall that fell down off of the plateau, and the opportunity to see wildlife. Mamadou and I stayed in touch, and I decided to use Taabe as a rural base to conduct my field-work from 2014.
opportunities to introduce oneself and one’s intentions alongside the exchange of kola and other gifts. These meetings furthermore constitute encounters through which guests such as myself would be vouched for and linked to chains of social relations through performances of personal testimony.

As in Chapter Eight where I argue that forms of participation are mediated through the exchange of kola, the gift of kola in such meetings similarly provides an important material index of contact and consideration. In the first meetings with the village of Taabe, Mamadou vouched for me to the present village chief, his uncle (bappa) and to the imam. Although I had known some Taabe residents for some years, the former village chief (Mamadou’s father) had passed, and I set about to make new acquaintances with the current village chief (Mamadou’s younger uncle, Jom Wuro Diallo) and with the current imam (almamijo onj). Across the Fouta Djallon, these two positions, village chief and imam define the leadership in villages. In this first meeting, I brought along kola nuts and explained my interest in staying in their village for some months and studying language use in the area.

42 Particularly during the time in which slave villages (Rundé) and Pullo villages sat side by side, settlements were often defined by the presence and absence of mosques. Those settlements with mosques (traditionally Fulbe) were known as miside, against the broader term for small settlement, wuro, and thus the village chief was referred to as jom wuro. Larger settlements were also referred to as a saare, but at times village chiefs could be referred to as jom saare, a somewhat more of respectful form of address.

43 As I argue in other chapters, the distribution of kola nuts possibly incorporates people who were not initially present in a meeting or ritual. Kola travel along with reports of the meeting and accordingly ratify people as authorities on the matter who are then able to report on it. To ensure that all families were represented by gifts of kola was therefore also to incorporate or ratify them into news of my activities.
Taabe sat on one of the first mountain plateaus in the northern reaches of the Fouta Djallon mountains that ran along the border between Senegal and Guinea. Villages of *hoore fello*, (on top of the mountain) included four linked villages sitting on a plateau in the northern reaches of the Fouta Djallon mountain range. Covering an area of approximately fifteen kilometers, these villages were interspersed by fields of mushroom-like termite mounds, low scrubland, and forested patches. Paths from one village to another could change with the season and were often abandoned during the rainy season only to be taken back up in the dry season. Webs of paths traced their way across the savannah, many branching off towards small hamlets or fields that were reclaimed from the surrounding vegetation. To walk through the village of Taabe was to quite literally an act of social navigation as well, since the paths winding throughout the village led through family compounds and therefore necessitated a social as well as spatial sense. As such, the choice of which path to take was also a decision that entailed decisions about which particular family networks one would encounter upon one’s way. Vehicles only occasionally

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44 Based on the La Direction des Travaux Géographiques et Cartographiques in Senegal.
made their way up to the hoore fello plateau since only the best equipped 4x4s could navigate the mountain road from the lower flatlands. Nevertheless, pedestrian foot traffic was common, and many used these paths to walk to and from Guinea. For example, a route from Maliville in Guinea to Takkopellel and on to Kedougou, often used by traders of indigo cloth and other wares, passed just through this hoore fello region. In Chapter Seven I show how these practices of movement impacted the stakes on which individuals interpreted and evaluated one another.

Figure 8 – A view from atop the Taabe plateau

Taabe’s residents were agriculturalists and primarily grew fonio, peanut, and corn on the rocky, ferrite rich soil of the plateau. A prized grain that is often eaten throughout West Africa at special occasions, fonio provided the most important source of revenue for these farmers. Its cultivation necessitates a great deal of coordinated labor at harvest time after which it is prepared through successive cycles of pounding and de-hulling. Since it is a crop that demands a large amount of labor at any given time, many agriculturalists traditionally relied on extensive in-law networks to find sufficient labor at critical times of the harvest. These same individuals balanced farming with seasonal work in Kedougou City, Dakar, and in the mining dioura. However, with

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45 Indigenous to this region, fonio (Pular, foññe) is a grain that is part of the digitaria genus which includes crab grasses.
a decreasing population and with more and more residents turning to outside activities to find work, cultivating a network capable of maintaining significant fields was an increasingly challenging activity. During the dry seasons, individuals such as Taabe’s village chief would travel to surrounding villages, often expressly with the goal of generating social capital that he might draw on at critical times, for example to locate appropriate traction animals from the surrounding communities. Placing others such as in-laws and colleagues through performances of joking and teasing was thus a central practice in the cultivation of social networks.

Although many Taabe residents cultivated during the rainy season, many (and not only men) spent significant time outside of the village of Taabe in order to explore economic opportunities in Dakar or the Gambia border area or to study the Qur’an. At times this meant that they would try their hand at jobs away from the village for several seasons, only to return and work the land again for several years. Most men had learned trades and continued to practice them in movement between Taabe and Kedougou. Many women also had side-incomes managing the sale of grains and other products across the region. Although game was increasingly scarce, many supplemented their food with hunted game. Fruits such as tamarind and laare in Pulafuuta (also known as madd in Wolof) also provided side incomes for families, which often meant that intermediaries from the surrounding villages travelled broadly to Kedougou and mining towns to sell products. In the past, Kedougou residents of this area had most often practiced a broad spectrum of subsistence strategies, i.e., growing foods, hunting wild game, and gathering products in this land of intermittent rain and more importantly, unreliable soil types.

Since 2009, Taabe came to find itself in the middle of a primate reserve founded and run by a Spanish branch of the Jane Goodall Institute. Beginning with exploratory work in 2008-
2009, the organization instituted a “community-based” chimpanzee reserve that encompassed much of the hoore fello plateau, and in theory, linked with lands on the Guinean side of the border. As the most northerly range of chimpanzees in West Africa, populations in the region of Kedougou were of great interest to conservationists and primatologists.46 Primarily focusing on conservation, the institute ended up building a field station at the foot of the mountain and trained a network of ecogardes across the representative villages.47

Figure 9 – Taabe’s Caves

Taabe was the original village of settlement in this stretch of the plateau.48 Not far from

46 Research by Jill Pruetz has provided evidence of “spear-hunting” or “tool-assisted hunting” by chimpanzee mothers, who would use sharpened stocks to harvest bush babies in dead logs (J. Pruetz 2007; J. D. Pruetz and Bertolani 2007).
47 Unequal representation and access to resources between Takkopellel, the base of the organization’s operations, and surrounding villages often affected local politics. The reserve also developed policies, ostensibly with the input of surrounding communities, that would restrict the harvesting of forest products, the use of firearms, and of hunting. This often brought local practices into misalignment with the formal rules of the reserve. Volunteers working for the reserve, many staying one or several years at a time, were variously placed in sites across the commune de Takkopellel, but with most centering on the market village of Takkopellel. No volunteers were ever based in Taabe, despite its being located in the middle of the reserve.
48 Sitting in the borderlands between Guinea and Senegal, paths winding across the plateau of hoore fello provided one way to reach Guinea, either through the border post in Yaaji located only five kilometers away on a road running flat along the plateau, or through the bush-like network of footpaths that eschewed formal border crossings. Heading from hoore fello further east, one reached the region of Fongolimbi. This area was still inhabited by a number of Jallunké communities after which the mountain range was named, the Fouta Djallon. To the north and west of hoore fello one began to cross into the region called the Bande where villages of Fulɓe interspersed with Bedik and other communities. Going even further north, one began to reach the Niokolo and eventually the Parc Nationale de Niokolo Koba. On its southern peripheries still lived, some until the 1970s, Malinké speaking communities who had been removed from their lands in order to carve out a national park. To reach the gold-
the site of the village, Taabe’s most recent founders, relatives of Mamadou and Jom Wuro Diallo, the village chief, discovered a cave which contained fixed beds abandoned by previous inhabitants. This cave had been a renowned site of black powder production before the availability of modern firearms, but today is no longer in operation. These days it provides an important stop for the tourists that manage to make their way upon the plateau and a cool place to escape the heat for local children. Most villages of this area can trace their recent histories to fleeing Sekou Touré’s Guinea and, during the time of Almamy Fouta in the 19th century, to escaping incursions of Alpha Yaya from his provinces further to the south (Diallo 2001). Based on interviews with elders, many villages on this side of the border were a result of those seeking to flee taxes (sagalle) based on heads of cattle. With many of its fields just a kilometer or two from Guinea, however, these were the Senegal-Guinea borderlands. And while many had intuitive ideas of where the border lay, there were markings, aside from the border post in Yaaji, that might indicate an official international border. In the last dry season that I spent in Taabe, for instance, this indeterminacy led to some friction over rights to harvest thatch between Taabe residents and their neighbors in Yaaji. With the incorporation of Kedougou as a region, however, villages of the area were preparing for the land management bureau to initiate a process of formal border drawing.

As the seat of the rural community encompassing hoore fello, the town Takkopellel sat just at the base of the plateau. Formerly a patterned array of straw-thatch, mud-brick huts like Taabe, Takkopellel is now composed of many large two-story cement buildings adorned with solar panels. The laterite road that snakes in from Kedougou stops at two tourist campements in Takkopellel several hundred meters from the base of the plateau. To make it up to the top of the mining regions further east composed of largely Jaxanké- and Malinké-speaking populations, one had to cross through Kedougou and on to the Mali borderlands.
plateau, regional residents continued on foot up to the base of the canyon wall, and up the steep paths that lead *hoore fello*. The path is difficult to navigate in both the rainy and dry seasons, but for different reasons. When the rains come, the stones become slippery and trickles of water run down the path. In the dry season, feet skate upon the rocks that lie strewn above the dry earth. During the school year, Taabe's children bound up and down the mountain path to primary school in Takkopellel and run down the path to make their early morning classes.

This mountain path rendered travel from Taabe and other *hoore fello* villages to neighboring villages in Senegal difficult. With enough gumption, some drove their motorcycles from the base of the mountain up a route that eventually led up to Taabe and the *hoore fello*. This road was also accessible by larger 4x4s (*quatre-quatre*) like Toyota Landcruisers, but not to smaller 4x4s like Mamadou’s Mitsubishi *Pajero*. In this way, transportation between Taabe and the economic centers of Takkopellel and Kedougou City was limited by a bottleneck of what one could carry up and down a steep mountain path. While Guineans from surrounding villages often used bicycles to drive across the border into Senegal, they would leave them at the top of the mountain and carry agricultural and housewares on their heads the rest of the way to Takkopellel and on to Kedougou.

Takkopellel, sitting on the edge of a forested plateau area replete with spirits, game, and possibility, had once been the edge of a plane of social expansion of populations living on the lower lands in Senegal. Local elders report that Takkopellel started out as the fields of another nearby town, Thiane. Over the years, however, Takkopellel became a hub of the small tourism industry, a primatological institute, and increasingly, NGO networks. Today, many Takkopellel youth speak Spanish and are as likely to initially greet each other in a customary “que tal” as they are in Pular. Many Takkopellel adults are now married to Spaniards and live in Spain.
Takkopellel’s compounds are typically composed of cement *batiments* and boast a well-developed solar network. A small number of tourists who arrived in Takkopellel ultimately made their way up to Taabe, mostly for day hikes to appreciate the scenery and altitude change.\(^4^9\)

**Kedougou City, a Regional Center**

After six months of steady research in the village of Taabe, I began to shift towards conducting more and more research in Kedougou City,\(^5^0\) although I went to and from Taabe during the course of my field work. Although the town is known locally as Kedougou, I use the term “Kedougou City” (“Kedougou Ville”) in order to distinguish it more broadly from the region. Although no official statistics are available, most in the region of Kedougou estimated its population to be in the range of 20,000 residents. I suspect that this number has risen significantly in past years and underreports recent arrivals.

Built around the bend of Gambia River, Kedougou is located in the extreme southeastern part of Senegal and is nestled close to the borders of Mali and Guinea. Kedougou City is centrally positioned at the crossroads of routes to Guinea, Mali, and surrounding regions. Because of its position, it provides a jumping off point for those headed to natal villages, mining zones, and on to the borders of Guinea and Mali. Kedougou City’s oldest neighborhoods,  

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\(^{4^9}\) My time in Taabe, however, coincided with the height of the Ebola epidemic, and for this reason, there were only a handful of tourists who actually made it to Taabe during my time there. During the height of the tourist season in July and August, Mamadou’s campement might welcome anywhere from two to fourteen tourists. Mamadou operated mostly through word of mouth and had built up a reputation among Spanish adventure travelers. Mamadou spoke fluent Spanish, but only very rudimentary English. Since 2010, Mamadou had also owned a 4x4 vehicle, and therefore could offer complete vacation options for Spanish tourists trying to visit hard-to-reach destinations like Kedougou. Flat for hundreds of kilometers across the Sahel, the terrain of West Africa begins to see changes in altitude only in southeastern Senegal. Interestingly, even Mamadou’s largely Pular speaking village and the surrounding area were advertised in tourist circles as *Pays Bassari*, which viewed the entire region in terms of its autochthonous populations, the Bassari.  

\(^{5^0}\) I rented in quartier Gomba some huts that were located in the family compound of a Bassari family from the Salemata region. I too had known the family from before and used the huts as a field station when I was in town. Even after beginning to do more ethnography in town, I went back to the village regularly and spent anywhere from a few days to ten days at a time. As I have pointed out at various points in this dissertation, this back-and-forth movement between Kedougou and Taabe mimics the way Taabe residents themselves passed between the two spheres.
Daande Maayo, Mosquée, and Compagnie were the home to those founding families and long-time residents. They are located within a short walk of the downtown market and were connected to the electric grid and municipal water system. Surrounding these oldest neighborhoods, however, new neighborhoods sprouted in what had once been fields and hunting grounds, in land claimed by recent immigrants from rural areas around Kedougou and neighboring countries, particularly Guinea.

These newer neighborhoods were often a maze of winding mud paths and dead ends, the end result of independent actors claiming plots of land and splitting them up in their own way. Although the city’s land management authorities did in some cases have city-wide plans and had zoned swaths of land that were officially registered, they were always working in the footsteps of enterprising families claiming land for themselves. These families occupying these new zones dug wells to access water and relied on solar systems for electricity. Unequal access to water and electricity drove the movement of individuals hoping to charge their phones from such households to visit their neighbors or those family compounds who had quality wells. Dealing with the contingency of urban living forced families to rely on one another and to make use of distributed resources. For instance, even deciding on which foot and vehicular paths to maintain required communication between neighbors who had to agree on borders and common lands.
This system of land tenure was based a range of “formal” and “informal” mechanisms that included actes de vente, signs, word of mouth, and tentative verbal agreements with authorities through which regional residents continually made evidence of land ownership. Within the past years, Kedougou witnessed a large boom in the lands surrounding Kedougou City that were “claimed” by residents through the clearing of brush and the construction of walls and huts. More important than the initial claiming, however, were practices of maintaining one’s claim. This necessitated regular upkeep, as well as making public and common knowledge one’s ownership of land such that one’s neighbors accepted these claims. In many cases, lands initially claimed were lost to other homesteaders. Although some facets of ownership could be legitimized with administrative offices through the maintenance of written records and through the construction of a hut and fence, these methods all hinged on one’s ability to make a case for ownership through the performance occurred in the everyday greetings and talk about one’s lien. As such, recruiting a large number of influential individuals who would recognize land ownership was significant since because neighbors hoping to profit from negligent owners often attempted to sell unattended land. Since children, other relatives, and colleagues might engage in much of the work of land maintenance on behalf of owners, being able to identify individuals as
part of a larger group of land owners became an important interactional dynamic.

Kédovins often joked that they would “yahay Senegal,” (“go to Senegal”) when heading towards other cities to the north and west, alluding to feelings of otherness and distinctness from the rest of Senegal. Indeed, an extremely rudimentary road isolated Kedougou from the rest of Senegal until the 1970s. The road from Tambacounda to Kedougou ran through West Africa’s largest national park, Parc National de Niokolo Koba, created before Senegal’s independence. Just below the Sahelian climate that dominated the rest of Senegal, Kedougou received significant rainfall between May and October. With its inland location, Kedougou could get quite hot in the dry season, with temperatures reaching as high as 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Plentiful rainfall, its distance from the coast, and mountainous terrain have positioned Kedougou as a shatter zone, a place of refuge for people who were seeking autonomy from religious and political states. Kedougou had a low population density, and transportation networks were still underdeveloped in comparison to occidental Senegal. In the eyes of most Dakarois, Kedougou was thought of as underdeveloped, poor, and with a harsh environment. Electric grids, access to clean water, and other basic amenities were rare outside the inner part of Kedougou City and a few larger villages along main axes. The region of Kedougou sat within the zone of equine and bovine encephalitis, and short legged, resistant breeds of ndama, so-called “pygmy” cows, goats, and sheep dominated the landscape.

Notes on Siting and Methodology in Dispersed Communities

While my dissertation research occurred primarily in two sites separated by thirty-five kilometers and several hundred meters of elevation, it would have been difficult to conduct a meaningful study of linguistic practices in Kedougou without integrating analyses between
Kedougou City and its surrounding hinterlands. In a first instance, the village of Taabe serves as an important cultural anchor for individuals who trace back belonging here. During important holidays, marriages, and funerals, these rural homelands attracted many individuals who could call themselves *originaires*, who may have never lived there for long or even have been born there. In Chapter Seven for instance, I look at certain forms of verbal creativity through which those residing in Taabe critiqued other Taabe *originaires* for not spending enough time in village and attending the necessary social functions. These were performances of teasing, often drawing on the force of guilt and invoking the weight of certain relationships and responsibilities. Likewise, Chapter Eight looks at how village ceremonies provide platforms for negotiating community participation and inclusion more broadly.

Other important scholarship has focused on the important work of “homeland” communities living abroad who often fundraise and advocate on behalf of their home communities back in Africa (Kane 2011). Many have analyzed the emergence of transnational families within the context of neoliberal policies that restrict the movement of people (Yount-André 2018b, 2018a). However, managing relationship with homeland communities is not just a function of transnational migration, but is and likely has been a broader part of social life in West Africa for some time. Regions such as Kedougou have become strongly integrated and particularly inflected by cyclical economic patterns. Not only do individuals travel widely and move, following mineral deposits and markets to take advantage of job opportunities, but economic shifts are significantly affecting rural residents’ seasonal migration patterns. Once a shatter zone in which populations could evade colonial and national tax burdens, the Kedougou region with its increased connectivity has pushed many residents into circular patterns of employment, marriage, and trade.
Earlier in this chapter, I showed that linguistic varieties as well as the linguistic genres and routines are constituted and evaluated not in isolation, but rather through relations between linked sites, increasingly as a function of cyclical mobility. In the context of Kedougou as elsewhere (Hill and Hill 1986), the salience of rural-urban distinctions was often articulated around conceptions of deep language, respect, and language loss which inflected ideological thinking about languages and people. In highlighting the interrelationships, I wish to refrain from an approach in which social and linguistic change only be associated with urban spaces. Indeed, ideologies of tradition with untainted kinship practices have often clouded analyses of rural African spaces. In examining the negotiation of in-law relationships, the construction of elaborated (“fictive”) mother-mother relationships, and the cultivation of relations in Chapter Five, I wish to avoid impressions of a static rural culture merely impacted by changes from the “outside.”

As I detailed earlier in this chapter, whereas Taabe and the hoore fello region more broadly were largely understood as wellsprings of deep Pular, they sat in contrast to town Pular which most considered mixed and degraded. However, if hoore fello Pular were further contrasted with Guinean Pular in the highlands of the Fouta Djallon, these Guinean varieties would be identified as the original, “pure” variety. One’s identity as “urban” and “rural” was not simply a product of hailing from a particular region. Where one lived, was from, had lived, worked and studied all provided grounds for various forms of self-presentation based in the idiom of place. Inhabiting the character of a villager, a fulawanaajo or neddo pitaaji (country bumpkin) in contrast to a boy saare (town boy), was a social typification that was constituted in interaction, built up through more widely or narrowly shared indexical associations as intuitions about place that read worldliness into diet, ways of dressing, and linguistic production. In the context of Kedougou’s
downtown market, for instance, merchants assessed one another through penetrating teasing and performances of competence as worldly, peripatetic merchants.

As a way to explore how mobility and economic change were being articulated through language, I went to do field work with the sense that I wanted to record conversations at the interstices of movement and contact. Beginning with sanakuyaagal joking relationships as a point of departure, I hypothesized that everyday moments of greeting and placing each other constituted an important part of individuals’ social lives through which they built contacts, made themselves known, and recruited participants in their ventures. My approach was designed to discover how speech events in the context of and at the interstices of small greetings, chitchat in bars, markets, and along mountain paths also provided opportunities for important social action. For instance, in Chapter Five, I found that the talk of the market could be understood in a larger linguistic economy of teasing, phatic baiting, and monitoring of speech that involved the exchange of money and the maintenance of debt. Chapter Eight demonstrated how small acts of embodied joking on the edges of ritual frameworks had important implications for the representational politics of the village, and that this sideline talk was salient because it stood in relationship with the main ritual stage. Likewise, secretive negotiations from more open frameworks of discussion were marked because they sat in relationship to the main participation framework.

51 I recorded from a broad set of interactions as much as was manageable so as to develop a database from which I could analyze the use of interactional creativity. However, I found it ultimately useful to engage with interlocutors across a range of methods. For instance, for the first two weeks of field work in the village of Taabe, and for much of my time in Kedougou, I did not jump to immediately record conversations, but rather spent significant time getting to know individuals. I often found that when I was not recording, I often paid more attention to the conversations that were happening around me, since I knew I could not revisit them at a later date. I conceived of my ethnographic engagement as happening across a range of methods. At the most intrusive, I conducted audio/video recordings of small group settings. I only began to do these after fifteen months of ethnographic research among individuals with whom I had already built strong relationships. While this kind of engagement was practical for small groups of stationary individuals, I found this kind of recording very difficult in busy market settings when new individuals were constantly coming into frame, and where action was happening in a 360° radius. During much of my ethnography, I did audio recordings using small, multi-directional audio recorders, at the same time that I wrote field notes during the encounters. While many of my recorded conversations occurred among relatively stationary participants from anywhere from 2-10 participants, I also did mobile recordings in Taabe where I recorded conversations along axes of movement through the village.
Just as my spatial movement to and from sites mimicked that of my interlocutors, I found that moving in and out of frames of intimacy and distantiation was a constructive aspect of ethnography, as has been argued by Webb Keane (Keane 2003). In this way, one of the day-to-day challenges of ethnographic engagement is the balancing of participation in conversation and social life, while at the same time stepping back and observing and recording interactions. At other times, I refrained from taking field notes at all, and viewed myself principally as a participant in festivities or activities. For example, during my field work I experienced the loss of several friends and interlocutors but decided that funerals and moments of grieving would not constitute part of my field work focus. In particular contexts—for instance with the family that lived adjacent to my Kedougou home—I also did not actively take notes or see myself as actively conducting field work. I found this “off” time important, that this time I spent with people helped hone implicit social skills that will ultimately lead to ethnographic insight. At other times, I felt that different projects seemed to overtake the act of ethnography itself, for example when over the course of a couple of weeks I navigated the land market and its administrative aspects as I began to build a field station in collaboration with my colleague, Mamadou Diallo. Yet the insights I gained from that experience were critical to my broader understanding of Kedougou’s growth and expansion amid this economic boom. Spending time around a diverse group of individuals and in different places was also important to my project which in one important sense was trying to understand how linguistic actors deploy joking relationships and conversational genres across a range of contexts.

As evinced by phenomenological approaches to social interaction, paying attention to others during an interaction can impact one’s ability to gain purchase on oneself (Schutz 1967), or even to be a smooth participant in emerging social relations if one focuses on one’s own
performance or physicality (Goffman 1957). I am convinced that operating across this range of possible engagements is critical so as to not acquire a single-point perspective of social life. I also felt that using a range of recording techniques helped compensate for some of the ways in which observation and recording can bias and sway the reactions and behavior of one’s research participants. The act of recording and writing was itself part of social life that my interlocutors interpreted and responded to. For instance, my Zoom H4N recorder occasionally became the object of discussion, often when young children would be curious about the furry wind-screen that I used when outdoors: “Baaba, ḍuŋ ko ŋaariru honno?” (“Daddy, is this a cat?”) While audio recordings provided a large part of my recordings, I did conduct significant video recording, mainly at the end of my field work and primarily in the village of Taabe. In other ways, my note-taking was interpreted by interlocutors who imagined the kinds of things that caught my attention. The act of writing itself also counted as social action, for instance when my jotting of notes was interpreted by porters as the uttering of a joke name that I was not ratified to say (see Chapter Five).

Building on my discussion of routines in the general introduction, this chapter placed routines of linguistic and social evaluation within the regional practices of drawing and assessing linguistic differences. In particular, I focused on understandings of respect and honor in the context of social change. I suggested that routines of secrecy and semantic obfuscation themselves impacted ways in which individuals interpreted linguistic differences. The next focuses on sanakuyaagal so-called joking relationships and on arguing for an interactional, performance-based approach. Through examining the poetics of connection making and equivalence drawing, I look at how social actors draw creatively on interactional genres in a way that does not merely respond to certain structural alignments of ethnicity, but allows for a
discovery of kin, friends, and joking partners in a region undergoing significant social and economic change.
CHAPTER THREE

Sanakuyaagal as Performance: From Structure to Verbal Creativity

Joking Relationships on the Open Road

Veering from one side of the road to the other as it dodged the pot-hole pocked asphalt, an old Renault bus reclaimed from years of hard service lurched past several towns on the outskirts of Kedougou City. An increasingly denser patchwork of small thatch huts announced our arrival to this border town of approximately 20,000 inhabitants in southeastern Senegal, nestled between the Fouta Djallon mountains of Guinea and the gold rich lands bordering Mali. The bus made one final stop at a police outpost where a lone officer leapt up from a chair underneath a small shade structure. Dressed in shades of blue, the officer leapt up the front entrance of the bus and bellowed out a greeting to the weary travelers as he squared his shoulders with the rows of seated passengers.

Speaking in Wolof, a language more common in coastal Senegal, the man asked in a forcefulness that shattered the early morning calm, whether we were all too tired to say hello. A passenger replied that we had had a panne, a breakdown on the difficult journey. “Panne c’est prévu,” (“Breakdowns are expected”) answered the officer curtly. One woman behind me finally replied to his initial question by muttering a polite response. The gendarme then rotated his head from one side of the bus to the next while asking in French “Est-ce qu’il y a des Peuls ici?”

52 Peuls refer to an ethnic group from the region, which as I will explain later, often draw on an ethnic-based correspondence to establish a teasing relationship with Serer, of which the gendarme was inferred to be a member. Called Peul (or Peuhl) in French, they refer to themselves as Fulɓe (pl.) or Pullo (sg.) in Pular. As I previously mentioned, local Fulɓe speak a regional variety of
(“Are there any Peuls here?”). Encountering silence, he looked down the line and asked several passengers, “Vous êtes Peul?” Shouting in such a way that the entire bus could hear, police officer bellowed out in French:

“Je vais vous couper la tête tous. Vous êtes venu dans notre pays habiter. Je vais vous tous chasser.”

“I will cut off all of your heads. You all have come to live in our country. I will chase you all away.”

The weary passengers sat in place, unfazed by these ostensible threats that echoed into the back of the bus. After a short pause, the officer looked up and down the aisle and pointed to two young men, “toi, et toi avec les verres.” (“you, and you with the glasses!”) The two young men reluctantly checked themselves for identification papers. Unsatisfied with what they had provided, the policeman beckoned one of the young men off of the bus and led him into a small building obscured from view from the rest of the passengers. “Les deux-là c’est des Peuls,” (“The two there are Peuls”) a friend suggested to me in a whisper.

**Introducing Sanakuyaagal**

Routines of *sanakuyaagal* range from light-hearted teasing between friends, e.g. “yette Ba moyýāa” (“The Bas are no good”), to moments of ambiguous verbal abuse in the meeting of strangers like the one I just described. Central to local understandings of *sanakuyaagal* routines was the sense that interlocutors were not to become upset or engage in serious confrontation with their *sanaku* joking partner. The *sanakuyaagal* joking routines I examine here draw primarily on correspondences between ethnic identities and last names (most often patronyms, passed down

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Pular known as Pulafuuta or Pular Fouta. This linguistic variety is related to other forms of Pular such as Fula as the variety is known in northern Nigeria.
along the father’s side), thereby providing speakers with frames for placing and recognizing others in social interaction. Examining these routines as routines shows how interlocutors draw on poetic and generic devices in interaction to constitute and imagine different relationships among one another and constituted social groups.

Rather than a fixed set of categorical correspondences, this chapter thus argues that sanakuyaagal routines present an emergent practice of social recognition in interaction. Such relational frames are performed as relevant in interaction, thereby giving contextualization cues as to how to construe and evaluate talk. While much literature insists on the obligations and systematicity of joking relationships as a social logic or structure, a performative approach allows for an examination of the ways these relational routines are creatively mobilized by interlocutors. Verbal routines varied from quick comments embedded in greetings, to longer narratives that drew on shared narrative structures, themes, and characters through which interlocutors teased one another. The perspective of performance offers an analysis of joking correspondences—established links between patronyms, ethnic groups, and generations—as not merely automatic but rather as interactions that entail a creative deployment of relational grounds such that these interactions constitute relatively open systems of social recognition.

Routines of sanaku teasing within a frame of play often featured story plots, particular character traits, and settings that drew on histories of contact between ethnic groups and of problematized relationships in an idiom of gluttony, theft, and hierarchy. In so doing, interlocutors socialized into this verbal routine were able to voice socially recognizable characters and to play with relationships between individuals and social types by embedding joking partners within larger social imaginaries. In this previous encounter, for instance, the Wolof police officer employed the idiom of sanakuyaagal to constitute groups and place them in
a Wolof national sphere that had been invaded by outsider Fulɓe.

Scholars have attributed to joking relationships considerable prominence on the West African social landscape—as a foundation of pan-Africanism (Ndiaye 1993), a framework for peaceful ethnic relations within the Senegalese nation-state (examined for instance by Smith 2006), or instead as a subversive anti-rite that chips away at social normativity (Douglas 1975a). Rather than merely taking for granted joking relationships in connections among social groups in West Africa, I draw on encounters of face-to-face interaction to track how this joking is deployed, shaped, and reinterpreted by linguistic actors. In so doing, I highlight creativity in joking relationship routines partly to compensate for assumptions about African social life that are relegated to rigid, parochial views of kinship and affinity (Ball 2018). While other scholars have examined ways in which discourses about joking relationships mediate ideologies of nation-statehood and peaceful ethnic relations (Smith 2004, 2006), this chapter adopts an interactional perspective and draws on systematic observations and audio recordings.  

Across Senegal and neighboring countries, joking relationship routines are routinely heard in the homes, markets, and public places. Passionately drawn upon and discussed by my interlocutors, sanakuyaagal routines provided an idiom through which I was drawn into conversation by those recruiting me into their patronymic and ethnic associations. In a first instance, sanakuyaagal encompasses categorical relationships of license between the bearers of patronyms, such as Diallo-Ba, or Ndiaye-Diop; ethnic groups, such as Serer-Pular correspondences. Broadly speaking, sanakuyaagal was also associated with forms of teasing and license-taking that were often connected to other joking correspondences within the family unit such as grandparent-grandchild, cross-cousins, or junior and senior in-laws. In other cases,

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53 Most of the examples I draw on were collected while conducting anthropological field work in southeastern Senegal from September 2014 to April 2016, along with other observations from previous field work.
joking relationships have been described as entailing mutual obligation (e.g. funeral responsibilities), economic exchange (e.g. gifts to partners) and hierarchical difference (e.g. a slave-master idiom). Joking relationships can be contrasted with avoidance relationships, and often there was strong interactional pressure to reciprocate in joking exchanges. In this dissertation, I employ the most widely used local term, *sanakuyaagal*, which in southeastern Senegal was used in Pular, but was nonetheless broadly shared partly because of its Mande origin *sanaku* and -*yaagal*, also of Mande origin.

Rather than taking for granted intuitions about the function of joking relationship functions, I examine everyday conversational routines across varied situations by different individuals across the region of Kedougou. Routines such as *sanakuyaagal* are usefully thought of as performative for several important reasons: they often share stylistic features (Briggs 1988), draw on common semantic themes (e.g. hierarchy, gluttony, body types, thievery), place an emphasis on the speaker in relationship to an audience, and offer generic norms through which individuals inhabit and perform learnable social roles. While joking relationships do provide a medium for actors to construct boundaries between social types in interaction, it is deceptive to draw on these categories to constitute ethnic units of analysis that persist over time, or to necessarily assume that stereotypes and assumptions built and sustained in these moments always motivate action or reflect.

Rather than a social map of ethnic and patronymic ties, it is useful to initially view the deployment of joking routines as an interactional achievement that is not automatic process. As demonstrated by Michael Lempert’s treatment of the Tibetan diasporic pedagogy in debate, these kinds of scalar jumps reflect an achievement (Lempert 2012b). They are thus achieved when actors manage to link together salient bits of talk in time and space by invoking shared
knowledge as emergent contextualization, or by manipulating interactional participant frameworks. As such, *sanakuyaagal* only provide one possible idiom to construct these linkages in contingent interaction. As a performance that is rendered successful in interaction, this dissertation pays particular attention to processes of negotiation by interlocutors. In this way, joking relationships appear less a fixed constellation of social correspondences, and rather as a genre of poetic recombinations and indexically-linked domains that speakers deploy in interaction.

Social idioms including *sanakuyaagal* emerge in the context of social and economic change in the region of Kedougou. Kédovins have adapted routines of *sanakuyaagal* to deal with changes in the caste system of social hierarchy, and expanded to them to encompass relationships among Bassari, Seɓɓe (Malinké) and Fulɓe in a way that has responded to Kedougou’s particular history of contact. My recorded conversations provide evidence of creativity, newly minted connections, and a poetic imagination that muddies a simplistic distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory. Not only reflective of established relationships and status distinctions, employing license and building joking relationships between individuals also can serve to define respective relationships.

**Joking Relations and Welcoming Strangers**

It is not accidental that *sanaku* joking relationships, particularly in Senegal and more broadly in West Africa, have become a thing of close anthropological scrutiny. During my early time in Senegal, they provided an idiom through which I was drawn into conversation as a Peace Corps volunteer. Living in West Africa under the auspices of a host family, guests like myself

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54 The patronyms lent to me over my time in West Africa changed several times as I lived and worked in Senegal, first living among Barrys in Thiès, then living for as long time in a Kanté household in Kedougou City. As a guest in these families,
were routinely extended local names, including given names and surnames. As with children of
the family, first names were often drawn from lineages of ancestors and living relatives, and
patronymics were patrilineally lent to guests and strangers. Although I initially felt somewhat
uncomfortable engaging in what I perceived as acerbic teases—often indistinguishable to me
from bald faced insults—my host families in Kedougou attempted to implicate me into these
kinds of exchanges. Like names acquired and chosen by elite Yemeni women who acquired
“male names” to interact more broadly with men outside of the domestic sphere (Vom Bruck
2006), names could expand the social opportunities of their bearers, much like a mask in the
tradition of Mauss, which allowed their wearers to adopt different social personas (Marcel Mauss
1938).

Not merely a way of extending social personhood to foreign guests, this flexibility in
changing, lending, and acquiring names as a way to access certain social opportunities was
fundamental to interactions more broadly. Acquiring names at birth, developing nicknames that
tie individuals to one another or particular experiences, and name changing during lifecycle
events to avoid death or disease all provide evidence a remarkable onomastic flexibility across
West Africa (Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006). Since last names figure into the first questions
that Kédovins ask each other at first meeting, these are available early and often are referred to in
routines of recognition, and often become the basis for joking exchanges. In this way, Senegalese
families who hosted Western guests like me actively drew us into joking routines as they

relationships with other families were often interpreted through the logic of joking relationship correspondences as we were
welcomed into routines of casual joking. As I spent more and more time in a rural village on the Guinea border, I was then
known as Diallo, something that my new host families insisted upon.

“Joking” relationships as rapport building resonates more broadly with forms of relationship work in ethnographic encounters.
Jason de Leon, for instance, reflects on the role of joking and banter in striking up relations with and gaining the trust of
informants in Mexico (De Leon and Wells 2015). Not only of ethnographic interest then, this dissertation urges a closer
examination of the genres and routines through which anthropologists build relations and identify informants through such
routines.
modeled it themselves, pointing out common patronymic and ethnic correspondences.

**Introductory Example: “The Father of Them All”**

*Sanakuyaagal* routines afforded one possible interactional frame within which interlocutors embodied characters and navigated relationships in their daily greetings and practices. As a first orienting example, this encounter demonstrates how such interactional routines of *sanakuyaagal* provide shared settings, plots and problematics through which interlocutors socialized into these forms of teasing could place one another. While routines could draw on highly particular histories of interaction or “inside jokes”, they also drew on broadly shared narrative settings and on characters which played with themes of gluttony, patronage and idiocy. This first example features Guinean and Senegalese traders in southeastern Senegal’s largest border town, Kedougou City, who frequently teased one another based on a widely invoked correspondence between Fulɓe (sg. Pullo) and Serers.

**Figure 11 – “The Father of Them All”**

Diallo = late 20s male Pular merchant from Guinea
Mar = early 30s male Serer merchant born in Kedougou

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular Speech</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>Ko miŋ woni baaba maɓɓe fow! Ko miŋ soodani mo kafe Touba o yari mo.</td>
<td>I am the father of all of them! I’m the one who bought him Touba-style coffee and he drank it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Serer no waawi nangugol jungo Pullo o yeeya mo.</td>
<td>A Serer can grab a Pullo by the hand and sell him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>Oo’o! Mi jaabataa duŋ! Ko miŋ woni baaba Serer fop!</td>
<td>No way! I’m not down with that. I’m the father of all Serers!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the busy downtown market of Kedougou City transformed in recent years by a gold rush and an expanding highway system, these daily exchanges provided ways of recognizing and accounting for colleagues or strangers. In this context, interlocutors made subtle inferences about one another based on names, bearing, or language by invoking a range of possible frames of
reference for interpreting one another as kin, colleagues, or joking partner. Drawing on a commonly cited correspondence of Serer-Pullo, a Guinean Pular merchant selling clothes and small electronic devices called Diallo exchanged teases with a nearby Serer hardware merchant, Mar. Diallo and other Fulɓe market sellers had made quick work of his patronym, Mar, by twisting it into the Pular word for dry rice, “maaro”. These charges also played upon understandings of guests who in local practices of hospitality are often welcomed and encouraged to share in meals with the hosts.

Along with witchcraft, theft, and in this case, exaggerated gluttony, tropes of patronage in an idiom of hierarchical relations underlay many such routines. Here, for instance, Diallo claims to be the father (baaba) of Serers (line 3), one who procures the coffee. 56 Claims of superiority in an idiom of patronage or family relations, and indeed slavery (maccube or haabe), were common (Here on line 2, “A Serer can grab a Pullo by the hand and sell him”) and made reference to historical relations between certain occupational and ethnic groups (or castes) which were often characterized by hierarchies of social and bodily difference (see for instance Tamari 1991; J. T. Irvine 1973; Hoffman 2000). While often described as just “play” by interlocutors, these themes thus hinted at such historical relations between populations—in this case the status of slavery and what in the present day continues to provide many West Africans with a caste identity. However, rather than trying to read idioms of sanakuyagal teases directly against the social history of southeastern Senegal, sanakuyagal routines provided opportunities to creatively re-embed and refashion associations of social types.

56 This early example further demonstrates ways in which even as an anthropological researcher who studies face-to-face interaction, I often provided an interlocutor to whom individuals could voice taunts and “pedagogical” lessons on others’ inferiority. Addressing me on line two, for example, Mar is able to tease Siradio at the same time that he is explaining “the way things are” to me. While my presence certainly influences joking cousin routines, subsequent examples demonstrate that the ways in which any co-participant may be used as an addressee to voice taunts and teasing. Rather than just a dyadic exchange between two people, joking relationship routines often provided a stance object (Du Bois 2007) to which others oriented, and the invocation of certain correspondences often elicited variously aligned comments from those present.
These ostensibly adversarial acts of teasing and insult were predicated upon a close interactional collaboration. Teasing in the idiom of patronage, gluttony, hierarchy, and idiocy, these shared themes constitute chronotopes, configurations of time, space, and narrative that make certain characters, kinds of actions, and plots legible (Lemon 2009; M. M. Bakhtin 1981). Drawing on Bakhtin, Alaina Lemon notes that “chronotope is not simply a point or a plane in space-time, not merely a scenic backdrop or surround of period and place. It shapes the logic by which events unfurl, their syntax, the rhythmic quality of plausible actions and counter-actions.” (Lemon 2009, 839). Socialization into these narrative chronotopes thus makes legible certain kinds of plots and allows interlocutors to narrate stories dialogically. Once deployed, routines provided publicly available frameworks for performing dialogic narratives in interaction, thereby affording scenes that others might enter into in order to animate characters and relationships. Not only enacting confrontations, joking in the idiom of Pular and Serer was also expressed as originating from a historical relationship between two ancestors, a Serer for instance who helped out his fellow-hunting partner in a time of hunger by offering him a piece of his own leg, an act of kindness which resulted in a privileged relationship (I analyze such a story later on in this chapter).

Patronymic and ethnic correspondences provided a core set of terms through which interlocutors constituted relations in interaction. While I am not claiming to present an exhaustive chart—and argue that one could not in fact be offered—I first provide a general sketch of attested name-based correspondences that were deployed in interaction during the course of my field work in southeastern Senegal. Here I employ the term correspondence to refer to the grounds upon which such interactions were founded, e.g., that individuals with the patronyms Diallo and Ba stand in a joking relationship. In the subsequent chapter, I introduce the
concept of “equivalencies”, which constitute two patronyms that are understood to count as the same name. As such, they may sub in for one another to extend the grounds for establishing joking relations.

**Figure 12 – Some Examples of Sanaku Correspondences Based on Patronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANAKU CORRESPONDENCES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Sow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Kanté</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndiaye</td>
<td>Diop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>Drame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>Cissokho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaby</td>
<td>Danfakha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaby</td>
<td>Cissokho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>Kanté</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Diaby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>Bindia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>Boubane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souaré</td>
<td>Keita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souaré</td>
<td>Camara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisse</td>
<td>Drameh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanté</td>
<td>Fofana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diakhité</td>
<td>Diallo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidibé</td>
<td>Barry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mballo</td>
<td>Diao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pullo</td>
<td>Serer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serer</td>
<td>Diola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of these names are in fact patronyms, since in this part of West Africa they are most often passed down along the father’s side. Women married into families, however, typically retain their own last name, and these are often drawn on in interaction. While youth and those in familiar relationships do often refer to each other by their first names or nicknames, the most common form of respectful address is through last names.

**From System to Entextualization, Poetics, and Play**

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57 This figure includes correspondences that I observed during field work, and also some that were elicited in interviews, and follow-up field work in conjunction with my research assistant. This is not an exhaustive list, nor should is there a possibility of providing a definitive, exhaustive list given possibilities of transformation and regional variations.

58 NB the partial exception of Bassari names (Bindia, Boubane, etc.), which have traditionally been passed on matrilineally, although more recently, even Bassari have begun to figure these names in patrilineal terms.
Amid a large literature that spans the fields of anthropology, folklore, history, and political science, in what follows, I highlight the ways in which sanaku has been used to categorize and conceive of social relations as a form of scale work. In the literature, joking relationships as social mediation have often been reified, wherein alliances are assumed to function as structural mediators. For instance, joking relationships have often been divided between kin-based and non-kin based relationships, and categorical vs. non-categorical joking relationships (Apte 1985). In many cases, such structural analyses of joking relationships presuppose social boundaries and minimize the entailing aspects of social indexicalities and emergent stances as well as their phatic, material aspects. As such, routines can be used to bring people into interaction, and to create channels of contact among embodied speakers. As an exoticized practice that first caught the attention of anthropologists who expected to find societies defined by kinship, anthropological perspectives tended to reify joking relationships as a distinct practice. In effect, this hides generic similarities and common strategies that are present across practices which include jammoore joking, praise names, and forms of age-group teasing. After presenting and dissolving the practice of sanakuyaagal joking relationships as a larger part of other routines of social identification, in the remainder of the dissertation I link these routines to other forms of verbal creativity in the context of increasingly cyclical mobility in the trans-border region of Kedougou.

Joking relationships provided an early object of anthropological investigation that emerged from a study of kinship systems (see for example Labouret 1929; Lowie 1912). Robert Lowie, like his mentor Franz Boas, stressed particularistic studies of human societies rather than broad comparative theories. Field workers like Lowie who continued to make note of categorical
relations of license in their accounts provided the examples that Radcliffe-Brown would later draw on to provide a comparative theory of joking relationships (Radcliffe-Brown 1940).

Gathering together case studies in a comparative perspective, Radcliffe-Brown viewed joking relationships as a ritual of license between groups, expressed in its broadest terms by what he considered ties of conjunction and disjunction (Radcliffe-Brown 1924, 1940). At its root, Radcliffe-Brown’s theory viewed joking relationships as mediating social relations between social groups:

The theory that is here put forward, therefore, is that both the joking relationship which constitutes an alliance between clans or tribes, and that between relatives by marriage, are modes of organizing a definite and stable system of social behavior in which conjunctive and disjunctive components, as I have called them, are maintained and combined. (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 200).

When the logic of cross-cousin relations is read along a system of joking relationships, joking partners provide the model for proto-typical marriage partners under a system of crossness (Whiteley and Trautmann 2012). In this latter sense, joking relationships were part of the systems that allowed individuals to navigate the kinds of people that one could or could not marry. For instance, in certain kinship systems, the principle of crossness cleaves the social field

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59 From Lowie: “Joking Relationship. Persons whose fathers belonged to the same clan stood to one another in a special relationship, one was the i’watkuce of the other. Thus, Hunts-to-die, himself a Sore-lipl, was permitted to joke with the sons of ack’amne men, because his father was a member of that clan. The term “joking” in this connection requires further explanation. An i’watkuce was permitted to play practical jokes on another without incurring his anger.” (Lowie 1912, 204) This example describes a system of inter-clan joking.

60 Several key relationships defined Radcliffe-Brown’s thinking on joking relationships, including affinal relationships, as well as the relationship between mother’s brother and sister’s son (MB-ZS). In fact, Radcliffe-Brown’s first views on joking relationships emerged out of a consideration of the central relationship between mother’s brother and sister’s son, in which he saw a quintessential relationship of license in (patrilineal) societies dominated by kinship (Radcliffe-Brown 1924). Yet even during the time of writing, Radcliffe-Brown’s views did not go unchallenged. Soon after he published his first treatment of joking relationships (Radcliffe-Brown 1940), Marcel Griaule articulated a theory of catharsis limited to the Dogon in Mali that took issue with Radcliffe-Brown’s comparative theory (Griaule 1948). In so doing, Griaule was arguing against the usefulness of considering a joking relationship a kind of social institution whose logic could be identified in societies across the globe. He dismissed Radcliffe-Brown’s focus on the mediation of social groups through joking license and criticized this comparison as tantamount to the ringing of bells in rituals across human societies. (For a good summary of this debate, refer to Launay 2006).

Rather than engaging this debate head-on, routines of joking relationships in interaction demonstrate that across West Africa, people have developed resources for building bridges across various forms of categorical relations and have made use of every ethnic, onomastic, and other social resource for bridging verbal genres.
into two types of people, those that one marries and those that are kin. This tension between in-
laws as outsiders that were to be integrated into a kin group was the heart of what Radcliffe-
Brown was trying to account for in his theory of conjunctive-disjunctive joking relationships
(Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 1949).

Among the Kiga studied by Jim Freedman (Freedman 1977) or in kinship systems called
bifurcate merging that featured principles of crossness (like the Ojibwa in Berens and Hallowell
2009), cross-cousins were precisely the kind of people that you marry. In the case of the Ojibwa,
crossness provided a productive classificatory logic across which joking relationships were
deployed. In a certain sense, this was a kind of social technology that allowed kin groups to keep
track of each other over great distances (Berens and Hallowell 2009). For instance, Berens
recounts traveling great distances with Ojibwa along bodies of water to come across distant kin
with whom his travel companions had never made contact. But it was principles of crossness
expressed in the form of joking relationship license that provided a guide for his interlocutors’
interactions with these forgotten kin who had been separated for many years (Berens and
Hallowell 2009). In the case of West Africa, while those who encountered one another every day
did often mark relationships through the regular exchange of teases, Beren’s story of placing one
another across distance resonates with ethnography from Kedougou. However, rather than
remembering or reanimating a lost relationship, joking correspondences in Kedougou were often
an act of creation, or a momentary way of turning strangers into kin. These constellations of
joking correspondences thus provided diverse populations ways to place one another in a diverse
range of social situations.

Although anthropological theories of humor have urged the continued distinction between
kin and non-kin based joking, the case of sanakuyaagal suggests that this distinction may not be
stark, and that it only recycles ideologies of kinship based versus industrial societies. This distinction parallels other approaches to practices of categorical license that view those encounters that are fixed and follow categorical rules with those that could be defined in interaction (Freedman 1977). Findings from this research demonstrate a flexibility even within what might be considered fixed, static principles of association. Drawing a strict dichotomy between kin and non-kin joking ignores the fact that joking behavior is entailing of relationships and not just reflective of categorical membership (Silverstein 2003; Agha 2007). I suggest that a negotiation of categorical relations is itself often productive. Who is to “count” as an in-law, or as a particular kind of person is itself often the subject of negotiation in interaction. To note categorical relationships, then, is only to be aware of normative frameworks that provide a field of possibilities that are often contested and reworked. Understood as a “feel for the game,” these routines of social interaction provided not a model of relations, but a matrix in which actors could enact connections based on entextualized names which could be made to do linking, relational work drawing on a range of idioms (Bourdieu 2014).

Sanakuyaagal Routines as Scale Building

My discussion above demonstrates how approaches to joking relationships in the tradition of Radcliffe Brown have viewed these routines as a lens for interpreting social structures. Still very much an active project, joking relationships continue to provide fertile terrain for scale-making projects. Analyses by Raphael Ndiaye, for instance, have traced out joking relationship correspondences (here jocular kinship) as the scaffold for Pan-African identity (Ndiaye 1993). Ndiaye draws attention to the system of patronymic, occupational, and ethnic correspondences.

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61 Apte considered inter-clan joking to be an outer limit of kin-based joking, and includes patronymic-ethnic joking in this category.
that cut across groups spread from Senegal to the Chad basin. He therefore reads a political-social cohesion of African populations across great distances based on the virtual correspondences of patronyms across ethnic groups.

Rather than reading social relations from a map of possibilities, however, an interactional approach views these correspondences as resources, affordances that can be invoked in interaction to do important social work. These correspondences nevertheless infuse joking relationships with an openness that allows West Africans to posit connections between themselves and a large swath of contemporaries who might have various patronymic, occupations, or ethnic affiliations. Instead of positing the scale of joking relationships beforehand and citing their scope based on patronymic correspondences that fit into the frame of a nation-state or pan-African identity, the perspective of performance allows us to trace the kind of social work participants are doing in interaction.

Not only as a scale-making of political and social imagination, joking relationships have become the site of political theorization as a mechanism for conflict resolution. Scholars such as Tal Tamari considered two types of joking relationships: those inter-ethnic and intertribal alliances, like privileged relations between Fulɓe and blacksmith; and those that deal with interpersonal relationships based on cross-cousins (denɗiraawo in Pular) or grandparent-

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62 Rather than a tight system of social structure projected in ludic relationships, a history of contact, migration, and exchange has contributed to the flexible systems of relational play that have been adapted across West Africa. Far from village societies cut off from each other, the sharing of joking relationship across swathes of West Africa provide evidence of this broad linguistic and cultural diffusion. This is not surprising, given important histories of Sahelian trade, and among formal linguists, given the recognition of strong areal features in the form of languages of the Sudanic belt. In one sense, (more or less) shared notions of joking relationships present an instance of what Dell Hymes considered a *Sprechbund*, an area in which speakers had shared notions of pragmatics regardless of whether they shared a language qua code in common (Hymes 1968). Circumscribed by certain political boundaries, the sharedness of this genre has been used to argue for the integrity of political and social formations. Discourse-oriented approaches (Smith 2004, 2006) have demonstrated how the ideological construction of the Senegalese state, for instance, has been motivated by reifying the ethnic and patronymic linkages of joking relationships in the shape of a state. Assuming political or social boundaries merely based on overlapping pragmatic knowledge of joking relationships is subject to Silverstein’s critique of Benedict Anderson, who himself imagined political communities based on their sharing of media technologies (Silverstein 2000). As with approaches to license and joking relationships that rely on reporting and normative behavior, such analyses risk imagining social entities.
grandchild (Tamari 2006). Rather than strict distinctions among relational grounds, however, I found that interlocutors translated across kinship idioms, patronyms, and occupational groups in such a way that boundaries between such “distinct” domains appeared porous. Tamari cites several historical examples of joking relationships as blood or milk pacts that have been initiated in the context of alliance building and the maintenance of peaceful relationships across West Africa. Other analyses of joking relationships that view a method of conflict resolution have relied on steam-valve theories in which tension is released through the cathartic act of joking (Griaule 1948; Freud 1960).

Joking relationships have figured centrally into analyses of how communicative practices contribute to conflict resolution or conversely how they engender factional tension. In many cases this purported function has been used strategically. In Senegal, for instance, Serer administrators are often selectively sent to the Diola areas of the Casamance by their superiors with the expectation that they exploit their kal (Wolof for sanaku) relationship with the Diola. Joking relationships have thus been viewed as either relieving tension between groups or alternatively by providing normative prohibitions to conflict63 (de Jong 2005).

The Manchester School contributed early debates on conflict resolution by moving beyond village-island anthropological analyses to conceptualize complex inter-group relationships in multi-ethnic societies. Max Gluckman, for instance, argued that “conflicting loyalties and divisions of allegiance tend to inhibit the development of open quarreling, and that the greater division in the one is likely to be the cohesion in a wider range of relationships” (Gluckman 1955, 25). In other words, Gluckman viewed the existence of multiple, cross-cutting loyalties as reducing the possibility of conflict. This social calculus parallels E. E. Evans Pritchard’s analyses

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63 Some research has investigated the capacity for joking relationships to impact ethnic voting tendencies (Dunning and Harrison 2010).
of Nuer segmentary lineages, in which larger and larger segments of a lineage could be rallied to one’s cause as quarrels with individuals become more socially distant (Evans-Pritchard 1974).

Gluckman uncovered the important insight that any single socio-linguistic mechanisms used for placing people and groups in diverse, multi-ethnic settings (e.g. joking relationships, principles of kinship, established allies, etc.) should not be analyzed in isolation. Instead, scholarship from the Manchester School demonstrated how repertoires of social idioms and genres must be analyzed alongside each other, and can often be mobilized in different ways in different settings (J C Mitchell 1959). Individuals thereby might draw on or evaluate different principles for aligning each other in different contexts and with different kinds of people. In the case of the Southern Africa’s Copperbelt, Mitchell was interested in the ways that social categories were used to structure people’s experience (J. Clyde Mitchell 1956). As a logic for organization, he found that “tribalism” was only contextually relevant. In contrast to “tribal” principles in rural homelands, joking relationships provided an organizational principle shared labor in urban settings. This early work on the relevance of relational idioms begins to position joking relationships as interactional resources to be deployed. In this context, individuals thus had various, cross-cutting alignments that were contextually activated and deployed in different settings.

In anthropological literature, social relations of small-scale societies of West Africa had long been defined by institutions of kinship or “tribalism”. Particularly given the huge role of economic migrations, many to and from urban zones across Africa, it is necessary to investigate how social actors translate experience between home villages, urban centers, and broader diasporas. And yet there is nothing new about this level of movement and migration. Anthropologists and historians have long demonstrated the histories of political assimilation,
migration, and trade have articulated societies south of the Sahara. Jean-Loup Amselle, for instance, argued against an anthropology of Africa as a cultural archipelago—that is, islands of small-scale societies posited from decades of village-style anthropological studies (J. Clyde Mitchell 1956). Rather than the exception, strategic playing on mother’s brother-sister’s son idioms (McGovern 2012), stranger-host relationships, other social idioms and have been at the heart of social relations across Africa for some time.

Aside from notable exceptions in the Manchester School, early approaches to joking relationships often assumed that joking relationships were coterminous with or constitutive of social boundaries. For instance, Marcel Mauss saw in parentés à plaisanteries, as he coined them, a total social fact that orders moral, economic, and religious phenomena (M Mauss 1928). Akin to Kwakiutl potlatches, he considered these total social facts that provided a framework for social relations in those communities. While a totalizing view of social boundaries is less useful at this juncture, Mauss’ great insight, however, was to not analyze in isolation different domains of social life. An implication of this view was to examine within the same frame exchanges of people and things so as to break down between subject and object, giver and gift. Along similar lines in Chapter Six for instance, I argue that teasing and taboo in the market must be analyzed as interrelated with the exchange and monitoring of material goods.

**Origins-based vs. Performative Approaches to Joking Relationships**

In many ways, anthropological analyses of joking relationships in West Africa as a structural idiom are subject to many of the same critiques expressed by Fabian in his analytic, *typological time*, as a timeless, traditional practice. In this way, Fabian showed more broadly

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64 In Chapter Six, I insist upon Mauss’ foundational work on personhood, materiality, and social relations, by showing how the exchange of nicknames is intertwined with the exchange, or rather extraction of resources from one another.
how particular societies and practices have been portrayed as quintessentially historic under the
gaze of anthropology, and therefore not contemporary with modernity and the West (Fabian
1983). Much in the same way, the joking relationships of West Africa might appear as an ancient
practice that is at the root of West African sociality. Indeed, in West African oral history and
folklore, origins for the sanakuyaagal joking relationships often point to the Kurukan Fughan, a
document that tells of the founding of the Malian empire (Niane 1965). The story of this charter
is told in the Sundjata Epic, a piece of historical oratory passed down through griots throughout
West Africa (Niane 1965). After declaring victory over the sorcerer-king Sumanguru Kanté,
Sundiata Keita, who would go on to found the Empire of Mali, is said to have established
patronymic joking cousin correspondences among his subjects. His victory over Kanté is even
encapsulated in the continued correspondence between the Kanté and Keita. In turn, joking
partnerships based on ethnic and patronymic correspondences do circulate in the savanna of
West Africa as interdiscursive routines that individuals may draw on. Passed down along the
lines of the Sundjata Epic, the Kurukan Fughan describes the patronymic partnerships
established by Sundiata Keita among his generals and allies after his victory in the founding of
the Empire of Mali (Niane 1965; Niang 1998).

The Kurukan Fughan as a founding charter for joking relationships stands as a
genealogical account that highlights origins. While histories of contact, trade, and conflict have
shaped past alliances upon which early correspondences may have been built, current routines in
interaction, which draw on poetics, popular culture and the resources available in face-to-face
interactions, mean that an analysis of joking relationship need not always refer back to a
historical and social reference point. While this charter is not commonly invoked by southeastern
Senegalese, various grounds for relationships between patronyms and ethnic groups are
motivated by historical relations that draw on religious conversions, past pacts, and occupational complementarity. Nevertheless, it provides a useful example of genealogical approaches to joking relationships that stress origins. During a meeting in 1998 of griots and regional representatives, participants put to writing orally transmitted knowledge of the charter, which founded *sanakuyaagal* at the inception of the Empire of Mali:

Il est institué entre les mandenkas le sanankunya (cousinage à plaisanterie) et le tanamanyöya (forme de totémisme). En conséquence, aucun différent né entre ces groupes ne doit dégénérer, le respect de l’autre étant la règle.

There is instituted between the Mande the sanankunya (joking relationships) and the tanamanyöya (form of totemism). As a consequence, the rule was that no one born in either group may denigrate the respect of the other.

Versions of the Sundjata Epic thus list his allies who were to be enshrined in reciprocal relationships of license (Niane 1965). As a founding document, *Kurukan Fughan* offers a founding charter for joking relations that only hints at the creative reconfigurations which were entailed in interaction.

**Entextualizing Joking Relations Through Song**

Whereas joking relationships might appear as a timeless practice, *sanakuyaagal* was extended as much through Guinean top hits as it was through foundational charters. I draw on the following example of the song, *Soulay*, to demonstrate how joking correspondences can become entextualized through the lyrics of Guinean pop music. As a call-out response for various social categories, this song often became a matrix for *sanakuyaagal* routines in which teases were inserted into the entextualized lyrics. First released in 2014, Thierno Mamadou’s hit song, *Soulay*[^65] (“Get lit”) which featured a series of repetitive lyrics calling out ethnonyms, patronyms,

[^65]: Here *soulay* refers to the imperfective aspect, which in this context used can be read as a habitual aspect. It is borrowed from the French *se souler* (also as an adjective) and is used to refer to drinking in excess.
and other social groups over a catchy back beat, provided an ideal frame for substitutional improvisation. In stark contrast to the charter of *Kurukan Fughan*, Thierno Mamadou’s hit song *Soulay* offers a glimpse of relational bricolage in interaction, one that emphasizes forms of play and creativity through which joking relationships are extended, created, and deployed. Thierno Mamadou is a Guinean musician who has come and performed several times in Kedougou where he gained a broad popularity. The song has demonstrated itself to be highly variable among its recorded and live versions since its poetic elements can be replaced and reconstituted, often depending on audience and context. At its heart, it plays on the repetition of voiced categories of people, who are called out for enjoying the drink, “(Sukaabe ṣeŋ) soulay” (“(The kids) they get lit”). At key junctures in the song, Thierno Mamadou picks out controversial figures, singing “Cellou Dalein⁶⁶ soulataa”. Originally from Guinea, the song nonetheless covers many patronyms that figure in Kedougou.

The principal elements call out a particular social group, followed by playful accusations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 13 – Entextualizing Social Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pular</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meney mey (…etc...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“soulay”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“soulay”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“soulay”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“soulay”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yettaabe Diało</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yettaabe Barry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yettaabe Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(etc...)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*note: see “Thierno Mamadou Soulay” on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86ctgV4gwkM

The flexibility of this song comes from the ability of Thierno Mamadou to list social types, such as men, women and children, or patronymic groups (e.g. yettaabe Ba), along with the people

⁶⁶ Cellou Dalein Diało is a Guinean political figure, broadly supported by the Fulɓe of northern Guinea, who lost in the most recent election to Alpha Conde. Not only Diało, but many other Guinean political figures were cited in this song.
from a particular known place. In live versions, Thierno Mamadou calls out patronyms, which are often answered by the audience in a call-and-response between performer and audience. As a song that entextualized social categories based on status or patronym, *Kédovins* often selectively inserted other social groups, using the song’s lyrics to tease interlocutors. In this way, accusing the “Yettaaɓe Barry,” then, for example, the Barrys are lifted from the song and made to land as if the song was singling out Barrys the whole time. Beyond live performances, songs like *Soulay* were frequently playing in the background during my field work throughout Taabe and Kedougou City. The song was extremely popular on Kedougou’s community radio stations and became a favorite of DJ Moctar. He himself linked this song and its patronymic play to *cousinage* which he would refer to as a “richesse de la nation” (a national treasure). In households of Taabe and throughout the markets of Kedougou City, songs like *Soulay* often provided an ambient auditory background which appeared disconnected from the face-to-face conversations until its lyrics or melodies were noticed and embedded into the flow of conversation. At these times, listeners would repeat or focus upon aspects of the songs they were listening to. Particularly catching songs like *Soulay*, then, had a greater longevity, maintaining themselves in the living memories of *Kédovins* and periodically being linked in ongoing social encounters.67

Disseminating along with the embodied communicative practices of radio publics, the entextualized lyrics of songs such as “Soulay” could become (re)contextualized in routines of teasing and joking. Not merely ancestral tradition, *sanakuyaagal* was “found” by participants in popular songs and sounds. Such was the case one day in an encounter between Mamadou Diallo (from the village of Taabe) and a local blacksmith who was coming over to do work on his

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67 Thus, joking relationship equivalencies and correspondences need not be understood as only being located in the mind, but are embedded in material, sonic processes in the phenomenal world.
property. Opening a large metal gate, Kanté, a well-known local blacksmith, approached us, gazing up as he slowly entered a courtyard that would soon be Mamadou’s urban campement. Quickly skipping over any pleasantries, Kanté mused out loud, “wana yette Baɓe ɓeŋ ɓuri?” (is it not that the Bas are the best?) as we began to walk towards the living quarters. Kanté’s voice began to follow a beat as he recited from Thierno Mamadou’s song, Soulay, “oŋ nani ko yette Diallo ɓe ɓeŋ soulay,” (“did you hear it is the Diallos that get drunk”). Following Mamadou up a small hill, Kanté began to sing the final strophe, drawing out the final notes of “kono Thierno Dalein68 soulataa:.” (“but Thierno Dalein doesn’t get drunk”). These lyrics contrast with the rest of the strong, picking out well-known politicians and religious leaders who humorously contrasted with the rest. Mamadou sustained a long laughter, and, clearly amused, escorted Kanté under a nearby shade structure.

This encounter was not the first time that I had heard Mamadou and Kanté exchange joking insults at one another. Kanté was the maître of a large blacksmith shop and had trained many of the youth who now work in metallurgy in the area. He was well known to many in town, particularly because he had built and organized a trash collection service in town. I later asked Kanté about the exchange, and he replied, “Kanté ko sanaku Fulɓe ɓeŋ fop, kono tigi tigi ko Keita.” (“Kanté is the sanaku to all Fulɓe, but really it is Keita.”) He went on later to say that his father told him about how Fulɓe think that Kanté are maccube (slaves), but they (the blacksmiths) are the ones that make labarki, the tool they use to circumcise young initiates. Mamadou had told me of how barijeliijo blacksmiths of the past used to circumcise the youth, but now that it was performed by a local doctor who knows both lekki bale (black medicine) and Western medicine. After Kanté had gone, Mamadou later laughed about the exchange to me,

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68 Cellou Dalein Diallo was a Pular candidate for the Guinean presidency who was beaten by Alpha Konde, largely backed by the Malinké part of the country.
telling me “…ko ɓe vrai baylooj, mi jalu haa mi ronki.” (“…they [hon] are a real blacksmith, I laughed until it hurt.”). Here Mamadou uses the honorific pronoun ɓe, (“they” instead of “he”) to speak about Kanté, a man with whom he had just exchanged ritual teases. This subtle effect, in fact, does not contrast with his previous interaction with Kanté, but instead shows that teasing through joking relationship and honorification represents two sides of the same coin.

New neighborhoods on the edge of town where Kanté encountered Mamadou were spaces in which greetings and mutual identification of others were particularly salient. These were lands were being claimed, cut up, and sold in a piecemeal process of urban development that was turning hunting and farming land on the edge of town into lots for a growing urban population. As a patchwork of land claims held together with small bits of paper, handmade signs, and most importantly public recognition of ownership, these outlying neighborhoods were arenas for selling and the performance of land ownership. Greeting individuals, speaking their names, and routines of recognition helped to associate people with land through everyday acts of marking. This land that provided the meeting space of Mamadou and Kanté indeed was a newly built parcel that Mamadou was developing into a small campement on the edge of town. Only a few days before this encounter, several men had stopped by in a search for other parcels to buy. In the subsequent conversation, they had remarked on how they had lost a bit of claimed land that had been cut up by a road and that had been lost in an unfavorable ruling by the land bureau. As

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69 This exchange reveals several things about joking indexicalities. Firstly, certain associations are viewed as more typical or stronger than others, which points to a range of joking correspondences that are more or less shared and accepted across speakers. Secondly, Mamadou’s comments to me after the fact stressed the fact that Kanté was a true master blacksmith. While any patronym associated with blacksmithing might provide grounds for a joking relationship, working as a master blacksmith with a host of apprentices built up the Kanté persona as a prototypical blacksmith. In this way, rather than merely a categorical box to check, Kanté’s model embodiment of blacksmith led me to consider ways in which embodied associations and models are drawn upon in joking routines. Thirdly, this example also demonstrates that rather than only dyadic associations drawn between interlocutors, Saliou’s invocation of Bas in his teasing indicates that interlocutors draw upon and voice other correspondences that they themselves might not inhabit.

70 This campement began as a small field station that I had envisioned to use for future research and visits and now is entrusted to Mamadou for his use as a tourist campement.
such, small acts of greeting and recognition among neighbors, workers, and strangers were a critical part of the performance of ownership in the outlying outskirts of Kedougou City.

**Origin Stories as Performance**

I have been arguing that routines of *sanakuyaagal* offer resources for navigating ongoing social relations between interlocutors. As such, even the telling of an ancestral joking origin story could be interwoven with emergent social relations. Origin stories were commonly described as *cosaan*, traditions passed down from the ancestors. According to some locals, however, license between cousins, grandparents, and co-wives preceded joking relationships modeled on ethnic groups and patronyms. In this view, relationships between cross-cousins and affines provided a logic of license that was used as a model to link to more distant social others. At other times, my interlocutors grounded the origins of *sanakuyaagal* in hunter’s lore that has been passed down and adapted for centuries across West Africa. The version I present in the following was recited in a household in Kedougou City by a Pular man to a Serer school teacher. It recounted the tale of two ancestors, one Serer and one Pullo, who grow tired and hungry while hunting *en brousse*. In attendance is also Diao, an agricultural technician from Kolda. In the following, I provide an English translation of a story told in conversation.

**Figure 14 – Origins of Sanakuyaagal As Told by Dudu**

Although some of the speech is possibly bivalent (e.g. chase), I mark the following as: Pular in regular font, **Wolof in bold**, and *French in italics.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dudu</td>
<td><em>andi eh ṭuy diŋ ko woni bon</em></td>
<td>You know this how it is, well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

71 While I offer a rough distinction between Pular, French, and Wolof in this transcript to highlight the politics of translation, many of the expressions employed in this transcript can be considered bivalent, or rather multivalent (Woolard 1998). That is, they are indeterminately French, Wolof, or Pular given the productivity with which “French” terms were often used in Pular and Wolof, a context which has usefully been described as a spectrum of embeddedness rather than binary code-switching (Versluys 2010).
2. Faye Serer bi ak Peul bi fan lañuy tasewoon ? The Serer and the Peul where did they meet?
3. Dudu ñande goo Serer (.) Serer bi Serer oŋ e Pullo One day the Serer and the Peul had gone hunting.
oŋ ñe yahunoo wañugol
4. Diao daňu demoon m: (.) chasse They had gone hunting
5. Faye chasse Hunting
6. Dudu ñe haylii ñe haylii ñe haylii haa woni: They walked they walked they walked until
7. Diao ñu ko defa xiif ko serer lu mu wax () They are in the woods for fifteen days
8. Diao ñu ko defa xiif ko serer lu mu wax () They fasted for fifteen days in the woods
9. Diao ñu ko defa xiif ko serer lu mu wax () The Serer told the Peul I’m hungry. He said you are hungry and he said yes.
10. Diao ñu ko defa xiif ko serer lu mu wax () He said you are hungry, he said.
11. Diao ñu ko defa xiif ko serer lu mu wax () Ah he told the Peul I’m hungry
12. Diao ñu ko defa xiif ko serer lu mu wax () He told him he is hungry that is what he said.
13. Faye mm
14. Diao ñu ko defa xiif ko serer lu mu wax () He said well hold on I’m coming.
15. Diao mm
16. Diao mm
17. Diao mm
18. Diao mm
19. Diao mm
20. Mam yettu Diallo ((aside talk about tea))
21. Diao mm
22. Diao mm
23. Diao mm
24. Diao mm
25. Diao mm
26. Diao mm
27. Diao mm
28. Diao mm
29. Diao mm
30. Diao mm
31. Diao mm
32. Diao mm
33. Diao mm
34. Diao mm
35. Diao mm
36. Diao mm
37. Diao mm
38. Diao mm
39. Diao mm

*NB: the conclusion of this story can be found in Appendix A.

Presenting this narrative without backchannel cues from Dudu’s audience (Faye, the school teacher, and Diao, a colleague and guest of Mamadou’s who spoke Wolof, French, and Pular)
would have provided the impression of a clear, uninterrupted story. Yet this telling was interspersed with corrections, translations, and back-channel feedback that provided an opportunity for interlocutors to evaluate each other as storytellers with expertise. Indeed, this story was told by Dudu, an elder Pular man who often struggled to elevate his stature in the city through wild stories and claims of traditional expertise. Living close to where Mamadou lived, Dudu was often mocked by local youth, and in return he went to great lengths to insist on his status as knowledgeable elder. Such stories, not ever merely an innocent tale of oral history, thus often constituted “tactical stories” used by interlocutors in broader strategies of self-presentation (Goodwin 1993) and or in evaluations of interlocutors (Basso 1988). For instance, on lines 4, 12, 25, 28, 29, and 33, Diao uses the cover of translation to seemingly insist on his own, (in his own estimation, more astute) understanding of this story as he clarifies certain segments in Wolof and French to the school teacher Faye, who had only learned Pular in the couple of years that he had taught in Kedougou region. In fact, after this telling, Diao related to me that he was dissatisfied with certain aspects of the telling and that he knew the story as well. On line 5, 16, 30, 32, many of Faye’s most developed backchannel repetitions are marked by clarifications by Diao. At most other times, Faye provides simple nasalized backchannel cues “mm mm.” Like other assessments about what sanakuyaagal joking was all about, these kinds of stories were never mere history but were inflected by interlocutors’ emerging relationships and claims over authority and tradition.

**Joking Relationships and the Poetics of Granularity**

In the following extended examples that draw on field work between a rural village and an urban center, I detail ways in which participants play with the grounds of joking correspondences which are creatively reshaped during the course of face-to-face interactions. Robert Launay’s
piece as part of a 2006 special issue in *Cahiers d’études africaines* provides an important point of departure in moving away from a view of joking relationships which projects out societal structure (Launay 2006). In a simple but important corrective of previous approaches, Launay first noted that those who stand in joking relationships with one another do not necessarily invoke their relationship at all times. Far from automatic and forced, joking relationship connections must be invoked and ratified in encounters. Furthermore, while certain individuals might invoke a joking relationship, a partner might not reciprocate. Indeed, flouting a joking relationship connection was itself an interactional strategy which, as I show later, could be used to insist upon other relationships. Furthermore, recognizing that joking relationships stand alongside other idioms of relatedness (kinship, affinity, shared names, nicknames, etc.) as competing axes of identification makes clear the fact that joking relationships are neither automatic nor necessary or compulsory.

Viewing joking relationships as performance is furthermore to recognize that correspondences may be mobilized in interaction as an achievement. Particular ethnic or patronymic identities cannot be used to predict configurations of stance alignment in interaction (Du Bois 2007; Lempert 2008) since interlocutors can mobilize joking relationships in creative ways that play upon scale, poetics, and a range of relational idioms. The following example demonstrates this lesson in showing how interlocutors can scale *sanakuyaagal* correspondences at different levels of ethnicity or patronymic association to diffuse a potential connection and to alter interactional alignments.

**Example – “They Caught Some Little Peuls Here”**

As this encounter unfolds, I am sharing in a pot of tea at the Kedougou City home of
Mamadou Diallo, who is chatting with several of his neighbors and with a Serer teacher, Faye, who is from coastal Senegal. Mamadou had recently acquired a plot of land in the outskirts of the city and his home was becoming a meeting place in an emerging neighborhood that attracted tenants, neighbors, and kin. At one point in the conversations, some of Mamadou’s neighbors begin to make statements about a strong Pular work ethic, statements which lead to some light-hearted exchanges among Faye and Mamadou’s neighbors. The Pular work ethic is often connected thematically to a sense that Fulɓe are wily and self-interested and live in a closed community that is defined by byzantine kin relations. The correspondence between Pullo and Serer was widely acknowledged and could animate heated volleys of verbal exchanges in the region of Kedougou, a place where Serer merchants and merchants stood out in a region populated significantly by Fulɓe. As the other neighbors turn to a side conversation, Faye addresses Mamadou and myself and begins to tell a story about “des petits Peuls” (“some little Peuls…”)

Figure 15 – “They Caught Some Little Peuls Here”
From 2014_11_04_AN01
Setting: courtyard of Mamadou’s house, with other family members and neighbors present
Mamadou: Male from the village of Taabe, mid 30s
Faye: Male Serer from coastal Senegal, teaches in a local school, mid 30s
Joking correspondences deployed: Peul-Serer; Diallo-Ba.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>il parait qu'on a attrap-</td>
<td>apparently they caught-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>eh on avait attrapé des petits Peuls ici</td>
<td>eh that they caught some little Peuls here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>haha ((group laughter))</td>
<td>haha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>hier nuit mais je ne s-</td>
<td>last night but I don’t kn-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>je n'étais pas au courant quoi</td>
<td>I didn’t know what was going on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>na alors c'est les Bas</td>
<td>or it’s the Bas then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>hier il y avait des idées ( ) ici</td>
<td>yesterday there were (unintelligible) here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>moi je</td>
<td>me I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>en ce moment je dormais certainement</td>
<td>at that moment, I was surely asleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>ce sont les yette Ba quoi</td>
<td>it’s the Bas then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>ce sont les Ba</td>
<td>it’s the Bas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>oui</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After “Peuls” become the topic of conversation, Faye proposes the story of a little Peul who, as he tells it, was understood to have stolen something in the night. Mamadou (who is Peul) could
have easily taken this to be a moment of *sanakuyaagal* initiation and countered with insults about *Serers*. Rather than doing so, however, Mamadou invokes a *yette* Ba, a Pular patronym that is widely held to be the joking cousin of the Diallos. On line 33, Faye follows Mamadou’s lead to fall back to *yette* Ba as the culprit. Rather than following a Peul-Serer opposition, Faye thus entertains the opposition of Diallo-Ba which allows the two, ostensibly arch-joking partners, to find common stance alignments even during the course of joking routines.

This interactional conclusion is not spontaneously achieved but rather emerged out of dialogic collaboration between Mamadou and Faye. This configuration is first initiated by Faye who, on line 28, cedes epistemic authority to Mamadou by claiming that he was not entirely informed, “je n’étais pas au courant quoi.” It is after this moment that Mamadou is able to propose the figure of the Bas, “na alors c’est les Bas” (line 29). Further ceding Mamadou’s epistemic rights, Faye states on line 32, “at that moment, I was surely asleep.” In so doing, Faye deftly embeds his epistemic deference towards Mamadou—understood as rights and responsibilities for participation—by voicing characters in the reported narrative event itself. This kind of collaborative storytelling based on temporal play that dialogically links narrated event and emerging interaction is possible partly because interlocutors share a socialized knowledge of teasing conventions. This collaboration entails the kinds of characters involved, including scalar configurations in which individuals are representative of groups, and a teasing chronotope that makes use of certain kinds of plots and scenes involving theft, gullibility, and an exaggeration of faults.

This interactional alignment is partly achieved by Mamadou and Faye by playing upon joking relationship correspondences that cut across different scalar levels, in this case between ethnic groups (Serer-Peul) and within Peul as a group (Diallo-Ba). This effect in which
distinctions can be recast at embedded levels has been referred to as \textit{fractal recursivity} (Irvine and Gal 2000). Specifically, this kind of labor is a form of scale-making, tracking the deployment of scalar assumptions and logics deployed in interaction (Irvine 2016). Not only an embedding of joking correspondences within one another for interactional effect, joking relationships could thus also be a form of scale-building. In this example, Mamadou and Faye drew on entextualized names to conceive of relations at two possible levels: ethnicity or patronymy.

\textbf{Figure 16 – Fractal Recursivity in a \textit{Sanakuyaagal} Encounter}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fractal_recursivity.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Sanakuyaagal as Interactional Matrix}

While joking relationships do demonstrate a remarkable ability to work their way into a diverse range of settings, there were nonetheless times and places in which joking relationships were recurrent. With respect to face-to-face encounters, joking relationship grounds were often established during the greeting phase, for instance when individuals presented and called each other’s patronyms. The moments of introduction as groups of visitors or NGO workers first presented themselves to communities, and the spaces of village assemblies both afforded the invocation of joking. Similarly, moments when I would walk down the mountain from Taabe to Takkopellel were also spaces in which my patronymic allegiances were tested. Kedougou’s downtown market, a space in which a great number of buyers and sellers were in contact, provided a space in which joking cousin relationships were invoked. Literature on joking
relationships reflects this situational nature of the joking relationship, for instance in the case of conversational ribbing among longshoremen at work, a ribbing that is strictly avoided at home (Pilcher 1972).

In this way, joking relationships routines often appeared as stark breakthroughs into performance (Hymes 1973) that were available during the course of a wide variety of other social situations. When strangers did arrive in Taabe, joking relationship routines provided one frame through which Taabe residents and incomers evaluated one another. For instance, at an official NGO meeting to discuss the community’s response to the region’s 2014 Ebola epidemic just across the border in Guinea, sanaku talk often broke through careful discussions of awareness-raising campaigns. Similarly, when a group of educators arrived to test Taabe’s cohort of primary school students hoping to pass their qualifying exams, patronyms were quickly mined for potential joking relationships. As Taabe hosts and professors learned of each other’s patronyms, a flurry of insults and teases, interspersed with laughter, accompanied these moments of recognition.

As one such delegation met with Taabe’s notables, the official agenda was punctuated by storytelling between joking partners. Arriving late from his fields, Taabe’s political conseiller, Barry, was able to draw attention to his arrival through the telling of a humorous story about his joking cousin, Sow. In the following interaction, I highlight the way in which initial accusations in the key of a sanaku routine provide a conversational matrix that affords other overhearers and interlocutors the opportunity to reevaluate characterizations. While the left column features Barry, Taabe’s conseiller, the middle column shows ways in which the structure of his narrative provides opportunities for others to hijack and recharacterize his story.

**Figure 17 – Teasing as Interactional Matrix**
From 2015_03_05_AN02
Narrative of the comic blunder of a Sow, as told by Barry, conseiller of the village of Taabe. Barry’s narration is in
left column, with “asides” and other back-channel comments included in the middle column. There is laughter throughout the interaction, and bold indicates attention to how Barry’s story is used as an opportunity to voice and comment upon other characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Barry’s Story</th>
<th>“Listener” Asides</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>yette Sowjo de</td>
<td></td>
<td>a Sow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>mij e mij e mij e yette Sowjo menj yahno woyaasi</td>
<td></td>
<td>me and a Sow went traveling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>(murmurs from the delegation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>heddo mi haala</td>
<td></td>
<td>listen so that I may speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>mij e yette Sowjo gooto menj wadi woyaasi</td>
<td></td>
<td>me and a Sow we did a trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>menj yehi menj yehi galle mawdo suudido</td>
<td></td>
<td>we went to the home of an elder woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>himo mari na’ii</td>
<td></td>
<td>she has some cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>ndaaranañ kossam tekkudan</td>
<td></td>
<td>find some good sour milk for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>o wadi kossan dan nokku goo</td>
<td></td>
<td>she put the kossam in one place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td>halloore ma yette Barry rekk</td>
<td>your Barry talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>o wadi lacciri ndiñ nokku goo fow ko koroy</td>
<td></td>
<td>she put the cornmeal in another little bowl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>o wadi coodan dan nokku goo</td>
<td></td>
<td>she put handwashing water in another place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>fow no koroy koy si a yi’ii koy no laabaa haa</td>
<td></td>
<td>all in little bowls, if you’d seen them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>menj soodi</td>
<td></td>
<td>all are sitting pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>o inni jooi awa si o wasano ejn</td>
<td></td>
<td>we washed [our hands]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Sow kuti coodan dan</td>
<td></td>
<td>she said now if she would serve us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>wayliri noñ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sow snatched up the handwashing water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td></td>
<td>ko yette Barry beq doñ</td>
<td>that’s really the Barrys there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td></td>
<td>ko kanko sax wadi</td>
<td>he’s the one who did it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td></td>
<td>lacciri boni ñaaamotaako</td>
<td>spoiled cornmeal is inedible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>…</td>
<td></td>
<td>that day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>ndej ñande</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td></td>
<td>( ) wonaa yette Ba eñ de</td>
<td>( ) it’s not a Ba [hon] truly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td></td>
<td>ah mi acci awa</td>
<td>ok I stopped then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td></td>
<td>wafudon onon kadi jikku yette</td>
<td>[if] you all too pulled a Ba, we wouldn’t have left him cornmeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ba eñ accaano mo lacciri ndiñ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As such, while Barry’s story at first blush provides the laughable foils of his joking partner, Sow, this story provides opportunities for listeners to voice yet further characters. This narrative thus demonstrates the risk of engaging in teasing which can often be used as model to target the initiator of the teasing or can be hijacked to mock others. Indeed, by creating a frame of teasing and by developing a narrative of comedic foible, one runs the risk of being positioned as the
target oneself (lines 10 and 18). On line 18, for instance, a local Taabe resident pipes up that it’s the Barrys that he is really talking about “that’s really the Barrys there”, adding “he’s the one who did it.” Likewise, a yette Ba pipes up on line 23, that “it’s not a Ba” which further draws a remark on line 26 from their joking cousin (“you all too pulled a Ba, we wouldn’t have left him cornmeal.”). Not only referential insults launched back and forth, this short narrative demonstrates how sanakuyaagal routines provide matrices that provide opportunities for the extension and elaboration of other joking correspondences by interlocutors. This point echoes other approaches to taboo, for instance, that not only look at denotation, but also view taboo as further structuring participation framework formation (Fleming 2015).

**Example: Ambiguous Ceddo and Pullo Relations**

In this chapter, I have argued that sanakuyaagal correspondences are often negotiated in interaction, thereby presenting an evolving social resource through which interlocutors may navigate interactional challenges. The existence of patronymic correspondences as entextualized poetics thus opens the door for the further elaboration and diffusio

d of new connective possibilities. This final section looks at the question of ambiguous sanaku correspondences between Ceddo (or Malinké)\(^{72}\) and Peul by contrasting two examples that involve the same protagonist—one in which a joking relationship between Malinké and Fulɓe was avowed, and one in which it was not invoked. This approach examines how interlocutors perform teasing to provide principles for typifying and evaluating interactions, rather than merely posing a definitional question of what constitutes a joking relationship encounter.

---

\(^{72}\) In Pular, singular ceddo, and plural, seɓɓe, but also referred to as Malinkee(jo/ɓe), or Maninkeet(jo/ɓe), with Malinké being the name of the language. That said, ethnonyms and language names were often used interchangeably. In Pular, ceddo or maninkeeto (pl. seɓɓe) are ethnonyms (or exonyms). In Malinké language (mandinka kaŋ), mandinkoo is the autonym, who refer to Fulɓe as fuloo.
Elsewhere in this chapter, I pointed out that there are certain equivalencies that are more strongly entextualized than others, often providing a poetic pairing upon which other relationships are based. Certain patronymic correspondences like Diallo-Ba provided tight poetic-conceptual clusters that were so widely accepted that they could metonymically refer to *sanakuyaagal* as a whole (for example, “*hidaa andi fii Diallo-Ba*?”, “do you know about Diallo-Ba?”), i.e. do you know about *sanakuyaagal*?). Others such as poetic recombinations linking Ba and Boubane, to which I turn in the next chapter, were potentially more ambiguous. The existence of correspondences and equivalencies among patronyms and ethnic groups, however, provided a well-worn practice of social and poetic recombination that provided a model for other possibilities. The existence of accepted relationships between ethnic groups, patronyms, and social types (e.g. castes) thus provided an opening for the construction of other joking relationships that have varying degrees of diffusion across social space. Acknowledging the productivity of joking relationships in interaction takes an emphasis away from the enumeration and categorization of joking correspondences as a “social map,” and places it on an analysis of the principles of social interpretation.

In southeastern Senegal more broadly, the existence of any relationship of license between Ceddó and Pullo proved to be a point of contestation. Given Kedougou’s histories of Islamic conversions of Malinké and a history of conflict, this relationship was marked. During metapragmatic assessments, I heard conflicting views distributed equally among parties. The unsteady state of a joking relationship between “Pullo” and “Malinké” exemplifies the permeability of this idiom. Historically, Malinké and Pular groups were in violent conflict in the region of Kedougou. Fulbe Muslims who traveled and raided across the region converted many
contemporary Muslims. To this day, many Kédovins cite uneasy relations between the two. In Kedougou’s high school, for instance, many students still report that the axis of Pullo-Ceddo still divides social groups and peer groups, and that friendships are less likely across these boundaries. These tensions are often expressed in linguistic terms, for instance with expressed frustrations that Pular is the unmarked language of common communication. During my time in the market, I heard conflicting reports on whether individuals considered Fulɓe and Seɓɓe (pl. of Sedɗo) to stand in a joking relationship. This relationship was somewhat complicated by thoughts on Jaxanké who, speaking a similar variety to Malinké, also figured in these calculations. Indeed, the notion of “ethnic” correspondences appeared to create a precedent for such an association that was at times successfully motivated.

One afternoon I was perched upon a jerry can next to a line of Guinean kola nut sellers and was chatting with a long-time acquaintance, Thierno. I would soon witness insult-laden exchanges between him and a Malinké alms-seeker at the market. Facing out towards the main pathway into the central market, a powerfully built man comes over to our line of kola nut sellers. Keita, who knows both myself and Thierno, approaches and first greets me. Soon after greeting, Keita turns to Thierno and exclaims loudly, “ko Fulɓe dʊŋ dʊo woni tooŋude goɗɗo do quoi,” (“this kind of Fulɓe who teases someone here”). “Keita,” responds Thierno, “onoŋ Malinkaaɓe ɓɛŋ,” he began, “interess ɔŋ ko ko ŋaamoŋ.” (“you the Malinké, you you only look for something to eat”). The two continue to taunt one another, as Thierno typifies “onoŋ Maninkaɓe ɓɛŋ” (“you the Maninke”) as merely interested in feeding yourselves (lines 9-10).

Much of this conversation appears to follow other stylistic features of sanaku routines (gluttony, individual to ethnic group typification). However, rather than pursuing the question of

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73 Indeed, certain populations are still considered to practice “animist” practices that predated Islam, notably those Malinké of the Niokolo in northwestern Kedougou.
ontological status—i.e. what is or is not a joking relationship—comparing this encounter to the following one suggests that tracking how interlocutors metalinguistically characterize encounters provides a more useful starting point. Consider the example I just introduced:

**Figure 18 — “You Maninké People”**
from 2015_11_11_AN01
Thierno: a male, mid 30s kola nut seller (Peul)
Keita: a mid 30s, alms seeker from southern Guinea (Maninkaajo)
Location: Kedougou’s downtown market, surrounded by other merchants and customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thierno</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Keita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Keita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>onoŋ Maninkaaɓe ɓenj</td>
<td>you Maninke people</td>
<td>you only care about food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>interes ɓi ko ko naamọŋ</td>
<td>as soon as you get something to eat your lanni problems are over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>si onoŋ ɓeŋ ko ko naamọŋ lanni haaju moŋ</td>
<td>you don’t strive for anything but food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>onoŋ on daɓaa hay fus si wana ko ɓaamọŋ</td>
<td>us, if we get one hundred francs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>meneŋ noŋ (.) meneŋ ɓi cent francs</td>
<td>we eat twenty-five francs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>meŋ ɓaamay vingt cinq</td>
<td>we give the family twenty-five</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>meŋ jonna famille ɓi vingt cinq</td>
<td>we save fifty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>meŋ mara cinquante</td>
<td>you if you get as much as a million in your pocket,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>onoŋ ɓi hay si ko million woni ka poche moŋ</td>
<td>you’ll die and the million will still be there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>hidoŋ waawi mayude million no toŋ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keita soon counters Thierno’s taunts by telling the story of a Pular who died falling out of a tree for trying to pick mangoes, all the while hiding away millions of Francs CFA in his pocket with which he might have bought a mango (i.e., a trope that Fulɓe are miserly). Fulɓe, he insinuated, were so selfish that rather than buying fruits with money in their pocket, they risk life and limb for something free. This story is metonymically captured in the words, “Pullo goo’to” and “fii mangoore” (“one pullo” and “for a mango”).

What is remarkable about this section, however, is not so much the content of their teases, but rather the way in which teases were countered. Rather than building on Keita’s teases by characterizing the Peul as interested in money, Thierno counters by accusing Keita of lying (lines 28, 30, 32). As a point of context, accusations of lying were a particularly fraught issue in metapragmatic accounts of respect and sociability. To accuse someone of lying in earnest was no small thing, and often only done on the basis of a relationship of strong familiarity. The way in
which teases were dealt with suggests a certain interpretation of the kind of social situation that Keita and Thierno had created. While *sanakuyaagal* routines were commonly characterized by the exchange of entertained accusations and insults, Keita and Thierno vehemently refute these.

**Figure 19 – “For a Mango”**
from 2015_11_11_AN01
In this interaction, Keita brings up the case of a rich Peul who died climbing into a tree for a mango.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Pullo goo’to</td>
<td>one Peul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Pullo goo’to</td>
<td>one Peul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>eh</td>
<td>eh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Thierno</td>
<td>fii mangoore</td>
<td>for a mango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Thierno</td>
<td>duq doo ko e fenaande</td>
<td>that there, you’re full of lies wonudaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>ye</td>
<td>ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>fenaande</td>
<td>lies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Thierno</td>
<td>Pullo goo’to</td>
<td>one Peul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Thierno</td>
<td>fenaande wonudaa</td>
<td>you’re lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>fii mangoore</td>
<td>for a mango</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This interaction contrasted starkly with a night of casual banter between Thierno and a Malinkéjo woman who lived just down the hall from a room Thierno rented not far from the main market in Kedougou City. In contrasting these two conversations, I draw attention to the way in which interlocutors themselves provide clues to one another as to how understand the definition of the situation to be. In this second interaction, Thierno and I sat on plastic mats on the concrete as his host’s daughter sat perched on Thierno’s bed by the door. Action movies played on a small TV in the corner of the room to which we all returned when there was a lull in the conversation. Throughout the night, Thierno and the young woman teased each other and entertained a heated debate about Fulɓe and Malinké history. At several points, Thierno threatened to sell her, a charge that I had heard several times in joking routines, but never outside this context. At one point, Thierno’s inability to speak Malinké was used as a point of ridicule by the young woman who claimed this was evidence of his prejudice. The back and forth comments

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74 In light of Kedougou’s strong growth in population and economic opportunities, acquiring land and renting out housing to migrants increasingly became an economic strategy for Kédovins. While I did not audio tape the following interaction, I made detailed notes of the interaction which I summarize in the following.
between Thierno and the host daughter were punctuated by frequent laughter on both sides. Alongside their mutual insults, however, both used language that at times ceded opportunities for storytelling and responses from the other. For instance, “ko woni mi faamaali, ononj Malinkaaɓe…” (“That which I don’t understand, is that you the Malinké…”), provided her with an opportunity to respond to his tongue-in-cheek critique. In so doing, his interactional move paralleled ways in which Mamadou’s Serer guest, Faye, in the example above ceded him epistemic authority over the narrative in such a way that furthered a dialogic text.

By point of contrast to the previous interaction between Thierno and Keita, in this interaction Thierno used many opportunities to insist upon its status as a joking relationship encounter. While in the throes of reciprocal teasing with the daughter of his host, Thierno repeatedly made reference to this interaction as one sanakuyaagal. “Hida andi oo doo ko sanaku an”, (“You know this one here is my joking partner”) Thierno explained to me at one point. He went on to explain that Pular are not sanaku to the Jaxanké, who speak a language that is very closely related to Malinké. While characterizing the situation as one of sanakuyaagal could often be an overt form of metapragmatic typification as in “oo doo ko sanaku an” or “this one here is my sanaku,” the ways in which individuals contested and reacted to teases and insults also provided more implicit cues that interlocutors drew on to mutually establish a sanaku frame.

For Thierno—a devout Muslim who often remarked on the loose practices of Kédovins—the implied superiority was a religious issue. For several minutes, he remarked on how it was in fact the Fulɓe who converted the Malinké, “ko karahaŋ ṣe woniri julɓe.” (“It is with great difficulty that they became Muslims”). While I heard of others claiming a relationship between Pular and Jaxanké, Thierno’s logic of joking relationships was based on the grounds of religious conversion and Islamification. This example, in which Islam and past histories of conversion
motivated the grounds of joking relationships, contrasts with other joking practices in nearby Mali (Marchand 2003). In this counterexample, religion was used as a form of self-presentation so as to extricate oneself from any responsibilities to engage in joking relationships.

In both this later example at his home and in the earlier example involving Keita, Thierno had addressed his interlocutors as Malinké. However, the two interactions differed strongly in key. While the latter had the feel of a collaborative ribbing, the former was marked by a defensiveness characterized by accusations of lying and outright denial. While Thierno’s particular histories of contact with Keita and the host daughter clearly impact these two scenarios, it is nevertheless significant that Thierno typified the latter as a sanaku relation. As such, rather than attempting to ascertain the ontological status of whether this was a joking relation, characterizing an interaction as sanakuyaagal and one’s interlocutor as a sanaku is to invoke certain grounds of evaluation, to eschew personal responsibility by linking one’s discourse to a broader routine of teasing. This latter approach follows the process of contextualization by the interlocutors themselves who thereby track the definition of the situation they view themselves to be in (Goffman 1981).

My Fulɓe interlocutors, many from the village of Taabe, often admitted witnessing awkward moments of tension when engaging in interactions with Malinké. Once while I was talking with Mamadou at the possible existence of an ethnic dimension to local politics, he related to me an incident that occurred to him in Kedougou City. “Ceddɔ yiidaa Pullo,” he told me. He was at an eatery in Kedougou and sat between a couple of Seɓɓe. As Mamadou told it, he tried to speak the language, Ceddɔ (or Malinké), to them with what little he knew (not a lot), and then resorted to speaking Pular. They replied brusquely that they too did not speak Pular and concluded by saying “Fula maniŋ” (Fulɓe are no good). Mamadou continued, saying it was a
“sanakuyaagal muusungal,” (“a painful joking relationship”) that was almost like a real war. “Be awmoto Fulɓe, no wa’ii si ko awumu kono hiɓe jokiti goonga—wono seeda seeda sangay.” (They tease Fulɓe, it’s like teasing but they mean it. Maybe it will change little by little.”).

Rather than trying to arbitrate whether Malinké and Fulɓe could be said to be joking partners, the above considerations demonstrate the importance of paying attention to how interlocutors make reference to and characterize ongoing interactions as joking relationships in order to better typify particular exchanges and to collaboratively establish a definition of the situation (Goffman 1990).75

**Metapragmatic Interviews, Normative Joking, and Informants**

Interactional approaches to *sanakuyaagal* reveal a fundamental methodological problem which impacts research on joking relationships: the reliance on informants as sources of information on joking partners and pragmatics. In the case of joking relationships in West Africa which elicit very strong responses, interviews are strongly shaped by speakers’ feelings about the practice. For instance, in the example I provided above, the telling of the origins of *sanakuyaagal* soon became a highly performative scene in which interlocutors were invested in providing evidence of their storytelling capacities. While some individuals described *sanakuyaagal* as a banal form of joking, in other contexts it was characterized as a cornerstone of peaceful relations and an important key for unlocking relations across West Africa. In most cases, questions about joking relationships elicit answers that refer to model cases and are defined by an invested interest by many Senegalese, in particular, in providing an image of social and ethnic harmony as part of Senegalese exceptionalism (Smith 2006). Political scientists, for example, have attempted

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75 Typifying encounters in metapragmatic terms that emphasize typical routines in context can do powerful work, as demonstrated by Donald Trump’s attempts to pass off sexist, predatory banter as “locker room talk.”
to assess through interviews the degree to which joking partners might draw on these grounds to inform voting (Dunning and Harrison 2010). As a result, a reliance on elicitations of joking partners by respondents in many cases has obscured the verbal *bricolage* of reinterpretation.

Robert Lowie’s analysis of joking relationships in North America, for instance, cites his informants:

According to Gros-Ventre-horse, the privilege of joking obtains not only between sons of fellow-clansmen, but also between sons of members of linked clans (Lowie 1912, 205).

Indeed, during my field work, interlocutors offered explanations of how joking relationships worked, thereby providing model joking partners and representing a typical routine. The following example comes from a Serer school teacher working in Kedougou who is addressing me:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 20 – “It’s Between Serer and Peul”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speech</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par exemple tu prends…………………………………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c'est entre Serer et Peul……………………………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on se taquine………………………………………..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu dis ah mais toi es Ba……………………….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ou les Bas là ne connaissent que voler………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>les Peuls là ne connaissent que voler……….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ou les Serers n- sont nos esclaves……………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non les Serers ne sont no- vos esclaves…..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous sont vos rois……………………………..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous voyez c'est comme ça………………….……</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on cohabite et puis…………………………….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on est soudé c'est génial quoi…………………</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Epistemological concerns about metapragmatic interviewing touch on Pierre Bourdieu’s core critiques of ethnographic practice in which he challenged anthropologists to examine the conditions under which intuitive strategies can be objectified (Bourdieu 1977). As a corollary to this critique, it may even be the case that those most able to condense interactional practices into abstract principles are those least able to apply them in practice. As a pragmatic domain,
however, *sanakuyaagal* was highly available to metapragmatic characterization, being a parsable and culturally meaningful practice (Silverstein 1981). During my later metapragmatic questioning on joking relationships, or in follow-up questioning after their deployment, I often heard conflicting assessments of joking alignments or underdetermined categorical grounds.

While certain grounds were broadly accepted (Serers and Peuls above, or Diallo and Ba), I heard highly divergent metapragmatic accounts of other joking norms. As I discussed above, when I asked about a joking relationship between Pullo and Ceddo, I got answers that both deny and assert such a correspondence. Indeed, a starting hypothesis might be that this would depend on the nature of this ethnographic interview or whether the interlocutors might benefit from insisting on such a relationship during the course of particular interactions. In fact, my West African interlocutors at times reflected on the ambiguity of such a relationship.

Asking questions about joking relationships in the latter parts of my field work led me to reflect on ways in which the value and importance attributed to particular discourses and practices dramatically affects the kinds of responses one receives. For instance, after one particular exchange of *sanaku* talk at the market, I had occasion to ask the interlocutors about what was going on. Despite my pressing, I had a hard time getting much information since one of the market goers merely stated that it was a bit of joking around, nothing to be taken seriously, “ko samakala, o toñay laŋ tuŋ”. (It’s just play, he’s just teasing me”). Beyond important factors such as rapport and interview setup, metapragmatic interviews about *sanakuyaagal* and *cousinage à plaisanteries* often depended on how individuals evaluated this practice as significant. For instance, some interviewees dismissed *sanakuyaagal* as merely joking around, while in other conversations individuals held joking relationships to be a critical cultural practice (for example, in maintaining peaceful relations in ethnically-segmented societies) and would
provide lengthy accounts of its significance. One particular interview I conducted with a local
journalist demonstrates several important themes that recurred:

Figure 21 – A Trigger Mechanism
from 2015_10_AN01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ça facilite beaucoup la communication, ça peut être un délic quoi&lt;br&gt;Par exemple tu veux commencer quelque chose, même une animation, tu es là en réunion&lt;br&gt;Pour décrypter les gens n’est-ce pas en introduisant par ça voilà, en disant eh vraiment les Danfakha ce sont des gourmands ou bien ce sont des mangeurs de ŋèɓe, tout le monde va rire&lt;br&gt;Automatiquement même si les gens étaient frustrés, tout le monde va rire, toute la salle va applaudir&lt;br&gt;Et puis hop ça passe&lt;br&gt;C’est le délic&lt;br&gt;C’est comme c’est le bouton quoi de décollage&lt;br&gt;Quand tu appuis sur le bouton là rekk hop tout le monde décolle</td>
<td>It facilitates communication a lot, it can be a trigger mechanism&lt;br&gt;For instance, you can start something, even a video while you are there in a meeting&lt;br&gt;In order to read people, right, by introducing this, by saying that the Danfakha are gluttons or that they are bean eaters, everyone will laugh&lt;br&gt;Automatically, even if the people are frustrated, everyone will laugh, and all of the room will applaud&lt;br&gt;And then it moves along&lt;br&gt;It’s the trigger mechanism&lt;br&gt;It’s like the lift-off button.&lt;br&gt;When you hit that button, boom everyone takes off.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In other interviews with women from Taabe on the subject, I heard similar sentiments about *sanakuyaagal* as a way to break away social boundaries of interaction:

**Pular:**

“Sanakuyaagal no mo'yî sabu si yimbé no suusiniri no woowindiri …si yimbé suusindiri, ñe andindiranay.”

**English:**

Sanakuyaagal is good, because if people dare to engage with each other, they will get used to one another, and if people dare to be together, they will arrive at mutual understanding.

In this sense, *sanakuyaagal*, even as the exchange of acerbic teases, shows how this genre is predicated upon interactional cooperation in which parties who may have never known each other have been socialized into a similar interactional routine of placing one another.

During the first year and a half of research, I often avoided asking people up front about their metapragmatic views on joking relationships so as not to always orient the conversations I was trying to study. However, in most interviews I had with interlocutors on metapragmatics, most thought first and fore most about inter-patronymic (e.g. Diaby-Cissokho) and inter-ethnic
(e.g. Pullo-Serer) relationships of license. However, *sanakuyaagal* was also discussed as a broader term that touched on other forms of joking license. For instance, when I asked individuals in Taabe about *sanakuyaagal* in the later stages of my research, I commonly got responses that viewed *sanakuyaagal* as a form of joking which lumped it together with other forms of license. In this way, it was clustered along other relational axes that permit license: *dendirayaagal* (cousins), *goreyaagal* (peers), *tanagol* (grandparents), and other familial relationships such as *yee kiraaɓe* and *fecciraaɓe*. “Fow no hawti,” explained Taabe’s chief to me at one point. These sentiments were echoed by many other respondents, including some women from Taabe who saw in *sanakuyaa gal* one part of larger practices of respect giving among individuals which included in-law relations.

**Conclusion**

While *sanakuyaagal* might appear as a set of social correspondences firmly anchored in West African tradition, in this chapter I laid out the stakes in examining them as emergent routines of social recognition through which interlocutors may place one another and draw on grounds to engage in scale building. Instead of positing the existence of social groups whose relationships are brought into evidence during the deployment of joking routines, this chapter has argued that they should be examined as routinized performances that bring into relation socially saturated signs. Rather than being able to predict stance alignments based on *sanaku* correspondences, interlocutors draw upon their shared generic knowledge of routines to navigate epistemic rights simultaneously deploy other relational idioms such as affinity or kinship. By comparing two different encounters invoking Malinke-Peul relations, I showed joking relationships to be an invokable frame for characterizing or offering expectation for certain kinds
of relations, rather than just a static reified link predictable in all times and places between certain groups.

By revealing strategies and dynamics shared among interactional genres, a performance-based approach to joking relationship routines reveals them as a creative site of social and poetic creativity. To set aside sanakuyaagal as a structural system only reifies it as an object of anthropological curiosity, when in fact it stands alongside and emerges in relation to other social idioms including affinity and kinship. Although the term joking relationships first animated my curiosity about conversational joking in West Africa, to adopt a narrow view of sanakuyaagal to be would be a blinkered approach that arbitrarily ignored many of the other social idioms and relationships that individuals draw upon in interactions. I address this question of sanakuyaagal’s role in relation to other forms of verbal creativity in the following two chapters, beginning with practices of naming in the next chapter, and examining duel processes of honorification and teasing as forms of cultivating relations in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FOUR

Name Play and the Sociopoetics of Relationality

“It is rather caused by the fact that similarity, harmony, and nearness are accompanied by the feeling that they are not really the unique property of this particular relationship: they are some thing more general, something which potentially prevails between the partners and an indeterminate number of others, and therefore gives the relation, which alone was realized, no inner and exclusive meaning.” (Simmel 1950)

Introduction: The Social Life of Names

This chapter argues that sanakuyaagal routines stand alongside other creative practices of naming (including jammoore taboo nicknaming detailed in Chapter Six), altogether providing flexible routines of social interpretation basd on (re)entextualized names. These names were not merely fixed referential qualifiers. Through interpretations of formal similarities, equivalencies, and interactional renamings, broader routines of naming afforded diverse possibilities of self-presentation. In this way, the names constituted not only forms of reference and address but also semiotically saturated signs that could carry social meaning and pass on character traits across generations in the case of namesake relationships. As in the work of Gabriele vom Bruck who describes how the adoption of male names by elite Yemeni women afforded the latter the possibility of interacting with men outside their intimate family circle, certain patronyms or namesake connections in West Africa afforded individuals a social mask that could be worn in order to open up other domains of social interaction (Vom Bruck 2006).

This view of names parallels broader correctives within linguistic anthropology that view language not only as a system of referentiality—referring to and characterizing things in the world—but also as a form of social action that is enacted through a range of conative, phatic, or
metalinguistic processes (Jakobson 1978). In West Africa, naming held a highly significant place in social life. Establishing namesakes with ancestors could pass on character traits through the generations, bind those sharing given names in webs of exchange, and provide grounds for insult and abuse in the case of sanakuyaagal joking relationships. Taboo nicknames circulated among Guineans in Kedougou’s downtown market often invoked the experiences of migrant labor and made light of its precarities. Merchants evaluated rights to use these taboo names through highly scrutinized routines of monitoring and policing, which could be bought or earned by being present at a baptismal event.

At the surface level, southeastern Senegal might appear to be onomastically homogenous. Most Fulɓe in Northern Guinea, for instance, had one of six or seven patronyms—Ba, Diallo, Sow, Barry, and several others that had multiple origins. Similarly, given names like Mamadou, Daouda, Kadiatou, and others were often passed along from namesake to namesake. Someone asking for a Mamadou Diallo in Kedougou City would be confronted with hundreds of interlocutors. Yet alongside this ostensible homogeny emerged a rich tradition of taboo nicknames (jammooje), praise names (waccoode), and accompanying titles earned through gained experience (e.g. Ustas Harouna after studying the Qur’an). These names furthermore intersected with established practices of address in which the last name was often used. Many young adults had nicknames of well-known European league football players such as Neymar or Drogba or of internationally recognized musicians such as Akon or Lil Jeezy.

Akin to forms of relational naming examined by Rupert Stasch (Stasch 2011), these myriad ways of calling were indexically saturated with shared follies, experiences, and histories. Different strategies of address could similarly afford different principles of association. While employing patronyms could evoke sanakuyaagal connections, first names might point to
namesake connections at the same time that different types of ratified nicknames indexed one’s intimacy and exchange history with a peer. As such, rights of use and ratification were themselves subject to policing and monitoring, a process which forms a locus of investigation for Chapter Five. More than merely referential tags, the names provided indexically rich forms of calling in which interlocutors embed one another in shared life histories. Within genres of taboo nicknaming in the downtown Kedougou market (jammoore), the question of who was ratified to utter nicknames was an important practice through which migrant merchants managed ephemeral solidarity groups. While joking relationships provided my first entry into everyday verbal creativity across West Africa, traditions of namesake naming and praising, alongside sanakuyaagal, afforded a broader repertoire for negotiating social relations.

While this genre of nicknaming was also prevalent outside of such dense market settings, my research shows that the routine has been developed as a way for market goers to navigate group formation and to keep track of one another. Not only a routine of virtual play, it was entangled with the materiality of money and barter. It is through such routines that these migrants assessed one another’s economic successes and baited one another in an attempt to capture idle pennies. Alongside other work on taboo (Fleming and Lempert 2011), these forms of restricted reference and taboo strongly mediated the formation of participant frameworks. With the arrival of Kedougou’s first police force, the regimentation of naming also expanded as ID cards were increasingly required by administrative entities as mechanisms for controlling movement. Gendarmes and police increasingly surveilled roads which had previously been open and unrestricted. Other research has thus shown how hegemonic structures have used such IDs as forms of population control and monitoring (J. C. Scott, Tehranian, and Mathias 2002). However, local residents equally impinged upon one another’s time-space possibilities by teasing
one another and constituting the category of *forodu*, one without papers, who was often ridiculed during face-to-face interactions.

Not merely a special case apart, *sanakuyaagal* performances were thus interwoven more broadly with an onomastic creativity that productively drew on last names in interaction. This chapter builds on the previous one by showing how the poetics of naming afforded a broader practice of social bricolage whereby interlocutors cultivated and pruned social networks across dispersed networks. Examining *sanakuyaagal* interactions in the previous chapter hinted at common principles that undergirded forms of joking license that cut across other seemingly distinct genres. For instance, name play and “paying off” joking partners are relational paradigms involving the exchange of talk and materialities across a diverse set of situations, including “pay-to-say” joking (Chapter Five). These common principles of interactional negotiation, along with metalinguistic intuitions by interlocutors themselves about the interconnections between pragmatic categories, brought me to consider joking relationships as a field of interactional play that draws on principles and indexicalities that underlay many other social domains.

Rather than an isolated practice of sociological alliances, the bricolage of name play that emerged in practices of *sanakuyaagal* thus sat alongside other frames of social evaluation involving the negotiation of license and respect, understood under metapragmatic terms such as *tanagol* (grandparents), *esirayaagal* (in-laws), *dendirayaagal* (cousins), and age-set joking among Bassari, for instance. In the following chapter, I go on to show that honorification and teasing offer two ways of looking at what are analogous principles of negotiating sociality in interaction. The following figure offers a rough overview of some salient metapragmatic categories of license and respect. Although different chapters focus on certain metapragmatic
category more than another, this chapter points out that many of the principles of onomastic play transcend any particular category. Moreover, not all significant forms of social action are performed through metapragmatic categories that have distinct labels.

_Tanagol_ was often used to explain teasing and intimacy between those separated by a generation, such as a grandparent and grandchild. Teasing in Chapter Eight may be viewed in such a light. _Esirayaagal_, forms of teasing between junior and senior in-laws is more closely examined in Chapter Five. Like-aged peer of approximately the same age were broadly understood to stand in a relation of intimacy, capable of telling one another uncomfortable truths or teasing one another. Other categories such as _ýeekirayaagal_ posited teasing relations between a brother’s wife and his own brother.

### Figure 22 – Salient Metapragmatic Categories of License and Respect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metapragmatic Category</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Related Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tanagol</td>
<td>generational (grandchild)</td>
<td>taniraawo, taniraaɓe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dendirayaagal</td>
<td>crossness (cross-cousin)</td>
<td>dendiraawo, dendiraaɓe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanakuyaagal</td>
<td>joking relationship (joking partner)</td>
<td>sanaku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esirayaagal</td>
<td>affinity (senior in-law)</td>
<td>keyna, keyniraawo (junior in-law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goreyaagal</td>
<td>Age-set relations (peer)</td>
<td>gøreɛjo, gøre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ýeekirayaagal</td>
<td>brother’s wife / brother</td>
<td>ýeekiraawo, ýeekiraɓe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokoro / tokora</td>
<td>namesake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evaluating Social Relations Through Names

Patronyms are some of the most salient social indexes that are invoked throughout social encounters, both as forms of direct address as well as in reference. In a context where given names were often perceived as disrespectful towards parents or elders, the address with last names was often an early question that figured in routines of greeting. Patronymy was also common, particularly in rural settings where individuals with children were referred to by the name of their eldest child, as in the following: “Baaba Mamadou” (Father of Mamadou), or Neene Wury (Mother of Wury). Since children were frequently named after ancestors or other respected members of their extended families, the kinship relationship between namesake and namee as origo was often used as a form of

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76 A further note on address and given names: alongside patronyms, _goreeɓe_ (like-aged peers) and those in familiar relations would address themselves by their given names. Occasionally, friend groups would refer to each other by nicknames which often invoked football players, musicians (Neymar, Akon), or past events or journeys (e.g. Gigol, Ghanaian). (I look at instituted joking relations of taboo nicknames in the market place in Chapter Six). Teknomymy was also common, particularly in rural settings where individuals with children were referred to by the name of their eldest child, as in the following: “Baaba Mamadou” (Father of Mamadou), or Neene Wury (Mother of Wury). Since children were frequently named after ancestors or other respected members of their extended families, the kinship relationship between namesake and namee as origo was often used as a form of
assessed for individuals’ provenance and ethnic group (“Yette Souaré ko Pullo? Is a Souaré a Peul?”). Although Fulɓe patronyms did not map neatly onto any clan membership and did not even unambiguously provide evidence of ethnic or regional origins, they were often the most significant first social index and address term used by individuals meeting for the first time.

**Figure 23 – Patronyms with Multiple Ethnic Associations**
This figure shows that ethnic or provenance could not unambiguously be interpreted from an individual’s patronym.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patronym</th>
<th>Ethnic Associations in Kedougou</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sangaré</td>
<td>Pular, Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakayoko</td>
<td>Pular, Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toure</td>
<td>Pular, Jaxanké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulibaly</td>
<td>Pular, Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanouté</td>
<td>Pular, Jaxanké, Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cissokho</td>
<td>Pular, Bambara, Jaxanké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanté</td>
<td>Pular, Bambara, Jaxanké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidibé</td>
<td>Pular, Bambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoura</td>
<td>Pular, Bédik, Bambara, Jaxanké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>Pular, Bédik, Bambara, Jaxanké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souaré</td>
<td>Pular, Malinké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadiahouk</td>
<td>Jallunké, Jaxanké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>Jallunké, Jaxanké</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ly</td>
<td>Pular, Toucouleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sall</td>
<td>Pular, Toucouleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndiaye</td>
<td>Pular, Toucouleur, Wolof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deme</td>
<td>Pular, Toucouleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakho</td>
<td>Jaxanké, Bambara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 24 – Some Ethnic Associations**
This figure furthermore shows the range of last names that were routinely attributed to ethnic groups in the region of Kedougou. This is not meant to be a categorical assignment but rather an overview of how certain names could be mobilized across interactions in southeastern Senegal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Identification</th>
<th>Patronym/Surnames in the region of Kedougou</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pular</td>
<td>Ba, Barry, Diallo, Diakhité, Dia, Diao, Baldé, Camara, Ka, Sow, Sao, Ly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malinké</td>
<td>Danfakha, Dansokho, Kouyaté, Kanouté</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarakholé</td>
<td>Diawara, Doucouré, Gassama, Fadiga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bambara</td>
<td>Coulibaly, Traoré, Diarrah, Bakayako, Kanté, Sangaré</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diakhanké</td>
<td>Danfakha (Male), Damba (Female), Dansokho, Diaby, Dembelé, Cissokho, Guirassy, Tandjigora, Diakhaby, Sakho, Soumaré</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassari</td>
<td>Bindia, Boubane, Bianquinch, Bonang, Bandiar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only evaluated for potential joking partners, last names could be evaluated and interpreted in an attempt to assess individuals in many different ways. Two individuals found to

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**reference. Goris (related to goro, grandfather), for example, were used in reference to children that were named after their grandfather.**

**Many thanks to Mike McGovern for reminding me that Mande patronyms do in many cases follow along clan affiliations.**
be sharing the same last name could use this as a ground to purport some other shared grounds.

For example, patronyms could be used to draw kinship connections in conversation as in the idiom of *mussibe*: “oo doo ko Diallo, ko mussibe meŋ” (“This guy is a Diallo, he is our kin”), a kola nut seller once said after hearing that someone shared his last name of Diallo. In this way, social actors routinely used patronyms to evaluate one another for social information. Knowing someone’s patronym as well as hometown, for instance, could often provide a better indication of an individual’s caste or lineage. While in many cases surnames carried ethnic and other social indexicalities, the possibility of changing names (for example in order to escape misfortune or death), the existence of equivalencies between names, and an indeterminate relationship between ethnicity and patronyms meant that reading identities off of patronyms was in practice ambiguous. While patronyms provided a rough, ambiguous social index that was publicly available, other lineage-based social groups called *leyỳì* could give a better idea of one’s caste, provenance, and migration history even if these were often initially unavailable and often required further inquiry.  

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78 While patronyms (e.g. Diallo, Ba, Camara) were commonly used to extract social information, genealogies were traced through *a leiöl* (pl. *leyỳì*). For instance, in the village of Îbel in the Bande, Jaljallûf were a *leiöl* whose members all bore the patronym Diallo, and the Uruɓe are noble lineages who have been among the village chiefs of the village. In the village of Taabe, for instance, *leyỳì* included Jimiyyaɓe (Diaalo) who were the lineage of imams and cattle specialists, Rundenaɓe or Dugarinaɓe (Diaalo) who were of the lineage of village chiefs, Patheaaɓe (Diaalo), Hariaaɓe (Diaalo), Simbiyaaɓe (Diaalo), Tafoɓe/Wayluɓe (Kanté) who were blacksmiths, Barrymaɓe (Barry), and Fodeaɓe (Souré). Certain lineages such as Seydiyanke (Barry) are noble lineages for whom genealogical accounts are traced to Muhammad and his wife Fatimata Zahra who were the founders of the most central city in the Fouta Djallon for much of its history, Timbo. (see Hall 2011 for a discussion of race in West Africa, which was often defined by tracing lineages back to the Prophet Muhammad). While certain noble lineages could be traced back to Muhammad or other apical ancestors, others such as Dugarinaɓe, who had been formerly slave caste, were traced back to points of departure in histories of migration, where Dugari is a village in Guinea from where this lineage migrated. This again provides an instance of the intertwining of place and kinship within West African social histories. Sitting just on the outskirts of what once had constituted the Almamy Fouta Djallon (with a capital in Timbo, Guinea), Kedougou has been shaped by its position in the periphery of this Islamic State by means of waves of movement to and from northern Guinea. In his chronicle of the Fouta Djallon, El Hadj Maladho Diallo provides a history of the settlement of the Fouta Djallon whose foothills spill out into the southern plains of Kedougou region (Diallo 2001). Although pastoralist Peul had been following the Fallaɓe along what is now the Senegal-Mali border into the Fouta Djallon mountains and thereby forming communities of non-Islamic Pulli, subsequent waves of Muslim migrants came into the region and converted local residents and eventually established a theocratic state, the Almamy of the Fouta Djallon. Early in this period during the course of contact between Arab missionaries from the east and Peul tribes in the Macina, Diallo writes that Madjoumaou, the daughter of clan chief Ougbata, gave birth to four sons (Diallo 2001, 17). The first, Aribou Ba (Uruɓe) was the ancestor of the Ba, the second, Wané Sow (Feroɓe); the third, Bodewal Diallo, and the youngest, Daatou Barry (ancestor of the Dayeɓes) (Diallo 2001, 18). As he writes, all of these children led to the great Pular families: Bah, Sow, Diallo, Barry or Diakité, Sidibé, and Sangare. “Pour les jeux et plaisanteries des enfants, le troisième fut...
Names could be fleeting when in certain interactions when interlocutors were momentarily rebaptized. For instance, face-to-face renamings such as “hande aŋ ko Ba,” (“Today you’re a Ba,”) were a common sanakuyaagal tactic which attempted to voice grounds which might be drawn upon in that interaction or hours to come. Indeed, rebaptizing one’s joking partner often constituted a part of the joking cousin routine itself. For instance, I once visited a village chief who identified himself as my sanaku, playing upon a correspondence between Kanté and Keita. Rather than call me by the name he knew me by (Kanté), however, he called me by his own last name (Keita) and used the rest of the encounter to compliment this name. I have remarked similar strategies at other times. In this way, during sanakuyaagal routines, joking partners not infrequently call one other not by their “actual” patronyms but rather by those of their joking partners.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, I myself was often referred to by a local names, given to me by host families with whom I shared domestic spaces. Although I was consistently known as Souleymane (or by the nickname Jules) throughout my time, my last name was changed at times, to reflect my connections in a particular community. For instance, while a Peace Corps volunteer, I lived in a family known as Kante. Later, as I spent more time in the Fouta Djallon, I slowly began to be known as Diallo like my host family. Others were very keen to call me by these names and implicate me via these names into local sanakuyaagal or namesake practices.

Interactional renaming is also possible during the connection-making phase as well when names are often assumed in the first moments of conversation until these assumptions might be

confié à l’ainé et le benjamin Barry au second Sow. C’est ainsi qu’est né le système de “Sanakou.” Les Diallo sont “Sanakou” des Balhs et les Barry “Sanakou” des Sow.” (Diallo 2001, 18). These last names and Diallo and Ba, in particular, were dominant among Peul in the zone particularly among migrant merchants from Guinea and also among those in the village of Taabe and surrounds. While this history provides one among many stories of the origins of joking relationships, it demonstrates a transformational logic of alternating groups that underwrites relationships of license among generational sets. In this practice, which is commonly included under discussions of joking relationships more broadly, grandparents and grandchildren sit in a relationship of license, whereas contiguous, consecutive groups are defined by respect and restraint.
rectified. As such, the stance of some individuals towards one another might shift as misconceptions or assumptions about certain last names are rectified (e.g. “aŋ ko Camara? ðē moyỳāah hay seeda…” (“you’re a Camara, right? they’re no good at all”). While interactional renaming may seem like a trick of the moment, it actually appears to be more standard practice if one considers the broader practices of changing names in West Africa. These practices include situations when individuals change their names to escape bad spirits, or when patronymic correspondences provide for alternate names in different locations, or when different types of operative names become possible in different situations. At the conclusion of this chapter, I discuss the case of Bassari in Kedougou who, creatively adopting these different onomastic affordances in different situations, often adopt Muslim names alongside their age-set names and religious names.

The analytic of routine thus conceptualizes sanakuyaagal as learned strategies of posited correspondences or ratified connections that can succeed or fail in actual interaction rather than a list of static rules on how to play the game. In this sense, joking relationships exist within broader forms of teasing based on name play which often used poetic parallelisms to motivate indexical associations in interaction. Patronymic connections in the idiom of joking relationship routines thus provided one part of name play. The following interaction, for example, demonstrates an attempt to mobilize poetic and kinship connections in order to recast an individual’s identity. Calling someone a Diallo in this instance was not deploying a neutral term but rather wielding one richly infused with indexical associations linked to caste, ethnicity, origin, and even personality.

Figure 25 – Diallo to Diakhaby
from 2015_10_18_FN

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79 Indeed, naming can be submitted to the same critique as those views which view language as mere denotational practice—i.e., they are not just about picking objects (or people) out in the world but rather also, via strategies such as (mis)pronouncing or choosing alternative names, about indicating shared stances, knowledge, or interactional strategies of the moment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ablaye</td>
<td>he Diallo (speaking to Demba)</td>
<td>hey Diallo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>((pause))</td>
<td>((pause))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ablaye</td>
<td>wonaa Diakhaby de</td>
<td>it’s not Diakhaby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Demba</td>
<td>mij ko mi Cedɗo</td>
<td>me, I’m Mande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ablaye</td>
<td>debbo makko ko Diallo, no yaadi kaa</td>
<td>his wife is a Diallo, that fits right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this exchange, a young man (Ablaye) thus constructs an equivalency between the last names of his friend and his wife based on the shared sound [j] Diakhaby and Diallo. While it is indeterminate whether the interlocutors would consider this dialogue *sanakuyaagal* (I discussed this possibly ambiguous relationship between Pullo-Cedɗo in the previous chapter), the exchange nonetheless demonstrates an example of how interlocutors utilize affinity, propinquity, and poetics to reinterpret each other through practices of name play. While in this case Demba Diakhaby refuted this momentary attempt to tease him, these exchanges illustrate moments when individuals develop reflexive awareness and objectify momentary forms of group attribution. Such moments provide modes of objectification during which poetics and indexical grounds, connected in interaction, draw attention to particular forms of identification such as ethnicity.

*Sanakuyaagal* as a genre of patronymic name-play provided a model for other kinds of name-play involving last names. For instance, one day when I descended into the market town of Takkopellel from the Taabe plateau, the name Camara was on the lips of almost everyone in town. As I penetrated further into the center of town, I found it abuzz with tales of the recent idiocy of the Camaras. As I later learned, in the matter of just a few days, tragedy had befallen one Camara after the next. First, an elder Camara man had almost choked on a serving of corn meal and cow’s milk. Later, a yette Camara had climbed into a mango tree with a machete and fell, cutting himself all over his torso on his way down. As chance would have it, a third yette Camara had absconded with millions of Francs CFA from the local community-owned campement and promptly disappeared. All over town, it was open season on Camaras: “Ko
tapaleyagal tuŋ,” one man told me (“It’s just plain old incompetence.”) Stories proliferated not only about absent Camaras, but on occasion I heard my friend Hassana address a yette Camara and confront him about the folly of yimbe makko (his people).

Names could bleed into one another and be subject to their material proximity, affinity, and history of contact mediated through their bearers. Since wives commonly retained their own patronyms, these were—with enough interactional finesse—applied to their children or their husband in joking routines. Among the Bassari, for instance, an ambiguity between surnames passed through women as was traditionally the case, and increasingly through men as well, meaning that the Bassari could often employ bilateral principles of identification. In the village of Taabe, a neighbor of the village chief and close friend of Mamadou was married to a woman named Ba. While her infant, according to principles of patrilineality, assumed the patronym Diallo, neighbors often warned the family that the infant should not acquire too much of her mother’s “Ba-ness”. Similarly, my research assistant once tried to recruit a friend and journalist as a Pullo and native of the Bande, since his wife had a Pular last name and in view of his frequent trips to this region. Any kind of association or proximity might thus rub off, so to speak, and provide affordances for placing individuals. Ways in which contiguity and syntagmatic associations in naming disrupt referentialist-oriented ideologies parallels ways in which neighborliness and proximity disrupt simplistic notions of lineage and kinship.

Attuning to patronyms in ludic and poetic routines was thus not limited to just joking relationships but was combined and reinterpreted in interesting ways. Other genres of name play such as waccoode or “praise names” were commonly implemented as forms of praising (or teasing) in conversation. These were not quite as salient as joking relationships, and I most often heard them in a pedagogical frame when individuals would tell me about a name by which I was
called. For instance, “Diallo jalantaa bondo,” became a refrain launched my way by many on the hoore fello in light of my acquired name. The following is a partial list of other waccoode, compiled partly in conversations with Taabe residents and a research assistant.80

**Figure 26 – Patronymic Praise Names**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patronym</th>
<th>Praise Name</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>mo jalanta bondo</td>
<td>Who mocks the wicked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanté</td>
<td>baylo mo tafata njandi</td>
<td>The blacksmith who hammers iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>Pullo (jeeri)</td>
<td>Pullo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sow</td>
<td>mo yarata sippadan</td>
<td>He who drinks cow’s milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keita</td>
<td>mo dogata jemma</td>
<td>He who runs at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulibaly</td>
<td>lando funnaange</td>
<td>King of the East</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like joking relationships, patronymic name-play derived from social indexicalities, praise-naming, or first names was also used as verbal routines for relation-making. In Chapter Eight, for instance, I discuss the case of a naming ceremony in the village of Taabe that looks into tokoro or namesake relationships in more detail.

**Patronymic Equivalencies**

Not just referential tags, names were socially-saturated ways of calling and reference that could draw in or distance individuals by implementation of creative interpretations and poetic associations. Across West Africa, many patronyms were linked in webs of equivalencies such that certain patronyms were understood to be the same entity. Although this linking had consequences for the performance of sanakuyaagal, these equivalencies were not only deployed during such routines. In many cases equivalencies were motivated on the basis of a shared occupational niche, a perceived ethnic link, or poetic similarities between terms. This entextualized set of equivalencies meant that certain patronyms within and across ethnic groups

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80 During elicitations, many of my informants were unsure about the praise names of others and often went back and forth about which was which. The fact that there was often doubt about the nature of these praise names is itself interesting. It is likely that certain praise names are more commonly entextualized in other languages like Malinké, Jallunké, or Jaxanké.
could “count” as the same—for instance that Diallos from southern and eastern Senegalese Fulɓe and Kane or Ka from northern Senegal Fulɓe count as the same thing as Diallo in other parts. A group of Toucouleur vendors in the Kedougou market as a yette Diallo, once explained to me: “Ka et Diallo, fow ko gootuŋ,” (“Ka and Diallo are the same thing”). In the case of Guinea, southern Mande names often carried correspondences with northern Mande names (McGovern 2013). These added possibilities of making equations and drawing equivalences to the establishment of joking relationships, thereby demonstrating the impossibility of establishing any exhaustive list of joking partners.

Looking across the kinds of equivalencies made, one can begin to identify certain grounds commonly used to equate or to establish last names and occupations. These included blacksmith vs. farmer, powerful vs. powerless, religious dominator vs. dominated—grounds often drawn across ethnic and patronymic boundaries (Ndiaye 1993).

**Figure 27 – Analogic Equivalencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounds for Equivalence</th>
<th>Correspondences</th>
<th>Equivalencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>farmer ↔ blacksmith</td>
<td>“blacksmith patronyms” (e.g. Cissokho = Kanté)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play on Form (Poetic)</td>
<td>Ba ↔ Diallo</td>
<td>e.g. Ba = Barry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Muslim Fulɓe ↔ Converted, formerly animist populations</td>
<td>e.g. all formerly animist names in Kedougou converted by Fulɓe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Peul ↔ Kaado, “slave caste”</td>
<td>haabe “slave” patronyms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For instance, those blacksmithing patronyms are often used interchangeably for the purposes of joking relationships and are often set up against any name that could be associated with a farming background (refer to the Kanté – Diallo routine earlier in this chapter). Several Guinean Pular merchants in the downtown Kedougou markets saw their sanaku as those individuals whose ancestors had been converted by Fulani religious states in Guinea. The following map gives an idea of the possible correspondences that could be drawn across the social landscape of West Africa (Ndiaye 1993).
In this way, a distributed variability in understandings of joking relationships and equivalencies provided another aspect of the play in joking relationship talk (see Launay 2006). Certain patronymic dyads would be accepted across great distances with a large consensus. Names such as Diallo-Ba were enshrined in stories from the settlement of the Fouta Djallon, while correspondences between Kanté and Keita, for instance, were embedded in the conflict between Sumanguru Kanté and Sundjata Keita that figures in the Sundjata Epic (which relates the founding of the Empire of Mali). Some correspondences on the other hand appeared to have more narrow ranges or might only succeed over the course of a single interaction. With these caveats in mind, the following table provides a non-exhaustive sketch of some attested patronymic equivalencies in the region of Kedougou.
Just as joking correspondences could be interpreted in various idioms given the underdetermined nature of their connection (e.g. the assumption that sharing a patronym is like sharing a kinship tie), equivalencies across patronyms could be interpreted through various social grounds. In Takkopellel, the weekly market town in the lowlands of the Fouta Djallon, a blacksmith shop sat in the outskirts of the market area. The blacksmiths had historically made the hand scythes (wortowal) and hoes (keri) for the villagers on top of the mountain who were renowned fonio farmers. I met the blacksmiths at two different times, each time accompanied by hoore fello farmers who traditionally supplied grain in the market town of Takkopellel. The first time a farmer from the top of the mountain brought me over to meet the blacksmiths, the latter were presented to me as Cissokho. The second time I met them, however, they responded to the name Kanté. Curious about this discrepancy, I was told that Kanté and Cissokho were dendiraabe, cross-cousins\(^{81}\), and that they were the same thing (“Fow ko gootuŋ.”). This was significant not only because of the forms of equivalency that can be drawn between names, but also because of the frames of interpretation (here crossness) that are invoked to equate “analogous” relationships. Just like sharing the same name could be made to signify other forms of (kin-based) connection in the idiom of mussibe, equivalencies among patronyms in the game

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\(^{81}\) Many thanks to Mike McGovern for pointing out that blacksmith endogamy also provides an explanation to such equivalencies.
of joking relationships could be interpreted in various ways.

**Onomastic Bricolage Between Bassari and Pular Names**

In the following example, I show how poetic similarities drawn between names associated with different ethnic groups provided grounds for expanding joking relationship possibilities. Most patronyms common in southeastern Senegal—particularly those associated with Mande, Pular, Wolof, Serer, and Diola—were broadly understood to be implicated in systems of correspondences. However, individuals with patronyms which are at first glance not accounted for in this Sahelian joking chronotope were often able to build poetic connections into routines of *sanakuyaagal*. The Bassari,\(^{82}\) commonly identified as the indigenous inhabitants of Kedougou with whom incoming groups negotiated guest-host arrangements, did not ostensibly figure into *sanakuyaagal* correspondences and equivalencies that largely encompassed Sahelian populations. Primarily broad-spectrum hunters, gatherers, and seasonal horticulturalists, the “animist” Bassari were driven from what were once broad territories to the most inaccessible, defensible locations over the past several hundreds of years due to raiding and conflict with incoming Fulɓe populations. Today, Bassari and Bedik villages are located in the most mountainous parts of Kedougou. To this day, many Bassari and Fulɓe Fouta often admit an uneasiness that is the result of these tense histories of contact.

Nevertheless, alongside increased movement and contact among Bassari and other populations in southeastern Senegal, Bassari have constructed poetic links between their last names and Pular names based on formal parallelisms. Traditionally, Bassari names had been passed along along matrilineal lines, including Bijar, Boubane, Bindia, Biesse, and Biankesh. In

\(^{82}\) “Bassari” refer to themselves as Béliyan, and speak a variety, Oniyan, which is known to outsiders as Bassari. They are often (wrongly) associated with “Tenda,” or Bedik populations.
the region of Kedougou, this contrasted with a dominant logic of patrilineality in the area.

Employing poetic parallelisms, some of the most common Bassari names were linked to Pular names as joking partners. In the region of Kedougou, however, Boubane was widely considered to be the equivalent of Ba (Ba - Boubane), as explained to me by both Bassari and Fulɓe informants. Similarly, the common Bassari name Bindia was widely considered to be an equivalent of Diallo (Diallo - Bindia) based on the sharing of the sound [j] (often written in French orthography as “dia”). While at other times these connections might be denied, their potentiality means that Bassari in Kedougou can—with a bit of poetic finesse—selectively subthemselves into the game of joking cousin relationships.

**Figure 30 – Bassari-Peul Poetic Bridges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bassari Name</th>
<th>Pular Equivalent</th>
<th>Sound Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boubane</td>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>[ba]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bindia</td>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>[ja]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these two equivalencies were commonly cited, other less-common Bassari names did not figure as readily into the system of correspondences. Nevertheless, it was always striking to me the number of individuals—and in particular Bassari—that went by multiple last names. In some cases, offering multiple last names appeared to be the result of Bassari accommodating patrilineal norms in the region by offering a last name that was intelligible as a (patrilineal) *nom de famille* (in French), *yettore* (in Peul) or *jammu* (in Malinké).

The Bassari provide an example of populations who tended to have remained onomastically flexible, taking advantage of analogies and shifting practices to negotiate co-presence with neighbors. Indeed, while Bassari have historically passed names along matrilineas, increasingly Bassari of Kedougou identify surnames patrinely. Bassari of Kedougou, in fact, often entertained multiple names of address, including birth-order name (e.g. Tama), Catholic given names that connected them with the church and saints from the Bible (e.g. Barthelemy),
and separate initiation names. Some young Bassari men I met also went by Muslim names, a fact that I initially found confusing when I was getting to know the extended family and friends of my Kedougou neighbors. Considering the connections that names could afford to their adopters in interaction, it is not surprising that individuals would retain links to a number of possible patronyms and nicknames.83

The case of the Bassari demonstrates how social actors draw equivalencies not only through the construction of poetic bridges across names but also through bridges across genres and practices. For example, many Bassari envisioned their own classe d’âge system of license and respect akin to or indeed as part of sanakuyaagal. Among the Bassari, girls and boys are initiated and subsequently are entered into a classe d’âge ranging from one to six that defines their social roles and responsibilities for much of their adult lives.84 These classes d’âge correspond to six years, after which point one enters the next classe d’âge. One’s classe d’âge defines the kinds of activities one can engage in and provides a set of norms for engaging with individuals from other classes d’âge. One significant aspect of the system is that two classes d’âge separated by another classe are understood to have a system of mutual joking and license. In this way, ranks one and three, or four and six are understood to benefit from license with one another. This institution was also likened to broader social interaction between like-aged peers, understood as goreyaagal (interactions among like-aged individuals among the Pular). These examples further demonstrate, given the porosity of joking relationships, that they are a far cry

83 It is telling that even among those who had not previously heard about equivalencies between Bassari and Pular often immediately accepted their legitimacy based on poetic parallelisms. On one particular occasion, I asked Mamadou if he knew about the correspondences between Bassari and Pular names. He replied initially that he did not, but he was instantly convinced, remarking himself on the poetic parallels between Ba-Boubane and Diallo-Bindia. This episode hints at underlying strategies in which Kédoins interpret joking correspondences and partnerships not through a fixed “rulebook” of correspondences, but through principles of association that include poetic correspondences.
84 See (Gabail 2012) for a discussion of Bassari initiations. For more on Bassari in the region of Kedougou, refer to (Gessain 2003, 1979; Nolan 1977; N’Dong 2010).
from a stable and unitary system of joking practices. The case of Bassari equivalencies ultimately shows that the everyday acts of relation-making in a field of poetic and semantic play can, over the long term, lead to strongly entextualized principles of association.

Playing with form thus provided opportunities for making social connections through creative reinterpretation. Not only strategic repartees among interlocutors, poetic parallelisms and plays upon form appeared at times to motivate the exchanges. As part of routines, the quick exchange of greetings and first pair parts often held strong expectations of replies and verbal reciprocation. In this way, poetic parallelisms such as alliteration and assonance appeared as the agents of verbal exchange (see Mannheim and Vleet 1998). For instance, the charge “hida andi ko Jallo (or Diallo) jey aljenna,” (“you know that the Diallos own heaven”) often invited a rhyming repartee, “kono ko hombo naborata mo toŋ, ko Ba jey barki e baraaji,” (“but who will take him there, it is the Bas that know blessedness and benediction”). Similarly, joking relationship puns often transported insults in tight packages of form and meaning, like “Serer ko erreur” which draws on a Pular-Serer joking relationship. Indeed, to many I talked with, Diallo and Ba just sounded like they went together, and reference to one in certain situations elicited the other.85

Puns occupy an interesting place within linguistic analyses. Puns and plays upon form occupy the lowliest position, often “disdained” by speakers and eliciting sighs rather than laughter (Oring 2016). Within humor studies, puns in particular have been characterized as breaking the frame, or as “derailing the interaction in progress” (Norrick 2003). Yet conceiving of joking as a deviation from “normal” interaction takes for granted a directionality implied by a

85 Puns have the interesting characteristic of countering the substitutability of joking insults. For instance, “Soulay,” the song that was often used as a framework for teasing patronym or ethnic groups, proved itself to be so versatile because any social grouping could be inserted into the repetitive beat. Even origin stories or other tales told of joking cousins are often substitutable, in the sense that the butt of the joke could be told as one’s joking partner.
language ideology that prioritizes message as communication. In a Kedougou market, launching into a string of puns that play off of the patronym, Ba, wasn’t a deviation. One day as I approached market sellers in Kedougou’s downtown market, I began greeting a local chief from a surrounding village who had identified me as a joking partner: “Ba,” he called me, inverting the name by which he knew me, Diallo, in an act of inverting address. Hearing this, a yette Diallo standing nearby began to yell out: “ba, barrage, ba, baafal, ba, baasal, ba, bappa, ba, bani…bakatu, albalaw…banana.” (Ba, dam, Ba, door, Ba, poverty, Ba, uncle, Ba, sapling, Ba…) later following this exchange with a short prayer, “Yo Allah dandu eŋ ngal baafal.” (May God protect us from this door (i.e. yette Ba)).

_Sanakuyaagal and Affinity_

In the following example, I show ways in which _sanakuyaagal_ performances were interwoven in other forms of name play, drawing on understandings of affinity between certain patronyms. Rather than a sociological alliance, this interaction shows how _sanakuyaagal_ provided one generically organized routine of social recognition that emerged along with other performed principles of relationality such as affinity. _Sanakuyaagal_ routines were often embedded into greetings between hosts and guests and used to investigate the provenance of travelers approaching weekly market villages and similar contexts where peripatetic groups converged. In the village of Taabe, a village of 300 individuals just south of Kedougou City in the foothills of the Fouta Djallon mountains, _sanakuyaagal_ routines offered interactional frames for articulating hospitality in the welcoming of guests. Like many of its neighboring villages on top of the plateau, Taabe has historically been a zone where populations sought refuge at the interstices of secular and religious states.
The dominant patronym in Taabe was Diallo, a people who considered themselves owners of the land and who traced back their lineage to original founders earlier in the twentieth-century. During my stay in the village, there was one woman who bore the patronym Ba and who lived just down the road from the village chief. She was born in a town a day’s walk away, further into the Guinean range of the Fouta Djallon mountains. When men from the village walked by, they would often call out to her that she was an interloper and would threaten to change her name to Diallo.

When things went wrong, the Bas were often blamed as quintessential scapegoats. Quick comments about Bas could be detected in the mutterings and murmurings after everyday spills and mistakes: “yette Ba ko be boni koŋ” (“Bas are the worst”). When children, or even adults, made absent minded mistakes like reaching for two spoons at the same time during dinner, or wearing shorts inside out, villagers would often invoke the figure of Bas as a potential witness, exclaiming what they might do if they were present (“If a Ba were here to see you…”). Residents often remarked that it was good that there wasn’t a Ba around to witness these blunders. Invoked in this way, Bas constituted imagined witnesses and interlocutors who offered relational foils for conceptualizing excuses and articulating norms. They provided imagined interlocutors through which residents could voice desires or articulate responsibilities to children. In this way, sanakuyaagal talk was not dependent solely on the presence of one’s joking partners, but rather offered a framework for constructing relations among imagined interlocutors.

To visit Taabe and the plateau villages as a Ba was to be surrounded by one’s sanakus and to inhabit a marked category that required a constant cultivation of verbal repartees. But it was in many ways a position of honor. To be revealed as a Ba was to be put on stage as someone whose interaction as performance was more highly scrutinized. For instance, when I first arrived in the
village of Taabe many years ago with several other companions, we climbed up the steep
mountain path to the entry of the village where we met a man looking after cattle. After a quick
greeting, he asked for our last names. The affect of our interlocutor changed instantly as one of
my travel companions admitted that her last name was Balde, which was often considered an
equivalence of Ba: “Yee aŋ ko Ba, mi hummay maa jooni,” I remember hearing, as the man
built upon a correspondence between his name Diallo. (“Whoa you’re a Ba, I’m going to tie you
up here [with the cows]”). While Barry was a patronym more common to the region of the
Fuladu west of where we were, the Taabe local interpreted this into local terms, making an
equivalence between Ba and Barry.

The following example shows how sanakuyaagal routines provided idioms for recognizing
others in the context of hospitality among mobile populations within a region undergoing social
and economic change. In this example, stances emerge in relation to other principles of
association like affinity. Not merely a formulaic entextualization of a set map of
correspondences, these routines constituted an emerging site of social typification and discovery.
In the village of Taabe, many adults had spent time away during periods of cyclical migration
before eventually settling back down in the village. In so doing, they had encountered and built
relationships with individuals from all across Senegal and West Africa. Traveling to Dakar,
Guinea, and Mali was common, particularly for men in what might be considered the more
secluded villages in the northern reaches of the Fouta Djallon. For instance, the village chief had
worked as a baker in Western Mali where he had made the acquaintance of a man from a nearby
region who went by the last name Ba. Taabe’s chief was delighted to tell me that Ba would be
spending a few weeks with us as a guest for several weeks. Ba was a consummate traveler who
had business interests and family all across Mali, Senegal, and Guinea. An avid storyteller, he
regaled us with perilous tales from the gold mines and with stories from their time together in Mali. Bearing the last name of Ba situated the village chief’s friend as a prime target for teasing. Hearing of a Ba in their midst, many villagers visited him on his first day, and joking relationship routines often dominated these first meetings.

As a routine that could draw emphasis upon one’s interactional responsibilities to attend to interlocutors under the function of phaticity, joking relationship talk could be deployed in interaction to maintain and renew a channel of contact between interlocutors. Viewed in this way, language is not merely a system of reference for picking out things in the world but also a strategy for performing other functions such as maintaining channels of contact and of conversation. In this way, these routines could offer a resource for rekindling contact with interlocutors after conversations had lulled. In the following interaction Taabe’s Chief (Chief), and another Taabe elder (Diallo), both bearing the patronym Diallo, sit with Souaré (Souaré), another household head from a nearby hamlet, and with Chief’s dear friend, Alpha Ba (Ba).

After several minutes of listening to Arabic prayers together, Taabe’s village chief breaks the silence and exclaims “elder witch!” (mawɗo ñanne) in a deep voice. He soon continues, exclaiming “They fly around at night!” on line 15 (“kanɓe ɓe wiiray jemma de”). He and another local elder lay down charges of witchcraft upon Bas, until Souaré, an elder from a nearby village, comes to Ba’s defense on line 27, exclaiming “Hold on now…Bas are our in-laws.” This charge of “witch” was, in most cases, quite a serious one. Even as standing in a sanaku relation with someone might invite such comments, sanakuyaagal provided one possible way to diffuse or soak up possible negative valences.

Figure 31 – “The Souarés Are Our In-Laws”
from 2015_01_15_AN01
Chief: elder male, village chief of Taabe
Diallo: elder male, Taabe resident
Souaré: elder male, junior in-law to Chief, lives in nearby hamlet
Important to note from the outset is the fact that Bas as a collective group do not constitute any stable in-law group with respect to Diallos or indeed the Souarés. This is to say that Ba, Diallo, or Souaré, like any other common patronym, does not share a sense of clan-based affinity as a marriage group in general. This under-determination, however, opens the possibility for locally salient, contextually-specific relationships to be woven into joking correspondences. In this way, sanakuyaagal routines present one possible idiom of social identification that could be interwoven with other idioms of affinity, kinship, neighborliness, or even universality in the name of religion.

As broadly shared routines for social play, teasing Ba by launching charges of witchcraft
initiates a frame for other participants to enter into this performance. On line 27, Souaré enters the fray and identifies Bas as his *esiraabe*, respected elder-in-laws who are owed deference and respect. He draws on this fact to justify his defense of them in the context of an invoked joking correspondence between Diallo and Ba. Echoing Souaré’s typification on lines 28 and 33, Alpha Ba soon from his perspective confirms this affinal relationship as a symmetrical one, exclaiming “us and the Souaréeɓe, they are our in-laws”. By drawing the focus away from the Ba-Diallo axis, Souaré invokes a joking relationship between Souaré, his own patronym, and Camaras. This move ends up providing a kind of resolution, since no Camaras are present to contest their tongue-in-cheek belittlement.

Rather than automatically falling into position along the axes of joking correspondences as structural operators, this example shows how relationships are constructed in relation to other social idioms like in-lawship and are invoked and redefined in interaction. As in the previous example, these kinds of calculations provide mechanisms for constituting and imagining social groups, in this case by translating individuals into members of a type or larger group (i.e., Souarés as collective in-laws). This scenario demonstrates that joking relationship routines do not merely entail pre-established groups with fixed alignments, but rather that individuals are able to constitute relevant groups and levels of analysis over the course of conversations (in this case Bas as an in-law group). Rather than closed encounters between speakers and hearers, teasing routines provide initial interactional matrices that overhearers can themselves break into and transform. Viewed in this way, processes of typification (e.g. the Souarés as in-laws) stand as an interactional achievement rather than a fixed set of alignments.

My interactional analyses of joking relationships from the markets and common areas of the Kedougou market and from a rural village that sits in articulation with it demonstrate that it is
precarious to definitively define the nature of joking relationships—to say that they are about affinity, cross-cousinship, or rootedness in any particular historical dynamics. In fact, rather than displaying a kind of rigidity that co-defined structural relationships, the kind of link that joking relationships were understood to represent was variable. The fact that the nature of this relationship was underdetermined meant that joking relationships were inclined to carry a multitude of meanings, including kinship (mussiɓe), groups aligned through affinal relations (esiraɓe), domination in the idiom of religion, domination in the idiom of caste relationships, and relationships of patronage. This kind of flexibility was extremely productive in contexts when joking relationships were established between groups such as patronyms and did not share any corporate identity; i.e. yettaɓe Ba and yettaɓe Diallo, who do not necessarily stand in any relationship outside of their existence as joking partners.

Conclusion

While sanakuyaagal as joking relationships do provide an initial paradigm, any predictions of interactional stances solely upon their supposed joking partnerships and correspondences would be to reify joking correspondences as social structure. In this sense, Gluckman’s early work on thinking through cross-cutting relationships provided a constructive groundwork. As the above example “mawɗo ɓanne” showed, principles of in-law-hood can be layered upon expectations of how one might engage with one’s “joking” cousins. Clearly, participants do not have one-dimensional relationships, and speakers draw on and motivate overlapping understandings of relative position. One thing these strategies have in common is to not deny outright the existence of a connection, but rather to lean on other guiding principles, or even to invoke other strategic alignments. This is why, although initially interested by joking cousin
relationships, I found that I needed to analyze them alongside a range of other conversational routines and genres through which West Africans were constructing social relations. Genre, as suggested by Bauman and Briggs, is thus not a form of categorization but rather a perspective on how and in what ways speakers combine bits and pieces of enregistered talk in interaction (Briggs and Bauman 1992). Having introduced routines of joking relationships, I will in the following chapters build upon this analysis to examine related linguistic practices of social identification in the region of Kedougou. I will show how they provide resources for increasingly mobile residents to mediate relations across linked sites, and to place and recognize one another in new ways.
CHAPTER FIVE

Honorification, (Dis)respect and the Pursuit of Relations in the Foothills of the Fouta Djallon Mountains

Introduction

Much of this dissertation has focused on what genres of performance often understood in the frame of the ludic—license, teasing, or joking which I reframe as verbal creativity or name play. This chapter examines routines of social interaction through which Kédovins negotiate relationships across rural and urban spaces to argue that these routines are to be examined in the same frame as performances invoking notions of honor, deference, or respect. Using the construction of in-law relations (esirayaagal), jokkere enday (the pursuit of relations), and honorific registers as focal points, this chapter explores broader verbal and spatial routines that interlocutors used for managing social ties across the region of Kedougou in the context of increasingly dispersed networks.

To narrowly study only either “license” and “joking” would be to ignore competing strategies as a background against which contrasting approaches are rendered legible. License and respect are negotiated upon normative relationships as kin or affines, but they are also emergent parts of broader strategies whereby individuals attempted to bring others into their social fabric. In so doing, I view the cultivation of such (categorical) relationships through the management of deference and honorifics as a form of labor. Both honorification and teasing, in this way, constitute twin processes that mediate expectations for contact and verbal reciprocity with in a world of others. Note the encounter between Kanté, the master blacksmith, and
Mamadou, the Peul, when sanaku teasing between the two was immediately followed by Mamadou’s utterance of honorific pronouns (ɓe) in reference to Kanté moments later. “…Ko ɓe vrai bayloojo. Mi jalu haa mi ronki,” (“they [hon.] are a real blacksmith, I laughed until it hurt,”) Mamadou had said about his sanaku.

This chapter responds to previous work on kinship and affinity that has tended to focus on kinship vocabularies as formulating systems of relations among individuals, which as noted by Ball have “tended to take language…as an empty vessel that merely reflects preexisting social relations.” (Ball 2018). The encounters that I present in this chapter—construing age mates as your in-laws, managing of marriage between distant kin separated in time and space, and attempting to intertwine others into your lives through the performance of honorifics—all demonstrate ways in which residents have adapted existing idioms to deal with the social consequences of mobility, economic change, and connectivity.

In what follows, I show how the cultivation of in-law relations and the deployment of joking relations exist as one part of a broader concern with jokkere endaj, (“the pursuit of relations”), a central concept through which my interlocutors conceived of building out social relations with in-laws, kin, and neighbors. Jokkere endaj entails not merely the narrow showing of deference and respect to other, but balancing forms of license taking, teasing, and honorification to build out social networks. The linguistic resources I describe in this chapter—honorific deference, investing in social relations through jokkere endaj, and building joking relations—present forms of achieved social labor rather than automatic categorical relations. Not narrowly a question of kinship, jokkere endaj encompasses social investment more broadly, including affinal relations, master-apprentice relationships, and friendship in a wider sense and that is performed through routines of greeting, visitation, gift reciprocity, and attendance at
lifecycle and religious holidays. It is through routines of honorification and teasing that these relationships were built and maintained.

As I had previously detailed, affinity as a liminal state between two allied kin groups has provided a significant locus for earlier studies of previous joking relationships. Radcliffe-Brown viewed joking as relieving a tension between conjunction and disjunction (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 1949), while other scholars have similarly viewed affinity as the broader organizing principle upon which joking relationships are grounded (Freedman 1977). Along with joking relationships established between patronyms and ethnic groups and between generations (tanagaol), a distinction between senior in-law- (esiraabe) and junior in-law-ship (keyniraabe) provides a major axis along which individuals established reciprocal responsibilities for respect and license. Spanning both rural villages and Kedougou City, in-law relationships were a highly productive relational idiom. This research has found joking routines to be in fact part of broader patterns of praising and teasing through which people shaped social relations and thereby were able to place each other as kin, neighbors, and affines.

As noted in an analogous context by Rupert Stasch, while the analysis of joking relationships has gained attention, any notion of “avoidance relationships” as relationships of deference have not been as widely scrutinized (Stasch 2002). Viewed in this way, avoidance is another form of relation making. Indeed, while the relationship between esiraabe, senior affines in many cases presents a classic avoidance case, this avoidance nonetheless entailed a great amount of relational work through which these relationships were established, contested, and reformulated. Alongside “joking” frames, negotiating relations of deference and honor and the manipulation of honorific vocabularies were central resources through which individuals placed kin and in-laws. In examining the dialogic negotiation of affinity and categorical relation, I show
that interactional perspectives are consequential for how individuals place one another as kin, affines, or neighbors.

In this chapter, I examine how forms of purporting in-law relations depend upon forms of symmetry in address; how the poetics of particular terms offered resources for interlocutors to eschew relationships; and how the negotiation of affinity often was instigated and arbitrated in dialogic encounters where third parties could be key resources. I begin with a case study investigating the negotiation of in-law status between a resident of the village of Taabe and a returning migrant who had spent many years in Spain. While much scholarship has focused on in-law avoidance and respect (Stasch 2002, 2009; Irvine and Gal 2000; J. Haviland 1979; Fleming 2015; Heald 1990), I found that norms for in-law respect were often contested, and distinctions among senior and junior in-law used to entail particular relational axes. In this way, Kédovins frequently played with the contours and responsibilities of in-law relationships and used them as an idiom to navigate around other relationships in social interactions. Previous approaches have noted that the ability to usefully deploy kinship language is predicated upon certain established norms of use (Agha 2007; Ball 2018). I thus begin with a brief sketch of lexical honorifics particular to Pulafuuta, which was used as an effective means for performing deference (or indeed mocking it).

Esirayaagal

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86 Recognizing that relations are negotiated through contingent, material encounters offers evidence of the same reasons for which Levi-Strauss’ had to shift his emphasis from kinship systems as an enactment of deep symbolic thinking to the realm of the mythical, since systems of kinship and affinity were too affected by the contingency of everyday social action (Kuper 1973; Lévi-Strauss 1969a, 1969b). Indeed the same observations can be levelled at the work of myth, since a telling is never apolitical, but often consequential as a form of everyday social action through which interlocutors assign blame, prove expertise, or evaluate identities (Goodwin 1993; Basso 1988; Bauman and Sherzer 1989).
The term esiraabe, can be roughly defined as a status of senior in-law between in-law groups known in a corporate sense as fuuttuɓe. While the father of one’s spouse provided the prototypical case of esiraabe, the role was defined in terms of relative seniority which fell to the senior individuals in the wife or husband’s family. This relationship was highly salient and invoked in many face-to-face encounters across the region of Keduguou. I found that rather than shutting down joking and license, the establishment of who was esiraabe to whom was extremely productive of interactions between men and women of varying ages across rural and urban settings. In one sense, this was an entailment of affinity as an avoidance relationship. In Taabe, for instance, the axis of affinity also cut across the generation of grandparents, effectively dividing one’s seniors into those with whom one joked around (tanagol), often referred to as (goro, pati, or mama), and those elders linked through affinity (esiraabe).

Esiraabe as affinity was often employed as a way to propose a certain relational frame that pointed towards future exchanges, and not merely in the realm of marriage. However, the idiom of esiraabe was employed productively as a form of flirtation or playing upon past romantic encounters. Despite statements about the heaviness and consequentiality of esiraabe relationships (and indeed perhaps because of this), I found that they thus provided a productive idiom of play through which individuals often contested and evaluated responsibilities towards each other. These were often tested during the course of interaction which often drew on the ambiguities that existed at the level of what many called la famille élastique (the elastic

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87 Fuuttuɓe (generic putu), refers to in-laws in a group-level sense. For instance, during a naming ceremony, individuals wait for the fuuttuɓe to arrive, the corporate group of in-laws. While esiraabe is sometimes used in this general sense, it is more commonly contrasted with keyniraabe, and as such constitutes a more limited class of what I refer to as senior in-laws (e.g. father and mother of the bride). For more on fuuttuɓe, the next chapter offers an analysis of the distributed social action during a naming ritual which provides an encounter between affinal groups.

88 Esiraabe as a form of play also entailed routines of aspirational marriage joking among young adults, adults in general, and among young children. For instance, a common practice surrounding newborns and naming ceremonies was to bring a dongal ledde to the house of a young child’s mother, an act taken as a sign of one’s interest as a suitable match. This often turned into a running joke between elder men, a way in which they could imagine and propose possible family alliances. Taabe’s village chief often led a joke which coursed among his friends about who would be able to wed his grandchild.
family)—dynamic structures in which propinquity and kinship are often blurred in such a way that it allowed for the flexible cultivation of familial networks.

Although categorical relationship did guide expectations and norms for comportment (senior in-law, junior in-law, guest, etc.), routines of joking and deference provided resources through which individuals could shape responsibilities towards one another. Asif Agha’s analysis of kinship behavior, for instance, views address terms and the talk of categorical kinship as resources that interlocutors may use to productively embed “kinship” associations and principles into social interaction (Agha 2007). Through performative displays of verbal creativity, contesting esiraabe relationships provided a modality through which interlocutors placed each other within ritual contexts, gauged responsibilities for redistribution and gifts, or evaluated peers amid cyclical migrations. The exact contours of esiraabe relationships were first sketched and then evaluated in such social encounters. However, these negotiations were not always individual encounters but often part of marriage ceremonies which could offer the cover of ambiguity as to respective positions since individuals might position themselves either as in-laws or alternatively as “blood relations” (mussibe).

While some individuals linked through marriage cultivated respectful demeanors, others maximized possibilities for license and joking by insisting on junior in-law relationships. Cultivating ties of affinity encompassed an investment in visitations, greetings, and displays of deference over a long term, but yielded the dividends of an important social network for farmers who needed access to labor at critical points in the fonio harvest and to important farming technologies at specific points in time. However, binding oneself as a deference-paying in-law could also diminish one’s verbal toolbox for dealing with requests for assistance, for enforcing payments, and could also limit one’s ability to recruit labor through monetary means.
Paying deference towards one’s esiraabe (senior in-laws) provided the most significant interational domain in which individuals employed and evaluated honorific vocabularies.\(^89\) If the prototypical case of esiraabe was the father and mother of one’s spouse, elder kin of one’s in-laws were similarly considered esiraabe.\(^90\) However, the relation of esiraabe as senior in-law stood in a significant contrast with keyniraabe, junior in-laws, those younger than one’s spouse with whom one could joke around (awmondirgol). Among affines, those older than the spouse were normatively considered esiraabe, individuals to be respected by younger members of the groom’s family. Based on this logic, it is possible to be younger than the individuals who might call you esiraabe. Among such in-laws, one could therefore cultivate keys of license with one’s junior in-laws and engage in teasing and playful banter with them, while using deference indexicals with one’s senior in-laws. While these distinctions appeared clear in principle, in practice they were the subject of much debate and negotiation.

This distinction between senior and junior in-laws figures in Radcliffe-Brown’s early essay that formulated a comparative theory of joking relationships, “On Joking Relationships,”

The discrimination within the wife's family between those who have to be treated with extreme respect and those with whom it is a duty to be disrespectful is made on the basis of generation and sometimes of seniority within the generation. The usual respected relatives are those of the first ascending generation, the wife's mother and her sisters, the wife's father and his brothers, sometimes the wife's mother's brother. The joking relatives are those of a person's own generation; but very frequently a distinction of seniority within the generation is made; a wife's older sister or brother may be respected while those younger will be teased. (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 198).

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\(^89\) Terminology includes esiraawo (sg.) esiraabe (pl.) esiraawoyaagal ngal: in-law talk or practice. Although occasionally used in the singular, the term in the plural esiraabe was the unmarked form, which was formed by the honorific pronominal -be. As such, esiraawo, was often used by those who know each other very well or who were close in age. Along with the deployment of lexical honorifics, avoidance and deference were performed through co-textual avoidance of gaze and lowering of posture, and in participant frameworks through holding back in conversation.

\(^90\) This could be witnessed, for instance, after the passing of parents of the spouse, at which point the elder members of one’s in-law’s lineage became senior.
Radcliffe-Brown thus leaves us with a useful paradigm that is continuously transformed and adapted by interlocutors. With the exception of clear cases such as father and mother of one’s spouse, the status of in-law relationship as junior/senior was often tested and redefined. In this way, teasing, baiting, and forms of address were not merely performance of in-law relationships, but themselves used to define and navigate respective relationships sometimes in a state of flux.

**Negotiating Affinity During a Migrant’s Return Trip**

With the periodic arrival of extended kin working abroad, in-law contestations provided an arena for evaluating mutual responsibilities and status. In the following example, I examine the uneasy negotiation of in-law status between two young men from the hoore fello plateau. Contesting in-law relations was one way of measuring responsibilities and relative status particularly in the context of cyclical migrations of working youth. The following interaction touches on several ongoing issues of importance. Firstly, shows how individuals may be thrust into relational frames by other co-participants and not of their own doing. Here Saliou, for instance, offers the observation that Ousmane is Rune’s esiraawo, a charge refuted by Rune that animates the remainder of the encounter. In this way, this interaction can be seen as a way in which interlocutors contest relational frames that are thrust upon them. Refusing this honorific routine requires a careful management of present participants to succeed and entails the management of footing, eye gaze, and the strategic employment of pronouns. Having exhausted all options at the end in the defense of his affinal seniority, Ousmane ultimately is able to abandon the debate altogether by establishing the addressivity of an overhearer and changing the topic.
Linguistic anthropology has contributed to the study of kinship (or more broadly as kinship behavior) by viewing kinship behaviors more broadly as a reflexive mode of metapragmatics through which interlocutors typify, articulate norms, and reflect upon social life (Agha 2007; Ball 2018). Scholarship by Nakassis, for example, has demonstrated that urban, upper-class Tamil youth deploy cross-kin terminology not primarily in the idiom of marriage, but as a way to manage in-group relations (Nakassis 2014). In the following episode, I likewise point out that not only urban settings should be viewed as the site of innovation, but that esiraabe as idiom is transformed (and indeed contested in this case) and need not be viewed as an urban, modern adaptation of a rural, traditional social domain.

Drawing on a recording of seven young men (including myself) having mid-morning tea under a shade structure in the village of Taabe on the Guinea border, this interaction depicts how Rune, Mamadou’s younger brother, and Ousmane, a migrant returning from Spain, negotiate a purported in-law (esiraabe) relationship. Before Rune and Ousmane's interactions were dominated by the negotiation of their respective in-law status, they had addressed each other directly, narrating together things they might do together. Here the stakes were low as they sketched out what a motorcycle trip to a neighboring village together might look like. In the following segment, they employed the second person familiar form, a, and the inclusive third person plural, en. In a show of involvement on lines 32 and 33, Ousmane shifted his right foot forward and oriented his entire body more towards Rune. As childhood friends and mussibe from a tightly knit region, this brand of collaborative joking could have defined the interaction. Instead, the negotiation of their in-law status became tense and oftentimes awkward, vacillating between indirect digs addressed through third parties, and direct, targeted antagonism.

Figure 32 – Imagining Travels
from 2015_09_23_AN03 and 2015_09_23_VNE
Ous (Ousmane): mid 30s man living in Spain, from a village neighboring Taabe
Rune: early 30s male, nephew of Taabe village chief living in Taabe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[si mi arti noŋ (0.6)]</td>
<td>If I come back then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>si a artii (1.0) ((sniff))</td>
<td>If you come back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>a (.) yëttay mille francs</td>
<td>You’ll take a thousand francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>jonna Gigol wadeŋ essence</td>
<td>Give it to Gigol and we’ll get some gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>mi deposay maa [Nandoumarie]</td>
<td>I’ll drop you off in Nandoumarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[ee ee jaka eŋ hootay Nandoumarie]</td>
<td>Eee well then we’ll return home to Nandoumarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>haray noŋ a jaaraama mawɗo=</td>
<td>In that case then thanks brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>=mi deposay maa Nandou[marie]</td>
<td>I’ll drop you off in Nandoumarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[haray a wadî ko moyî]</td>
<td>Then you will have done me a solid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By exploiting indirect addressivity and by actively recruiting co-participants as addressees, Rune (in the back right) succeeds in talking about Ousmane (in the front left) in the third person rather than to him throughout much of the interaction. This framework allows Rune to voice his charges against Ousmane, while positioning the latter as a non-ratified participant. This strategy is effective not only because it potentially recruits other addressees to his side, but also because it renders refutation difficult for Ousmane since he is not addressed directly. The question of in-law status was first raised by Saliou Baylo (front right) on line 52, at which point Ousmane and Rune were already in a state of light-hearted contention over who might front up gas money for their motorcycle trip. Uttering "ah he's your in-law too man," Saliou Baylo's instigation defines much of remaining interaction by placing Ousmane and Rune at odds. Not just a dyadic affair, however, once the terms of this interaction were set, all other co-present
participants provide potential resources through which Rune and Ousmane voice their positions, eschew challenges, and garner support.

Rune actively attempts to recruit other addressees as a way to talk about Ousmane and position him as a non-participant. In the following segment, Rune deploys multimodally incongruent addressivity, shifting quickly from a direct metapragmatic critique to a claim in the third person. Separated only by Ousmane's indistinct muttering, Rune begins by saying, "Don't disrespect me," (line 109), following it closely by a statement about him, "I am his in-law".

Consistent with his claims of being senior in-law, Ousmane uses no lexical honorifics or forms of address and employs the third person familiar-singular o, kanko, mo. This shift to the third person on line 111 is accompanied by large amplitude head movements from one corner of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
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<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Sal</td>
<td>ah- te ko esiraawo ma nii kadi goy</td>
<td>Ah he’s your in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>mi haali- s-mi haali- mi ha-</td>
<td>I- I- spoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>oo ko min okki mo debbo</td>
<td>Him I’m the one who gave him a wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>ko kanko foti laŋ respektude</td>
<td>He’s the one who should respect me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>wonaa miŋ fotti mo respektude</td>
<td>I’m not the one who should respect him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>oo miŋ ko mi esiraawo makko</td>
<td>This guy I’m his-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>onoŋ fow ko mi esiraawo moŋ</td>
<td>I’m all y’all’s in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>-ta yawo laŋ</td>
<td>Don’t disrespect me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>si mi naɓi mo kaa moto (.)</td>
<td>If I take him by motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>tsch mi yahanay bandiraawo anŋ [mi artiray mo</td>
<td>Psh I will go get my little sister and bring her back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>[miŋ a yi'ii doo</td>
<td>Me you see here here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>o anday ko- ko- [ko- ko- ko- band-</td>
<td>He will remember that that that my sis-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>[mi ukkitotaako doo [heh</td>
<td>I'm not getting involved here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[ahaaah</td>
<td>Ahaah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>ko bandiraawo anŋ o wadî mo [responsable</td>
<td>that my sister is his responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96.</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>[milan yoyi seeeda</td>
<td>I'm too smart for that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>miŋ mi ukkitotaako doo=</td>
<td>I'm not getting involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>=andi si jom galeeji Nandoumarie</td>
<td>You know if you count up all of the family heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>si no kontee o kontete (0.3)</td>
<td>If they are being counted he will be among them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>=miŋ=</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>=mais ko bandiraawo anŋ o wadî mo [mo- wadî mo responsable</td>
<td>But it is my sister that he is responsible for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
shade structure to the other as Rune scans for a potential addressee. Unfortunately for Rune, all participants display a slouched posture and many turn their heads away as they are unwilling to take up his attempts to gain addressivity. Indeed, Rune's subsequent utterance on line 115 confirms his frustration as his pool of addressivity dries up: "none of you all speak the truth."

**Figure 34 - Looking Away**

<table>
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<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>[wota yawo laŋ]</td>
<td>Don't disrespect me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>((unintelligible))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>ko mi esiraawo makko nii (0.7)</td>
<td>I'm his in-law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ousmane and Rune navigate a delicate balance of chummy, joking digs between like-aged friends and a potential in-law relationship normatively characterized by avoidance.

Although Rune manages to talk about Ousmane rather than to him for much of the interaction, they do slip in and out of direct antagonism in the form of symmetrical deployment of second person pronouns, over-lapping or latched speech, and in the form of the repetition of metapragmatic charges. For example, Rune cuts down Ousmane’s comebacks by repeatedly talking-over him, thereby limiting his ability to respond or refute claims. In the following three segments, this strategy can be seen as Rune's speech overlaps with all or most of Ousmane's attempted turn at talk, attempts which result in halted, or disfluent speech.

**Figure 35 - Overlapping**

*Where [ refers to overlap in the speech of two subsequent turns-at-talk*

<table>
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<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>wota [ya- ( )</td>
<td>Don't dis-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While Ousmane mitigates direct challenges through averted gaze and endearment terms, both employ a strategy of other-addressee recruitment. One form of direct engagement is the frequent repetition of a metapragmatic critique, "wata yawo laŋ" (Don't disrespect me) on lines 59, 76, 77, 79, 81, 109. Ousmane's use of this phrase, however, is often accompanied by mitigation strategies. Firstly, Ousmane adds to this stock phrase endearment terms such as mawɗo (elder) as well as Rune's name. Secondly, Ousmane practices gaze avoidance, which appears to allay this direct metapragmatic accusation. As Ousmane mutters, "Don't disrespect me Rune" on line 76, he gazes away, and turns his head to the right.

Figure 36 – “Don’t Disrespect Me”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>°ah° (0.1)</td>
<td>Ah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Sali alaa too Rugiatou alaa too =</td>
<td>What about Sali what about Rugiatou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>= wata yawo *laŋ woni Rune (0.1)</td>
<td>Don't disrespect me Rune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>mawɗo wata yawo laŋ (.)</td>
<td>Brother don't disrespect me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>hakkundeŋ Allah</td>
<td>Good Lord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Rune predominantly employs strategies of third-party recruitment to practice indirect addressivity and to launch digs, Ousmane generally recruits addressees to escape
awkward, direct challenges from Rune. The tensest moment of direct exchange occurs after Ousmane asks Rune a first pair part question on the purported grounds of their in-law relationship. Scholarship in conversation analysis (CA) indicates that such questions often demonstrate a compulsive power to respond. That is, even beyond any preference for positive responses, a non-answer is highly marked and often demands interactional remediation. After Ousmane explicitly probes the grounds of their in-law relationship as an unambiguous first pair part question (line 66), Rune responds by listing the relatives that his family unit (*mussibe*) transferred to Ousmane's. Furthermore, Rune scathingly narrates an example of appropriate in-law behavior in no ambiguous terms (line 83-84). Rather than responding directly to Rune, Ousmane employs a strategy of single addressee recruitment that deflects any responsibility to respond. Scratching his forehead with his right hand, Ousmane points to me and says in a marked mixture of Wolof and Pular, "you only know..." (line 85). Saliou Baylo confirms this rising tension by muttering "he should take it easy" on line 88.

**Figure 37 – “How Are We In-Laws?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>k'o honto eyrirdeŋ</td>
<td>How are we in-laws?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>na:</td>
<td>Wha:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>hen (0.4)</td>
<td>Huh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>mi okka- mo bandiraowo aŋ (0.1)</td>
<td>I give him my sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>hombo (0.3)</td>
<td>Who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Safi</td>
<td>Sali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Sal</td>
<td>[hhehehe (0.2)</td>
<td>Hahaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>“ah” (0.1)</td>
<td>Ah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Sali alaa too Rugiatou alaa too =</td>
<td>What about Sali what about Rugiatou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>= wata yawo *laŋ woni Rune (0.1)</td>
<td>Don't disrespect me Rune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>mawɗo wata yawo laŋ (.)</td>
<td>Brother don't disrespect me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>hakkundeŋ Allah</td>
<td>Good Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>wota [ya-(unintelligible)</td>
<td>Don't dis-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>[miŋ ko mi esiraawo maa (0.1)</td>
<td>I'm your in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>wota yawo laŋ (.) accu</td>
<td>Don't disrespect me, stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>a faw-[</td>
<td>You sh-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>[a fotuno bortude pade den hiwroɗaa laŋ</td>
<td>You should have taken off your shoes when you greet me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>hida ara de haddiira mi pade den miŋ kadi takka [ɗoŋ (0.3)</td>
<td>As you're coming untie my shoes to and put them next to them there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[he: he he (-da) andi rekk (.) hen (0.2)</td>
<td>Haha- only know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The previous segment furthermore demonstrates how Rune and Ousmane compete over addressee recruitment. Indeed, after Ousmane identifies me as an addressee, Rune hijacks my addressivity only to voice additional arguments against Ousmane in third person (lines 89-101). Rune manages this competitive recruitment through a dense cluster of multi-modal signs; saying my local name (Souleymane), he orients his torso to the left, turns his head to me, and performs a metaphoric clutching gesture as if to draw me in. Wary of my own stance taking, I explicitly denounce partiality in this encounter (lines 93, 96, 97).

**Figure 38 – Hijacking Addressivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>non (0.3)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Souleymane ptsch=</td>
<td>Souleymane psh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Sal</td>
<td>=yo o yah doy</td>
<td>He should take it easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>si mi nabi mo kaa moto (.)</td>
<td>If I take him by motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>tsch mi yahanay bandiraawo aŋ [mi artiray mo</td>
<td>Psh I will go get my little sister and bring her back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>[miŋ a yi'ii dóó dóó</td>
<td>Me you see here here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>o anday ko- ko- [ko- ko- ko- band-</td>
<td>He will remember that that my sis-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>[mi ukkitotaako dóó [heh</td>
<td>I'm not getting involved here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[ahaaah</td>
<td>Ahaaah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>ko bandiraawo aŋ o wadí mo [responsable</td>
<td>that my sister is his responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>[miṭnant yóóyí seeda</td>
<td>I'm too clever for that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>miŋ mi ukkitotaako dóó=</td>
<td>I'm not getting involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>=andi si jom galeeji Nandoumarie</td>
<td>You know if you count up all of the family heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>si no konteeede o kontete (0.3)</td>
<td>If they are being counted he will be among them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>miŋ=</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>=mais ko bandiraawo aŋ o wadí [mo- wadí mo responsible</td>
<td>But it is my sister that he is responsible for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While Rune had been largely successful in exploiting indirect addressivity to voice his charges against Ousmane, he is ultimately unsuccessful in rallying the broad support of co-participants to his side, note his grumbling about the group's intractability on line 115, "none of y'all speak the truth." Just as Rune's addressivity languishes, Ousmane recruits a dormant co-participant as a diversion. Orienting his body to the left, he asks Thierno—who had not yet spoken at all—about his recent marriages in a bid to change the topic entirely: "So I heard you have two wives!" (line 117). "Heh brother," Rune sighs in return. Ousmane's eagerness to change the subject, combined with Rune's unsatisfied grumblings, may indicate that Ousmane retained the upper hand in this encounter. Indeed, Rune's dominant role in arguing his status might mean that he felt more pressure to come out on top. Avoidance entails not only non-interaction, but at times an active strategy of defusing, passing on remarks, and maintaining one's poise.

**Figure 39 – Changing the Topic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>106.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[a][h]- ahh mawɗo</td>
<td>Oh brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>[ah-</td>
<td>Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108.</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>[wota yawo laŋ</td>
<td>Don't disrespect me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>(</td>
<td>((unintelligible))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>ko mi esiraawo makko nii (0.7)</td>
<td>I'm his in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>a yu ɓu-</td>
<td>You b--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>[Sali nayi ɗoŋ</td>
<td>Sali got old there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114.</td>
<td>MJ</td>
<td>eheh- [e-</td>
<td>Haha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>[onon ɗow on (ŋawataa) goonga [ac-</td>
<td>You all don't speak the truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116.</td>
<td>MJ</td>
<td>goonga=</td>
<td>Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>=jakka a jombino ɗidɔ (0.6)</td>
<td>So you had married two (wives)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118.</td>
<td>TH</td>
<td>e:(h)ya=</td>
<td>Yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119.</td>
<td>Ous</td>
<td>=wonaa samakala</td>
<td>No joke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rune’s Charismatic Obfuscation

In the previous encounter, Ousmane’s relationship to Rune as esiraabe or as kin, presents an axis through which they negotiate their respective status in this instance. A migrant working abroad could come to Taabe infrequently but could still wield significant influence and resources. As demonstrated in the above example, Rune often attempted to reframe his relationship with others in such a way that minimized his ritual and deferential responsibilities towards them. Rune had married the eldest daughter of a member of the imam’s lineage (jimiaabe) and lived only a short distance away from them in the same village neighborhood (hirnaange). In Mamadou’s absence, Rune was the one to manage the campement that welcomed the odd tourist that made it to the plateau region. He had spent more time away from

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91 In the village of Taabe, there were two neighborhoods, the hirnaange (the Westside) and the funnaange (the Eastside), with the former being the original site of the founding of the village. The funnaange was more populated at this point, however, and had a greater number of shops. Both sides of the village built joking routines along this axis, often referring to the other neighborhood as the “boonies,” whereas their own was the civilized center.
the village so he could sell merchandise in the gold mining regions and work in Kedougou as a *boutiquier*.

Whereas his elder brother, Mamadou, tended to cultivate a reserved front, Rune exuded a charismatic and intense manner in which he rarely hesitated to stir things up in interaction. Stubborn but intensely affable, Rune could spin dramatic tales and had no qualms about confronting others in interaction. As a young child, he was known as troublesome, but he had turned this mischievousness into a charismatic intensity. Walking in and out of his compound, we often came upon younger members of his wife’s family whom he often teased, women he poked while they toted *baignoires* of water on their head all the while coaxing them to run errands for him. As such, Rune often attempted to ground relationships in terms of *keyna*, junior in-law. “Rune alaa *esiraabe,*” his wife, Hassatou, once said; she could sometimes get flustered and amused at her husband’s interactional tactics. Some individuals like Rune contested the relationship of *esiraabe* so frequently almost to the point of their denying any *esiraabe* relationships save perhaps that of the father in-law and mother in-law. In this way, Rune was attempting to minimize the number of individuals to whom he might be expected to give deference, and to enlarge the pool of interactants with whom he might display a range of (often playful) engagements.

Rune displayed a strategy of minimizing any *esiraabe* relationships and insisting on a relationship of *keyna* if at all possible. In so doing, he could seemingly benefit from license and the prerogative to refuse requests for aid from the large extended family of his wife. In this way, a relationship of license affords a host of interactional resources that can be quite useful. Amid a sociality in which one’s juniors could be sent on errands, placing a greater number of individuals as one’s *keyna* was also a useful strategy. In this region which was relatively rich in natural
resources, those senior could convince their juniors as extra labor to help one harvest bamboo, thatch, and wood.\footnote{The intensification of regional markets with greater availability of paid labor for gold mining and of the sale of agricultural products meant it was often harder for villagers in Taabe to acquire access to labor locally, e.g. carrying wares up the mountain, helping in fence mending, etc. In this context, Mamadou and Rune, who managed the campement and often required help in small tasks, found it hard to induce individuals to do work even for pay. They increasingly relied on social pressure, in the form of cajoling, guilt, or desperately formulating certain familial relationships, combined with monetary payment to recruit labor. They saw this as a distinct change from even ten years ago.}

The following interaction shows how particular pragmatics of symmetrical address contribute to how individuals negotiate in-law status with one another. In the following interaction, Rune, the village chief, Jom Wuro, and Sory, a neighbor, are seated in front of one of Taabe’s small shops that the owner’s wife, a cousin of Rune’s wife, is tending. While Taabe was a very small village, it nonetheless had anywhere from three to five operational boutiques where shopkeepers would supplement their income by selling small necessities, matches, rice, soap, and tea.

Figure 40 – Cousins or In-Laws
Sale = Hassatou’s “parallel cousin”; Oumou = relative of Sale
Bold refers to symmetrical address (i.e., speaker addresses an interlocutor with the term the hearer would use for the speaker themselves)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Esiraaɓe kaa Khadiatou daaɓiɗe</td>
<td>Senior in-law, has Khadiatou gone to sleep?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>O waalike too taw</td>
<td>She laid down already</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Keynaŋ kaŋ kaawu moodi hee Sale hee miŋ ko eŋ dendaŋ</td>
<td>Hey junior in-law, man hey Sale hey we’re cousins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>((laughs))</td>
<td>((laughs))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Eh ko eŋ hondoŋ</td>
<td>We are what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Ko eŋ dendaŋ</td>
<td>We are cousins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Hehe</td>
<td>Haha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Oumou</td>
<td>Ko hondoŋ ((to Sale))</td>
<td>What? ((to Sale))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Woo ko meŋ dendaŋ</td>
<td>He said we are cousins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Ko eŋ dendaŋ net</td>
<td>We are cousins, period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>Esiraaɓe</td>
<td>Senior in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Rune</td>
<td>Wana eŋ esiraaɓe de miŋ ko eŋ dendaŋ</td>
<td>We’re not in-laws, I’m a cousin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example, Sale who is in the family of Rune’s wife, Hassatou, addresses Rune, saying on line 1, “esiraaɓe…”. Based on normative readings of Sale and Rune’s relationship based on affinal ties, Sale could be considered Rune’s esiraaɓe since she is older than Rune’s wife,
Hassatou. However, kin and address terms were often used in symmetrical addressivity in which both members call each other the same address term and often use the lower position as origo (see bold above) (Agha 1998). In so doing, Sale can propose a relation between them, adopting his position of origo. Rune initially answers her question, but quickly speeds up his speech on line 3, making explicit his reading that they are junior in-laws, even as he sidesteps, changing this to cousin at the end of the utterance.

This type of symmetrical address was not uncommon, and the pragmatics of these usages affected ways in which interlocutors might strategically propose relationships. One day as I was travelling to a neighboring village of the hoore fello plateau with Taabe’s chief, I witnessed a young boy run up to us as we entered the village. The chief smiled at the boy and by way of recognition said, “heee kaawu”. At first, I found this inversion unusual, since kaawu, the term for maternal uncle (although sometimes used for female elders as well), indicated someone in one’s deyel (mother’s lineage) who was older than oneself. I later heard this form of reciprocal address at other times as well, for instance between Mamadou and the father of his second wife (ostensibly his quintessential esiraabe), whom he called bappa. However, the fact that the elder party also called the younger by the same term provided an interesting dynamic to the strategic question of how hierarchically aligned individuals might recognize each other. In contrast to other cases where one’s choice of address term did not receive any immediate recognition, this practice afforded the senior family member the opportunity to ratify or echo any address term offered. In this way, while Mamadou called his wife’s father, bappa, the fact that the latter reciprocally addressed Mamadou in the same terms presents one modality through which individual navigated the possibilities of placing each other amid different possible strategies.
Mamadou’s strategy for dealing with in-laws and affinal groups deviated somewhat from normative accounts of how esiraabe respect was supposed to happen by most informants. By his own admission, Mamadou largely neglected the most extreme forms of deference towards his father-in-law, both through his addressing him as bappa, and through his direct gaze and bodily alignment. Mamadou’s calling of his father-in-law bappa constituted a generational computation that Mamadou understood to be appropriate because his father-in-law was the same age as Mamadou’s own bappa. These practices of drawing equivalencies between generation and age were common. Since Mamadou was not primarily a farmer and made a living working as a tourist guide, he was likely able to invest less in in-law networks while still maintaining a presentation of himself as a successful tourism entrepreneur.

Indeed, when I attended naming ceremonies in Taabe with Mamadou, I often heard others criticize him for not attending more community events, for neglecting to visit the family of his mother in the Guinean border town, and for not participating in community work parties (kilee). As a guide who spent time on long voyages throughout Senegal, Mamadou found it difficult to balance all of these competing social strategies (e.g. investing in in-laws, familial networks, vs. in professional networks). In the Chapter Seven, I will later discuss ways in which Taabe residents would tease Mamadou for his absences and deny his membership as a Taabe originaire. In this way, esirayaagal constituted an idiom through which individuals moving through ritual spaces and coming into their homeland communities, evaluated each other.

**Lexical Honorifics in Pulafuuta**

Notably absent in Ousmane and Rune’s previous exchange of contested affinity, honorific vocabularies otherwise provided an important locus of evaluating and performing affinal relations. In Chapter Two, I showed how the presence of absence of these were often used
as grounds not only to distinguish among linguistic varieties (e.g. Bandenanké and Pulafuuta) but also as a way of understanding ongoing socioeconomic changes in the region. In what follows, I provide a basic overview of Pulafuuta lexemic and pronominal honorifics, significant linguistic resources through which Pulafuuta speakers performed deference. In the region of Kedougou, these honorifics are particularly interesting because they are largely absent from neighboring languages as well as from related varieties of Pular (e.g. Pular Bande as discussed in the Introduction) and are commonly understood by local speakers to be one of the distinctive features of this variety of Pular. Pulafuuta speakers were attentive to the significance of their lexical replacement vocabularies which included the deployment of second- and third-person plural pronouns as forms of respect in addressing and referencing individual addressees.93 Knowledge of honorifics in the rural areas contrasted significantly with urban Pular speakers in Kedougou City and provided one domain through which “deep” (often rural) speakers understood urbanites to wield a lesser, deficient variety. Among broader Kedougou populations, such honorifics, combined with conceptions of imprecise speech and with a panoply of kinship distinctions, led to conceptions of Fulɓe Fouta as having overly complex, byzantine social relations. For elders in Taabe, lexical honorifics were elicited and produced as emblematic examples of what many considered to be a deep register of Pular, Pular luugungal for which Pulafuuta was renowned over other varieties.

Before I began field work in the village of Taabe, in a region where most considered themselves Fulɓe Fouta, a friend from the neighboring region of Bande warned me about what to expect. “They are very secretive, and don’t like to joke around,” he said. “While our generation are happy to joke around with our parents, Fulɓe Fouta would never do this.” I heard these

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93 While other varieties of Pular such as Pular Bande also employed certain lexical replacements, speaking with my research assistants from this area indicates that the usage of these other varieties is mostly restricted to ritual circumstances.
stereotypes of Fulɓe Fouta widely which referenced convoluted systems of in-law and seniority, marked by exaggerated deference. Indeed, Fulɓe Fouta themselves advertised impressions of secrecy, deference, and respect. My Bassari neighbors in Kedougou City often marveled at my willingness to learn about what they understood to be highly complicated, byzantine systems of kinship relations. Those I spoke with from the hoore fello region and from further into Guinea often humorously voiced these stereotypes themselves which often emphasized self-interest, secrecy, and craftiness, particularly in commercial, familial enterprises.

Alongside a related concern for seniority, respecting esiraabe provided a locus for deference indexicals and honorific speech. “No teddi,” (“It is heavy”) I often heard Taabe residents say of dealings with their in-laws. The appropriate management of one’s speech figured as part of broader concerns for dignity (sutura) and for displaying deference towards one’s elders (“teddingol esiraabe muŋ”). This weight was not only metaphorical but was physically manifest when shaking the hand of honorable elders and religious teachers whose weighty arms one held up with two of one’s own hands, a hand-shaking that also required gaze avoidance.

Honorifics constituted a critical part of one’s behavior towards one’s esiraabe. Not only when speaking to elders, in-laws, and strangers, speakers of Pulafuuta often deployed honorific lexemes to replace common verbs. For instance, at a village meeting a town counselor addressed a group of adult men called yeesooɓe (or “front men”) and asked the delegation: “mawɓe oŋ gelike?” (Elders have you heard?), thereby drawing on the honorific lexeme gelagol, (see figure

94 Heaviness, or weight, was a quality with which my interlocutors described relations of respect with elders and particularly in-laws. Teddingol (a noun formed in the augmentative class) referred to honor or respect in relation to guests, elders, and in-laws. Related terms exist, e.g., tedduɗo, an honorable person, or teddingol, to respect (someone). Teddingol, to show respect, was expressed in the causative infix –in–, “to cause to become heavy.”
below). In other contexts, the tag line, “a nanni,” (2\textsuperscript{nd} person singular) or “oŋ nanni” (2\textsuperscript{nd} person singular/hon.) was common.

In the following, I present a partial list of honorifics, mostly verbs and nouns that replace other non-honorific lexical items.

**Figure 41 – Honorific Replacement Register\textsuperscript{95}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Honorific</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Non-Honorific Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nafagol</td>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>ŋaamugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neemagol</td>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>ŋaamugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neema oŋ</td>
<td>food</td>
<td>ŋaametee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resugol</td>
<td>to marry</td>
<td>yettugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seenagol</td>
<td>to come</td>
<td>arugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huylagol</td>
<td>to sleep</td>
<td>daanagol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takitagol</td>
<td>to withdraw oneself</td>
<td>soofugol, buubugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fooyugol</td>
<td>to be ill</td>
<td>nawnugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋanagol</td>
<td>to rise</td>
<td>finugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋelagol</td>
<td>to pass the night</td>
<td>waalugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maakugol</td>
<td>to say</td>
<td>haalugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faatagol</td>
<td>to die</td>
<td>maayugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suddiebe</td>
<td>(hon.) woman</td>
<td>debbo oŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toolagol</td>
<td>to sit</td>
<td>joodagol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fayɓe ben</td>
<td>children</td>
<td>sukaabe ben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tinugol</td>
<td>to see</td>
<td>yi’ugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gelordi diŋ</td>
<td>ears</td>
<td>noppdiŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gelagol</td>
<td>to hear</td>
<td>nannugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yummiraowo</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>neene oŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salaa oŋ</td>
<td>head</td>
<td>hoore ndeŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rahagol</td>
<td>to deficate (for infants)</td>
<td>buubugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ittugol hendu</td>
<td>to fart (for infants)</td>
<td>fuytugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yahugol jije</td>
<td>to urinate (for infants)</td>
<td>soofugol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-- eŋ</td>
<td>honorific marker for persons, following their name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of these lexical replacements refer to bodily parts or verbs of movement that become significant in hospitality contexts; they often serve to assess the needs of guests and elders, who are invited to eat, so as to accommodate everyday functions. Interestingly, many

\footnote{\textsuperscript{95} Elicited through metapragmatic interviews with residents in the village of Taabe, and also over the course of ethnographic field work, and confirmed in later observations. The root “tedd-” (see the note above) was broadly used to conceptualize this lexical register.}
such “honorifics” exist for young infants as well.96 Many figured into respectful greetings that are often cited as being "typical" or metonymic of varieties more broadly.97

Even metapragmatic reports on honorific registers belied the closeness of honorification and insult. Drawing on perceived differences between Pular Bande and Pular Fouta, many Kédovins anticipated possible deferential misunderstandings and pointed out that to address an elder Pullo Fouta “ọŋ waali e jam” is to insult them. Instead, one should utter the more respectful “ọŋ ɓelike e jam.” These kinds of concerns often figured centrally in debates between youth from Kedougou City and those Fulɓe Fouta from outside. As honorifics, these lexical replacements were commonly used in the presence of elderly individuals to whom one owes respect, and particularly in the presence of esiraabe, those related by affinal ties.

Fulɓe Fouta were thus highly metapragmatically reflexive of varietal differences in honorific addressivity and lexical replacement, often talking about or voicing other forms of address. Mimicking a speaker of Pular Niokolo, a region which borders on the Bande, an elder from the village of Taabe made light of the familiarity with which they addressed elders: “a waali e jam baaba, jam no toŋ?” (“Did you spend the night in peace father, is there peace?”). This greeting which demonstrates several instances of marked familiarity for Pulafuuta speakers included a instead of ọŋ, the greeting “waali e jam” rather than “ɓelike e jam,” which employs

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96 Honorifics were commonly used to address infants or children, particularly when they were named after deceased, respected ancestors. Infants who were the tokora of respected ancestors often carry along with them associations from their previous lives. For instance, a child named after a former highly-respected chief of Taabe was addressed by markers of respect and referred to by means of replacement honorifics. Those addressing the child would often use honorific markers, “Diao ọnj,” or refer to him as “Papa.” They often used honorific replacements for verbs that referenced bodily movements, saying “baaba seenike,” (from the infinitive seenagol) for instance, rather than arugol, the common word meaning “to come.” As such, using such honorific names and markers drew on iconic relations of sharing names and social roles between infants and their elderly respected namesakes. The incongruities of such forms of deference often themselves became the object of humorous tropes. For instance, the youngest son of Taabe’s chief was named after the mayor of the nearby commune, and habitually addressed as “Monsieur le Maire,” or as he was later called “Monsieur le Meew” (drawing on the Wolof meew, milk).

97 In many cases, greetings provided the linguistic token through which speakers met linguistically distinguished among varieties of Pular. In this way, the degree to which varieties of Pular demonstrated consonant shift between singular and Pular (mbadfoŋ vs. wadiadfoŋ) metonymically came to represent a different variety of Pular.
the honorific verb *belagol*, and a common word for father *baaba*, rather than a more respectful *baŋ*.

Pulafuuta speakers, in contrast, have extended the use of the second- and third-person plural forms as an honorific pronoun. For example, “*oŋ baŋike*” (“have you risen?”) is a greeting that is often heard on the Taabe plateau and that residents use to address an individual senior in-law (*esiraabe*). This honorific effect is even encoded into the pronominal system. For *esiraabe*, the human plural marker, –*ɓe*, marks the noun root for affine, *esiaraa*-. This suffix, –*ɓe*, is the plural marker for the human noun class, “*ɓe*”, which stands in contrast with the singular marker “*oŋ*” –*wo*.

**Figure 42 – Pulafuuta Pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Active (short) / stative (long)</th>
<th>honorific pronoun use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sing.</td>
<td><em>mi</em></td>
<td><em>mido</em> (alt. <em>miŋ</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sing.</td>
<td><em>a</em></td>
<td><em>hidä</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sing.</td>
<td><em>o</em></td>
<td><em>himo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. (incl.)</td>
<td><em>eŋ</em></td>
<td><em>hidŋ</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. (excl.)</td>
<td><em>meŋ</em></td>
<td><em>medŋ</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl.</td>
<td><em>oŋ</em></td>
<td><em>hidŋ</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl.</td>
<td><em>ɓe</em></td>
<td><em>hibe</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This system of pronoun and lexical replacement alone provides the possibility for embedding honorifics at various points in the construction. As pointed out by Agha, utterances may be more or less saturated by honorifics at multiple points, and the burden is upon language users to evaluate this possible honorific gradient (Agha 1998).

**Figure 43 – Honorific Formulations**

For example, using the verbs *maakugol* (h) and *haalugol* (l), “to speak”:

*ɓe maaki* | *he* (h) said (h) |
*ɓe haali* | *he* (h) said (l) |
*o haali* | *he* (l) said (l) |
*o maaki* | *he* (l) said (h) |

(*note: although this last form is less commonly attested*)

This system of pronominal and lexical replacement honorifics thus afforded several strategies for play and congruence at the morpho-syntactic level.
The existence of pronominal honorifics and the extended usage of lexical replacement honorifics in Pulafuuta (not just in more circumscribed, ritual contexts in Pular Bande) meant that evaluative judgements of respect towards elders were often made based on the absence or presence of these deference indexicals.\textsuperscript{98} As evaluations drawing on second-order indexicality (Silverstein 2003), Fulɓe Fouta working in Kedougou’s downtown market often commented on the character of other speakers of Pular who were less respectful, referring to their elders as “o” rather than the honorific “ɓे.” For instance, spending time with one fabric merchant in the Kedougou market, I once heard him remark on the Pular spoken by some clients at a tailor shop across the alleyway, “Teddungal alaa Kedougou, ɓe wi’ataa ɓe ko o tuŋ.” (“There is no respect in Kedougou, they don’t say [the respectful] ɓe, only o.”) At the level of pronominal and nominal lexemes, these forms of deference were at a heightened level of metapragmatic awareness (Silverstein 1981). Yet to speakers from other areas like the Bande, such usages of pronominal honorifics were an immediate tell, indexing provenance in the region. As I heard many from Kedougou describe it (and in the Bande in particular), referring to one person in the plural sounded strange indeed.\textsuperscript{99}

**Building Deference and the Example of Mama Seydou**

While speakers evaluated one another for (also second order (Silverstein 2003) respect and provenance based on the usage of honorifics, individuals often adopted different strategic patterns of employing these linguistic varieties. And while Ousmane and Rune navigated an

\textsuperscript{98} This contrast of presence and absence of honorifics in neighboring varieties demonstrates the importance of looking not only narrowly at linguistic features in one variety, but rather in considering how interlocutors evaluate linguistic forms given a diversity of morpho-syntactic and pragmatic tools for paying and giving respect in neighboring languages.

\textsuperscript{99} These forms of ethical assessment were produced on top of underlying assumptions about the sharedness of linguistic practices, in this case that speakers of Pular were speaking the “same” language, and therefore had access to respectful pronouns. This could be contrasted to a case where speakers might explain away the absence of deference indexicalities due to absence of those features in a “separate” language.
uneasy mutual understanding by contesting the relationship of affinity, in other cases honorific and deference displays could be used to build up networks of mutuality of interest. Rather than tools for deference in the service of avoidance, performing honorification could also entail active solicitation, in the form of frequent and marked verbal displays towards those lionized referents. In what follows, I examine the case of Mama Seydou, an elderly resident in the village of Taabe, whose repeated employment of honorifics and deference indexicals revealed a larger strategy of building networks of patronage. As a formerly divorced husband with no children of advancing age, Mama Seydou had a small household without a reliable farmer who could provide a steady supply of corn, fonio, and peanuts for his household. Fellow Taabe residents understood Mama Seydou’s use of honorifics and deference indexicals more broadly to be quite excessive. For these reasons, he often relied on the support of his kin, affines, and neighbors. While he had previously taught the Qur’an to neighboring children, his dudal (Qur’anic school) was not as large as it once had been, partly due to the general decline of Taabe’s population. Mama Seydou’s house, where a fire was built to provide light for evening study, was located next to a main pedestrian path from the east side of the village to the west. A finely settled layer of ashes hinted at the length of time it had been since Mama Seydou had been able to teach Qur’anic lessons.

Yet his was one of several other Qur’an schools throughout the village taught by the imam and other trained serignes (Qur’an teachers) who also worked as farmers during the rainy season. From talking with Taabe elders about the village’s recent past, it was clear to me that the village was much less densely populated that it had been decades ago, and this flow of residents to other economic centers had decreased the demand for Qur’anic schooling in the village.100

100 In talking with Taabe youth, I was given the impression that less and less chose to study the Qur’an after childhood and invested in Qur’anic studies. Nevertheless, most children attended Qur’an schools in Taabe by the light of woodfire, reciting first
Walking through the village with Mamadou, Mama Seydou often mused about how the calm he encountered in the sporadic family compounds contrasted starkly with the rowdy, populated scenes from his memory.

His current wife, for instance, was a common participant in group work parties (kilee wakili), where her labor was compensated with shares of much needed subsidence crops like corn, fonio, or peanuts. Mama Seydou’s deference, however was often seen as excessive, particularly since he increasingly relied on direct requests for tea and sugar. Indeed, for those who came from Kedougou City with a supply of tea and sugar like Mamadou, Mama Seydou’s behavior had become somewhat of an oddity. As Mamadou told it, Mama Seydou would surprise him outside of his hut in the early morning and engage him in effusive praise as an overture to ask for tea and sugar.

The following segment, which occurred at the compound of Taabe’s chief, provides a first example of strong honorifics use and deferential gaze on the part of Mama Seydou. Present in the frame are Mama Seydou, sitting on the left, Mamadou, seated, Mamadou’s cross cousin standing up, the village chief to his right, and his two wives behind him in the background.

Figure 44 – Averting Gaze, Solicitous Deference
From GOPRO020esiraabe.MP4

Line 10: “Fayɓe no e jam*” Mama Seydou in left averts head

texts from wooden alluwa. Some young adults had studied in Qur’anic schools in Dakar and elsewhere, whereupon they were often referred to as Ustas by their peers, in recognition of their studies.
MSD = Mama Seydou; RD = woman at right, 2nd wife of the village chief; MUD = village chief’s first wife (not visible). Bold items denote honorific usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MSD</td>
<td>kaawu on naalaali</td>
<td>uncle good afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>RD</td>
<td>eeyo</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MSD</td>
<td>faybe beŋ no e jam</td>
<td>the children are well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>no wa’i’</td>
<td>what’s up (aside)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>RD</td>
<td>eeyo</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MSD</td>
<td>esiraa:be</td>
<td>in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MUD</td>
<td>na:</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>MSD</td>
<td>on baŋkena</td>
<td>have you risen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MUD</td>
<td>eeyo on banike</td>
<td>yes, have you risen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>MSD</td>
<td>faybe no e jam*</td>
<td>children are well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>MUD</td>
<td>eeyo</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While gaze avoidance is not an uncommon in displays of deference towards esiraa:be, this extreme form of avoidance, combined with the lyrical, slowly rising then quickly falling tone “esiraa:be,” contributed to a multi-modal display of in-law deference.

esiraa:be

Indeed, Mama Saliou’s extreme deployment of deference in speech paralleled a strong use of back-channel cues and agreements, offered in haltering speech as he frequently seconded speech by other senior members of the village. In the context of an increasingly articulated economic zone where certain residents built wealth through access to commodity trade and tourism, linguistic tools of deference in the honorific register provided Mama Saliou with useful resources in aligning himself strategically with successful entrepreneurs like Mamadou. Indeed, Mamadou admitted to me several times that he had felt obliged to give Mama Seydou money for tea or other small gifts.

The example of Mama Seydou provides an example of in-law deference indexicalities through honorific lexemes (ɓaŋagol, faybe ɓeŋ) and bodily deference (averted glance) that can be

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101 Although further acoustic analyses are necessary, these intonational performances of deference seem to follow the same tonal patterns of long-distance calling (e.g. names, address terms) and thereby seem to index a “distance” among interlocutors that provides a parallel “spatial” deferential dimension to the use of lexical address terms.
contrasted with the example of Ousmane and Rune, in which the status of in-law ship itself was contested and honorific usage was minimized. For Mama Seydou, his access to resources and to a broad social network that he could rely on, was strongly tied to his deployment of honorifics through which he performed relations of deference in exchange for patronage and social assistance. Yet for all honorifics and affinity are purported to be about distance and avoidance, Mama Seydou’s interactions shows how these themselves can be quite solicitous and directed.

**Jokkere Enday: In Pursuit of Relations**

Continuously renewing social relationships through the exchange of deferential or teasing performances and the phatic labor of reciprocal visiting were central facets of sociality in southeastern Senegal. While the rainy season in Taabe was marked by a regular commute to and from agricultural fields, the cessation of the rains invited a continuous flow of visitations and greetings that circulated residents across family compounds, neighboring villages, and urban centers in the region. In West African historiography and anthropology, this concern with cultivating diverse and wide-spread ties has been described as “wealth in people” (Guyer 1993), a concern of African populations in land-rich, but low population areas. Accordingly, farmers and itinerant laborers in southeastern Senegal invested in everyday routines of contact and exchange with neighbors and kin through reciprocal greeting and gift giving.

Local residents actively reflected upon the significance of cultivating social relations broadly, including tending of kin and in-law ties, and often reflected upon these concerns as *jokkere enday* (“the pursuit of relations”102). *Jokkere enday* was achieved through “ko e déngal,

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102 In this document I translate *jokkere enday* as the “pursuit of relations,” drawing on the meaning of jokkere, which can mean pursuit. Jokkere, or *jokkal* can also refer to a joint, or articulation, and thus might be thought of the articulation of sociality. Although I only infrequently heard reference of this fact in Kedougou, *enday* also means sap. Other possible translations of *jokkere enday* include social relations, solidarity, or even family relations in a narrower sense.
newre, e jungo”, a physical and linguistic labor entailing regular travel and cultivation of social ties through one’s tongue, hands, and feet—tongues for speaking, hands for shaking, and feet for traveling the distance. In an area with limited cell phone reception, conducting business among villages in the area often required personal travel to friends and colleagues. Maintaining a strong social network thus entailed the linguistic and physical labor of paying visits and reciprocation. Rather than merely honorification, however, cultivating such networks entailed a balancing of sociality which included teasing and ritual insulting where appropriate. Verbal play in the key of senior vs. junior in-law distinctions as I detailed above, were part and parcel of this important practice of recognizing others and placing them within practices of continued verbal and material exchange.

*Jokkere enday* not only encompassed the cultivation of affinal or kinship ties but also a broad set of social relationships. For instance, relationships among artisanal maîtres such as mechanics and their apprentis were often conceptualized as a familial organization, which also encompassed the responsibilities of *jokkere enday*. A master motorcycle mechanic I frequently chatted with spoke of the strong *jokkere enday* that existed while he had been an apprentis with his master who would invite him for feasts and religious celebrations such as korité or tabaski in an idiom of filial care. The families of those entrusted apprentis often consulted maîtres in important life decisions, and I often heard honorifics used in addressing respected maîtres whose professional relationships were often cast in terms of parental authority. For example, when I first met the automotive maître with whom Mamadou’s nephew was apprenticing, Mamadou employed honorific pronouns and introduced the maître in the following fashion: “*Bëe ko maître Demba, hîɓe andì fìi otoji*”. 
In Kedougou City and in the wider region, I often heard a concern about a decreased sense of respect and *jokkere enday* on the part of the youth. When I conversed with regional residents about changes in the city of Kedougou in the past ten years, the language of respect was often brought up, as I was told that the youth no longer had any respect: “teddungal alaa jooni”. Motorcycle mechanic shops, in particular, provided a locus for these ideologies of decline, ironically contexts where apprentices and masters often configured their relationships in a familial mold of *jokkere enday*. In many cases, crime and decline were understood not in a legal framework, but rather as a decline in respect and courtesy reflected in language use. For instance, unsanctioned cross border incursions by young Guinean nationals, even during the closure of the border during the Ebola epidemic, were understood not primarily as lawless, or even dangerous behavior, but more significantly as displaying a lack of respect. As such, a dearth of appropriate deference in an idiom of hospitality—which might include verbal “insults” in the key of *sanaku* where ratified—often provided a locus for the interpretation of strangers or youth.

In the village of Taabe, *jokkere enday* in the form of the cultivation ties among in-laws was on high display during the organization and attendance of work parties, naming ceremonies, and funerals. During the time that I spent in Taabe, families often felt overwhelmed by the pressure of social responsibilities since attending celebrations were often whole-day affairs in an area where travel was arduous. Local residents often expressed a concern about a decline in the capacity of individuals to organize successful work parties, *kilee* (a subject I return to below).

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103 *Jokkere enday* entailed a shared pursuit, often understood in terms of *yadugol* (“going together”), *jokkugol* (“following after someone”), and the maintenance of social relations through visitations of one’s categorical kin, neighbors and colleagues understood more broadly. *Jokkere enday* appears at first to fit nicely with Sahlin’s *mutuality of being* which stresses categorical membership; maintaining social relations in the idiom of *jokkere enday* placed an emphasis on the social labor—on reciprocal visitations, greetings, shaking hands, and functions.

104 For example, a Radio Mali radio show keenly followed by Taabe residents once recounted the story of a rich man who sent money to social events (*haaju*) in his stead. In the end, the man encountered misfortune and the moral of the story was that one’s physical presence was paramount in honoring *jokkere enday*. This story resonated with many co-listeners, and became the subject of discussion for some time.
After one particular long voyage to a naming ceremony on the other side of the plateau, for example, the wife of an elder in the Taabe chief’s lineage said, “jooni ko mo kala e beyguure mup.” (Now it’s just everyone and their own family). Given a wide network of possible individuals with whom one could build relationships of in-laws, of kin, these concerns relate to a broader question of how to invest in networks, investments which required continuous maintenance and attention. The cultivation of in-law relations thus constituted real labor in the form of visitation and displays of deference and was not merely an automatic state.

Through forms of relational bricolage—negotiating in-law relationships through routines of greetings and hospitality—residents on the hoore fello shrank and expanded their social ties by using a wide array of idioms. The residents of Taabe themselves were so intensely aware of the pliability of kinship and affinal relations that they constructed metaphors for understanding relations in broader or narrower terms. Kin relations in the expanded sense were often thought of as a kaakol jaabere, an apt metaphor drawing on the broad leaf of the taro plant. This expanded sense of kinship provided a range of possible connections which individuals could attempt to grow or shrink through the cultivation of social relations achieved by visiting, invoking appropriate language, and by passing time together.105 As such, who counted as a member of an extended kinship group could grow or shrink and was dependent upon the investment of individuals through practices of jokkere enday. As such, everyday visits and the reciprocity of

105 Furthermore, a partial equivalency established between place and lineage could mean that being from the same place justified placing someone as kin. While this equivalency was motivated in interaction, residents reflected on this as a part of histories of migration and the establishment of new settlements in the West African frontier. In this way, those who travelled from far away and came together to a new area to settle could be considered kin in the new settlements. In Taabe, for instance, “place-based” and “genealogical” identifiers were often used interchangeably to refer to Mamadou’s family in a way that blurred distinctions between lineage and proximity (Nave 2016). Often called Dugarinaabe (Dugari, the village in Guinea from where Taabe’s founders emigrated, and –nabe, a plural, human nominal form), kin relations were often posited among those who emigrated from the same area. Indeterminacy between lineage and place played out in interesting ways; for instance in the aftermath of shifting village boundaries, adherence to a village (formerly determined as place-based), was now “inherited” among families in such a way that certain households in the neighboring villages on the hoore fello were part of Taabe with respect to not only administrative, but also representational concerns (e.g. that they would receive a “share” of resources received by the village of Taabe).
honorific language, or alternatively teasing, provided ways in which residents not only tended, but pruned or expanded in-law and kinship groups in the idiom of the *kaakol jaabere*. Those like Rune and other youth from Taabe I spoke to often expressed the idea that their kinship in the idiom of the taro plant was less and less mobilized, and that family units were becoming narrower. *Mussibe*, the close family, i.e. “your people,” was often talked of in an idiom of blood juxtaposed to one’s *bolonda*, a somewhat larger conception of relatedness that made space not only for “kin” as narrowly construed, but also for extended relations and neighbors. In presenting *la famille élastique* and the *kaakol jaabere* I do not intend to present these as Rosetta Stones that encapsulate local approaches to kinship and affinity, but rather point out that an openness and uncertainty about the extent of kin relations was itself an ongoing concern of local communities who actively reflected upon the breadth and strength of social relations, often contesting them in social interaction.

**“Mother-Mother” and Expanding Relations**

Taabe residents actively built social networks themselves by means of employing and extending idioms like parental responsibilities in order to motivate other “constructed” relations. The women of Taabe, for instance, constructed a network they called *neene-neene* (mother-mother) in which each younger woman of the village (*biddo*, or child) was paired with an elder woman, her *neene*, or mother. These women regularly exchanged gifts by filling calabashes full of rice, food seasoning, mints, and vegetables that they gave to their exchange partners in times when resources were plentiful. Not only was every woman in the village paired with a mother

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106 Interlocutors commonly described kinship relationships using terms that entailed different levels of ambiguity and specificity and making good use of “borrowed” French terms like “même famille,” famille élargie, cousin(e) alongside Pular terms in ways that could extend less categorically specific forms of belonging.
partner, but the network was split into two groups, each of which had a female head as well as a male representative who was the *baaba* (father) to their group. These layers of constructed kinship were intertwined with categorical relations and provided another level of social connectivity that could be used to extend kinship relations to one another.

Practices of *jokkere endən* were not only performed through gift reciprocities, visitations and appropriate verbal greetings, but were also built upon and impeded by the materiality of houses, fences, and paths of the lived environment. More recently, literature on houses and domestic spaces understands them not only as containers that are filled with the categorical relations of kin and affines, but also as spaces through which such social relations are articulated and shaped (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Morton 2007; Mueggler 2001). In the village of Taabe, for instance, a heated verbal altercation between two founding, related lineages of Taabe ultimately resulted in the construction of walls between their neighboring compounds. The family of the village chief had long had a fraught relationship with these neighbors with whom they shared a distant genealogical tie dating to the founding of the village of Taabe. After an encounter at the village *forage* between two women one from each of the two families, an altercation that deteriorated from verbal insults to physical assault, the chief’s elder brother built a corn-stalk wall to separate their domestic compounds along the edge of their inner corn fields. Paths alongside these compounds that had previously been used for travel to and from agricultural fields towards the Guinea border thus became closed off to neighbors who now had to take a roundabout path and who could now no longer engage in daily rituals of greeting. Maintaining regular channels of phatic contact was thus a central concern, and residents avidly discussed the paths they might take, and how close it would bring them in relation to various
compounds spread throughout the plateau area. Insulating oneself from particular forms of sociality was thus a long term strategy that entailed an investment in material infrastructure. The ease with which walls could be constructed and banco huts torn down and rebuilt meant that individuals could displace their families, fields, and reshape boundaries to mediate relations within the village. Since the surrounding land around Taabe and neighboring villages had yet to be zoned, members of the family could split off with relative ease and found a homestead or hamlet in a new part of the plateau area.

**Placing Distant Kin**

The contingency of categorical relations and the breakdown of relationships over distance and time came to a head one weekend in the village of Taabe with the sudden arrival of distant kin. A delegation including a suitor and his father came to Taabe to ask for the youngest sister of Sory “Ghanaian” who lived right beside Rune, Mamadou, and the village chief’s compound. Their arrival ignited a debate about the nature of distant relations in the idiom of the *kaakol jaabere* (taro leaf), whose broad leaves represented to locals an encompassing view of familial relations. Ghanaian, the head of a household shared by his mother, wife, and younger sister, Fatoumata, was away from his house when the delegation arrived, carrying along a suitcase full

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107 Across the region, for instance, routines of greeting neighbors and kin were highly elaborated, even on local radio and at public events. Broadcast on Kedougou FM or into the mic at a political rally, uttering the names of others could often last several minutes. “Miño hiwro Mamadou Kanté mo Daande Maayo, Seynabou Ba mo Laawol Tamba…” (“I would like to greet…”)

108 During this time, however, hoore fello residents began to talk about the *lotissement* (zoning) of the surrounding lands. While previously village boundaries had been largely undefined, the administrative reshuffling which had made the department of Kedougou into a region meant that increasingly boundaries were being drawn between villages within a commune. This accompanied a monetization of land markets within Kedougou. Already in Takkopellel, lands that had been previously assigned through village authorities were being sold. In the case of Takkopellel, there were often two listed prices, one for local residents, and one for those from outside the commune.

109 Given significant recent patterns of movement and migration, relations could also be lost. Particularly given the highly mobile nature of families often in search of economic opportunities, in-law and kin might be irretrievably separated. Indeed, looking for lost family members was a recurring origin story for the founding of many villages, notably of Taabe and Kedougou City itself which was founded by a young man, Maciré Ba, who had set out to look for his brother, only to end up founding Kedougou after entering into marriage alliances with local populations.

110 Sory was one of Mamadou’s closest friends to whom he was related through grandparents.
of complets. Drawing on a distant connection according to which the groom-to-be’s father and Fatoumata’s father were known to have the same mother, the suitor had come to ask for Fatoumata’s hand in marriage. Sory, who had only a vague knowledge of these relations as dendiraabe (cousins or cross kin) and had not spent time with the guests personally, was reluctant to hand over Fatoumata—much to the chagrin of his wife and mother. He initially refused which led to a hunger strike from his family who deemed it a fitting match.

This situation created quite a stir in Taabe and provided an occasion to reflect more broadly on the breadth of kinship relations. As such, it presented a mode of objectification, a moment that brought Ghanaian and his family to typify and therefore evaluate mutual relationships. The proposal brought many in the community into a discussion about the outer limits of dendiraabe relations and about how these limits were impacted by distance and by mutual knowledge. Sitting in his compound next door, Rune, Aunt Aissatou, and I began to talk about the implications of this request. Rune’s aunt, Aissatou, described this as a bolonda relationship, a category for kinship often covering expanded relations such as dendiraabe (cross-cousins), neighbors and the deyol, the female line. Rune, in contrast, dismissed it as “kaaki jaabari ngin, siddo sidido oŋ” (“a big honking taro leaf, playing a game of kin-kin”), a game of playing on distant relations in the idiom of a wide-leaved taro leaf. In our discussions Rune continued in this vein by calling it a “ko dendiraagal woddungal” (distant cousinship). As such, it was not at all clear to the present parties how exactly Sory’s family and the suitors were related.

In a certain sense, this confusion breaks down clear distinctions made between Levi-Straussian

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111 More broadly, a cross-cousin (dendiraavo) is often considered preferred marriage partner.
112 Certain kinship terms such as bolonda, or similar terms such as famille oŋ (the family) were useful insofar as they were somewhat vague and thus admitted a wide swath of possible relations that could include neighbors, friends or cross-kin more broadly.
alliance theory and descent theory, by affording a kind of habitual marriage alliance through two families who emerge as vague, distant cross-kin.

With a weak showing of bridal gifts, Ghanaian and many in Rune’s family were initially dismissive of this relationship. Rejecting any notion of automatic kinship relation, Sory initially balked at agreeing to a marriage based on only the establishment of kinship ties. Sory did not agree until much later after a greater showing of bridal gifts and a promise that someone in his family would travel back to Gambia in order to ascertain exactly where she would end up. Rune, was dismissive of these expanded senses of kinship characteristic of past generations in which individuals could become kin merely by living together. Listening to residents debate this situation in the days afterwards, I grasped that it was not only a question of distant relations, but also of the fact that because this relationship had not been tended with an exchange of greetings and visitations. Mutual knowledge was therefore not on secure footing. As others described it to me after the fact, although the delegation from afar had attempted to display deferential behavior, esirayaagal, 113 displaying respect and maintaining marriage alliances required a regular exchange of phatic language.

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113 Endogamous marriages, which were common in the area (indeed deemed to be “typical” among Fulɓe in the region, Dupire 1963) often resulted in situations in which individuals stood in kinship as well as affinal relationships with one another. A disentangling of these simultaneous relationalities underwrote many of the routines of in-law play that feature later in this chapter, particularly in the example of Rune and Ousmane which I turn to at the end of this chapter. Indeed, in Sory’s example above, the establishment of relations as dendiraaɓe provided the logic of association that Sory’s extended family assumed would be straightforward. Previous scholarship in kinship studies has noted that various forms of marriage co-exist, some more legitimate than others. Bourdieu, for instance, noted that only particular kinds of weddings were deemed by scholars as worthy of anthropological attention, while the common forms of weddings (often arranged by women) often escaped treatment (Bourdieu 1977). Certain approaches to exogamy, for instance, note that endogamy in contrast to exogamy reduces one’s social network. In this literature (Lévi-Strauss 1966), endogamous weddings are held to entail less financial investment and social negotiation since all parties were members of a family unit or lineage. These kinds of generalized assumptions hold true only amid virtual calculations in which genealogical kinship relations are the only ones made to count at the expense of place-based bonds. In a fission-fusion context where small lineages often pursued economic opportunities in local and transnational economic centers, marrying one’s kin in distant sites often entailed gaining not only a foothold in a field of economic possibility but also in social networks in the form of neighbors and social contacts cultivated by one’s kin in those sites. For example, one of the most affluent traders in the town of Taabe married into a family who had originated from Taabe many years ago and held blood ties with his family, but who now resided in a border town close to the Gambia border. The merchant used these contacts to access goods (cheaper sugar and other informal imports) to grow his business. In this way, blanket assessments of kin-based marital strategies only work in a view of social life defined exclusively by kinship systems within a village-as-island view of community. As demonstrated by the example of Sory, maintaining relations with “kin” or in-laws was not automatic but demanded a linguistic and physical labor of reciprocating greetings, visits, gifts, and knowledge of oneself.
Cultivating In-law Relations and Work Parties in Rural Kedougou

In the previous examples I discussed how individuals like Mama Seydou attempted to grow a cadre of favorably disposed in-laws to support him, and how Sory’s distant cross-kin attempted to draw on untended relations in order to position themselves as aspirational in-laws without a ground-layer of linguistic labor and the giving of respect through jokkere enday. Others like the village chief actively tended social networks through visits, greetings, and reciprocation to shore up sources of shared labor, credit, and political support. During my field work, for instance, the Taabe chief mobilized networks of in-laws and kin in neighboring villages to build enough capital that could back an agricultural loan for the upcoming season. Negotiating relationships of familiarity and respect was a critical aspect of leadership that Jom Wuro, Taabe’s village chief, had mastered. In travels with Jom Wuro through the hamlets and neighboring villages, his ability to switch between routines of teasing, play and respect for religious and village heads was nothing short of remarkable. However, he sometimes viewed his position as chief of the village as a social liability, since it often prevented him from taking longer trips away to visit more distant relations and prevented him from travelling to surrounding towns where me would have been able to sell bread as an expert baker.

Likewise, those hoore fello residents who had effectively negotiated the reciprocity of jokkere enday—visitations, greetings, and gifts during the course of naming ceremonies, weddings, and religious holidays—could benefit from mutual support of in-law groups. Some of the most critical forms of mutual support that farmers drew from their in-law were work parties at critical points in the fonio harvest. As fonio farmers, many of Taabe’s residents encountered bottlenecks requiring large amounts of labor in a short period of time. By calling on neighbors
and esiraabe, recruiting n’amakalaabe (girots), and providing social lubrication in the form of music and amplification, farmers might be able to do a month’s worth of work in an afternoon. These work parties, called kilee, were not taken for granted by Taabe residents who saw them not as matter of course rituals that drew on networks of kin. Instead, kilee were the result of successful management of one’s esiraabe and neighbors through the practices of jokkere enday. Kilee were not the natural result of one’s virtual affinal bonds, but a form of concerted labor that layered the labor of deference, visitation, and exchange into a social event. As such, kilee, necessitated a significant investment in phatic labor, repeated visits to and from one’s in-laws to plan for and seek assistance in the planning of a kilee work party. Indeed, kilee were seen as increasingly difficult to organize given increasingly dispersed populations, and many I talked to perceived a decreasing trust in the compelling force of such categorical relations.

These work parties were particularly significant at times when crops were harvested and all in one place awaiting one last stage of processing before they could be carried to safety in the village storehouses. Once seeds had developed in tight clumps along the length of the plant’s long leaves, teams of men would cut clumps of fonio grasses with small hand-held reapers. After consolidating them into small bundles, Taabe farmers arranged them on bamboo structures erected in the center of the fields where the first phases of thrashing and separation were conducted. These key phases of the harvest when the year’s supply of fonio and peanuts were all neatly collected and piled together presented the most precarious times for fonio farmers. Farmers practiced shifting cultivation on small fields hacked out of the surrounding forest where baboons and monkeys attracted to the harvest hid in the dense foliage along the edges of the fields. First obscured in the forest at the edge of the fields, their calls would grow louder and louder as more and more adults emerged into the open beyond the tree line and become visible to
us. When enough of their troop had emerged from the tree-line and crept closer to the fields, the farmers would run out in small groups, expertly launch small rocks from slings at their side, and holler at the amassing troops of baboons. Children would also be sent ahead as an advance contingent armed with sticks, slings, and rocks that they used at each weapon’s effective range. It was during these times of the year that farmers slept out in their fields at night to protect their harvest from cows and warthogs and during the daytime from threats like monkeys and baboons.

Before the fonio could be put into rice sacks and carried several kilometers back from the fields to the village storehouses, the fonio seeds needed to be removed from the stalks. Farmers cleaned out a section of the field, then used a mixture of manure and water to lay a smooth, hard surface upon which they could process the grasses. Suspending a large trunk between two smaller forked posts, the fonio farmers established an area where workers could hold onto the trunk while they stomped the seeds out of tightly bound bunches of fonio stalks. Called yabugol, this process slowly enabled farmers without significant labor reserves to pack the vulnerable fonio into bags and transport it back to the village to safety.

As a way to amass a large amount of labor, Taabe farmers would hold several types of community work parties or kilee. A kilee wakilaare was a general work party in which farmers rewarded workers with a good meal of goat meat and plenty of attaya tea. The success of these work parties was predicated on one’s past investment in the social labor of jokkere enday and on one’s rhetorical skills through which one would guilt and goad others into attendance, often by reminding friends and relatives of past work parties. A second type of work party was a kilee putu (from fuutuube, a corporate in-law group) which placed the responsibility upon one’s in-laws to assemble a large group. During my first agricultural season in Taabe, I witnessed such a work party in which the in-laws of Ustas, the elder brother of Taabe’s village chief, had arranged
the labor for a large work party that would process his year’s yield of fonio. Assembling work parties of *esiraabe* required a lot of work and was not an automatic process of categorical membership across axes of affinity. Being in a position of calling a *kilee putu* meant one had to have invested in these relationships through past attendance of work parties and through displays of deference along open channels of contact, displays that required foot travel over multiple kilometers for naming ceremonies, funerals, and weddings. As such, investing in these kinds of relationships and cultivating these relationships was itself a kind of labor and not only an automatic or given categorical fact. To host a successful *kilee* entailed having quantities of food, gifts, and *dammi* (either a goat (*mbewa*) or a sheep (*baalii*)) in sacrifice as well as *ñamakalaabe* and portable speakers capable of animating the occasion. Pounding a *gimbeeru* drum replete with metal chimes, two *ñamakalaabe* from a nearby village could animate the bodies of female in-laws to make quick work of a field of fonio bundles. These women, the *bolonda* (larger family unit) from the village of Sakamsa’s wife, were recruited by the mother of Ustas Sakamsa’s wife, his *esiraabe*. Dancing on top of the fonio to the rhythm of drums, the women thrashed the stalks underneath their feet and initiated a crescendo by grabbing the fonio with their hands and thrashing it in concert upon the packed earth. Pursuing togetherness through the concerted work of *yabondirgal*—the act of stomping together bundles of fonio—was

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114 The kinds of crops that one farmed brought one into certain kinds of relations with surrounding human-animal worlds. Scholars such as James Scott, for instance, has written about ways in which tubers such as sweet potatoes, taro, or manioc, enabled highland residents of Southeast Asia to avoid taxation and government surveillance (J. C. Scott 2017). Fonio, in particular, necessitated labor at key points in the year, while crops like corn or peanuts could be cultivated with less social density.

115 A short note on caste: In contrast to neighboring regions (see (Irvine 1973) *ñamakalaabe* (i.e. griots) were not held to be separate casted groups. While other castes were recognized, such as *baylo* or *daleaabe*, *ñamakalaabe* among Fulɓe Fouta of this area was held to be a vocation that could be practiced irrespective of lineage. On a related note, *Runde Naaɓe*, which until recent history were dependent, non-noble populations that often tended the fields of noble Fulɓe, was not a hierarchically-inflected category in the village of Taabe. For instance, intermarriage between Mamadou’s family, who were *Runde Naaɓe*, and *Jimiaaab*, a “noble” lineage of herders who controlled spirit snakes (*mboddi jine*) associated with the cow (*the ningiri*) was a non-controversial union. While *baylo* still stood out as a caste, I suggest that many of the recorded prohibitions have become less salient in recent years. On the plateau, this breakdown of bodily distinctions among casted lineages could be seen in increased contact between a formerly distinct potter class, the *Daleaabe*.

116 With an infix indicating reciprocal or mutual action, two alternative forms –ondir- and -indir-
considered a strong form of jokkere enday, of sharing together in labor. Here the work of ŋamakalaabe as singing or animation—along with the small talk that combatted loneliness and that was performed among work partners—provided a form of labor that was essential to the success of fonio farmers.

**Esirayaagal as Play and Poetics**

Routines of paying deference and teasing were important interactional skills that featured in the daily talk of residents on the hoore fello—not only in presupposing certain relationships, but also in positing and building the relationships. In the previous section, I discussed loci of in-law relations, and in the example of Sory’s marriage proposal, a context that interlocutors used to reflect upon and cleave in-law and kinship relationships at different points. While some—particularly those who did not rely entirely on subsistence farming like Rune and Mamadou—could afford to hew more closely a limited number of relationships, others who relied on work parties and village networks invested more heavily in broader in-law ties. Cultivating in-law relations could be a great resource if they, for example, attracted labor to one’s kilee, but also at times a great burden. It entailed the contribution of one’s labor and limited one’s ability to parry requests for help and contributions through the deployment of refusals and counters in a frame of joking. In one sense, being on familiar terms with someone afforded a different toolbox of possible interactional resources. Rune and Mamadou, for instance, often minimized in-law relations with others and erred on the side of informal teasing with those around them.

Contesting esiraabe and keyniraabe status is legible against a wider field of playing on social pressure to conform to normative patterns of license. While deference indexicals, often considered in the context of respecting in-laws, constituted an ethical locus of norms of respect,
in practice individuals found innovative ways of parrying perceived social pressure to engage in displays of deference. For instance, during the time in which Ebola loomed in neighboring Guinea, I witnessed refusals to shake hands that were framed as an ostensible concern with the transmission of disease. In Kedougou’s downtown market, this technique was at times used as a cover to eschew contact and greetings. Certain individuals found strategies to eschew entirely the social game of deference-taking.\footnote{In the market, for instance, there was a well-known elderly man who refused to be addressed with honorifics or, in particular, to be called “mawɓe” (elder). Inverting expectations of deference, he referred to himself as “boy” and demonstrated his youthful energies by, not infrequently, placing a high karate kick next to his interlocutors. By adopting a ridiculous demeanor, the man circumvented the game of maintaining a positive face altogether (Goffman 1967). While his self-effacing act certainly didn’t earn him any respect in the eyes of his elderly peers, it did allow him to make use of a linguistic toolbox of more familiar language with those in the market area.}

Even during moments where individuals stood in clear affinal relations with one another, interlocutors often developed clever strategies for eschewing any interactional commitments of deference and distance. On one particular occasion, as Mamadou and I were passing by a small boutique, a man called out to him, “heee boy…”. Mamadou looked over to him, exclaiming, “\textit{ye hersiraabe, hersiraabe}.” Sitting in the doorway of a small shop was one of Mamadou’s ostensible esiraabe, a senior member of his first wife’s family. Mamadou later explained to me that he and this man were content to continue joking with one another as they had before Mamadou married his first wife. Playing on a poetic blending (Eble 2007) of \textit{esiraabe} and \textit{hersugol}, “to feel shame”, Mamadou and the man made a joke out of their collaborative sabotaging of any necessity for deference. In such instances, a multiplicity of salient axes of relationships (e.g. as with in-laws and kin) presented interesting opportunities for interlocutors to navigate new terms of interaction and frames for their relationship.\footnote{Esiraabe as an address form, an initial offer of mutual recognition in face-to-face encounters, was not only a reflection of marriage alliances in a strict sense, but was also used as an aspirational involvement. For instance, this term was wielded not only in strict marriage situations, but also as an idiom for understanding more public, casual romantic involvements that were increasingly becoming a feature of Kedougou’s social environment. Passing through a village on the outskirts of Kedougou City, for example, I heard a friend of mine called \textit{esiraabe} by a number of individuals standing along a roadside. After greeting them and passing on, my travel companion explained that his brother had been romantically involved with a woman in their family.}
The distinction between junior (kenyna) and senior in-law (esiraabe), in particular, had important ramifications for the ways through which individuals tested out responsibilities towards one another. Placing others as respected in-laws, junior in-laws, or cultivating verbal license afforded different forms of cooperation and engagement. While esiraabe networks could be drawn on through complex work party rituals that necessitated ritual sacrifice, griots, and cooked food, those with whom one could speak frankly could be goaded, shamed, or bribed into performing services. To be someone’s esiraabe could be leveraged for small favors; it led to deference indexicals in interactions, and it signified a special bond between individuals. Esiraabe could count on meals, boarding, and freely given assistance. However, refusal of established esiraabe was often socially risky since the capacity to refuse, contest, or push back requests was limited.119

The concept of esiraabe was often invoked in conversation as grounds that activated certain principles of ethical evaluation. While two men were tussling about in the market one day, for instance, a kola nut seller called out to them, “Accu dɔŋ, ko esiraabe moŋ. Hay goo’to piyataa esiraabe muŋ.” (“Stop that there, it’s your senior in-law. Nobody hits their senior in-law”). Soon thereafter, the two men disentangled, having been able to save face in the name of in-law relations. In subsequent conversations with those present, I understood that their status as esiraabe was motivated by the fact that they came from a nearby region in Guinea. However, this posited relationship provided a model for action: to respect one another and to stop fighting. This logic of translation of propinquity into affinity was quite common as strangers having a similar

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Similarly, esiraabe would commonly be used in routines of flirtation, and the subtle utterance in certain contexts could indicate one’s veiled interest in another family member. 119 For instance, Rune and Mamadou had one of the few solar energy systems in town that were capable of charging cell phones. Their house soon became a place for villagers to bring their electronics to charge, and while Mamadou and Rune would have liked to charge a small fee to help pay for the equipment’s upkeep, Rune was prevented from charging any fee because of constant and mutual calls for free services in the name of in-law relations.
geographic origin were often considered to be kin or affines. Like in the previous example, the frame of affinity could often be invoked by third parties who in so doing drew others around into talk that used the relationship of in-law ship as a basis of mutual identification (the example of Ousmane and Rune at the beginning of this chapter).

While at times these frames were not challenged by those co-present, at other times attempts to frame encounters in terms of shared in-law status could be challenged. Mamadou—who was seen to be well connected as a successful entrepreneur with access to a 4x4 vehicle and whose social network included Spanish tourists (as well as myself)—was often the target of these interactional reframings. One of his sisters, for instance, was married to a Bassari man, Davier, who came to live in Takkopellel just at the base of the Taabe mountain. Davier became well known and well-liked in the area and claims of affinity with Mamadou were motivated through the person of Davier. At times, Mamadou would scrutinize such attempts at relation-making, and, on one occasion, exclaimed: “Aŋ e Davier ko honduŋ hawtidaa? Wana eŋ esiraaɓe.” (“You and Davier, what do you share? We are not in-laws”) after a man attempted to position Mamadou as his esiraaɓe.

In Taabe and in Kedougou City, I often heard calls of esiraaɓe which consisted of playful attempts at indicating one’s interest in courting others. Rather than clear axes of relations that mapped neatly onto categorical membership, the selective extension of principles of categorical membership into imbricated, overlapping relations (e.g. an endogamous marriage where one has affinal and kin-based ties), as well as ambiguities between “place” and “kinship,” all provided a field of play that interlocutors drew upon to recognize one another or to build a relationship.

**In-law Joking and Constructing a Home in the Market**
Extending and invoking the idiom of esiraaɓe were not only used to navigate relations in the rural areas. Some market sellers in Kedougou City, employed the idiom of esiraaɓe as interactional imaginary play to invoke the structure of the reassuring home sphere at the oftentimes chaotic downtown market. I include the following analysis to argue that esirayaagal as relational idiom was not something defined by rural spaces as a primary locus for kinship and affinity. Although the Manchester School of British anthropology can in many ways bridged rural and urban spaces, recent approaches continue to propose analytical distinctions in this vein, for instance, as urban kinship (Bjarnesen and Utas 2018). I suggest however, that this analytic distinction is unnecessary since interlocutors draw on similar repertoires of relation making across sites that are not formally distinct.

For these sellers who spent all day in this downtown market—eating meals amid their wares and shifting between frames of hospitality and market exchange—esiraaɓe as relational creativity allowed some to momentarily build a comforting home amid crates and wheelbarrows. Such was the case with Djiby, the joking relationship-inclined porter whom I introduced in Chapter Three. Employing the language of domestic relocation, Djiby pushed a wheelbarrow which often became a mobile home, a domestic base of operations in the corners and alleys of the market from which he could enact displays of hospitality and generosity. “Mi eggi taho, Souleymane,” (“I’ve moved, Souleymane”) he told me one day as I came upon him slumped in his wheelbarrow which he had parked along a different alleyway further into the Kedougou downtown market.

As I sat by his side, an elderly man soon ambled over. Djiby leapt up and began to meticulously arrange his wheelbarrow the base of which he lined with discarded cardboard from bulk tea boxes. Putting on the final touches with meticulous attention, Djiby addressed the man
effusively, exclaiming “he ko esiraaɓe aŋ.” (“Hey it’s my senior-in-law!”) “Esiraaɓe bismillah moŋ esiraaɓe jooɗee, jooɗee esiraaɓe godɗo wernay esiraaɓe mooɗŋ” (“In-law, welcome to you, in-law sit down, sit down in-law. One ought to welcome one’s in-law”). Along with a body image of deference, and a placement of his respected in-law in a superior position to himself in the wheelbarrow, here Djiby employed the honorific plural jooɗee (-ee, plural/honorific), rather than jooɗo (-o, singular). Djiby urged his esiraaɓe to sit in the carefully laid out wheelbarrow seat where the latter reluctantly sat down. “Wana fii jooɗagol mi ari,” (“I didn’t come here to sit down,”) his guest said, alluding to business with another man at the market.

Sitting embodies an important way of paying respect to one’s in-laws and visitors who are often beckoned to sit down upon their arrival in a compound or family house. Not only verbal honorifics but also such bodily orientations performed a deference which invoked a domestic chronotope, a home, or galle where guests were welcomed, seated, and fed. Like Djiby’s calls of sanaku baiting in the open market in Chapter Three, his use of esiraaɓe was a form of phatic labor, of drawing upon an enacted relational idiom in order to bring others into interaction. Comparing this scene “esiraaɓe, jooɗee,” to aspirational sanaku baitings, “hee aŋ ko Ba,” demonstrates two interactional modes that Djiby employs to build bonds and make contact with individuals in a busy market.

With many others looking on, Djiby’s “esiraaɓe” had a hard time ignoring these advances. Ordinarily, ignoring greetings and similar interactional offers constituted indictable offenses. His “esiraaɓe’s” compulsion to sit down and spend time with Djiby, despite the former’s self-professed unwillingness, attests to the compulsion of the in-law idiom. After his esiraaɓe left, Djiby admitted to me that the man was not really his in-law, but rather a like-aged individual, his goreejo, an individual of the same age. Goreebe, peers of approximately the same
age, benefit from a relationship of familiarity and are often known to tell jokes with one another and to benefit from a license that is often contrasted with relations among members of one’s parent’s generation.

An issue that also complicated the sifting between *keyna* and *esiraabe* was that of effective seniority, i.e. age rank established during the course of interactions. The absence of a formalized age rank system means relative age is often the subject of negotiation since there are no formal boundaries which might distinguish elders from juniors. Those who were close enough in age would call themselves *goreebe*, and the ability to talk in familiar terms was often grounded upon such a relationship. However, there were often different points of view about how much of an age gap could be accepted between individuals to still be considered *gore*. While a gap of several months of separation still qualified for *goreebe status*, this gap could sometimes be stretched up to a range of one or two years. For parents, having siblings that were too close in age was sometimes a liability. As one man explained it to me, if siblings were all closely arranged in age rank “ɓe hersoniray,” they would feel shame toward one another. However, as negotiations of relative age and in-law status in this chapter suggest, individuals will find ways to contest any seemingly given status and manipulate frames of interpretation.

Yet the possibility of flexibility was ever present in establishments of seniority even in the face of seemingly irrefutable chronological sequence. In the village of Taabe, one woman named Hassatou had an elder twin sister, Hadiatou. And yet, the family considered Hassatou to be the elder sibling since she was the one who demonstrated the maturity and judgement to allow her sister to pass before her. Like interactions contesting in-law status, or joking relationships, relative seniority was at times the object of play in interaction. At other moments, different grounds of establishing seniority were offered in various interactions to differentiate among
contenders. Children would often invent mechanisms for determining who was older, for example by wrapping their arms over their heads and measuring how far their hands came down around the opposite ear. Likewise, during the course of the wedding of Mamadou’s younger brother in the town of Kedougou, several men debating seniority began to pull out ID cards as proof of age. However, this itself was an object of contestation since many had had jugements, administrative procedures, whereby families could adjust the age of their children, procedures which became a strategy for students to re-enroll in school if they had missed several years, or to enroll in lower grades as a way to get ahead.

Drawing on work in West Africa, others have noted that this negotiation of seniority permitted a flexibility that engendered competition (Barnes 1987, 260–61):

…in some cases, priorities were worked out, in most, the rules were ambiguous enough to provide some degree of flexibility to the process of evaluating and assigning senior status….possibilities for manipulating the rules…this is what made competition possible.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the building or contestation of categorical in-law relationships during social interactions—often through the use of honorific language and verbal creativity—figure into broader routines of pursuing relations (jokkere enday). A central aspect of in-law relationships is the question of esiraabe and keyna, (senior and junior in-law) which was predicated on a calculation of seniority with respect to the extended family of one’s affines. However, in exploring the negotiation of categorical relations through verbal creativity, I have endeavored to show that license and teasing often travel alongside deference as competing or even complementary strategies.

Just as in-law relationships are invoked and displayed in interaction at which time they may be contested and negotiated, seniority (as with affinity) is not a universal fact that
necessarily stands outside of ways it is established in particular configurations. This is to say that seniority is not merely the function of sequence in age, but also a complex product of status in another realm, of strategies of, for example, self-presentation. Interlocutors relied on grounds of evaluation that were often posited in the immediacy of interaction when seniority and affinity were sorted out on the spot. These moments constituted modes of objectification, particular times at which individuals had to concretize connections among each other, knowledge about relative ages that otherwise might have remained implied.

This level of contestation over seniority thus constituted an element of play that could reorder relationships between individuals. Through a discussion of in-law work parties, of differing strategies for deference and license, and of the negotiation of esiraabe in the context of migrants returning from abroad, the management of esiraabe relationships has been demonstrated to be a practice through which interlocutors managed their social responsibilities in space. Mama Seydou, for instance, through the deployment of honorific talk, sought to maximize a coterie of close friends and relatives who might support him in his advancing years, since he was unable to provide for tea, sugar, and basic necessities. Mamadou, concentrating on networks of colleagues, saw an investment in esirayaagal as somewhat of a distraction to the networks that would advance his businesses. He was torn between maintaining relationships of kin and neighbors in this natal village, while not being overinvested in these demanding relationships. For women attending far away denabo naming ceremonies in the extreme borderlands of Senegal, negotiating one’s status across the axis of in-law and host family was one way of dealing with their long-distance relationship with these village events.

Rather than merely strategic moves by rationally acting individuals, the case of Rune and Ousmane’s discussion demonstrates how sometimes relationships can be oriented around certain
contested details of these relationships, and how co-participants are often arbiters of relational negotiations. In particular, the idiom of *esiraabe* was activated not only in “traditional” forms of affinal alliance building. It also offered ways of managing social relationships in which individuals were separated from social networks across great distances for periods of time (e.g. Ousmane and Rune as well as the example of Sory). While West Africa has provided the conceptual site for the emergence of genealogical theories of kinship, I have shown how individuals contest, evaluate, and construct in-law or kinship relations across social space.
CHAPTER SIX

Placing Relations in the Linguistic Economy of Kedougou’s Downtown Market

"Titles, talismans, copper objects, and the spirits of the chiefs are both homonyms and synonyms of the same nature and performing the same function. The circulation of goods follows that of men, women, and children, of feasts, rituals, ceremonies, and dances, and even that of jokes and insults." (Marcel Mauss 1925, 46).

Introduction

This dissertation began with an analysis of sanakuyaagal, routines that it subsumed in the previous two chapters as part of broader sociopoetic practices of relation making. As embodied and situated linguistic practices, this chapter examines how such linguistic routines in the marketplace mediate the circulation of people and goods in Kedougou’s downtown market. In so doing, they provide tools for building emergent social collectivities, restricting access to goods,
and navigating personal networks. Not merely relationship work, in the first part of this chapter I point out that these forms of talk contribute to the formation of participant frameworks that can be viewed as an emergent infrastructure (Simone 2004). This chapter concludes with a discussion of *jammoore* (“pay to say”) nickname play, a productive site of teasing through which merchants evaluated the utterance of taboo nicknames, thereby negotiating participant relationships in a busy market context. Through these taboo names, merchants evaluated their lives and masculinities as itinerant merchants at the same time that they baited goods from one another. Although this genre was not unknown throughout the region of Kedougou, it became extremely productive in this downtown market setting as a way to build solidarity groups and come to terms with the precarities of life as an itinerant migrant.

**Teasing “Little Ass Master”**

As I had many mornings before, I approached the corner where Guinean kola nut sellers I had gotten to know had been doing business for over ten years. Arriving mid-morning, I slipped in amongst a cluster of seated bodies around his spot, but soon was drawn out by a nearby mass of young men who were swirling about a stumbling figure, laughing and calling out to him. "Mustapha!…eeeee Mustapha!" they called. "Jom babuŋ…jom babuŋ!" "Little ass master!" they shouted in overlapping rounds of laughter. The crowd's calls seemed to push Mustapha's body in opposing directions as he swayed in the taught frequency of the enveloping acoustics. I had on occasion seen Mustapha before, a powerfully built, but laconic man who on occasion worked as a porter in the Kedougou front market. Before this day, Mustapha had been known in the market for his strong reactions to the mention of Guinean president Alpha Conde. Elected in 2010, Conde is a president who is seen to primarily represent the Maninke speaking third of Guinea,
and who was largely opposed by Pular speaking Guineans in the northwest. Just the mention of Conde's name would set Mustapha into a spin. Poor guy, I thought—they're not going to let him escape this nickname, "Little Ass Master." After years of backbreaking labor in the Kedougou markets, Mustapha's peers seemingly mocked him for aspiring for nothing more than a juvenile donkey.

Whereas African market contexts have often been described as chaotic and inscrutable (Ferguson 1999), making sense of these contexts necessitates a closer look at routines of verbal creativity. As I would soon discover, Mustapha’s incipient nickname was just the tip of the iceberg. Beginning with an investigation of this taboo nickname genre, I soon explored a wealth of teasing, testing and baiting routines that occupied many of the market sellers throughout the day. These nicknames, like any other forms of address and reference, were not just a matter of picking out people in conversation, but also entailed placing individuals social imaginaries of cyclical migration and making space in the market. Before examining these routiens in more detail, this chapter begins by examining the linguistic-material economy of Kedougou’s downtown market, composed of customers and market sellers, many of whom are from neighboring Guinea, Gambia, and neighboring villages in the region of Kedougou.

I view these genres of verbal creativity as constitutive of the flexible spatial practices in which market sellers configure infrastructure and circulate across fission-fusion groups through the exchange of nicknames, insults, and money. Against this backdrop, sellers attempt to acquire clients, bait each other into revealing wealth, and tease each other through a nickname avoidance genre, jammoore joking, that becomes a focus of the second part of this chapter. The phatic baiting of joking relationship described in the last chapters presents another example of these practices of sifting through social persons in a crowded market. Rather than talking about
conversational genres and forms of verbal creativity in the abstract, detached from the ethnographic particularity of the space, I use this chapter to situate forms of verbal creativity, naming and teasing in the texture of everyday life, intertwined with the exchange of kola, change, and information. While previous analyses of teasing have focused on social identities, face work, or poetics, I combine these analyses with broader forms of exchange, play, and circulation within Kedougou’s downtown markets. I conclude this chapter by showing that nickname joking provides a way for market sellers to place and keep track of one another in a precarious, peripatetic business.

**Kedougou’s Downtown Market**

Sitting in southeastern Senegal at the crossroads of Mali Bamako and the trading cities of northern Guinea, Kedougou City was in the midst of an economic boom. Ten years ago, Kedougou had been a sleepy border town, and I could have counted the number of motorcycles on one hand. Today, hundreds of cheap Chinese manufactured 150cc *coupet* motorcycles roam the streets of Kedougou, employing an army of mechanics. Although Kedougou's populations had been always been composed from migrant and settling populations from Mali and Guinea, waves of Guinean migrants now flocked to Kedougou as day laborers, merchants, and transporters to pursue the economic opportunities that a new Dakar-Bamako international highway as well as the mining economy afforded. On the paved roads to the large concession mines, lorries transporting heavy equipment and supplies could still be heard in the center of town as they clanked awkwardly over speed bumps that had been designed to slow them down. Sitting at their spots in the downtown Kedougou market, kola nut sellers watched lorry caravans headed to the industrial mines move through town like cars on a freight train. Bearing newly-
painted, identical company logos, each lorry was rendered unique only through a distinct constellation of water coolers, collapsible chairs, and plastic woven mats tucked into exterior nooks and crannies.

While Kedougou was only loosely connected to the rest of Senegal by unreliable laterite roads until the 1970s, the Dakar-Bamako road routed through downtown Kedougou in 2009 further invigorated and reshaped the downtown market area. This newly paved road ran alongside the border of Kedougou’s labyrinthian inner market, composed of small alleys, makeshift tables, and corners stores packed one after the other. The small-scale merchants and workers selling fruit, ready-to-wear clothes, and manufactured goods thus provided an additional layer around the brick-and-mortar shops that composed the skeleton of the market. The main paths that crisscrossed the market were lined with these sellers who had built their operations into the sides of roads. When larger trucks drove down these streets, one by one they would bend, push, and drag their mobile infrastructure to make room. While some sellers carried wares in their arms or had custom-built carts that allowed them to travel across the market areas and into the neighborhoods looking for clients, other sellers anchored in pedestrian cross sections or corners, building relationships with neighboring shops and sellers to stake their claims. As such, their effective range was underwritten by social connections built with the shop owners around them, through which they gained access and shared space with their colleagues. As other scholars have noted, friendships cultivated among wholesale and small-scale merchants has helped solidify a trust that was paramount to sustaining successful economic activities (Warms 2014).

Space in the downtown market emerged through exchanges of speech, talk, and bodily orientations. By likening people to infrastructure, Simone has argued against taking for granted
the teleology of material infrastructure, and for examining how people made use of and reformat ted aspects of their lived environment (Simone 2004). Simone’s analytic, people as infrastructure, is particularly apt in describing Kedougou’s downtown spaces, hinting at ways in which humans shape urban spaces, flexibly transmuting socio-technical infrastructures to suit their needs. In the Kedougou front market, participant frameworks were particularly malleable. These fission-fusion frameworks featured overlapping interactional spaces where market goers continually reconstituted regions of social action as they assembled makeshift furniture in various formations or constituted places of social gravity through the sharing of tea. In this view, infrastructure includes not only walls, lines, and cement “frames”, but rather people also present a structuring force that break ups and reshapes any supposed teleologies of public space and urban planning (Simone 2004).

Not only built of temporary shops and carts, the space created by market sellers with their bodily orientations and arrangements contributed to the infrastructure insofar as these orientations break up space, thereby structuring the possibilities for socioeconomic action. Every day that I went to the Kedougou’s downtown market, I noticed the ways in which individuals slowly shaped the frameworks for interaction, creating circular spots that seemed to invite intense discussion on some days through the arrangement of chairs and selling carts. Other times I would return to find that these small oases of intense social interaction had evaporated. This emergent space quickly dispelled any dualist notion of public and private (Gal 2005), as the sellers managed their spots on a broad continuum—more closely managed conversations, relatively open configurations where tea might attract a new participant, or moments when their displays were outward facing in the hopes of attracting in new clients. Market sellers thus arranged themselves such that walking up to brick-and-mortar stores first entailed navigating the
human pathways of mobile sellers who attempted to draw customers into interaction. Occasionally, this symbiosis between brick-and-mortar stores and mobile sellers was brought into question, with the former occasionally resenting the latter’s ability to siphon off customers with lower prices and conversational finesse. Verbal hooks like joking or client relationships and spatial arrangements provided equivalent strategies for market sellers to grab the attention of possible customers.

Repurposing a paved parking structure area at the entrance of Kedougou’s downtown market, sellers and porters had turned this area into a bustling business area that was the place to go if you wanted to purchase low-cost Chinese manufactured goods like caps, radios, or flashlights. This was one of the first places where artisanal miners and villagers from surrounding areas would stop on their way into town. This space was occupied by dozens of merchants sitting behind small, make-shift stands and counters. Perching in rattan furniture, or on old jerry cans, each stand was topped off with an umbrella, either tied to table legs or fixed to old wheels or other car parts. Political campaigns did, at times, attempt to reformulate the “illogic” of the inner market, casting a shadow over the local organization of shop owners and market sellers. Several months into my field work, the mayor initiated a clean-up operation that evicted most of the “informal” sellers except for kola nut sellers, forcing an improvised reorganization of the space.

An important feature of each trader’s presentation was the ability to—at the drop of a hat—manage wares by quickly covering up and tying down merchandise. Each evening, merchants carefully folded and stacked the merchandise in on itself. Using rope or rubber straps cut from recycled bicycle tires, they tied plastic sheets and rice sacks around their stalls into tight bundles, preparing for their overnight hibernation. In the event of a rain storm, merchants performed a
more hurried improvisation of their habitual technique, after which they would run into the nearest permanent structure. Early in the wet season, rains were first announced first by swirling dust storms. With a keen sense of barometric pressure, traders often responded to the changes in air pressure and the temperature more than they did to visual signs of the sky, which were often obscured by tightly packed two-story buildings. Ostensibly a meteorological phenomenon, these early season storms appeared first as a flurry of dispersing humans and animals, who were followed by plumes of dust and impending rain. These meteorological forces provided strong affordances for intense social interaction. Early moments of calculated preparation inevitably were followed by a quick scramble for shelter. Those unable to make it back home were swept up into corner shops, covered patios and private compounds. *Trois-rous* (three wheel) drivers, shopkeepers, and shoppers suddenly found themselves thrust in upon one another. United against the dust, I was often brought into these improvised moments of greeting and commiseration—a kind of collective effervescence dominated by the loud din of conversation bouncing off of the cement walls inside concrete market buildings.

At first glance, the front market appeared chaotic, providing the space for intense movement of bodies and products. At other times, and particularly in the heat of the day, activities calmed down and I had flashbacks to the calm Kedougou market that I remembered when I was a Peace Corps volunteer from years before. While kola nut sellers and small-scale traders cut up the market space into small inhabitable spaces that afforded circles of sociality, porters, moto-taxi drivers and clients would filter in and out of these spaces as they followed work opportunities throughout the day. Work came in spurts and gusts. When a lorry came in to unload goods into one of the wholesale stores on the perimeter of the space, porters would dissolve themselves from huddled conversations and approach the arriving lorries, hoping to be
part of the unloading team. Once teams were assembled, one or two unloaders would stand in the back of the freight compartment, heaving sacks of rice, concrete, or cooking oil onto their comrades’ heads.

The growth of gold mining, as well as the expansion of its urban population from sub-regional migration, and the development of Kedougou as a political center significantly increased trade in such market goods in the past decade. Many porters remember coming to the Kedougou market from 2010-2012, at which time they benefitted from a boom from gold mining activities. Most saw the profitability of their market work as traders and porters rise and fall with the success of artisanal gold mining and the expansion of inter-regional trade. The years 2011-2012 had been a peak, with a sharp fall in 2013-2014 that coincided with a closure of the mining areas in the wake of the Ebola epidemic as well as President Macky Sall’s attempts to regularize artisanal mining.

**Kola Nut Sellers**

![Figure 46 – Kola Nut Sellers in Kedougou’s Downtown Market (2015)](image)
Kola nut sellers occupied a central position in the linguistic economy of Kedougou’s downtown market, nodal figures who organized truck shipments, loaned and exchanged money, and traded in other big-ticket items such as motorcycles. Selling kola nuts was one of the most difficult networks to get into, and its sale was very profitable with respect to other forms of commerce in the market scene. Many of the same kola nut sellers that I had known at the Kedougou market in my time during the Peace Corps from 2006 to 2009 were still present in 2016. Some had left for Congo or Angola, only to be replaced with a brother, cousin, or friend. As key nodes in the complex rhizome of the front market, kola nut sellers were rooted in their habitual spots from sunup to sundown, returning home only for evening rest.

The participant frameworks of Kedougou’s downtown market were contingent achievements, composed of shifting arrangements in which individuals often moved in between small stools, umbrellas, and the temporary stages created by the bodily alignments of idle workers. Overhearers lurked on the edges, picking up words here and there, and jumping in and out of modes of (over)hearing and participation. Individuals might maintain conversations while seated at great distances from each other, or at other times yell greetings with passersby while they were simultaneously engaged in intimate conversation. Regulars would often hear their jammaore nicknames called out at a distance. Their arrival in the market was often forecast by loud invocations, “get up!” or “millet man!” which were often echoed by other sellers. Nicknames broadcast over the market in these ways were often addressed to a friend-in-the-know, invoked within hearing distance of its target who was thus baited into uptake. In the first part of this chapter I focus on the market as a place of material-linguistic circulation, turning in the second part to the pragmatics of “pay-to-say” nicknames and how they mediated processes of communication.

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120 (see Gaibazzi 2018; Whitehouse 2012).
The instability of participant frameworks in public settings like the front market were partly a result of habits of sharing and redistribution that governed goods in the public view. Names as with gifts, provided mechanisms of exchange and movement. Once put on the fire, a pot of tea became a redistributive opportunity for those who could create or draw on existing connections with the tea patron. Who was to count as present and deserving of tea in an environment where individuals were continuously on their way in and out, was often a continuous background negotiation in market interactions. Refreshments, snacks, or prayers that were publicly displayed similarly drew in people around them. While exchanging greetings was often sufficient payment to admit others comfortably into each other’s co-presence, rights to sit and participate were often monitored by implicit hierarchies in which kola nut sellers sat at the top.

While some kola nut sellers sat clustered in groups of three or four, others claimed small alleyways in the market for themselves. Those who sat in larger groups provided a larger draw for potential clients, and provided a magnetic pull to those on the market, but relied increasingly on their ability to create special relationships with kiliyan who would seek out specific kola nut sellers. Like sanaku correspondences or shared names invoked as phatic affordances to draw people into conversation, market goers relied on verbal baiting and other strategies to sift through a diverse group of circulating individuals in the market. Market sellers often attempted to construct privileged relationships with market buyers, using relational idioms to build a relation of kiliyan. A reciprocal term that sellers and buyers called each other, to be a kiliyan was to have a built a relationship with a seller to whom one might return over and over. In return, buyers could hope to get preferential prices or credit, drawing on established trust with sellers.
Teasing provided a key routine through which individuals constructed *kiliyan* relations, drawing and expanding upon routines of *goreyaagal* (those of the same approximate age) or *sanakuyaagal*. One day as I was sitting with a kola nut seller called Thierno (the same individual who had teased his Malinke host’s daughter in the previous chapter), a man came by to purchase a handful of kola nuts. As he approached, Thierno called him *jallunkeeri*, thus calling out his ethnic group inflected for the Pular “cow” noun class and thereby likening him to a bull. The man smiled, but found revenge in calling Thierno “*pulluy kjuy*” (“the little Pullo”) in return. Although this particular interaction did not follow a widely held *sanakuyaagal* correspondence, previous chapters have shown that interlocutors creatively construct relational idioms between certain social classes that often build upon relationships among ethnicities and patronyms. Kola sellers often teased back and forth with *kiliyans*, and a rebuttal of comic insults often brought *kiliyans* back to known kola sellers.

When providing long-term *kiliyans* with kola, Thierno, one of the most senior kola nut sellers in the front market, had a way of presenting kola nuts in his open palm, making a demonstration of the choice merchandise he had selected for a particular *kiliyan*. He often began such an interaction by asking, “*ko kilo jelu faaleɗaa?*” (“how many kilos do you want?”), even if the anticipated sale was often just a few kola nuts. With an initial assumption of a large order, buyers often had to construct palliatives and excuses that explained away their smaller purchases.

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121 While sellers sold kola by the pound, one pound of it was not equivalent to the next. Ritually important for the purposes of marriage, *sadaka* (religious offering), or entering communities as a guest, kola was of great significance in the West African ritual economy. Containing caffeine and other homologous compounds, kola is said to provide energy and keep hunger at bay. Kola come in three principal varieties, white (*dane*), red (*bode*) and pink or beige (*oole*). Certain types of nuts were preferable for certain preferences. For a *sadaka*, people often preferred white kola in the same way that a white sheep was often preferable to other varieties. While larger kola nuts were preferred as individual pieces and in smaller quantities, many buyers expecting to pass out large numbers of kola nuts at a wedding or other event often preferred large numbers of equally sized nuts. Having a number of nuts of the same size was critical to effective distribution—in this way they could be counted and distributed equitably. Having large differences in the size of kola nuts destined for religious offerings (*sadaka*) thus posed a problem of kola as standard unit. On the other hand, those looking to chew kola regularly but without the coin to afford the best quality often asked for *cuɓe*, the small, blemished, or misshapen nuts that sellers removed from their large sacks to smaller plastic bags on the ground.
If Thierno noticed blemishes on a kola nut as he selected it, he would remove it and search over the surface of his wares for a suitable alternative. Through a performance of meticulousness, he would often pause on three or four kola nuts before choosing a replacement. After being selected, kola nuts were then placed into thin, clear plastic bags. Separate from their purchased lot, *kiliyans* were often given extra kola nuts in a separate bag. Since kola sellers could subtly reduce the quality or quantity of a “kilogram” of kola, long-term, friendly relations often won out over hard-nosed bargaining in buying kola nuts. As such, rather than bargaining over price, sellers would alter the quality and composition of kola to match the price but also the relationship they had with their clients.

Inhabiting a flexible spot built up with shade umbrellas, small seats, kola nut sellers were able to dodge regularization campaigns at the same time that they provided spaces for others come together. In the front market, kola nut sellers like Abdou, Thierno, and others I had known for a decade had managed to establish themselves as central market players. In the market regularization campaigns that saw almost all small-scale traders removed from their tables and stands, only the kola nut sellers managed to initially retain their spots throughout the market. Kola nut sellers’ stations could be minimalistic compositions of a single of sack, behind which they sat on simple stools, often with a moveable umbrella to protect against the sun. Bringing in other chairs, and clustering on small benches, kola nut sellers could, however, create a large space for others to sit in and around if need be. This flexible mobility, along with their trade in a ritually important item, were likely factors that contributed to their not being removed in waves of regularization campaigns, in which other “informal” merchants were successively removed by the municipal government.

Not only drawing on kinship, *sanakuyaagal*, and other relational idioms to construct
relations with colleagues and clients, sellers cultivated familial relations as a way to build influence and connections in the market area. Indeed, whereas kola sellers returned to their rented rooms as renters and guests, the market area served as a “home” where they dispensed hospitality and where they enjoyed considerable social gravity. For lunch, kola sellers would pool their money and organize their kin and friends to cook for them. Around lunchtime, female relatives would bring stacks of bowls to the market, and small groups of kola nut sellers and others would group together to eat. As such, they could share their meals and invite others over to eat who might not have organized these regular deliveries. Silver bowls stacked one on top of another seven or eight-high announced the arrival of these lunches. Having home cooked meals brought over afforded kola nut sellers opportunities for performing hospitality and generosity unavailable to those who went to the low-cost restaurants and eateries tucked in all corners of the Kedougou market.

Kola nut traders were also the first traders to bring Chinese motorcycles to Kedougou. Before there were stores that specialized in the importation of motorcycles, each motorcycle had to be driven individually across the border from Guinea to Senegal. From 2007 to 2013 many of these kola nut sellers like Thierno who possessed the start-up funds for these kinds of investments, would purchase motorcycles out of the box and have them put them together in Guinea. They would then load them up with contraband destined for Senegal, and then drive them from border cities in Guinea to Kedougou across unmarked, often treacherous bush paths. For many years, motorcycles were often parked in front of their kola nut stands, awaiting sale. Crucial to their success were their connections to the *syndicats* (commercial unions), the official association of fruit and agricultural dealers. Many kola nut sellers were those well-connected individuals whose relationships with *syndicats* and transporters in Guinea and Kedougou could
bring you into the kola nut trade. Abdou, for instance, had been trading for at least ten years and in the meantime had brought his younger brother, Mokhtar, into the kola business. Many had side businesses like Abdou, who sold smokes, thin, luxury cigarettes, out of a messenger bag on the side. Kola nut sellers were central figures in the market.

When the market was at a lull, kola nut sellers studied the Qur’an. They most often read from pamphlets that contained particular collections of verses, produced for quotidian study in everyday spaces. Many read out loud at a murmur, quickly reading lines that many could have recited from memory without a written aid. Just behind Abdou’s kola nut selling crew stretched a small pedestrian alley where an elderly trader from Guinea had wares set up on a large table. Elders living in Kedougou as well as some from surrounding villages would meet daily to read the Qur’an together, and listen to exegesis (\textit{fira}) performed by those with Qur’anic training. The front market space was thus layered with those negotiating trade, joking with each other through the calling of taboo nicknames, and pious acts of Qur’anic learning. As I argued in the previous chapter, the intimate coexistence of “pious” and “ribald” performances in these contexts provided a verbal assemblage devoid of contradictions. Porters might playfully wrestle by calling each other outrageous names and subsequently listen to a \textit{fira} on the Islamic history of Anabi Souleymane around the corner from their set-up. While in other parts of West Africa presenting a pious self might provide a strategy to extract oneself from pressure to engage in joking relationships (Marchand 2003), in this context, such playful banter was interwoven into conversations between periods of pious Islamic study. Just behind the largest cluster of kola nut sellers where Thierno set up shop loomed a large stand where a Hausa merchant sold volumes of Qur’anic verses, rosaries, and other religious items. During prayer times, kola nut sellers and other market people would line up in even rows along the facades of the market buildings and
pray in large group formations.

**Exchanging Names, Exchanging Credit**

Individuals circulated throughout the market through the simultaneous exchange of talk and credit. Kola nuts sellers as well as other small traders and shop keepers were regularly in the business of providing credit and paying off past debts. Kola nut sellers on occasion left their spots to conduct business in other parts of the markets—to collect debts, briefly return home, or engage in business transactions on the side. When they left, other colleagues would take their place, and tend to their business. In so doing, they were also momentarily borrowing a prestigious position as the purveyors of kola nuts, a product of strong ritual significance (more on this in Chapter Eight). By lending money, selling on behalf of colleagues, and making change, market sellers were in a constant state of frictional debt with one another. In Kedougou’s downtown market composed of crisscrossing routes and alleys, to be in a state of debt was often to exist in an avoidance relationship with one’s creditors, those one would often avoid through alternate routes.

Thierno, who had been selling kola in Kedougou since 2005, also exchanged CFA, Francs Guinéens, Euro, and on occasion dollars. Just down an alleyway, Younoussa, who tended a small fabric shop just behind the first line of storefronts in the main market, was known to give small lines of credit to those he knew and trusted. Since he often worked with tailors who dominated the alleyway just in front of him, he often provided materials to the tailors as a form of advance. For others, he would write down amounts owed to him in a small notebook, generally extending credit for less than a month. In the time leading up to a festival such as Korité or Tabaski, Younoussa’s credit would be widely distributed. Since many were financing expensive outfit and
fabrics that required moderate investments, his credit provided critical fluidity. Most of the credit Younoussa provided was based on wares for his own store, so providing credit was a way of increasing his sales to those who could otherwise not afford certain fabrics. Similarly, corner stores (*boutiques*) often extended credit to neighboring families who would habitually stop by. However, Younoussa also provided small advances for *dépenses* for certain individuals who needed just a bit of coin to get through the day. When speaking with those who owed him money, Younoussa would often teasingly remind his debtors of how much they owed him. His interlocutors often responded by commenting on how difficult times were, and how hard up they were. For those who owed Younoussa money, lack of funds was performed linguistically with declarations of poverty.

Cash money, as explained by Simmel, also endows its carriers with the unique ability to conceal their wealth and possessions (*Simmel* 1950). In the market, money was treated with discretion, and most avoided displaying or counting money in open. On trips to the market to buy vegetables, women often folded bills into tight clumps, concealing them in the nooks and crannies of their wax *pagnes*. Market goers could thus tuck away cash in multiple places across their person, thereby concealing the total at any one time since revealing one’s budget often undermined efforts to barter for the best price. Supplications by buyers often relied on the admission of insufficiency: “*Ko guluuje diidii tuŋ mi jogi,*” (“I only have one thousand”) exhorting the seller to help them out in procuring necessary items. The furtive life of cash also seemed to reduce its lifespan. Lower denomination bills such as the 500, 1,000, and 2,000 CFA bills were frequently in a state of disrepair, bearing histories of circulation and discretion. Some traders even specialized in the business of buying up old bills.

Just as debt had a way of structuring people’s time-space possibilities of movement,
making change had a way of circulating people through the market area. For macroeconomic reasons that remain elusive, change in cash always seemed to be in short supply. A common joke among those fortunate enough to be in such a position was that with a 10,000 F CFA bill (worth approximately $20), one couldn’t buy anything at the market at all. But when they did emerge, they initiated a process of movement and conversion that saw multiple individuals cycling through contacts in the hopes of making change (and often it was the kola nut sellers who had this kind of cash). Throughout the day, traders often circulated among the stands in search of change, greeting each other and making small talk along the way. Making change was also a form of gift reciprocation that helped form a social map of social-economic entanglements.

While one might be able to coax change out of a larger store even if one had no connections, Kedougou market traders were continuously borrowing small amounts of change from each other, running from store to store in hopes of changing a larger bill. Hopeful that they would be provided with extra change in the form of small denominations, both sellers and buyers often denied having any change. The form of payment appeared as a hidden, second level of negotiation in which buyers often attempted to pay with the largest bills they had available. In this case, they might not only get a good deal on an item, but also have someone else do the labor of finding small change for them. For this reason, most merchants carried money on different parts of their body, and in different stashes. Only when stymied for a significant time, would some give up the hopes that their clients had smaller change, and begrudgingly reach into their hidden stash with appropriate change. Similarly, if sellers loaned money to their colleagues and friends, having stashes of money in different places meant they could hide their effective liquidity in levels of concealment.

Unlike villages—places where one could live without buying everything one needed—
towns were understood by seasonal migrants to be places where money could be made, but
where it was quickly spent. Towns, and in particular their markets, were known to eat money
(ňaamay kaalisi). Returning to natal villages from urban centers like Dakar or border towns like
Kedougou was often accompanied by rants on the difficulty of living in a place where everything
had a price tag and where even the most basic necessities were part of the market economy.122

Those travelling to the Kedougou market from villages surrounding it commonly relied on
networks of kin and ņatigi (host friends) to provide food, shelter, and water when they came into
town. While villages were places where one was largely able to feed oneself without spending
money on any given day, towns were dominated by a monetary market. In the downtown market,
sellers even purchased drinking water in the form of small 400 ml bags filled with purified water
which was sold throughout the market in makeshift coolers by enterprising merchants.

Markets, in particular, were places where money could easily be lost. Dealing in money,
exchanging it back and forth, collecting debts, and buying things in front of one’s associates all
rendered these circulating funds vulnerable. Successful traders often inhabited a position of
patron, which entailed sending others on errands and sharing one’s gains. In West Africa more
broadly, expectations of patronage figured strongly in relationships between those socially and
politically superior and their followers or clients. As such, when one engaged in business,
middlemen who ran errands on one’s behalf were habitually given small amounts of money for
their trouble. For kola sellers who found themselves in one place for much of the day, sending
others on errands became important ways to take care of business, but often required that they

122 Whereas low population pressures and greater common resources meant that inhabitants had been more able to rely on
surrounding natural resources for many basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter, inhabitants now viewed Kedougou as a
place where one had to have money to get by. This market economy was compounded by what most inhabitants perceived to be
rapidly increasing prices due to the demand associated with the growing mining economy. “Fow no seeri jooni,” (“everything is
expensive now”), long-term residents of Kedougou often confided.
share a cut or benefit from the transaction. Furthermore, there were strong expectations of equal
distribution of resources. As such, any funds or objects acquired in public were often subject to
redistributions among those present to be shared.

In the market, a kola nut seller’s wares were particularly susceptible to claims. Kola nuts,
which had strong ritual importance, were a particularly open target of alms and charity, and
therefore had a habit of giving themselves away. Since kola nut sellers each sold from their own
bag of kola nuts, if they left their station to take care of other business, other friends or sellers
replaced them and took momentary charge of their goods. As such, wares displayed for sale and
money exchanging hands were potential targets for redirection. Money exposed to public
trajectories over the course of errands and exchanges was subject to playful but probing attempts
at redirection. Spying a bit of loose change in the corner of a kola nut sellers’ bamboo chair, a
porter hanging out on break announced to others present, “ɗee ɗoo ko miŋ jeey?” (“this here, is
this mine?”), thereby fishing for an accomplice. Sellers presented their wares in large sacks
composed of multiple layers of kola leaves and rice sacks. Sellers generally cut or folded down
the giant sack as they sold down their wares. After opening a new bag, sellers spent the first
several days peering from behind a towering bag. As their wares diminished, their presence
slowly overshadowed the diminishing bag in front of them. Care was taken to ensure that kola
nuts always lay flush, spilling over the top level of the bag. However, the largest and choicest
kola nuts were displayed prominently on the top surface. With such desirable wares sitting out so
openly, kola nuts were often the target of friends on the lookout for a freebie, or those seeking
alms.

Selling ritually important kola nuts, sellers would often be confronted by those seeking
alms, or sadaka. “Sadaka ngiiri Allah,” one could hear alms-seekers approaching the front
market in their daily trips to the market. Like other market customers, alms-seekers often sought out their *kiliyan*, relying on the exchange of prayers rather than cash. When given goods like kola or sugar, or even coins, alms seekers would say a prayer for their benefactors. On a Friday morning as a kola nut seller and I were hanging out under the shade of his umbrella, an elder strolled by the stand. “A yâkay,” asked Thierno (“You chew?”). Sylla held out his hand, and as he was walking away, responded, “mi yahay ka julirde dôo, si a yi’ii laŋ a anday,” (“I’m headed over here to the mosque, and if you see me you’ll know”) hinting at the prayers that would be coming Thierno’s way. Sitting in positions of material vulnerability, kola nut sellers nonetheless could benefit from the prayers they received in return for their valuable wares.

In Senegal and more broadly across West Africa, prayers constituted a liquid form of exchange that could be offered in the immediacy of a quick conversation. Prayers were often given in exchange for good deeds, presents, or support. As such, they provided fluid currency that could be used as part of exchanges in everyday negotiations. In contrast to these fungible, quick paced forms of reciprocation, other forms of exchange require multi-step, ritualized enactments to succeed. What is striking about prayers is the immediacy with which they can be deployed, either as a promise of future prayer or the immediate incantation of Qur’anic verses. Contributions of alms to wandering *talibe*, who recite the Qur’an in exchange for coins or food, is one example (Ware 2014). A focus on alms giving purely in the context of “poverty” and “exploitation” misses larger patterns of patronage and redistribution in West Africa and the role that Islamic prayers play in a broad set of exchanges.

**A Game of Hiding and Uncovering Wealth**

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123 Similar to other currencies and substances of value, *barki* had a physical form and could be ingested (Ware 2014), and one could therefore accumulate it.
The front market assemblage provided a scene upon which actors attempted to accumulate and maintain wealth—if even in small increments—while at the same time limiting access to others. These practices provide one aspect of conflicting strategies of what has been called sharing and hoarding, which constitute the precarious nature of managing one’s wealth in West Africa (Shipton 1989). In the market setting, interlocutors had elaborated forms of verbal and physical play in which they attempted to unearth or divulge each other’s resources. As a verbal strategy, market goers attempted to render their wealth inaccessible through the monitoring and parrying of prying language. A central aspect of these strategies is described by Parker Shipton in his work on Gambian saving: “…saving strategies are mainly concerned with removing wealth from the form of readily accessible cash, without appearing antisocial.” (Shipton 1989, 257).

Making wealth inaccessible entails not only material transformations such as the transformation of cash into cement,124 (see Archambault 2018) or accumulating money far from kin, but also through the monitoring and management of one’s speech over the course of conversational routines in which one might be tricked or baited into indexing one’s holdings. As such, market goers not only attempted to protect wealth through measured speech, but also to bait each other

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124 In an important sense, West Africans prioritized wealth in people, according to which successful individuals attracted not only quantities of labor through which one might grow crops and transform the environment, but also attracted a diversity of talents and competencies (Guyer 1993; Guyer and Eno Belinga 1995). In this context, the hoarding of money or food in the extreme could be interpreted as witchcraft. Savings thus often took a social, redistributive form, as in the case of money keepers, individuals to whom sums of cash were given so that they might safeguard them. At the same time that West Africans value wealth in its ability to provide social ends, their savings and accumulation techniques also take into account these social pressures of redistribution. Many market people I talked to joked that to make more money is merely to accumulate more dependents. One important strategy for market migrants has been to accumulate money far from dense networks of kin in northern Guinea. Another strategy for savings has been to convert surpluses into forms that are resistant to convertibility, thereby withstanding any claims by associates or kin. Strategies of minimal domestic provisioning and buying in small quantities on an at need basis can be seen in this light. In urban areas like Kedougou, individuals have been known to lock savings into the walls of their dwellings. While ten years ago the only two-story buildings made of concrete might be found in the market, these days families with sufficient funds increasingly build with cement. Constructing homes too large for one’s families has certain advantages. For one, surplus rooms that are not immediately needed can be rented out in Kedougou’s increasing renter’s market. Since access to land has become a relative scarcity, it is no longer possible for most incomers to find land and to use locally sourced materials to construct adequate lodging. Many of Kedougou’s teachers, administrators, gendarmes, police, migrant traders, and porters thus had to rent rooms. For many families, these excess funds are used to construct cement walls around one’s home, or rooms that are added onto a central structure one at a time. In many cases, individuals might only have the funds to buy cement for the construction of bricks which could be stacked up and left out for even years before they are finally put to use.
to divulge resources through conversational play.

In the Kedougou markets, it was necessary not only to watch one’s purse and pockets, but also to monitor one’s speech. In Goffman’s analysis of face, engaging in communicative interactions entails a risk: the risk of not conforming to the state of talk, the risk of insulting, or the risk of deploying semiotically infused tokens that can be used by others to characterize or typify (Goffman 1967). Market people engaged in routines that endeavored to bait interlocutors to reveal or defend material possessions. Concentrated in the Kedougou market, but also common across the region, these routines are a form of verbal creativity in which interlocutors prompt and parry attempts to reveal others’ material standing, attempts often resolved through the acquisition of small gifts, tokens, or concessions.

In the market, even the most common greetings can betray one’s material standing. As such, individuals were often wary about sounding too enthusiastic in response to questions. As such, “seeda tuŋ,” (“just a little”) was a safe answer to probing greeting questions like “no yahde,” (“how is it going?”). Speaking too glowingly of one’s life and representing it in too favorable terms was understood by many to index a possible surplus of material goods, and the potential for redistribution and patronage. It could also invite bad luck and the attention of witches. The first time I encountered this phenomenon was when I first began learning Pular in the Peace Corps. My language teacher often counseled us on the best ways to remain polite and open, while not revealing too much. Individuals in Kedougou and Taabe were similarly aware of this fine balancing act. After being greeted in Taabe with a simple, “ko hounduŋ weel dōo” (“what is good here?”), a friend warned me that this could be a probing question. Rather than betraying good fortune, responding in less than effusive ways minimized the risk of revealing one’s good fortune to those around you. In this sense, formulaic or “stock” answers to greetings
in West Africa should not be viewed as uninventive verbal tradition, but rather as strategic solutions in providing appropriate answers to important greeting expectations without revealing too much about oneself. Just like knowledge of how to respectfully engage with one’s elders, strategies for responding to such greetings were part of a practical wisdom honed over years of social interaction.

While certain speaking strategies seemed designed to hide and render inaccessible evidence of material possessions, other strategies honed one’s ability to bait individuals into revealing their wealth. Kédovins found a certain pleasure in repartees, using responses to put the initial interactant on the spot. Questions of substance such as “a ŋaamay teewu,” (“do you eat meat”) could be skillfully parried by the response, “si mi heɓi,” or “if I had some”. Using this repartee puts the pressure back on the questioner. The kola nut sellers of the front market got great pleasure out of explaining these strategic repartees to me.

Monitoring others’ impressions of your personal wealth was a notorious issue among West African migrants, particularly among those who had made it to Europe and the United States. Coming back to natal villages or Kedougou often entailed an evaluation of how successful itinerant migrants had been. Theirs was a fine balancing act between performing success while at the same time not giving evidence of deep pockets with which they might purchase gifts for family and friends back home. In the following exchange, for instance, a man comes up towards a cluster of porters and kola nut sellers that sits between the road and a bulk goods shop. Mobile sellers relied on their position along pathways that required market goers to pass by their stands on their way into brick-and-mortar stores and locations in the interior of the market. A well-dressed man greets the group. A voice calls out from the crowd marking and putting the referent on display by saying, “he went to Dubai,” a place understood to have gainful employment. On
line 6, an older porter, Djiby, bluntly asks the man if he brought back any money. Beginning to respond, “I did,” the man gets sucked more and more into revealing his resources. Right after line 8, he remains silent and leaves, no longer able to maintain the conversation without divulging his assets to Djiby’s insistent prodding. As such, silence provides an important strategy in such situations where to speak is to continue to provide others with indexes of one’s wealth and capacity for patronage.

**Figure 47 – “He Went to Dubai”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Traveler</td>
<td>oui () salamalaykum</td>
<td>yes hello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>malaykum salam</td>
<td>hello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bystander</td>
<td>o yahuno Dubai</td>
<td>he went to Dubai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>a yahno Dubai</td>
<td>you went to Dubai?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Traveler</td>
<td>eey</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>a addi kaalissiiji diŋ</td>
<td>did you bring the money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Traveler</td>
<td>mi addii</td>
<td>I did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>jelu</td>
<td>how much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td>((traveler leaves))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Baiting techniques could be as blunt as “ko honďuŋ adordaa laŋ?” (what did you bring me?). Responses could be disarmingly blunt in return. When a boy once asked an adult friend of mine, “ko honďuŋ adordaa laŋ” after returning from a trip to Spain, the latter responded with a stock insult “bottere maa.” (“your balls”). A stock insult between young boys, such a strong rejection could only be successful across great distances in age or strong relationships. Another possible response was silence or unintelligible speech. “Diallo, ko honďuŋ marudaa laŋ, ko eŋ ŋaatigi” (“Diallo, what did you save for me, we are friends”), elicited only a mumbling, unintelligible response. Not responding, or tactfully avoiding such a direct question meant one did not have to spell out the fact that one didn’t bring anything along. In the village, these kinds of baiting questions were often asked of those returning after a period of being away. These questions were often posed to individuals returning from journeys, as for example from a mining area seen as a destination where one could make money and therefore a trigger for searching
questions. A *neldaari* or host gift was a common request after returning from travels, even in common conversation.

I was not immune to this kind of probing solicitation. Having parked my motorcycle in the market one afternoon, a market porter I had known came up to me, and after greeting, casually asked for my motorcycle, “okkaŋ moto maa.” (“give me your motorcycle”). Although our relationship was clearly a product of my being a white Westerner seen to have larger funds, these kinds of baiting requests were common among equals. Part of the sport, it seemed, was seeing how one’s interlocutor would respond. Certain professions were more vulnerable than others. Those with cars were particularly concerned with dealing with such jealousy. The evil eye, as it is sometimes described, was something *chauffeurs* were commonly concerned about. Many kept dried lemons in their glove compartments, where the tart qualities of the fruit could counteract the sweetness of vehicle itself. Similarly taxi drivers often hung single infant shoes, or cow tails from their bumpers to achieve the same effect. In the next part of this chapter, I focus on a genre of “pay-to-say” nickname joking through which market sellers baited and teased each other with nicknames, in which ratification of use was acquired through payment in the form of money or goods in kind.

**Baiting Relations in the Market: Phatic Baiting**

Rather than merely a genre of social negotiation that existed at a “virtual” relational level, routinized interactional genres could function to bring bodies into contact, providing an interactional resource for manipulating space through verbal baiting. For some in the Kedougou market, joking relationships could be used strategically as a way to make connections, what one might call phatic baiting, in a jumble of action. While other literature on joking relationships has
attempted to characterize its primary functions as a mediator of positive social relations, or alternatively as inter-ethnic tension (Canut 2006), at a basic level, joking relationships—like other first-part greetings or questions—could compel listeners and overhearers to respond, and open up a channel. Zuckerman has pointed out that phaticity carries no necessary function, for example that of positive relations, and possibly encompasses negative, or disruptive qualities, which the example I draw on demonstrates (Zuckerman 2016).

One porter well known porter, Djiby Diallo, often used joking relationships as a phatic affordance to bait possible joking cousins into interaction with him. This kind of verbal fishing can be usefully compared to the “dropped remarks” in Barbados (Fisher 1976), in which insults called out in public settings were attached to referents only after they fell into the trap, singling themselves as the targets “all along”.

Whereas dropping remarks could apply to anyone, sanaku remarks already contained somewhat selective principles of addressivity, aspiring to pick out those who would consider themselves in a joking relationship with Diallo. As such, in the case of sanakuyaa gal, invoking a particular patronym often carried with it an affordance for addressing its joking correspondents.

Djiby often used this joking relationship routines to bring in other passers-by to his orbit. He was particularly keen on them, and I began to notice way in which he used them to recruit an audience. Lying down in a wheelbarrow between jobs, he would often call out the name of joking partners to an open market, hoping to bait someone into uptake: “hee, aŋ ko Ba?” (“hey, are you a Ba?”) Playing the odds and placing his chips on a very common last name in the region, Djiby thereby attempted to bait Bas to respond by drawing on local conceptions of

\[\text{\footnotesize{125 It is interesting to note that there are so many examples of similar forms of phatic baiting, dropping remarks, or signifying as forms of teasing (L. H. Morgan 1996) across the African diaspora. Although it is out of the scope of this dissertation to make strong claims about the sharedness of such practices, there are good reasons to hypothesize that certain forms of joking relationship-style teasing may have been carried across the African diaspora, as noted by other authors (Abrahams 1972, 1989; M. H. Morgan 2002).}}\]
addressivity filtered through *sanakuyaagal* correspondences. After this initial connection was achieved, it was difficult for those individuals to ignore him. Not only using conversational compulsion, Djiby often set up his wheelbarrow between rows of kola nut sellers at the entrance to the front Kedougou market. Those wanting to pass to the inside of the market, or on to the shops that formed the outside ring around the market would pass by him on their through. As such, Djiby’s verbal performances combined with his bodily alignment in relation to the spatiality of the market combined to form a strategy of phatic baiting that might capture social relations in the market. At one particular moment, Djiby clasped the hand of a young man squeezing his way through. “Ko Diallo kaa,” (“It’s Diallo, right?”) exclaimed Djiby. “Ba,” said the young man softly. As the young man awkwardly attempted to distance himself, Djiby continued to play upon the bodily exchange between (polluted) joking partners, exclaiming “he faut mi soodo.” (I need to wash my hands now). After these and similar exchanges, Djiby would often ask those he met for a small contribution, “addii godfou” (“give me something”).

Djiby’s use of first part questions drawing on joking correspondences demonstrate extreme strategies in mobilizing responses from a chaotic market. Stivers and Rossano, for instance, provide a set of features which increasingly set expectations for mobilizing response, including interrogative prosody, interrogatives, recipient-focused epistemics, and speaker gaze (Stivers and Rossano 2010). Djiby’s placement of his body along the axes of foot traffic to and from boutique shops demonstrates a future oriented strategy of eliciting response and participation. If body alignment provides an act of orienting towards interlocutors as potential (Sidnell 2014), addressivity can be anticipated and need not be in response only to co-present participants. Orienting one’s seat and bodily position to maximize potential addressees thus provides a way of anticipating and future interlocutors.
Baiting joking cousins through the deployment of insults, Djiby was engaging in phatic baiting, which played upon expectations of reciprocation in conversational insulting. Scholars in the tradition of Conversation Analysis (CA) have examined this patterned organization of speech in interaction through analyses of sequencing, in which one statement, often called a first pair part, makes contextually relevant and often elicits responses as second pair parts by interlocutors. The cost of contravening such conventions are no less than one’s face or reputation, and are often morally evaluated (Keane 2014; Goffman 1967). Although in the literature flouting joking relationship conventions is often said to entail a fine, the interactional costs of contravening norms often preclude any necessity of instituting a fine, as is reported in some literature on joking relationships. This scene confirms a point of clarification regarding phaticity made by Zuckerman in his work on Laotian boule players (Zuckerman 2016). That is, phaticity should not come to stand only for a positive valence—stereotypically perhaps as in two Englishmen engaged in polite, but meaningless conversation about the weather—but instead it can refer to disruptive or violent modalities. Indeed, clear distinctions between insult, violence, and camaraderie are blurred in many joking encounters.

While I have argued that sanakuyaagal entails the capacity for reinvention, rejecting sanaku talk itself was a possible interactional strategy, a rejection that often necessitated levels of explanation and reflexivity. The following exchange occurred as Djiby found a seat to rest upon among the kola nut sellers at the entrance. Djiby often found such a place close to the kola nut seller Lulu Ba, who ostensibly sits in a joking relationship with Djiby. Although I argued that joking relationship routines are more flexible than structural accounts might suggest, it is nevertheless difficult to ignore joking relationships altogether, much in the same way that it is hard to ignore a greeting entirely without incurring a social cost. Lulu Ba, a kola nut seller in
Kedougou’s downtown market, provided a strong exception to this. He once countered Djiby’s joking partner talk with a scathing critique that likened joking relationships to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. “Gasi taw, la traîte des noires,” (“It’s over now, the black slave trade”) Ba exclaimed the first time that I witnessed Djiby attempt to tease him. The necessity to resort to such a nuclear option, however, only seems to further demonstrate the strong compulsion of entering into joking relationships. A moment of disjuncture like this one furthermore demonstrates how to dismantle particular interactional routines also necessitates verbalizing particular connections or assumptions that might have remained implicit.

In a subsequent encounter in the same part of the market, the eschewing of a joking relationship itself proved to be an important form of social action through which interlocutor insisted instead on other relationships. That is, denying or dismantling a proposed relationship is not only an interactional failure, but moreover a form of social action in its own right. Sitting with Lulu and Djiby one morning, a woman comes over to our group with a pale in her hands, greeting our group. Although I had never met face-to-face, I had seen this woman at the market before. Lamarana Diallo was part of a community of individuals living with leprosy, who came to the Kedougou market each morning asking for alms and kola nuts. On line 12, Djiby introduces me as a fellow Diallo. He makes a point to call the woman by her patronym, Diallo on line 14. In so doing, Djiby makes public her patronym for those who might have not known. In his subsequent comments he further insists on identifying me to her as a Diallo and not a Ba. This information about her patronym affiliation is a first step in bringing her into the action of joking relationship talk and can be thought of as an initial recruitment. This simple act demonstrates several important lessons. First, that an individual’s stance is not only the product of self-directed, intentional orientations, but is established in collaboration. Secondly, it
demonstrates that joking relationship correspondences are ratified and deployed as a publicly available action interaction.

**Figure 48 – “He’s Part of Our Family”**
from 2015_08_21_AN01
Djiby = Djiby Diallo, a porter
Lama = Lamarana, a market-goer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>ko Diallo o yette [wana Ba</td>
<td>His name is Diallo, not Ba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Me</td>
<td>[himo Amerik taho (.2)</td>
<td>She is in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>a nani Diallo (.25)</td>
<td>Do you hear Diallo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>wa? (.35)</td>
<td>Ya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>ko mussiñe meŋ de ko Diallo o yette[te wana Ba</td>
<td>He’s part of our family, his last name is Diallo and not Ba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>[ko Diallo o yetta=</td>
<td>He is named Diallo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>=eey</td>
<td>Yup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not long after this exchange takes place, Lulu Ba presses a few kola nuts into the arms of the woman, exclaiming “hino goro oŋ.” (“Here’s the kola”). Djiby nevertheless continues to tease Lulu Ba, exclaiming “o wujjay de!” (“He steals!”). On line 43, Djiby launches yet another insult towards Lulu Ba “ah here is the thief over here”. However, on line 44, the woman Lamarana defends Ba to Djiby Diallo by saying “Oo doo kadi ko kiliyan aŋ a nani,” (“This one here is a client, you hear?”). In so doing, Lamarana seemingly defies the stance predicted by her patronym, and defends the side of her joking cousin, Ba.

**Figure 49 – “This One Here Is A Client”**
From 2015_08_21_AN01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>=ah hino gujjo oŋ gaa oo doo=</td>
<td>Ah here is the thief over here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>=o’ooye (.6)</td>
<td>No way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>oo doo kadi ko kiliyan aŋ a nani(.)</td>
<td>This one here is a client, you hear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Djiby</td>
<td>he oo kiliyan maa alaa nafoore (.25)</td>
<td>Your client is worthless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>eh o'oooye (. )</td>
<td>Eh no.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the market context, the term *kiliyan* (client) refers to a privileged relationship that is developed between buyers and sellers who seek each other out. As a buyer, to have a *kiliyan* is to return to a seller regularly, thereby benefitting from better terms of sale and reliable products. Amidst a market in which kola nut sellers, clothes merchants, and food sellers often are found together in groups throughout the market, creating relationships with particular buyers is an
important strategy in differentiating oneself from one’s competitors. Diallo’s defiance of the joking conventions thus presents an investment in the relationship between herself and Lulu Ba, a person she is hoping will provide her with kola nuts as alms on her regular trips to the Kedougou market.

In this sense, eschewing the logic of joking relationships, and invoking a kiliyan relationship helps her insist on her solidarity with Lulu Ba that much more forcefully. This interaction demonstrates that flouting the interactional pressure to insult one’s joking cousin, or align oneself with one’s like-named interlocutors may offer individuals resources to insist on other possible relationships. While Lamarana could not entirely ignore the relational axes invoked by Djiby, she could strategically flout an ostensible sanaku connection to reinforce her kiliyan relationship with the seller. The way in which Lamarana Diallo invokes a relationship of kiliyan to counter any purported joking relationships demonstrates not only that joking relationship routines are not automatic, and can be contested, but also that they sit in relationship with other (interrelated) idioms through which individuals could ground relationships.

**Jammoore Joking**

The first part of this chapter began by situating Kedougou’s downtown market as a space created every day through flexible participant frameworks and assemblages of storefronts, mobile carts, and ambulatory sellers. Here, the exchange of jokes and credit circulated people throughout the space—people who might at times get tangled up through the phatic affordances of nickname baiting, or the verbal hooks of kiliyan or joking relationships routines. The market was an intense site of circulation—of bodies, talk, and debt that structured relationships. By sending each other on small errands, by entrusting each other with funds, or by settling debts,
market sellers found each other mutually entangled in a state of circulation. Through practices of baiting and prying talk, market sellers engaged in forms of verbal creativity in which they attempted to reveal or claim a part of funds caught in between hands. Jammoore joking provided a significant site of verbal creativity through which market goers teased one another in routines of baiting and banter. It is especially important to examine the spatial and pragmatic context of the market which gives rise to particular enactments of the emerging jammoore joking rather than merely to interpret them broadly as “cultural” systems associated with particular communities.

In the next section I examine in greater detail a highly salient dialogic genre of taboo name-play called jammoore. During such routines market sellers teased each other by invoking taboo nicknames of folly and failed aventure. Specifically, jammoore joking provides a way for migrant sellers to account for and keep track of each other by using in-group knowledge of nickname jokes as one acoustic component of group membership within a market season when people could otherwise lose track of each other. They also provided ways for increasingly peripatetic migrants to make sense of their precarity, and to come to terms with masculinity. In the context of a busy market, jammoore joking, sanakuyaagal, and the construction of kiliyan relationships provided resources through which individuals could sort out colleagues and customers. Comparing jammoore joking with sanakuyaagal, in a certain sense, reveals the two interactional routines at opposite ends of a spectrum in terms of the particularity of indexicalities mobilized during the course of these routines. For instance, while joking routines are widely invokable by drawing on stereotypical relationships between patronyms and ethnic groups, even without reference to any particular life histories, jammoore teasing often draws on intimate personal histories of humor and tragedy, and indeed intimate knowledge or payment into this
ratified knowledge qualified one as a participant.

Although the traders and workers of Kedougou’s front market engage in various forms of teasing and joking, this practice of “pay-to-say” nickname joking stands out as distinctive. Most traders were Pular speaking men from northern Guinea who had come in to benefit from Kedougou’s economic upswing from gold mining and increased trade. Rather than a conventional assortment of names like Mamadou, Thierno Ibrahima or Thierno, the market’s onomastic ambience juxtaposed otherwise familiar objects, places, and phrases: “teach-us-here”, "albino lover", "Dakar", "Espagne", "honey", and "pillow". As nickname routines, these forms of calling can be understood as metonymic tags, recalling a past folly or memorable story that was encapsulated by an original cast of name givers.

These nicknames are particularly clear examples of interdiscursivity, the way in which talk from one interaction can be redeployed in new scenarios but still index past interactions or voices. In a Bakhtinian sense, every word carries with it a taste of its previous invocations; likewise, these ways of calling are saturated with stories of humor, pain, and intersubjective experience (M. M. Bakhtin 1981). Other work on nicknames has highlighted this interdiscursive, metonymic dynamic. In West Papua, nicknaming practices described by Rupert Stasch demonstrate similar processes of interdiscursivity in which forms of nickname address evoke shared stories that co-construct forms of dyadic personhood (Stasch 2011). Such references are not a phenomenon limited to nicknames, however, according to Keith Basso’s work in "Speaking With Names," but rather even metonymic references to a place name of a narrative could airlift ancestral stories from the past and deliver them to the present (Basso 1988).

Called \textit{jammoore} or \textit{waccoode}\footnote{While I most commonly heard the term \textit{jammoore} in reference to these “pay-to-say” nicknames, I also occasionally heard the term \textit{waccoode} used. This latter term was also used to refer to patronymic “praise names,” like “Diallo jalla rawna,” or “Toure} in Pular, nickname joking in the markets of Kedougou is
regulated by a system of ratification in which access to restricted names is mediated by the payment of a fee or compensation. As such, restricted names can be understood as taboo names, regulated by a linguistic economy in which one can acquire usage rights through the payment of money or material goods—a "pay-to-say" model. Through semantic obliqueness, deft plays on words, and stance alignments, market goers navigated their restriction and enforcement, regarding the status of which nicknames were to be considered taboo, the amount to be paid, and how these would be distributed. These negotiations often occurred immediately after the climactic utterance of the taboo name in front of this referent individual, in which a payment was often demanded in return for transgression. In many cases, a third party who was ratified to say a particular taboo name would act as an instigator, not only baiting individuals into saying a taboo name but also attempting to extract a monetary fine for its violation. Although anthropological work on insult and taboo has pointed to ways in which restrictions invite violations, this genre affords an opportunity to analyze how taboos come to be formed discursively, and how these dynamics mediate participation and broader group membership.

Goffman’s writings have been extremely productive in analyzing how face-to-face interactions become moments of contestation and negotiation over face work (Goffman 1967). Although negotiation of face for Goffman was a basis on which people invested in face-to-face interactions, Goffman left to cultural variation the specific forms that face could take, e.g. honor or dignity. In this sense, face is an interactional goal in itself—something to protect, guard, and defend. One of Goffman’s primary metaphors is that of traffic, which can help us get at the strategic principles that might underlie a game of face, how people defend each other, invest in other interlocutors, and integrate social conceptions (like honor, dignity, etc.) into the interaction.

Mande Mori,” as I detailed in Chapter Four. The semantic overlap of these terms further hints at the inseparability of praise oratory and taboo within a linguistic economy, a point I argued in Chapter Five.
In the context of jammoore joking, traffic often led to the saving of face beyond a dyadic exchange between instigator and target, motivating opportunities to co-participants to evaluate and monitor speech.

Goffman points out that saving face and impinging upon others’ face can acquire the status of a game. Knowing the ways in which people manage face impingements, one learns what kinds of verbal moves one can get away with. In one sense, jammoore joking routines can be thought of as a way of a group-managed mechanisms for teasing that not only allow for ratified plays upon interlocutors’ face, but also strategies for mitigation that involve the exchange of cash or goods. Indeed, the game of jammoore teasing was often to evaluate what aspects of speech were to be sanctioned, and to develop strategies for almost defying semantic or formal boundaries. Rather than putting the burden on individuals to construct methods of compensation or mitigation at each juncture, jammoore routines provide a mechanism for individuals to test the limits of teasing in such a way that would otherwise require great personal risk. In similar fashion, Irvine’s analysis of xaxaar practices in coastal Senegal show that in-laws could eschew responsibility for insulting wedding poetry if it was voiced by others and composed as part of a long-standing genre of poetic expression (Irvine 1992).

Not an isolated practice, paying fines during jammoore exchanges fits into a pattern of linguistic, material exchange in which small sums are paid for trespasses or in reconciliation across West Africa, notably in the case of joking cousin relationships and forgotten items, or as a shadow reflection, paying griots for praise speech (Irvine and Gal 2000; Irvine 1973). While not unheard of outside the market area, the enforcement of monetary fines was more common in the market setting. Routines of jammoore joking furthermore sit aside other forms of verbal teasing and baiting in the market, through which market sellers attempted to get deals from each other,
benefit from shared resources, and humorously filch small amounts of money or kola nuts from their colleagues. As such, money and open wealth were always at risk of being intercepted. A common practice at the market was to play on the restricted nature of *jammoore* nicknames. As a newcomer to this routine of verbal creativity, my role as anthropological researcher and my introduction to new members of the market crew were first translated through *jammoore* joking routines.

One common form of nickname play was to bait participants into uttering the nicknames of present parties. The techniques of instigation varied from the blunt instrument, *innu kolce* (“say forelimb”), to more nuanced forms of extortion and semantic obliqueness. In the following example, a kola nut seller asks me a question whose answer would entail saying someone’s nickname, “Dix Heures.” Dix Heures and others were standing by and listening in for any possible violation. Although these scenarios were most often conducted in a good humor, they could at times get tense, particularly in phases of distributing compensation. The following examples provide some of the textures of these baiting strategies.

**Figure 50 – “What’s After Nine O’clock?”**
From 2015 08 05 AN01 @ 00:16:50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alarba</td>
<td>Si neuf heures feyï ko l’heure hombo haaludaa?</td>
<td>If nine o’clock passes, what time do you say then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>Wi’u a andaa, wi’u onze heures moins.</td>
<td>Tell him you don’t know, say it’s almost eleven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarba</td>
<td>O’ooye, si neuf heures feyyï ko l’heure hombo woni?</td>
<td>No, if nine o’clock passes, what time is it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At other times, market sellers entrapped each other through various taunts, including an offer of money, as in this case. In the following exchange, Farba, a young Guinean man stepping in for a kola nut seller is teasing an elderly leatherworker, Jom Wuro, who is low on cash and suffering from a momentary headache. Kaolack, the bearer of the nickname the leatherworker is being dared to utter, is present in the encounter and lurking as an overhearer. Despite Farba’s offer of money, the leatherworker is unwilling to say the name of the co-present referent of the nickname.
He is unwilling to take the chance, even with the offer of a bit of coin.

**Figure 51 – “You Will Speak”**
From 2015_09_15_AN01
Farba: young Guinean merchant
Samba: older Jaxanké leatherworker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Farba</td>
<td>Samba a suusoyaali si a haalanii godfüŋ mi jonete mbuddié (1.2)</td>
<td>Samba you don't dare if you say something I'll give you money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Samba</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>Samba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Samba</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
<td>Samba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Samba</td>
<td>a fimndinde Kaolack (1.5)</td>
<td>You're waking up Kaolack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kaolack</td>
<td>(.9)</td>
<td>Kaolack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Samba</td>
<td>hah (.2)</td>
<td>Hah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Farba</td>
<td>Kaolack (1.0)</td>
<td>Kaolack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Samba</td>
<td>nəa (.4)</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Farba</td>
<td>Kaolack Kaolack (3.1)</td>
<td>Kaolack Kaolack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>si a haali mi yobete hino döö mi jonete mbuddi din (.5)</td>
<td>If you speak I'll pay you here you go I'll give you the money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although *jammoore* baiting was a very common activity that defined talk among this community of market sellers, it was also a practice through which I as an ethnographer was brought into social relations in this area. In the next example, a market seller introduces an individual to me by their *jammoore* nickname and to see if I would take the bait and repeat it in subsequent conversation. Although I caught on after a certain point, baiting me was often an initial joke through which I got to know some of the market sellers whom I had not known years ago in my time in Kedougou as a Peace Corps volunteer.

**Figure 52 – “Forelimb”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man1</td>
<td>hida e jam</td>
<td>Are you well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Man1</td>
<td>tanaa alaa gaa?</td>
<td>Is there any evil?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Man2</td>
<td>no ëeynguure ndej</td>
<td>How is the family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Man1</td>
<td>hife e jam, barikalla</td>
<td>They are in peace, thank God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Man3</td>
<td>o kãdĩ ko kolce</td>
<td>This is “forelimb”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Man1</td>
<td>kolce</td>
<td>Forelimb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Man3</td>
<td>heeehhhh</td>
<td>Haha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Man1</td>
<td>min ko Daby mi wi’ete</td>
<td>My name is Daby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>ko hondũŋ woni kolce</td>
<td>What is “forelimb”?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general terms, both before and during *jammoore* joking routines, those who paid the jammoore referent then had to right to use this nickname. While one could be ratified as a taboo-utterer by paying a fee, an original host of ratified individuals were those present from the
moment of the initial name’s inception. This payment was often qualified in the following terms, “si a yobii hida waawi haalude,” (“If you pay up, you can say [it].”) However, the under-determination of other aspects was a productive aspect of this conversational routine that afforded significant interactional negotiations. These aspects included how much to pay, to whom this was given, who might share in the compensation, and more broadly, what modalities of utterance were to be policed. Regarding the latter, what is to count as an "utterance," a token of the type that is taboo name? Do topically related, but semantically oblique euphemisms, bodily enactments, or reported speech count? In so doing, the market goers were engaged in similar analyses of voice, reported speech, language ideologies that we as analysts claim for our own.

Looking instead at the way taboo violations are policed and enforced is to view taboo as a negotiable practice. Recent work on taboo has focused on the non-referential functions of taboo—how they project participant frameworks and how they are contested or leak across registers (Fleming and Lempert 2011). This genre of taboo names presents several interesting questions for anthropological work on taboo and insult. The “pay-to-say” taboo names provide an opportunity to examine forms of policing and monitoring. Rather than emanating from tradition, religion, or culture writ large, this genre provides an opportunity to examine the way in which taboos are negotiated in small-group face-to-face interaction—how they are constructed and enforced over multiple encounters and how their invocations mediate group formation.

Even as an original cast of individuals present at an event could claim to have given rise to a particular jammoore nickname, such nicknames acquired taboo status through subsequent routines of evaluation and policing. The emergence of jammoore taboo names was such that they could be construed as having been taboo names all along. As with insults, the construction
of taboo crucially involves not only the utterance of taboo language itself, but also the charge and evaluation of talk as taboo (Irvine 1992). In the following figure, I show how among many possible nicknames, certain names were discursively constructed *post facto* as *jammoore* taboo names to be restricted.

**Figure 53 – Taboo and Temporality**
The above line refers to a post-facto reinterpretation of how taboo names are imagined to “always have been” taboo from the beginning. The lower line shows how taboo names are, in fact, created out of routines of teasing in subsequent interactions after the initial (often embarrassing) baptismal moment.

Research on nicknames has been particularly productive in the way they allow us to track processes of group belonging and social formations. For instance, Jacquemet has analyzed ways in which nicknames were seen as emblematic of membership in an Italian criminal gang (Jacquemet 1992). In the case of the Kedougou market and among those who know each other’s taboo names, utterance of one taboo name often calls out for the return of another. Strings of taboo names thus often followed each other in rapid succession across the space of the front market: "ten o'clock! three-pound kola! rice man!" providing a dense acoustic image of shared group membership. The arrival of a friend was often forecast by calls of a nickname, with other nicknames exchanged across stretches of the Kedougou market. In this way, the addressivity of such taboo names followed along the lines of ratified callers whose shared substance was taboo. However, they also called out to others who might yet become initiated—for a price.
Since taboo names often travelled in acoustic bundles, being ratified in one taboo often indexed one’s rights to others as well. Knowledge of particular nicknames also indexed knowledge of others through histories of use. Doubt and discussion about who might have rights to a certain name was therefore an element of nickname routines. In certain interactions, participants would try to keep track and limit the ratification through paying their way in. For instance, after a kola nut seller paid a number of *petit kola* to an acquaintance for uttering his *jammoore*, the latter attempted to limit the nature of this compensation to the kola nut seller alone "*ko kanko tuŋ soodi,*" ("he’s the only one who bought in"). This was a concern precisely because there was a risk that those also participating in the enforcement of fines would try to gain ratification by association. In so doing, the namee is attempting to combat leakage of ratification to others through their co-presence.

**A Game of Fruit and Soap: An Extended Example**

In the following example, I examine an extended case of *jammoore* joking among a group circled around a kola nut seller’s spot. As various nicknames are planted in the conversations, their status as possible violations are evaluated by co-participants who identify and police forms of nickname license in interaction. While some names don’t acquire the status of taboo objects, others—through the ways they are evaluated in interaction—require monetary redress. As such, *jammoore* joking demonstrates modes of attunement and monitoring displayed during the flow of conversations, in which overhearers and audience would attune to each other as names were being tested out. In some cases, individuals would allude to names in introductory statements, asking for the “permission” of others in the party who might then share in the guilt of uttering a taboo name: “*bappa jooni he jooni mi haalana ɓe fii sigge oŋ kadi yo mi haalu.*” (uncle now hey
now should I tell you about the little [inception event] too, should I say it?).

In this encounter, Abdou progressively presents Mama Seydou under various nicknames which are progressively evaluated by co-participants. In line 25, for example, Abdou presents him as “paquet maaro,” a move that is remarked upon by a nearby fruit vendor, Diallo. The latter calls out Abdou for his utterance of “paquet saabunde maaro,” stating on lines 29-30, “ye uncle, you said it.” Just after this calling out, Abdou and his brother Mokhtart continue on a seemingly nonsensical conversation that semantically touches on the meaning of the nicknames.

**Figure 54 – “Paquet Maaro”**
From 2015_08_03_AN01
Abdou = 30s, male Guinean kola nut seller
Mokhtar = 20s Abdou’s younger brother, a Guinean kola nut seller
Mama Seydou = elderly male client being teased
Merchant = male fruit merchant
Dudu = visiting male Guinean merchant who knows Abdou well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>wana de Seydou(.)</td>
<td>It's not Seydou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>ko paquet maaro (.35)</td>
<td>It's rice pack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Me</td>
<td>ko (.6)</td>
<td>It's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>ko paquet saabunde maaro (.25)</td>
<td>It's rice pack of soap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Mokhtar</td>
<td>paquet saabunde ni ni ko temede jeenay (1.7)</td>
<td>Right now a packet of soap costs 4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>he bappa (.5)</td>
<td>He uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>a haalii=</td>
<td>You spoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>=paquet saabunde maaro ko ko quatre mille (1.1)</td>
<td>A paquet of rice soap is 4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Mokhtar</td>
<td>jooni be be beydi temedere (.35)</td>
<td>They've increased it by 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>eh- quatre mille cinq cents(.)</td>
<td>Eh four thousand five hundred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Mokhtar</td>
<td>eeyo=</td>
<td>Yup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>= a wa ni ni Adja Ndiaye no yeeyude fonio ko seeri (3.1)</td>
<td>Alright Adja Ndiaye is selling fonio at a premium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>((laughter))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Mokhtar</td>
<td>eh (.65)</td>
<td>Eh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>Adja Ndiaye no yeeyude fonio ko seeri (2.0)</td>
<td>Adja Ndiaye is selling fonio at a premium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Mokhtar</td>
<td>eh-ah:ah</td>
<td>Haha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In so doing, they talk in semantic circles around the subject of Seydou’s nickname, assessing the price of rice and the qualities of “rice soap” in a later part.127 As the kola nut sellers continue to adumbrate the prices of various commodities which index Seydou’s nickname,

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127 Lempert has argued that the term “indirectness” implicates a number of distinct phenomena (Lempert 2012c). In this case, the way in which the object of reference (mango or laare) implicates a different referent or target demonstrates how indirectness should be analyzed in the context of local pragmatic considerations which emerge amid histories of interaction.
another porter in line 35 mentions that fonio, a local grain, is being sold a premium by a well-known merchant: “Aya Ndiaye no yeeyude fonio ko seeri.” Fonio, ostensibly topically aligned with Abdou’s and Mokhtar’s discussion, is in fact the nickname of another well-known porter. Seydou, the object of Abdou’s teasing, jumps on this. On line 43, he urges others to continue saying it, “mido anndi mi nawyi hidëa waawi wi’ude fonio oŋ,” (“you know I’m old you can say fonio”) egging on his fellow interlocutors, “hombo kaɗi suusi” (“who else dares”) to utter the taboo name. In so doing, Seydou momentarily drives the focus away from himself, as those around him repeat the name “fonio” back to him. Seydou employs this strategy of calling out and egging on co-participants to utter others’ nicknames (“fonio, ar yeheŋ”, on lines 43, 45, and 78).

**Figure 55 – “Foññe”**
From 2015 08 03 AN01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Seydou</td>
<td>wo- hidëa andi mi nawyi hidëa waawi wi’ude fonio oŋ</td>
<td>Sa- you know I’m old you can say the fonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td>(group laughter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Seydou</td>
<td>hombo kaɗi suusi (.5)</td>
<td>Who else dares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Baylo</td>
<td>foññe oŋ hehe=</td>
<td>The fonio, haha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>=foññe oŋ (.)</td>
<td>The fonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Seydou</td>
<td>eeyo hombo kaɗi (.)</td>
<td>Yeah who else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>somme oŋ (.)</td>
<td>The ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Unkn</td>
<td>foññe oŋ foññe (. )</td>
<td>Fonio the fonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>foññe foññe (.)</td>
<td>Fonio fonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>eeyo=</td>
<td>yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>=koŋ dëo yoori koŋ dëo yooraili (.)</td>
<td>This one is dry, this one is not dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Seydou</td>
<td>eeyo (.4)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After their exchange had reached a lull, Abdou, ever the instigator, breaks the silence, uttering “laare oŋ,” (a popular bush fruit) which quickly elicits loud shouts and laughter from those crowded around Abdou’s kola stand. The next few moments feature overlapping rounds of laughter and short intelligible bursts of speech by participants who are all talking over each other. All one hears are small snippets of a tragic trip from Guinea to Senegal in which Seydou’s bag of valuable bush fruit, *laare*, rotted en route. In contrast to his earlier teasing with “paquet saabunde”, Abdou is quickly sanctioned in strong terms. DF, a nearby fruit seller, calls Abdou
out with on line 70: "You're starting off early with something one shouldn't say," which initially proposes this utterance as a taboo utterance that requires redress and payment.

**Figure 56 – “Something One Doesn’t Say”**
From 2015_08_03_AN01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>laare oŋ (.45)</td>
<td>The laare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>eh</td>
<td>Eh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>((raucous group laughter))</td>
<td>((raucous group laughter))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>a attay law ko duŋ woni haaletaake</td>
<td>You start off early that's something one doesn't say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>((group laughter and overlapping talk: &quot;ka camion...yuppu...wana noŋ...&quot;))</td>
<td>((group laughter and overlapping talk: “in the truck...spilled...that's not it...”))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abdou’s subsequent (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) denial suggests that he himself understands his utterance to be a violation: “miŋ ko fii (.) miŋ ko fii pinkun dabbuŋ mi haali wana laare” (“Me, I talked about the [little gun], not laare.”) Again, Seydou finds himself as the butt of a nickname. As before (lines 43-48), he invokes the nickname of another, “fonio,” which for some time draws the focus away from him. An important aspect of the game of jamoo re joking is playing on semantic allusions to the joke name. Previously in the encounter, for instance, a porter had snuck in an allusion to a nickname, uttering “Adja Ndiaye is selling fonio at a premium.” In this way, interlocutors would trace a fine line between uttering a name outright and bringing up concepts and uttering statements that appeared to follow the ordinary flow of conversation.

In the ensuing interaction, Dudu, an older man from Guinea who is good friends with Abdou, tells a story about a Guinean man who attempted to smuggle mangos across the border into Kedougou in order to sell them. While the story does not describe Seydou—whose taboo nickname, laare oŋ, is tied to the rotting laare fruits he brought over from Guinea—it concerns an analogous case of someone tragically losing their wares on the unreliable trade routes between Kedougou and Guinea. As Dudu begins telling the story, Seydou confirms that this story is about mangos (not laare), since it is strikingly similar to the origin story of his own jamoo re name (line 91).
In this way, Dudu is ultimately able to tell the story of Seydou’s fruit debacle while quite plausibly talking about someone completely different. Beginning on line 82 and continuing as the story continues, in fact, Seydou adopts the role of primary addressee, actively responding to Dudu’s story with backchannel cues. At several points however, other participants attempt to break the boundary between these two separate but parallel narrative frames by uttering “laare oŋ.”

Indicating his desire to repay amends on line 88, Abdou afterwards leans over to Seydou and presses a large portion of petit kola (small kola nut) in his two hands. Soon after having been given a handful of petit kola, Seydou takes many for himself and hands off the rest of the petit kola to the man sitting next to him. By divesting himself of a responsibility to share the petit kola, he avoids a host of animated but good-hearted arguments about who would get a share. For instance, as the kola nuts are held in the hands of a young porter (on line 135), Dudu declares that he will continue saying the taboo name unless he is given a fair share of petit kola. In the following discussions the interlocutors accuse one another and dodge responsibility for uttering the jammoore nickname, laare (lines 137, 140, 145).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Dudu</td>
<td>si a addaalii gebaŋ ngal wɔbbe ɗeŋ haalay</td>
<td>If you don't bring us the portion the rest will speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>((Baylo laughs))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Seydou</td>
<td>ko kanko tuŋ soodi</td>
<td>He's the only one who bought his way in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>est-ce que est-ce que wana laare hettinay niïye=</td>
<td>Isn't the laare what (? ) teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>Baylo</td>
<td>=eeyo:= ((others chime in))</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>=ko kanko woni e haalude [laare oŋ] [yeeso woni e yaahde (.)]</td>
<td>He's the one who is saying laare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Dudu</td>
<td>=ko kanko woni e haalude [laare oŋ] [yeeso woni e yaahde (.)]</td>
<td>He's the one who is saying laare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>kanko himo waawi haalude laare oŋ ka-ka camion paani donŋ=</td>
<td>He can say laare there where the truck broke down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>Dudu</td>
<td>=addii no petit kola sendenŋ=</td>
<td>Bring it over share the little cola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>=uh uh (.)</td>
<td>No, no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>onoŋ oŋ haaloo doo o [wi'ii]</td>
<td>You all spoke he said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Dudu</td>
<td>[no si send- ah menj de haalay si sendaaka [ ] si send-sendaali peti kolaaje ɗeŋ=</td>
<td>No if not shared ah we (excl.) will speak if it is not split up the little kola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Abdou</td>
<td>[ ] laare (.35)</td>
<td>Laare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>Dudu</td>
<td>eh</td>
<td>Eh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Dudu</td>
<td>joo ni si a yeddii menj ka petit kola a [hebataa fere</td>
<td>Now if you fight with us about the petit kola you won't have means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the ensuing action, those clustered around the small kola selling corner clamored for their share of the petit cola. Like any publicly exposed good—and in this case a particularly fungible one—co-present participants attempted to motivate a claim to the extracted payment out in public. Since things produced in public, like food or drink, were typically shared, co-present participants had an interest to encourage taboo diffusion and transgression. For this reason, third parties often attempt to elicit broaches of jammoore names, in the hopes that fines would be publicly paid. When money was paid, it was often converted into easily sharable units such as water, peanuts, or other small snacks that can be distributed to all those present. Kola nuts had the advantage of already being a substance that was conventionally shared among all those present. The materiality of this sharable good induced the interlocutors to make explicit each other’s stance during the narrative and opened up, as a topic of conversation, who was ratified to say the name. The following comments exemplify the talk through which interlocutors negotiate ratification in jammoore joking.
For instance, in line 142, (“He can say laare there where the truck broke down,”) a speaker refers to the way in which those who had been present at the baptismal event may be ratified to tease jammoore targets as original witnesses qua name givers.

The interactions between Abdou and Seydou demonstrate how shared conceptions of jammoore joking provide a resource that Abdou can draw on to repair negative face, by compensating someone he had teased. In this sense, a “pay-to-say” form of ratification provides people like Abdou with a form of compensation which allows him to utter taboo names in the presence of their target, and rely on payment (in cash or in kind) as a well-worn method of ratification witnessed by present parties. Kola nut sellers were particularly well positioned with the tools of redress and recompense since they possessed a privileged position in the market as purveyors of a ritually significant product. With kola, they possessed a valuable product that was easily gifted and dispersed, using small gifts and here and there to gain favor and pay debts. The particular place of kola nuts within the linguistic economy of the market demonstrates the importance of considering material affordances in analyses of face, honor, and teasing, and not only of focusing on the social identities of the individuals involved.

Through routines of nickname joking, the market sellers of Kedougou’s front market were confronted with the necessity to evaluate and police taboo utterances. The policing of nicknames was shown to be a product of not only the addressee’s responses (e.g. “you can call me anything because I’m an old geezer”), but also of co-present participants who evaluated the gravity of certain forms of teasing. Through the reactions of present parties and through ways that the
utterances were sanctioned by overhearers, some names were policed, thereby requiring payment. As an example of this, compensation in kola provided a mechanism for mitigation for Abdou. This example demonstrates how the avoidance of certain nicknames generated talk that played the semantic nodes of nicknames such as fonio, maaro, saabunde, or laare. While those simply talking about the prices were not directly sanctioned, Abdou's utterance of "laare" was marked by the group, and ultimately resulted in compensation.

**Nicknaming and Ethnography**

Routines of regulation, baiting and monitoring for evidence of violation provide an opportunity to examine the modalities of expression, like writing, that are made to *count* as an utterance or as social action. Utterances as material actions, however, can come in many forms such as (more or less audible and variations of) soundwaves, different alphabets and forms of writing, whispered asides, as well as gestures that through indexical or symbolic grounds can be understood to count as a particular kind of utterance. The way in which linguistic forms are made to count as social action in various forms is up to ethnographic particularity. In the case of “laare ու,” for example, Abdou and his crew discussed whether miming out the action [opening a laare fruit with one’s knees] counted as an infringement. In another example, Irvine and Gunner’s most recent work on *hlonipha* demonstrates that names called out constituted taboo violations, whereas their writing did not constitute such a violation (Irvine and Gunner 2018). Indeed, what makes nickname joking in Kedougou particular, is the degree to which interlocutors scrutinize and attempt to detect and bait each other into violations and to find creative ways to plausibly eschew violation. In the following, I examine another interaction that elucidates what kind of linguistic form (broadly construed) *counts* as a taboo violation. In so doing, this interaction
demonstrates that ethnography and the writing of field notes constitute a practice which research participants analyze and interpret as social action in its own right.

Nickname taboo joking was not only something I observed and recorded, but it also provided a mode through which market sellers came to interact with me. Playing with my initial ignorance, many would bait me into uttering taboo nicknames through verbal traps. For instance, as I was sitting along a side alley of the front market with traders, a man came over whom I had seen on and off in the market before. As this new acquaintance Mamadou (Mama) approached, a kola nut seller (Juma) leaned over to me: “If nine o’clock passes, what time do you say then?” Tell him you don’t know,” suggested my new acquaintance. “No, if nine o’clock passes, what time is it,” insisted the kola nut seller.

### Figure 61 – “What’s After Nine O’clock?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Alarba</td>
<td>Si neuf heurees feyyi ko l’heure hombo haaludaa?</td>
<td>If nine o’clock passes, what time do you say then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>Wi’u a andaa, wi’u onze heures moins.</td>
<td>Tell him you don’t know, say it’s almost eleven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alarba</td>
<td>O’ooye, si neuf heurees feyyi ko l’heure hombo woni?</td>
<td>No, if nine o’clock passes, what time is it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By this time, I had learned to be on my guard, so I suspected that his jammoore was “ten o’clock” (“10h”). Counting out the hours, those nearby would count from one to ten, staking out their alignment by including or omitting 10h. As those around me were playing with the nickname, “dix heures,” I resisted writing anything down for some minutes, concerned with investing myself in the interaction. Minutes later, after Mamadou was trying to lay claim to the kola nuts, I furtively write down “10h” into the corner of a field notebook that had been balanced on my knee. This act of writing did not go unnoticed. Those around me suddenly oriented to me and began laughing and calling out. On line 2, Mamadou called me out for having "spoken" his nickname, while others came to my defense. As an anthropological researcher, I was broadly
understood to be someone who writes observations. For Mamadou, my small inscription counted as an action as he was sure that I had written “10h”—a graphic expression of his nickname. Luckily the other kola nut sellers defended my actions, citing my general tendency to write things down as someone studying language.

**Figure 62 – "Ten O’clock"
From 2015_08_05_AN01
Camara = late 20s merchant
Mamadou (Mama) = mid 30s porter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>o haalaali de</td>
<td>He didn’t speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>ko action o wadi, ko action o wadi, o wadi nii o wadi nii karto yii’ii mi</td>
<td>That was an action, that was an action. I saw he did like this in the notebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>kanko o winday doo woni</td>
<td>he’s writing here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Alarba</td>
<td>yehe:h</td>
<td>yehe:h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>Hehehe</td>
<td>hehehe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>o haalaali de</td>
<td>He didn’t speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>non ko do</td>
<td>No it’s here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>o haalaali de</td>
<td>He didn’t speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>ko action o wadi</td>
<td>He made a move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>ko action o wadi</td>
<td>He made a move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>o wadi nii o wadi nii karto yii’ii mi</td>
<td>He did like this in the notebook I saw it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Camara</td>
<td>kanko o winday doo woni</td>
<td>He’s writing here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conducting ethnography in the chaotic market area was challenging. With new faces constantly coming in and out of the picture, I attempted to remember names, nicknames, and relationships between these friends and kin who, unlike me, had known each other for many years. Goffman’s essay, “Alienation from Interaction”, brings up the kinds of involvements that one can have during a conversation: orienting to the speech code, to external noise, or to oneself in ways that estrange participants from the state of talk (Goffman 1957). As a researcher, emphasizing at different times varying aspects of these involvements represents part of the craft, but also the part of the anxiety of being an anthropologist. When I did write down observations in the market, I attempted to do so quickly and furtively, not to hide my actions, but rather out of feeling a responsibility to invest myself fully in the conversation.

As an interlocutor, I often tried to balance participation in conversation with my desire to
write down observations. To converse with market goers and share talk was also to repay their kindness in accepting me and my presence. Like most West Africans, market goers were often very interested in me and enjoyed conversations with me. The responsibility of engaging and repaying social attention often pushed me to regularly visit friends in the homes and markets of Kedougou; a feeling of gratitude and indebtedness led me to visit and spend time with those people I had gotten to know.

Ethnography as writing in the presence of social action, however, did not sit outside of the interpretive frames that the people around me were constructing. This above example demonstrates not only that the writing of ethnography is a site of interpretation as social action, but also ways in which market sellers assessed the nature of likeness and equivalency across different semiotic modalities. In so doing, market traders invoked euphemisms, played with likeness in poetics, and spun out semantically oblique word plays that fed upon nicknames (like “huit heures, neuf heures, onze heures”). Whether gestures (in the case of “laare oŋ”) or written records (in my encounter with “Dix Heures”) were made to count, was therefore up to negotiation and interpretation in group-managed interactions. According to Irvine, euphemism exists as one possible strategy of containment that “works by masking and distancing: putting a linguistic mask—a circumlocution, or a relatively abstruse expression, or a code-switch—between the interlocutors and any direct engagement with dispreferred, toxic referents” (Irvine 2011:18). This example demonstrates how the performance of euphemism was part of the social game of jammoore nickname joking, where participants often assessed which of these oblique strategies “counted” as utterance of taboo.

Rather than trying to identify fixed principles for ways through which speakers conceptualize linguistic action as stable language ideologies, these exchanges demonstrate the
significance of paying attention to the ways in which interlocutors police, evaluate, and weigh connections and equivalencies constructed in interaction, for instance recognizing the patronyms Ba and Barry as the same thing, or counting the writing of a word not spoken as an “utterance.” These considerations lend weight to linguistic anthropological approaches which look to the principles of evaluation invoked by participants in interaction (contextualization cues, deictics, indexicalization), rather than merely using epistemologies, cosmologies, or language ideologies as a bank to identify static principles of evaluation. This genre of taboo naming demonstrates the importance of looking at mechanisms of policing and enforcement and ultimately reveals the contingency and negotiation at the heart of taboo practices.

Conclusion

The success of Guinean migrants abroad and their ability to access new markets was predicated on cooperation and the nurturing of strong social ties through which they accessed credit, carved their “spots” out of crowded markets, and constructed relationships with customers. Bodies of work have focused, for example, on the Mouride brotherhood's success in spreading diasporic business ventures from Senegal into West Africa and throughout Europe (Riccio 2004; Cruise O’Brien 1971). Lacking such a strong religious and economic support system, Guinean migrant communities were in many ways somewhat more precarious. Some weeks before the laare scene had occurred, a Guinean migrant in search of economic prospects abroad had recently returned. As his story emerged in the downtown Kedougou market, he had worn nothing more than a bath towel from four years, working in a position tantamount to slavery in a Mauritanian compound. Taboo names in the Kedougou market often encapsulated the hardships of being a migrant trader and laborer in West Africa. Nicknames such as “la
France” thus indexed unsuccessful attempts to make it as a transnational merchant. While the merchants now teased each other for each other’s failed ventures, the humor found in these stories often belied truly perilous and painful attempts by migrants to make lives for themselves abroad.

In the market scene, jammoore nicknames provided an idiom through which largely male migrants played around with the difficulties and dangers of transnational migration and with the implications for men expected to leverage economic success back home in order to build houses and marry. While outside of the market context I have heard women engage in “pay-to-say” joking and play with taboo names, in the downtown market context, such jocularity played upon norms of masculinity. In many cases, some of the joke names had a sexual character, “kele pulli,” (Albino girlfriend) “diaganay”, (pillow) and even “sarbiette,” (towel). This last nickname mocked a hopeful young man unable to succeed in the game of accumulating money over the years in regional migration and trade, a game through which he might become a head of household (jom galle). In many cases these nicknames thus poked holes into idealized forms of masculinity in which resilient men successfully navigate economic precarities and go on to found expansive familial networks.

These nicknames, however, were also a way of keeping track of and accounting for fellow travelers on the pathways of migrants. Back in the opening scene of Mustapha as the “little ass master,” the swirling mass of bodies and elements calling out his nickname thus represented a possible baptismal moment, an aborning taboo name for Mustapha. Although his teasing might be thought of as cruel and distancing, this chapter argues that this name calling is in fact rooted in deep concern for him. As relational names, these teases were intersubjective and incorporated a whole social network’s stance towards this man. Indeed, Mustapha's intial teasing coincided
with his planning to move to another trading city several hundred kilometers away in search of better prospects. How would they keep track of him? How would he be remembered? Indeed, fellow migrant laborers expressed to me concerns that he would be forgotten as he moved away, lost among the many other migrants in the large merchant city of Tambacounda.

Not just teasing and tormenting, taboo names function as a form of care in which the conative dimension of language can draw attention to and mark people in the world. In the market, to have a taboo name is to be known. Insofar as access to the names was restricted, their addressivity strengthened the bonds of solidarity among those who were therein initiated. Indeed, taboo names are in this sense bundled. Calls of one taboo name were answered by return names as a form of group construction. Yet vectors of addressivity also pointed outwards to those still non-ratified in the aspiration but who might be baited and drawn into the fold, thereby joining in the shared substance of taboo. Within the spatial contingency of the market, jammoore joking provided the market sellers a way of keeping track of each other, while interactional genres like joking relationships, kiliyan relationships, or other idioms allowed individuals to sift through and draw in kinds of people from the circulating mass of sociality.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Mobility, Ebola, and Evaluation in Southeastern Senegal

Introduction

Cyclical mobility was a defining part of lives of Kédovins who split their time between Kedougou City, surrounding villages in their environs, as well as economic sites abroad or in coastal Senegal. Movement and the capacity to take advantage of social and economic opportunities indeed characterized the verbal creativity of Kedougou’s downtown market. This chapter continues on this central practice by examining the routines of self-presentation, teasing, and typification in the region of Kedougou as forms of constituting and enabling practices of mobility. It focuses on the context of road travel, which was particularly fraught in the time of the Ebola epidemic where many international routes had been closed. Rather than analyzing social relations as already constituted in bounded speech communities or sites, this chapter examines how individuals place one another in spatial routines in the context of patterned migrations and mobility. Indeed, many of the previous chapters of this dissertation have dealt with the role of movement and mobility in this region of increasingly social and economic articulation. I use this chapter as an opportunity to discuss the implications of these mobilities for how individuals typify and evaluate one another.

This chapter studies social evaluation in the context of Ebola, focusing on routines of road travel as modes of objectification—moments at which interlocutors encounter one another and are brought to reflect upon and express implicit relationships. These examples show how the
material realities involved in contact as well as the nature of conversational routines all motivate moments of self- and other- interpretation. Given these patterns of movement between linked sites, I examine movement as a practice of social negotiation in which interlocutors often relied on social idioms and routines of conversational joking in order to place people and manage the contingency of travel. Moving through these contexts, Kédovins resorted to routines of conversational joking and kinship idioms along the way, discriminating among strangers, kin, and collaborators along trajectories of movement. If linguistic anthropological analyses often start after individuals have already arrived, accounting for one stationary island of semiotic display to another, this chapter sketches out an ethnography of linguistic practices along trajectories of movement and corridors of migration in southeastern Senegal.

This chapter highlights the centrality of mobility in the region of Kedougou and its environs, which—despite the environmental obstacles to travel—comprises a strong feature of social life. This movement entailed cyclical patterns of trade and work between Kedougou City, Dakar, and other urban centers, as well as through the mining zones of southeastern Senegal. An economic seasonal cyclicality was particularly recognizable during the dry seasons, at which time farmers often sold grain, applied their trades, or did odd jobs throughout the dioura. This dissertation views the village presents as merely one social locus, one that sits along other places that West Africans inhabit at different moments in their lives and at different times of the year. Amidst this movement, villages like Taabe in the Fouta Djallon plateau were often situated as home towns or in an important sense, cultural anchors, drawing in individuals for funerals, naming ceremonies, and religious holidays (e.g. Korite and Tabaski). In turn, these populations cycled in and out of mining zones, border crossings, religious centers, and back to hometown villages. Although mobility has been a strong feature of social life for some time, new linkages
with coastal Senegal and into the interior in the form of improved roads, internet and cellular technology, as well as mining networks, meant new possibilities of movement for the residents of villages like Taabe. I begin this chapter with an introduction to patterns of mobility in the village of Taabe and in the region more broadly. I begin by showing how social actors made sense of one another’s experiences abroad, often through forms of teasing and monitoring one another’s deportment for signs of cosmopolitanism.

Decades ago, the Taabe of memory was a thriving village with large extended families and Qur’anic schools packed with children. Today, Taabe occupies a new position as a more lightly populated village that still provides a cyclical home for many families, which like many other villages like it in West Africa, sits as an anchor site for many more wayward residents who spend their time across regional and international cities. While this dynamic is characteristic of many rural-urban zones across the world, the region of southwestern Senegal saw the intersection of numerous factors which increased this peripatetic cyclicality. Changes to people’s spatial routines were particularly stark in the region of Kedougou during 2014 to 2015 partly due to the Ebola epidemic in neighboring Guinea.

Issues of circulation were particularly fraught in light of the Ebola epidemic that affected nearby countries of Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. This epidemic rendered marks of “Guineanness” as a particular problematic given that cross-border Guinea-Senegal traffic was blocked and monitored for some time in 2014-2015. This threat of contagion brought people to reflect on the phaticity of greeting and hosting mobile individuals. These concerns were multiplied by the increased presence of state apparatuses in Kedougou whose new status as a region placed it on an administrative map. An increased police presence out of concern for
security generated by the banditry concomitant to gold mining and the resultant emphasis on ID cards raised the stakes of regional travel.

**Methodology and Movement**

Within African studies and anthropology, there are important reasons to locate the analysis of social relations in West Africa beyond a dichotomy of urban and rural. For some decades now, Africanist scholars have recognized the importance of studying relations between home-towns and sites of diasporic and economic activity that have multiplied post-independence (Trager 1998; Geschiere and Gugler 1998). This pathfinding literature identified rural-urban linkages with home-towns as one of the principal contexts of social and economic change in the African continent. This dissertation contributes to this dissertation by looking at how individuals contextualize, find meaning, and affect social relations across these dispersed spatial networks.

Analyses of joking, for instance, have often implicitly categorized certain practices as rural (i.e., relating to kinship and categorical) or urban (i.e., elective, fluid) (see Freedman 1977). Mbembe, for instance, has contested bodies of literature that position Africans as quintessentially rural (Mbembé 2004). As such, “urban flight” and “rural exodus” are not so much singular events but a greater number of individuals moving in with family, and friends, who had for some time been building part of their lives in urban areas. Emphasizing the “rural” thus risks reifying communities and ethnic groups (e.g. the Nuer) whose “homelands” were these homogenous, rural spaces. Narrow perspectives often systematically overlooked spatial and social interlinkages that could be gleaned from a broader historical or spatial vantage point ((Amselle 1985; Gluckman 1940).
Historical research on Senegal’s coast have demonstrated diverse, cosmopolitan societies (Diouf and Rendall 2000). These patterns have a deeper history, since archaeological investigations in the Niger Delta (S. K. McIntosh 1999; R. J. McIntosh 2005), and later under three important Sahelian empires, provide evidence of heterogeneous urban settlements. Precolonial Senegambia was a landscape cut through by extensive trade networks (Brooks 1993). Although many anthropologists have drawn attention to recent trade diasporas and patterns of transnational mobility (Riccio 2004, 2011; Buggenhagen 2012; Kane 2011), particularly under the transnational rise of the Mouride brotherhood (Cruise O’Brien 1971; Guèye 2002) and with the migration of economic refugees to Europe, other recent work has attempted to bring an attention back to intra-African patterns of mobility (Cohen 1969; Aronson 1977; Piot 1999; Whitehouse 2012; Whitaker 2017; Scheele 2012).

Historically, Kedougou has been positioned as a shatter zone that provided refuge for populations that sought refuge from neighboring states, empires, and religious polities. The region of Kedougou was also a key site in the West African slave trade. During the height of the slave trade, the region between the Gambia River, upon which Kedougou City is situated, and the Fouta Djallon mountains was a slave catchment area (Brooks 1993, 257). Indeed, one of the villages I passed through on my way from Kedougou City to my rural field site was a renowned slave market, called Itato, which was abandoned for some time due to a deadly outbreak.\(^\text{128}\) Until recently, the borderlands of Senegal and Guinea have remained a zone that has largely been out of administrative control, where communities seeking to avoid taxation or regulation have been able to establish themselves.

\(^{128}\) Local residents confided in me that even its name harkens back to the days of slave trading, formed from the roots *ittugol*, (to remove, or to take) and *toŋ*, or too, (distal deictic, “over there”). In this way, *itta toŋ*, means taken from over there. The next village down the road, just on the other side of a stream, was called Thianku Malal, the small river of fortune, for if you escaped from Itato and made it all the way there, you likely made it to freedom.
Significant patterns of migration and trade are clearly not new phenomena in the region of Kedougou. According to pre-colonial histories of the region, southeastern Senegal was a part of the trade and production of kola nuts and iron. While not indigenous to the area, kola nuts had a long history as a commodity along the Gambia River. They still provide one of the most important trade goods and are imported by largely Fulɓe Fouta merchants who sell them from Kedougou to coastal Senegal and beyond. Kola trees began to flourish in the areas just south of Kedougou and as far as the forest region of Guinea. The Fouta Djallon was similarly a strong area of timber export, which likely fueled the Mali Empire’s strong demand for iron. According to Brooks, this production resulted in increasing habitation beginning in the 16th century (Brooks 1993). Iron production methods at this time would have required a vast quantity of charcoal to produce iron implements, which with the increasing coastal trade routes from European traders, would have increasingly replaced an indigenous supply of metal.

The West African plateau has long been an important artery for regional and transcontinental trade. However, modes of access have shifted in recent years, affecting significant social and economic change for most of its residents. A gold mining boom, the construction of a Dakar-Bamako international route, and administrative centralization have all significantly increased urban populations, and increasingly drawn in merchants, miners, and officials in search of opportunities. Due to its status as a borderland as well as economic and epidemiological factors, questions of autochthony and national origins have become increasingly salient for residents of southeastern Senegal.

It is often said that Kedougou sits on the borderlands between Guinea, Mali, and Senegal. Although a part of Senegal, Kedougou has almost been more articulated in the regional histories of what is now Guinea-Conakry and of western Mali than of Senegal. Indeed, most of the
residents of Kedougou City, and the rural regions to the south and east, can trace their origins back to what is now Mali and Guinea-Conakry. Highly porous borders and a lack of administrative control have made of Kedougou a place of refuge from tax regimes or Islamic states. Kedougou’s autochthonous Bassari and Bedik populations now inhabit the hills and mountainous areas which provided places of refuge in the wake of raids by the religious states of Alpha Yaya who targeted these non-Muslim communities. The village of Taabe, for instance, was founded in the beginning of the twentieth-century by families coming from Dugari, villages in northern Guinea (and formerly from the Casamance) in efforts to evade cattle and other taxes. The sparsely inhabited foothills of the northern reaches of the Fouta Djallon provided an effective refuge for such populations. During the rainy season, Kedougou’s streams swell and render travel near impossible. The Gambia River, and its tributaries snake through the zone, fed by strong rainfall that flows north into southeastern Senegal from the Guinea highlands. Even at the entrance of the village of Taabe, a large cave that had long been the center of gunpowder production provided refuge for populations who inhabited the plateau zone before Taabe’s founders.

Kopytoff’s *African Frontier* as model for social relations within a shatter zone aptly captures many dynamics found in Kedougou, where a fission-fusion movement between polities occurs over an area of low population density (Kopytoff 1987). His book captures ongoing processes of segmentation and integration through which populations moved in full groups to create hamlets in what is relatively abundant land. As individuals splinter off from existing polities and communities to found their own, Kopytoff’s model considers how individuals assimilate (or transculturation Ortiz 1995) to pre-existing cultural models, only to splinter off again, often in the attempt to create purer versions of the societies they left. Jean-Loup Amselle’s
critique of village-island anthropological gazes, that considers islands to be cultural and linguistic wholes, takes a more historical view than Kopytoff’s model, but both perspectives point to the dynamics of splintering mobility and fission-fusion social movements across the West African landscape (Amselle 1985, 1990). Kopytoff’s model not only helps draw attention to the processes of social segmentation over time and space, but also helps capture the movement to and from regional capitals and economic hubs, along which important social relationships are managed. Importantly, this movement entailed the negotiation and mutual understanding of individuals who did not always share ties of kinship, but who nonetheless had to find ways to understand and work together with those they found along their pathways of settlement and trade. Bird, for instance, points out that migration across West Africa was often accomplished by individuals or by families, not by entire ethnic groups. As such, contact and mobility was not in the form of “societal wholes” that were geographically transplanted from somewhere else, but that small groups of people had to negotiate forms of co-existence with the peoples with whom they would share a life (Bird 1999, 276).

Kedougou’s integration with coastal Senegal dramatically increased beginning in the 1970s with the construction of the first passable road that linked Kedougou with coastal Senegal. In talking with elders who remember a time before this road, the region was largely isolated from much of occidental Senegal. While elders I interviewed remembered eating plentiful game and forest products, when crops failed, famine ensued. Since transportation was severely limited, grain supplies were unable to arrive by road. Indeed, the road that does exist cuts through the heart of the Niokolo Koba game park, the first of its kind in West Africa that was established and managed under colonial rule just before independence.
Village Mobilities

Beginning in May and ending in October, the rains provided not only an agricultural calendar, but cleaved the year in two distinct social times. Rather than define them in meteorological terms, rainy season and dry season, many agriculturalists distinguished them based on their social dimensions. Whereas the rainy season provided a time for farming, the dry season provided opportunities for social investment. Since farming fonio often required a large influx of labor at key points in the harvest, many Taabe residents invested significant energy cultivating ties with far-flung kin, in-laws, and friends in surrounding villages. When the rains came, most farmers were much less mobile, focusing on tilling, planting, and protecting their fields until they could harvest their crops at the end of the rainy season. Travel was difficult during this time. While the road from Takkopellel to Kedougou was intermittently graded, every rain storm punctured larger and larger pot holes into the red laterite earth which filled up with water and mud as the rainy season progressed. During the dry season, however, rural-based Kédovins had more time for trade, leisure and travel. In the village, locals spent time drinking tea with friends and family, but also time to pursue secondary economic opportunities selling fruit in neighboring villages, mending fences, or finding seasonal work in the *diouras*.

While straw-thatch roofs, red-pebble courtyards, and thin-branch fences of Taabe gave the impression of isolation, the families of the village were implicated in histories of movement and trade across the sub-region. Tucked into the thatch roofs were small solar panels, radios, and DVD players which attracted midnight movie clubs. Many of their residents had studied the Qur’an across Senegal and traveled and traded into Mali and Guinea, and many families had sons and daughters who now lived and worked on the Guinea-border, in Spain, or Dakar. While at times Taabe seemed emptied of its residents, at other times Taabe became the site of intense
sociality, during marriages, naming ceremonies, and religious holidays that attracted individuals from across the region.

Most heads of household in the village of Taabe had spent significant time outside of the village. Its chief, Jom Wuro Diallo, had spent not only years in Dakar, but also in western Mali, where he learned the trade of baker. He was an extremely capable speaker of Wolof, often joking with the local primary school teachers who spoke little Pular. Similarly, studying the Qur’an also attracted many young men to Dakar or other centers. The chief’s elder brother, Ustas, for instance, had studied in a Qur’an school in Dakar for many years. In the evenings, Ustas would teach the Arabic alphabet to his sons and daughters, patiently going through each combination of consonants and vowels, passing to the next combination of sounds as his children spoke them aloud to the shadows of their hut. Those who had spent time abroad studying the Qur’an gained honorific titles that marked their educational achievements. In the village, they were referred to as “Ustas,” for instance, which indexed years of Qur’anic schooling in Dakar, Guinea, or Mali. These forms of address and reference—respect terms garnered through past histories of mobility and experience abroad—impacted the ways in which adults in Taabe were talked about and afforded them with new possibilities for self-presentation.

Agricultural villages in southeastern Senegal had a completely different character in the dry \((\text{ceedu})\) and wet seasons \((\text{ndungu})\). Walking through Taabe in the early dry season, I encountered mostly empty compounds with latched gates, which upon closer inspection might conceal young children peering up above branch-fences. While in the dry season one could circulate freely throughout the village’s system of fences and compound walls, in the wet season critical doorways were closed up, preventing any bike traffic and forcing pedestrians to climb up over fences. While Taabe residents were more stationary in the wet season, often tied to their
fields where they planted, and harvesting corn, fonio, and peanuts, the dry season provided a
time for investing in relationships, paying social visits on the move, or a time for making space
for social callers by putting on a small kettle of attaya tea. During this time, both men and
women frequently travelled to neighboring villages, market towns, and more distant economic
centers to visit kin, affines, and friends. For instance, my arrival at the village of Taabe just
after the harvest at the beginning of the dry season provided an opportunity for Taabe’s village
chief to introduce me in the surrounding villages where I had the opportunity to meet
neighboring authorities, as well as his networks of kin and affines that lived on the plateau area.
As I detailed in Chapter Five, these visits were critical to farmers such as the village chief, who
often had to turn to in-laws, kin, and friends in neighboring villages to borrow a complete
plowing team of bulls (ngaari), whose timely labor at the beginning of the rainy season could do
weeks worth of labor in several days.

Traveling widely throughout the plateau in the first dry season after my arrival, I noticed
that the cultivation of social networks was not only limited to villages, where Jom Wuro, Taabe’s
village chief greeted in-laws, kin, and friends among the plateau villages, but also took place in
the seemingly empty ladde (“bush”) between villages. Settlements were spread out across the
plateau. Passing by a family compound was often followed up by inquiries and greetings from
the road. Young children often became the locus of teasing and questions that tested their

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129Variations in patterns of movement and sociality might be compared with Marcel Mauss’s among the Eskmio, which examined
seasonal variations upon their social “morphology.” He observed that summers were marked by large, dispersed kin groups,
while winters were marked by dense habitation in clusters of nuclear families (Marcel Mauss 1970). Evans-Pritchard’s analysis
of the Nuer can similarly be viewed in this light, where dry and wet season dwelling afforded different forms of social
organization (Evans-Pritchard 1974). For fonio farmers, an expanded ability to travel and interact widely in social networks was
afforded by the dry period after their harvest, a time marked also by commercial ventures.
capacity to parry searching questions and comments upon their beauty and future marital plans.\textsuperscript{130}

Families often developed a geographical division of labor as family members grew roots in important population centers in the sub-region. For instance, the family of Saliou Diallo had a family home in Taabe, Kedougou, as well as the important ferry town along the Senegal-Gambia border in Keur Ayib. As the eldest head of household, Saliou was based in Taabe, while his son worked as a fruit seller and often travelled between Keur Ayib to Kedougou. Younger brothers and sisters often followed along these social networks during summer vacation, slowly learning how to trade. While these interregional economic networks were often based along kinship networks, they also benefitted friends, neighbors, and distant kin, who would often stay in the homes of those who had established themselves in Kedougou or other cities. Once family members had established themselves in a distant city, their home served as a place of social gravity that other kin and acquaintances would use to help them establish themselves in turn.

While men and women all displayed cyclical trajectories of movement, men were somewhat more mobile in the case of the village of Taabe. After the agricultural season passed, many men travelled to nearby mining camps or engaged in regional trade in agricultural commodities. Many women did as well, as it was often the women that sold fonio in nearby mining towns and markets in Kedougou. The gendered nature of work was sometimes summed

\textsuperscript{130} Sociality was not limited only to the hamlets and villages of the Fouta Djallon foothills, but also to be found in “nature”, for instance in the social power that could be harnessed by forest products. As I walked along the narrow paths in between the hoore fello’s hamlets, the Taabe village chief often called out the names of plants and trees to me, noting their usefulness or taste. He often put seeds of particularly useful plants in his pockets that he later would plant in his compound in Taabe. In this way, social visits circulated plants across the hoore fello region (see for example Ellen and Platten 2011). One day as we were walking along a partly forested incline on our way to the furthest village in the plateau area, Jom Wuro stopped me in my tracks. He ran up to a thin, leafy tree up the incline, culling several branches, which he carefully placed in a plastic bag tucked into his waistband. This plant, that I call duuki (for reasons of discretion) rendered one charismatic and was held to facilitate charisma and social gravity. The next day, the chief presented the plant to me in the form of a charm (gris-gris), noting the power of this lekki. Such a plant was particularly useful in a region where developing one’s lands, fields, and family was largely a process of developing wide and social networks.
up in Wolof through the proverb, “Góor dékkul fenn,” which means “men don’t live any (single) place,” Young Kédovins often talked about travel as *l’aventure*, the desire to find work away from one’s home, to see a bit of the world and to encounter different perspectives. As such, *l’aventure* was often seen as a form of education, in that experiencing different places and people would increase one’s understanding.

Large families and polygamous marriages often afforded Taabe residents greater opportunities for family members to occupy these various farming and trading niches. Neene Oumar, a resident of Taabe, was strongly involved with the mining economy. In her early forties and with several adult children, she had recently remarried a man from a neighboring village after her previous husband passed away years ago. Neene Oumar often travelled to artisanal mining towns after the fonio crop came in, selling pounds of pre-cooked fonio to traders in the mining towns of Bantoko and Tenkoto. As a co-wife to a husband who lived in a neighboring village, Neene Oumar was relatively free to travel for days or weeks at a time. Women in polygamous households were more involved in trading than those without co-wives, since polygamy allowed them to travel while other wives tended to the household.

Neene Oumar was active in an influential women’s group led by Aya Ndiaye that had a large stake in the processing and sale of fonio in the Kédougou region. As a way to connect to these important networks, Neene Oumar named one of her daughters Aya, after Neene Oumar’s patron and head of the women’s group. In so doing, Neene Oumar used the powerful connection of namesake, or *tokoro*, to strengthen her ties to this powerful woman. In West Africa more broadly, children were often named after an ancestor or important living individual. This connection is seen as extremely important by West Africans, and individuals bearing the same name often draw on these connections as affordances for connections between families. Not only
as a form of invoking ancestors within a family, such naming strengthens bonds among
individuals across time and space. Children named after relatives that lived in towns and urban
centers far away, thus provided impetuses for them to travel back to their home village for the
naming ceremony.

Patterns of migration and mobility were often shaped by seasonality and lifecycle. Upon
concluding their secondary schooling, most young men would enter into a period of itinerant
work and study, training in Qur’anic studies, working for some time in the gold mines of
Kedougou, or trading in the markets of larger Senegalese cities. These funds were often
necessary for young men to make money for bride wealth and to establish a household. Many
joked about process, “ko god pozosta mo goddo.” (“It’s something gets you somebody”). As
they came back to Taabe year after year, they would often slowly accumulate solar panels, DVD
players, beds, and the fundamental components of a home. Since land was easily acquired in the
village, young men could easily make a place for themselves in natal villages by constructing a
simple mud and thatch hut, often on the edges of familial compounds or in small clusters of
siblings. Those with enough money would often invest in property in Kedougou City,
constructing walls around acquired property and adding on layers of concrete and brick as they
found more money.131

Basirou, a young man who had spent over a year in the dioura area hauling buckets up
from the depths of mining shafts, was able to transform his otherwise unremarkable mud hut into
the village's hottest nighttime hangout. With the dissemination of modular solar technology and

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131 Many from the hoore fello plateau who had spent significant time away often confessed that they found life in the urban
centers difficult. Many admitted that they preferred living in a village, citing the availability of resources that one didn’t have to
pay for. As a travelling merchant in Dakar, many confessed that even finding a place to go to the restroom, having access to clean
water, and negotiating one’s living situation were everyday struggles of negotiation. Increased economic opportunities also
entailed a market economy, in which things that could be acquired through idioms of connection or from brousse were suddenly
expensive.
its increasing affordability, individuals like Basirou have been able to build up small electricity grids in remote areas. Until late in the night, village youth would huddle together on bamboo benches and woven mats to steal a glimpse of Jackie Chan, Jet Li, and Van Damme movies on his portable DVD player. Full moon nights, in particular, were hopping. Under the light of the moon, young men and women I didn’t recognize from neighboring villages would brave the wild spaces in between to congregate, watch movies together, and flirt. Basirou had one of the largest collections of DVDs in town, and other households with small solar systems often went to him in search of the next Guinean show or martial arts movie. Like the gifting of yams for Trobriands, the circulation of Basirou’s DVDs expanded his time-space horizons in the village of Taabe (Munn 1986). Young men like Basirou often spent long stints in the dioura just before marriage, times when they attempted to make money in preparation for the big event. Not only did dioura funds provide him with the possibility of marrying, they also increased his social standing among the youth of Taabe who were grateful for his nightly parties—an opportunity to stretch the imagination.

This degree of movement across villages and towns in the sub-region meant that individuals regularly took advantage of the hospitality of those members of their kin and other networks who had the capacity to house them. Individuals often built up these homes little by little, buying shipments of cement as they came across a little money to increase the height of a wall or built a small hut. While Kedougou City residents opened their homes to friends and kin broadly construed, building property and renting out rooms to those attracted to the region’s economic opportunities increasingly became a form of investment for those in the city. Having a thriving household in Kedougou established one’s social gravity, providing a jumping off place for one’s neighbors and relatives from rural areas to establish themselves in town. Renting
property in town to itinerant workers or civil servants, however, became increasingly viewed as a way to get ahead in Kedougou City, particularly in the context of a coalescing land market with increasing demand. Indeed, successful heads of household could marry and establish household across vast spaces in cities across Senegal by marrying up to four wives. In Taabe, for example, one particularly respected Taabe resident had three wives, each of whom tended one of the husband’s homes in Taabe, Dakar, and Tambacounda, which each served as a social and economic hub for Taabe residents.

**Evaluating Speech and Travel Within Mobile Networks**

In light of these distributed social pathways, categorical terms like *villageois*, rural, or urban as a priori labels are misguided attempts at defining social categories that were recognized in interactions, moments during which mobile populations evaluated one another’s speech, dress and deportment. As such, the discrimination among village and urban residents was often conducted in face-to-face interactions, where certain pronunciations, expressions, or gestures could be indexically linked to rustic life. Indeed, as individuals became adroit at moving in between villages and urban centers, adopting different strategies of self-presentation as enlightened urbanites as well as integral members of village social networks. However, for those that travelled to Taabe after time spent in the gold mining zones or Dakar, returning with the linguistic and cultural knowledge did not immediately translate into increased symbolic capital. For instance, even in Taabe the youth commonly monitored each other’s production of Wolof

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132 A decade ago, land was still largely available via a “homesteader” system in which those who claimed it, improved it, and put it into use could effectively own it. Becoming incorporated as a region meant that Kedougou’s land was increasingly becoming zoned and put on the market by municipal land agencies.
and French, teasing each other amid mistakes that indexed an incomplete knowledge of objects of wider culture.

Certain linguistic performances could sediment one’s status as a successful *aventurier*, while others risked being mocked and circulated as evidence of backwardness and incompetence. Amid conversations among Taabe youth, for instance, the mispronunciation of *clé as kele*—a feature of Pular phonology that separates consonant clusters—was drawn up to position others as country bumpkins, unfamiliar with the stuff of the wider world. In the following example, Boubs nativizes *clé* (as in *clé USB*) according to the phonological rules of Pular, inserting a vowel in what would otherwise be an awkward consonant cluster. Inadvertently, he asks his peers with me present, if we would help him with (read: acquire) a girlfriend. Such missteps were often widely discussed among age sets and could provide ammunition for teasing for weeks.

**Figure 63 – “We’ll Share a Girlfriend”**
from 2016_01_19_AN14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boubs</td>
<td>a wallay laŋ e kele</td>
<td>will you help me with a girlfriend (i.e. USB key)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boubs</td>
<td>meŋ hawtay kele</td>
<td>we will share a girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Daouda</td>
<td>meŋ hawtay kle USB</td>
<td>we will share a USB key!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Daouda</td>
<td>kle, Boubs, a heɓi kle</td>
<td>key, Boubs, you got a key!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a similar example, I examine the case of a young man known locally as Drogba, who was a common presence in the village of Taabe. Originally from a nearby village at the base of the plateau, Drogba often played on the Taabe football team, where he received a nickname in honor of the famous Ivoirian footballer. One day, after a longer absence from the village, Drogba spent several days in the village, and I often spotted him making the rounds, dropping in on various acquaintances throughout the village. I soon gathered that Drogba was interested in finding a wife. He had spent several months at a local *dioura*, where he expressed hopes of soon making headway. A young man from Taabe and I were walking out of the chief’s compound, when we crossed Drogba hanging out under a small baobab tree that often provided a locus of
activity due to the few bars of cell reception one could sometimes find there.

**Figure 64 – Entextualizing Awkward Greetings**
*An asterisk indicates a pronunciation of the Pular velar stop [k] rather than the Wolof velar fricative [x].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drogba</td>
<td>lu kew</td>
<td>what’s *up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yoro</td>
<td>hein lu kew</td>
<td>what? what’s *up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NPS</td>
<td>lu kew lu xew</td>
<td>what’s *up what’s up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yoro</td>
<td>danga ma wax lu kew wala lu xew</td>
<td>are you asking me what’s *up or what’s up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yoro, who had spent years working as a tailor in nearby villages, was quick to point out his mispronunciation. Chuckling about this after his confrontation with Drogba, Yoro spread word of Drogba’s blunder. In this way, attempts to display one’s linguistic knowledge—in a way that indexes one’s worldliness—can backfire as this example demonstrated. Youth were ruthless in monitoring and mocking each other’s attempts to deploy these resources. Yoro and other overhearers ridiculed Drogba’s mispronunciation of Wolof phonology. A common acquisition error among Pular speakers is to pronounce the Wolof velar fricative, [x] as a velar stop [k]. A such, an inability to pronounce this sound is often used as ammunition to position the mispronouncer as an unaware villager. A Wolof greeting that was supposed to display Drogba’s wisdom in the ways of the world thus failed and backfired, bringing attention to his Pular villageois pronunciation of Wolof. Not just a meaningless error, Drogba at this time was actively searching for a spouse, and the word on the street had incisive potential to undermine his efforts given that these kinds of missteps were actively circulated throughout the surrounding area.

Other work on transnationalism in Senegal has noted that economic success and through it, masculinity can be indexed through physical absence (Melly 2011). These moments of evaluation when migrants returned to cities, however, offered critical snapshots through which such experiences were contextualized and provided platforms for evaluating perceived success and masculinity. Those residents of Taabe like Mamadou who often traveled from village to town were often scrutinized for their travel and teased for their absence from their natal village,
as was Mamadou. On one particular occasion, for instance, a woman passing by him at the village well yelled across a field, “ko hünduŋ wonudaa e wafude dōo?” (What are you doing here?), with the implication that his presence here was to be explained, and not considered a thing of course. A young woman in Takkopellel whose mother was from Taabe, routinely teased Mamadou “a jeyaaka Taabe,” (“you’re not from Taabe,” or literally, “you do not belong to Taabe,”) revoking Mamadou’s local origins in light of his increasing absence and in spite of the establishment of his house on the outskirts of Kedougou. These forms of ribbing paralleled ways in which individuals frequently teased one other after absences, saying “a hawki laŋ, de!” (“You’ve abandoned me”). This form of phatic baiting could prompt individuals to explain their absence, often pushing them to insist on how important their relationship was after all. These forms of teasing, as I show in more detail in Chapter Eight, constituted not only a form of relationship work, but also a kind of spatial work, which could maneuver others into webs of reciprocation and continued exchange.

**Ebola and the Stakes of Mobility**

Having sketched out the importance of seasonal and lifecycle patterns of movement for “rural” inhabitants, in the following section I examine the Ebola epidemic as not merely a physical disease, but a social one as well insofar as it shaped frameworks for understanding mobility in the region of Kedougou. In presenting the Ebola epidemic in this way, I insist on the fact that joking routines were not apolitical, ahistorical poetic forms. Instead, they were significantly impacted by political and economic events which affected the grounds upon which individuals placed and recognized each other. I focus on the site of Takkopellel, a larger village at the base of the Taabe plateau, that provided a locus of economic activity in the Guinea-
Senegal border region. When I first arrived in Kedougou in 2014, it was not without some reservations about heading to an area bordering on Guinea-Conakry which had been severely affected by the Ebola epidemic. Although the epicenter of the epidemic was in the coastal and forested regions of Guinea, Kédovins were concerned that it might spill over the border. As it turns out, Kedougou and Senegal were spared from Ebola, with only one close call in which a young Guinean man made it across the border at Koundara (somewhat west of Kedougou) and continued on to the Parcelle Assainies neighborhood of Dakar, where he was diagnosed and contained.133

Reading Western media that was charged with either sensationalizing it or not taking it seriously, I was unsure of what to expect on the Senegal-Guinea border. Most Kédovins were concerned, but hopeful, that they would be spared. Reading about Ebola in the Western media, I heard the names of affected countries over and over again: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone. Using national boundaries as units of measurement, often called methodological nationalism (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), made it sound like the virus was waiting just across the border in Guinea, when in fact there were few if any cases in northwestern Guinea. Referring to Ebola in a nationalized frame made it easier for individuals to think of Guinean migrant residents in Kedougou—who were overwhelmingly from the unaffected North—as being important vectors of the disease. Indeed, it is because national boundaries were used as a proxy for understanding social patterns of mobility that the term Guinean could acquire a broad association with Ebola.

If Ebola posed a health challenge of unprecedented proportions to communities in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, in Kedougou its impact was largely felt in economic terms. As the main border town, Kedougou was at the crossroads of important trade routes to Guinea and Mali.

133 The unité, or subsection of the neighborhood where he lived, has subsequently been positioned as somewhat of a polluted zone, often referred to as “ebo” since this event.
Although foot traffic across the Senegal-Guinea border could never really be significantly curtailed, it was the long-distance passenger and freight vehicles that were prevented from crossing the border. These were large-clearance trucks packed with cigarettes, indigo cloth, fruit, and plastic wares that navigated the steep, unpaved mountain roads between Guinea and Senegal. Until the border was reopened on January 28, 2015, these Guinean trucks would conduct clandestine border trips, often driving up to the border, and unloading the cargo of fruit, kola, or cloth onto another truck that had been brought from the Senegalese side. News of these shipments quickly spread throughout the market, and when a clandestine shipment was caught by the police frontalière and service des douanes, this seizure was a topic of discussion among Guinean merchants.

The Guinea border is transected by webs of foot and moto paths, many of which crisscrossed the area of Taabe, then descended onto the Senegalese plain and on to Kedougou. The entire swath of hoore fello villages including Taabe and Takkopellel all sat in-between the Guinean and Senegalese border posts. Sitting on top of the hoore fello plateau at the Guinean border post of Togue, one would have to travel ten kilometers past Taabe, Takkopellel, and several other hamlets before encountering a Senegalese border post. Since the border cut across villages linked by ties of kinship and affinity, crossing between villages in Guinea and Senegal even during the height of the Ebola epidemic was common on foot. Save a few small border post islands, the border between Guinea and Senegal was not even fully demarcated. Residents of the hoore fello had their own ideas about where it might be, but as subsequent conflicts with Guinean village residents over thatch harvesting demonstrated, even these were up for negotiation.

In the last decade, many of these paths were shared between foot traffic and motorcycle
smuggling. Before their importation became formalized, young Guinean men would load up a
brand-new motorcycle, strap on as much merchandise as they could, and head to Kedougou
where they would sell the lot of goods. Since these motorcycles were put together in Guinea, this
cross-border trip was a necessary step in breaking in a brand-new motorcycle--making sure the
newly pieced components were sufficiently rattled together to form a cohesive vehicle. After
shipments of motorcycles arrived and were assembled, teams went out in caravans, tearing
through the region each with an extra jerry can of gas on the luggage rack to break them in.

While Ebola did not affect Kedougou in a classic epidemiological sense, the virus did carry
important social symptoms in the region of Kedougou, where shaking hands during greetings, for
instance, was a matter of course for those recognizing one another in interaction. If the Western
biomedical community has largely limited its consideration of disease to the somatic symptoms
bounded by the human form, recent approaches to illness have expanded the notion of disease,
locating its emergence across socio-technical practices that cut across what is commonly
assumed to be a nature-culture divide (Mol 2002; Roberts 2013; Stonington 2012). These include
ways of counting and assessing bodies, social stigma and forms of self-identification after
diagnosis, and other ways in which disease is rendered visible. Annemarie Mol, for instance,
argues that disease has no singular existence, but is enacted through medical examinations,
technologies of presentation, and medical interventions (Mol 2002). At several points, I
witnessed individuals seriously pause or poke fun before shaking one anothers hands, breaking
these routinized forms of greetings, which subsequently led to discussions about Ebola.

Viewed in this way, changes in the way people assess others, for example their “Guinean-
ness,” or deploy embodied greetings, are all constitutive of the Ebola. In the Guinea-Senegal
borderlands, Ebola had many such “social” symptoms, thereby raising the stakes for proving
national identity as well as bringing into question everyday practices through which individuals could put themselves at risk for contagion. As such, Ebola shaped people’s experience of Kedougou as a borderland, circumscribing practices of mobility and ways of living in an ethical frame.\textsuperscript{134} For instance, during one of the many NGO Ebola interventions in the village of Taabe, facilitators tried to institute a system of surveillance under which a village committee would note down every guest that entered their village, emphasizing those from Guinea. While the village did not adopt this practice, it raised discussions about keeping track of passersby and about keeping track of people’s comings and goings. Residents did harbor concerns about contamination through shaking hands or sharing tea glasses. At times Ebola was strategically used by individuals who used the risk of contagion as an excuse to not greet or engage with others, a strong rebuff under normal circumstances.

**Takkopellel Markets, Gendarmes, and Ebola**

In the region around Taabe, this concern with movement and Guinean contagion manifested itself in the weekly markets (\textit{luumo}) located in Takkopellel, just at the base of the Fouta Djallon mountain range. Like many other weekly markets, the Takkopellel \textit{luumo} was a somewhat larger sub-regional center where surrounding villagers came to sell agricultural produce or livestock and to buy manufactured goods and other necessities. Villagers from all around Taabe and into Guinea travelled to the Takkopellel \textit{luumo} on Sundays. At its peak, the \textit{luumo} was a busy bamboo grid of small-scale sellers from across the area, selling cloth and cooked foods. The centers for the wholesale of fonio and other forest products were situated in

\textsuperscript{134} For instance, many NGOs urged local residents to avoid all contact with bush meat, including bush deer, porcupines, as well as primates, which were not hunted or consumed by locals. They disseminated such methods at a time when it was not as of yet at all clear what had initially been the zoonotic species of transmission. Although local residents did not primarily live from game, given the limited amounts of protein, and particularly historically, populations in this area had a broad-spectrum approach that combined hunting, foraging, horticulture, animal husbandry, and artisanal work.
the periphery of this market where men from Takkopellel would weigh rice sacks filled with produce and establish market prices. On off-days, the site of the weekly market appeared as a skeleton of bamboo structures with little bits of colored plastic sheeting sticking out from underneath the straw.

After the harvest Taabe agriculturalists carried down sacks full of hulled, pounded fonio for sale in Takkopellel. As I have mentioned, fonio provided *hoore fello* residents with a primary cash crop. Notoriously difficult to process, *fonio* requires a number of labor-intensive steps in its preparation. While Senegalese farmers dominated the fonio market in Takkopellel, Guinean sellers would come in from further away, often selling at a lower price. However, imports of this kind became much more difficult during the period of border closure. During the off-season, many sellers would carry down bags full of tamarind fruits that they had harvested from their own trees or purchased from *hoore fello* residents and would sell them to Wolof middlemen in the Takkopellel *luumo* (weekly market).  

The *Commune de Takkopellel* became a site of concern amid the Ebola epidemic, during which time the Senegalese government ordered the closure of all *luumos* on the Guinea border. At this time, a genuine concern about the disease coexisted with skepticism about the regional administration so that doubts arose as to the actual extent of this disease, which was on occasion dismissed as mere *politique* by Guinean traders. Even during the official closure of the *luumo*, a

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135 Although this part of West Africa was articulated with long-distance trade routes in the precolonial or colonial periods, particularly as a site of slave trading, iron-smelting and trade in general (Brooks 1993), the *luumo* was not a long-time fixture at this time. Instead, it emerged at the moment of structural readjustment in the time during which Senegalese agriculture fell out of nationalized control (Perry 2000). This privatization opened up a niche for middle men and regional traders to buy and sell agricultural products, a niche that afforded them an opportunity to take advantage of regional price differentials and increased road networks. An elder woman in the village of Taabe, for instance, remembered the time before the *luumo* when finding goods for sale entailed travelling great distances to regional hubs. For village clusters all across contemporary Senegal, however, *luumos* provided an economic gravity, thus bringing in surrounding agriculturalists and traders once a week.
number of merchants nonetheless set up shop just down the road at the escale crossroads, where Takkopellel’s ordinary corner stores were located. This makeshift, unofficial luumo was a fraction of its normal size where predominantly local, small-scale merchants managed to set up a few stands here and there.

In the weeks after the closure of the weekly markets and of the Senegal-Guinea border, Wolof-speaking gendarmes from western Senegal began to appear on patrols in and around Takkopellel on luumo days. Takkopellel residents nervously remarked upon the increased administrative presence. Mariama, a woman who sold snacks from a small eatery that her family managed, complained to me one day about the gendarme presence. In the preface of her critique she insisted on the importance of people saying hi to each other with respect. But with the gendarmes, “negotiation alaa” (“there is no negotiation”) she regretted. She continued explaining how there was no discussion and, if they told you to leave, then there was little recourse. “Teyyil!” (Shut up!), she cried out over and over, mimicking a gendarme who shut down any possibility for negotiation. What bothered Mariama about the gendarmes was their reluctance to make concessions and to recognize the claims of Guinean and hoore fello residents who had been coming to the luumo for many years, many of whom had kin on this side of the border. Stories spread of Guineans being caught on the footpaths down the mountain to the luumo. Guineans caught in this way were escorted to the border by gendarmes, and any of their goods were confiscated. While questions such as “ko honto wonufaa yahde” (“where are you headed?”) were commonly interwoven amid greetings between travelers meeting each other on the road, this question suddenly had the capacity to index one’s transgressions of official border policy.

Yet among the gendarmes tasked with patrolling the Takkopellel luumo, few spoke Pular,
the language of common communication in the area. Those posted to Takkopellel spent their time patrolling the town and its environs, often lingering at the crossroads at base of the roads leading down from the Guinea border. During this time, patrolling gendarmes traveled with a member of Takkopellel’s volunteer security force who served as translators and guides. These officers were normally tasked with managing local disputes and were not officially part of the police force. Encountering gendarmes on patrol was a new dynamic in the area that had largely been spared from a mobile police presence. Previously, the only police presence had been the police frontalière post down the road in Segou, where officers stayed put in a small post on the edge of the main artery.

Once while descending the mountain with two Taabe residents, our group passed by two gendarmes accompanied by a member of Takkopellel’s volunteer security force. Any Guineans entering into town would have had to pass along the same roads as we did, and those travelling alongside me were therefore suspected of coming from Guinea. Walking in front of the gendarmes, we overheard the officers ask the security officer about our presence as we entered town. The translator security officer responded by placing us as residents of the town of Taabe, “koɓe Taabeɓeng,” (“they are people from Taabe”), adding that this village was in the territory of Senegal. The security officer told the gendarmes—who were particularly concerned about one of our companions—that we were from the village of Taabe. At moments like these, the gendarmes (likely from the intuitions of their guides) picked up on cues involving dress, baggage and footwear that might betray one’s provenance. While in some cases the gendarmes accepted their guides’ assessments of whether people were Senegalese or not, producing a national ID card\textsuperscript{136} often became the final arbiter of such investigations.

\textsuperscript{136}As part of an administrative push for decentralization, Kedougou was put on the map as a région, during which time a new police force and regional government slowly gained a foothold. In this context, identification cards became increasingly
As our group stood diagonal to the gendarme’s orientation to his local escort, we noticed that the gendarme spoke only with his local counterpart. Although he and the guide stood close together, he spoke loudly as if he intended for us to overhear him. Even though those in our group spoke Wolof, the gendarme eschewed any direct engagement with our group, talking about those around him rather than to them. As such, the local security officer translated and transmitted questions to us at the same time that his role closed down direct contact with the gendarme. Whether or not this was a conscious strategy, using the local guide to voice authority insulated the gendarme from routines of sociality, from ways in which those in interaction might find a point of connection, a shared name, a joking relationship, or affiliation that might be used to mitigate any wrongdoing. “Negotiation alaa” (“There is no negotiation”).

These participation frameworks—in which politically powerful police relied on local residents as mouthpieces—provide homologies of initiation ceremonies during which ritually powerful masks (mamaji) are also voiced by linguistic intermediaries. As a broader principle, gendarmes were administratively discouraged from developing long-lasting relationships with the locals in their posts. Rotating on an approximately six-month basis, gendarmes were thus dissuaded from developing and investing in social relationships that might compromise their ability to provide enforcement. Although the Takkopellel luumo was closed for some time during the height of the Ebola epidemic, it was allowed to open up again not long after the reopening of the Guinea-Senegal border in January 2015. In many respects, the officers’ insulation from controlled and provided traveling insurance, a first line of defense against state agents who might seek payments from regional travelers who were caught without an ID (carte d’identité). While work by James Scott et al (J. C. Scott, Tehranian, and Mathias 2002) has focused on the way in which state apparatuses have used IDs to count and control citizens, these forms of identification were also taken up into routines of teasing and discrimination, capillary-like forms of power through which residents monitored each other in the frame of play, teasing those without an ID card as foroda, yokels from the country with no official status. Ironically, given the deep history of Kedougou as a shatter zone region that provided shelter for those escaping state control, Kedougou residents were increasingly being officially accounted for in state registries through ID enforcement.

137 Examples of speaking through others, such as talking through pets (Tannen 2007), dropping remarks (Fisher 1976) or Lempert’s broader discussion (Lempert 2012c) are as interactional resources part of broader observations that addressivity is gained through multi-modal means in which those ostensibly addressed are not always the intended audience.
engaging with the surrounding population parallel’s Duke’s unwillingness in the opening
dissertation vignette of this dissertation, to offer names or other signs that his interlocutors might use to place
him within webs of sociality. While scholars of interaction such as Sidnell have examined
participation as a positive attunement towards others (Sidnell 2014) and anthropologists have
continued to develop the concept of phaticity to examine forms of contact making (Zuckerman
2016), this research points out that phaticity also entails an analysis of its contrasting strategies
of insulation and non-engagement through which individuals work to stave off contact. As with
the monitoring of one’s speech in the market so as to not give off signs of wealth, interlocutors
developed keen, multi-modal strategies for protecting themselves against possibly revealing talk
at the same time that they practiced routines of sociability.

Mountain Path Sociality

The mountain paths located between Guinea and Senegal were a space of social liminality,
which residents of Taabe such as the group mentioned above navigated in their everyday trips to
the market, or even to go to school. As such, they provided a rich context of evaluation and
social identification, particularly in the context of the Ebola epidemic. One’s capacity to move
was mediated by one’s ability to build concrete relations with individuals through material
exchanges and by the acknowledgement of regional, kinship, or other relational idioms. The act
of traveling itself afforded the possibility of certain forms of connection and evaluation among
travelers.

Beyond the intercity and long-distance travel that punctuated residents’ monthly routine,
much of the social life in southeastern Senegal played out along axes of movement. In Kedougou
City as on the hoore fello plateau, one gathered daily such necessities as water, cooking fuel, and
supplies. In the typically large families, elder members of the household had the authority to send those younger than them on errands to buy small amounts of food and to take care of other basic essentials, an understanding which put individuals in an endless circulation between homes, sites of water collection, and corner boutiques. From Taabe down to the market town of Takkopellel, this constituted a three-kilometer trip down a steep mountain. On luumo days, most families sent at least individual tasked with buying supplies from each household in Taabe down the mountain to Takkopellel. Children and younger siblings were often sent on such errands and entrusted with bits of change to buy goods from the luumo or, on a daily basis, from small shops on the other end of town. These seemingly small errands, however, constituted important parts of the socialization of children who learned how to represent their family’s business and wishes, how to negotiate loans and prices with boutique owners who were their elders. These children were often overwhelmed by teasing on the part of merchants and adults, since for many of the children this constituted an activity of utmost gravity and consequence. These small exchanges through which credit and debit were established among families drove the lively circulation of individuals among homes and stores.\(^\text{138}\)

These mountain paths occupied a liminal space—partly monitored, partly a free space of play. For children finding themselves momentarily between the home and school or market, these mountain paths were a place of unbridled imagination. Children inhabited the personas of famous footballers or other forest animals as they played in the liminal space between settlements. Running up and down to the luumo and on their way to school, children would tag the rocks and trees in chalk with their call signs which remained for weeks in the dry season, but

\[^{138}\text{Both in the market and across town, debt structured relationships of power and respect in which those who owed money often felt shame, deference, or resentment towards their creditors. In situations of repeated debt-dodging, debt structured interactions chronotopically—the those who were owed money, would alter their walking habits and routines with respect to the ways that their debt was distributed in the community.}\]
quickly washed away in the rains. Often these signs were bits of text lifted from the talk of tourist guides, talk in which the children anticipated a future tourist group as an audience. These tags also included homages to their favorite rappers or football players.

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rest 1 km
Taabe 2 km
Davido
une rapor Davido
Bienvenu aux Village Taabe La Village la plus Bele Cru- village
grotte dint
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rest 1 kilometers
Taabe 2 kilometers
Davido (a rapper)
A rapper, Davido
Welcome to the Village of Taabe, the most Beautiful Village...
Cave ( )

In these in-between spaces along paths through the forest, children would tease travelers by impersonating chimpanzees from high points along the canyon rim, so that their animal calls resounded widely. Indeed chimpanzees, but more often baboons, commonly travelled through these zones, and travelers were keen to pick up on sounds of movement around them.

For adults slowly working their way up and down the mountain, the trip up offered an opportunity to take advantage of the cell network. Since the cell network all but disappeared once one reached the top of the plateau, the forested paths up the Taabe mountain was ironically a place of intense sociality. Plateau residents from Guinea and Senegal and headed to the *luumo* made use of the phone network as long as they could, exchanging news with distant relatives as they ascended the steep mountain paths. Indeed, discussions along these paths in-between towns were where I encountered some of the most sensitive conversations. Talk of marital problems and disagreements with siblings were often kept private until we reached a space of discretion among the trees and open roads. Indeed, Fulɓe from this area were quick to remark on their
secretive nature, proud of their ability to dissemble speech in Kedougou by using deep Pular, and of their ability to give signs to others in-the-know by secret signs. A common move was to *gundagol*, for instance, to slip away with other fellow conspirators to secretive talks of a personal nature. Passing by and encountering other groups of travelers, however, one could not help but catch bits and pieces of their talk in these seemingly “private” zones. Following in-behind individuals, or momentarily spending time with them at places of rest, travelers could catch bits of discussions and usually put together the pieces so as to discern what was going on. This seemingly deserted path *en brousse* was in fact a site of condensed sociality.

On one particular day, Mamadou and I followed behind a man who was talking to his brother on speaker-phone. We began to catch significant parts of his conversation, in which the man was counseling his older brother about how to deal with his ostensibly intractable wife. She had, it seems, burned money as an act of defiance, and the two were discussing how to move forward. Mamadou and I both listened curiously to their troubles and we continued to follow him up the mountain as we went along. Since *hoore fello* and Guinean residents often stashed their bikes at the top of the mountain and descended the rest of the way on foot, this three-kilometer section provided a productive space of compressed sociality. As many travelers reclaimed their bikes on the top, they then made quick progress to their final destinations, and the fascinating eavesdropping was abruptly over.

Not just homes, markets, and courtyards, but also different environmental niches were appropriated and adapted to particular needs for discretion, like the *brousse* as a place of romantic concealment, or the sacred forest in which boys were initiated into manhood. Opportunities for hiding oneself from others’ gaze were not only shaped by human technologies, for example through the emplacement of walls and courtyards, but they were also afforded in the
naturally occurring forms of precipitation and vegetation. Just like rains brought people fleeing to safe interior spaces and into intense social contact, full moons provided long corridors of sociality along which youth from neighboring villages would gossip and flirt on their way to and from impromptu *soirées*. The mountain path between Takkopellel and Taabe provided a liminal space of animal-human contact, a place taken advantage of by local residents to engage in particular social relations.

**Movement, Play, and Self-Presentation**

Like the mountain paths leading in from Guinea, the trade town of Takkopellel was a locus of social interpretation as to the provenance of new arrivals. Crossing each other along paths to and from the *luumo*, local residents often greeted the other market-goers and asked searching questions to assess what people were carrying and what their business was. “Ko honto wonudaa yahde,” ("Where are you headed?") was a predictable question that those entering village spaces would encounter. These kinds of questions, however, were acutely sensitive in the wake of the Ebola epidemic during which travel to and from the Guinea border was increasingly monitored. News of births and deaths were often exchanged by those who encountered each other en route. The number of travelers and their belongings often gave fellow travelers hints of their destination and business. Lines of women carrying packages on their heads, for instance, provided a dependable sign of impending marriage negotiations or celebrations. At two vantage points along the steep incline, travelers would stop and chat for a while before continuing on. The foot of the mountain was a place of recognition and attempts at identification. Greetings had a way of spilling into more searching questions, and at times like these I was often asked about my last name and my hosts, queries that were often followed with cutting remarks about my host
patronym, Diallo. Younger adults and children that my travel companions did not know were quizzed about whom in the area they were associated with, “ka hombe wonudaa?” (“whose place are you at?”). These kinds of quick searching greetings and answers allowed rural residents to quickly associate individuals with larger families. For acquaintances, chance encounters in the bush were often an opportunity to inquire about family members and other personal news.

The luumo got going after the first caravan of cars from Kedougou arrived in the market town. While those living in the village clusters around Takkopellel came both to buy provisions and to sell livestock or agricultural products, there was a class of merchants who travelled from luumo to luumo selling their wares. Women unloaded ice chests full of frozen juice in plastic bags and piled up bowls stacked one inside the other like Russian dolls stuffed with cooked treats. Merchants unraveled tarps that spilled out flashlights, mirrors, utensils, and other necessities. All of this merchandise had been tucked in baggage crammed between and on top of people huddled in Mercedes buses on their weekly mission to deliver people and their wares to the luumo. Just as Senegal’s iconic cars rapides were being phased out in cities like Dakar and Saint Louis, they were popping up around Kedougou on bumpy routes to the Guinea border in what appeared to be a rather strenuous retirement job.

For plateau residents, descending to Takkopellel was moving to a different social arena. Inhabiting this different space often entailed different strategies of self-presentation and identification. Bourdieu’s concept of social field is useful in illuminating the social relationships between Taabe and neighboring communities (Bourdieu 1991). Defined as “the structured social arena in which individuals occupy distinct social positions and interact relationally to acquire desired capital,” Bourdieu’s concept of social field allowed him to account for the various ways of being embedded in the world as afforded through habitus, ways that positioned individuals
differently with respect to access to various jobs, marriage partners, and life opportunities (Bourdieu 1991).

While Takkopellel had once occupied the edge of the known social space—a few fields sitting on the edge of a forested plateau area replete with spirits, game, and possibility—it shape-shifted now into the capital of the commune. Over the years, however, Takkopellel became integrated with the tourism industry, with primatological institutes, and with NGO networks. Today, many Takkopellel youth speak Spanish and are as likely to greet each other in a fluid “que tal” as they are in Pular. Many former Takkopellel residents now reside in Spain, and quite a few are married to Spaniards. Along with a campement villageois, Takkopellel boasts three additional campements, small rustic hotel compounds many of which are financed by tourist guides and expats in Spain. On the southern edge of town sits a primate research center run by a Spanish branch of the Jane Goodall institute. Many of Takkopellel’s compounds are built of cement batiments and boast a well-developed solar network. Youth from Taabe and other hoore fello villages often related to me their marriage situation in the area. “We cannot marry women from Takkopellel,” one admitted. Rather than looking for successful fonio and peanut farmers with wide social networks, Takkopellel’s women, I discovered, were often in search of office workers, guides, and professionals. Men from hoore fello were more likely to marry other women from hoore fello, as well as potential partners from Guinea. Takkopellel youth, on the other hand, had often married within the village, but also from hoore fello and Guinea.

If the social field were to be expressed spatially, one of its boundaries lay along the crossroads at the base of the hoore fello plateau upon which Taabe sat, and before the entrance to the village of Takkopellel. This is where Mamadou and his friends from Taabe would sneak into the bush and change into their town outfits on their way to soirées, late night dancing parties.
Takkopellel was a place where one could wear one’s best clothes and not feel like one was showing off. Mamadou’s crew, drenched in the sweat of the hill trek, would take off their simple t-shirts and trousers just off the path where they could be hidden among the foliage. Donning sporty prêt-à-porter clothes purchased during the weekly markets in Kedougou or Dakar, Mamadou and his friends would spray themselves with cologne and display their finest baseball caps and sneakers. Mamadou and his crew were then not only ready to emerge from the brousse, the forest regions in between towns, but also to enter a significantly different social arena than the one they had left on top of the plateau.

As in Mitchell’s *Kalela Dance* (J. Clyde Mitchell 1956), in different spaces such as the luumo, Kedougou City market, or the village, individuals had to assess different strategies of self-presentation, including ways of speaking and of dress. Descending the Fouta Djallon plateau to the town of Takkopellel could thus entail a lowering of social status. One of the most renowned figures in the village of Takkopellel was El Hadji, the long-time nurse from the Casamance, who had made Takkopellel his home. His family made good money buying up fonio and other products from the plateau and then selling them to buyers in Kedougou; the use of plastic sealing machines added even more value to their agricultural produce. Over the years, El Hadji had developed a rough conversational style that bordered on the playful and the aggressive: his position as health post supervisor and middleman afforded significant social status.

I was shocked the first time I witnessed an imam from a hoore fello village meekly enter El Hadji’s campement where the imam hoped to sell a rooster. In their subsequent conversation, El Hadji called the slim, elderly imam “boy” and jokingly threatened him: “je vais te rinser et t’arranger,” (“I’m going to wash you out and lay you out”). While this kind of talk could be
explained away by El Hadji’s status as a ritual outsider, a status which perhaps enabled him to tease based on a joking relationship between Diola and Fulɓe (which was not a particularly strong association), the imam’s radical self-abasement was striking. I visited the imam just weeks later in his home village, and the man commanded a deep reverence and respect as a sage. In their movement to and from different settlements and market towns, plateau residents thereby deployed vastly different embodied, linguistic routines in order to respond to different contexts. They thus alternated between repertoires of deference-seeking and self-lowering in a face-saving frame of joking in order to advance practical agendas across the changing spaces and times. Clothing the self-lowering in the suit of a licensed joking relationship thus allowed individuals to deploy certain self-abasing but productive interactional strategies under the protection of the idiom of joking, whereby the face-shifters need not suffer permanent or lasting loss of face (Goffman 1967).

**Movement as Social Negotiation**

Whereas movement and navigation have often entailed an investigation of frames of reference or intuited senses of place in the tradition of Heideggerian being-in-the-world (Casey 2013; Heidegger 1927; Ingold 2000), forms of mobility in Kedougou have been characterized above by social wayfinding. In contrast to certain phenomenological traditions which largely focus on the individual’s orientation towards a lived environment, I highlight movement as a practice of social negotiation (cf. Vigh 2006). Tim Ingold, for instance, adopted the perspective of wayfinding as a way to envision individuals as constituting the landscape as they move through it (Ingold 2000). Many of these perspectives on mobility as wayfinding are largely built around paradigms of the hunters and gatherer (Ingold 2000) or pedestrians taking in the
complexity of a (European) city as individuals engaged in the flow of wayfinding (de Certeau 1984). Rather than approaches that primarily explain wayfinding as an individual, apolitical process of finding one’s way in the world, this chapter locates movement in southeastern Senegal as a practice of breakdown and contingency that often relies on the dynamic negotiation of social relations on the spot. These pathways of movement between social sites provide patterned modes of social evaluation and objectification through which individuals placed and connect with one another.

In the context of challenging environmental factors in Kedougou, travel constituted a necessary but arduous part of everyday life. Indeed, Fulbe were traditionally wide-ranging pastoralists travelling across the Sahel with large flocks of cows, goats, and sheep, pastoralists who interacted with sedentary populations as a function of their differing relationships with movement. Early in the 20th century, ancestors of Taabe’s residents would, in trading for salt, embark on multiple-month trips through Senegal. During these long-distance trips, travelers needed to draw on idioms of relatedness in their reliance on local hospitality for food and lodging. More recently, even in the wake of increased investments in transportation, infrequent and irregular public transportation still meant that getting around the region often required reliance on one’s ability to find occasions (privately-owned vehicles) and in so doing to draw on social networks that could create opportunities for oneself. While Kédovins did often walk long distances from place to place, these treks were often undertaken under the burden of heavy rice sacks or other goods for sale. With the intensification of artisanal mining in the area, price differentials across the region motivated Kédovins to make close calculations about selling at a profitable margin across space. Kédovins often expressed distance in terms of a price-map where locations sat in relationship with one another based on relative prices, inflected by one’s ability
to draw on personal connections to offset the cost. Those with access to motorcycles could in the best of circumstances cross great distances, however the unreliably of these motorbikes of Chinese manufacture meant that trips were characterized by the profit-shaving contingencies of breakdown and disrepair. Travelling by moto thus entailed not only the navigation of physical barriers, but also planning of one’s trip with respect to the motorcycle mechanics’ shops along the way. Travel thus necessitated the deployment of strategies to gain assistance from others by taking advantages of social opportunities as they presented themselves.

In the dry season, vehicular travel between cities and villages was suspended in plumes of dust biting at the faces of those travelers navigating wash-boarded laterite roads in the bush. On the back of a motorcycle, one’s bones rattled under the shocks and vibrations of wheels bouncing over root and stone-strewn paths leading from village to village. Traveling often entailed long hours of waiting and boredom that could abruptly end in a split second’s opportunity to take advantage of a social connection that expedited one’s journey. While linguistic anthropology offers well established tools for studying stationary, small group conversations, or even momentary greetings through observation and recording, much of the social life in Kedougou City and between urban spaces happened in a flash from the back of a motorcycle while one greeted people on the move and negotiated momentary social encounters with passersby. I gleaned much of the relationships between individuals in Taabe by paying attention to short trips through town during which I learned which kind of people were considered in-laws, and which other kinds of people could be insulted and teased.

Across southeastern Senegal, the roads themselves were therefore not only modes of transportation but also loci of social activity. Roadsides were lined with boutiques, repair shops, and small eateries where people and vehicles co-existed in tight quarters. I often had to
recalibrate my comfort level with bodily proximity to large vehicles passing by me at anxiety-inducing speeds. Rather than primarily just a lane of travel, paved roads in town and in the rural hinterlands were used also as restaurant floors, store fronts, and stock rooms. On these arteries, motorcycles, cars, and people all shared a tight social space in which movement mediated the kinds of social experiences people might have with each other. In the downtown Kedougou market, men on motorcycles often drove up to kola nut sellers on the sides of the road; they weaved between umbrellas and shade structures so that they could saddle up to the market stalls.

Until very recently, rural-urban transportation was for most an onerous matter of walking, or conversely a quicker trip for those few lucky enough to own a bicycle. As recently as 2006 when I first arrived in Kedougou City as a Peace Corps volunteer, there were only a handful of motorcycles in the city. In stark contrast to that time a decade ago, now much of the city was navigated on the backs of inexpensive Chinese scooters and coupets. Since the introduction of cheap 150cc motorcycles of Chinese manufacture imported from Guinea, motorcycles have begun to define regional transportation in zones with little public transportation. With as little as 300,000 F CFA (approximately $500) for a brand-new bike, or 100,000 F CFA for a used one, a family could vastly increase its abilities to transport people and goods across the Kedougou region. Those who did own motorcycles were relentlessly approached by those from the same household and from groups of friends or colleagues who might have need of them. For some years now, scooters have been gaining popularity as an urban vehicle designed for small in-town trips. Larger motorcycles allowed for the transport up to two other people, and with a bit of practice, for several bundles of goods stacked on the luggage rack and foot panels. In Kedougou, to have a car was also to occupy a particular dual position: on the road and more broadly in one’s social relations. While motorcycles had become more and more common, it was not everyone
who could afford one. Since public transportation was so rare, many people relied on occasions, people informally offering travelers rides in their private vehicles.

Actual social encounters—of kin or potential strangers—involved a sociability that came to terms with particular socio-material configurations that shaped the encounter like speaking up to others from one’s seat in a car, looking through the window at a bank teller, or buying ritually powerful kola in the hot sun. Having or not having a certain means of transportation in a region meant that individuals were often forced to make relevant social calculations on the fly. Who were the kinds of people who would stop for you, or how do you greet someone on the move? Beyond linguistic and bodily deference indexicalities of face-to-face interaction, how do you show respect to an in-law one meets while on a motorcycle? These kinds of everyday encounters defined the interrelated travel and socializing of Kédovins. These encounters are soundly linguistic in the sense that they involve the possibility of addressing, bodily positioning and proxemics, as well as gesture through which individuals communicated each other’s relative position. As such, traveling through town on foot, on a bicycle, on a motorcycle, or in a vehicle drastically altered one’s engagement with places and people, changes that afforded different degrees of isolation and distance in a context where one was often quickly drawn into social relations through greetings, debt relations, and the recognition of relatedness.

In town, possessing a car, and to a lesser degree a motorcycle, provided a measure of protection against the pressures of attending to one’s social relations. For one former head of the battalion of Kedougou’s gendarmes, traveling in a car became a way to avoid the time-consuming practice of everyday greetings. By the end of his career, he told me, he could barely walk down the street of Kedougou or nearby Tambacounda without greeting and attending to social interaction every few minutes. The end result was so disruptive to his circulating, that he
took a car wherever he went, even for small short distances. Attending to his phone while being driven around and benefitting from the car’s barrier to the outside, allowed him to slip in and out of areas where he would otherwise be carried into drawn-out conversations. Being driven around by a chauffeur also helped excuse him from any responsibility to stop for individuals on the way since he wasn’t at the wheel. While having a car in some cases could be used to project a consequential and successful persona, at other times vehicular travel was used to insulate oneself from the responsibilities of phatic contact in face-to-face interactions.

**Kinshipping**

While someone lurking inside of a car might slip through a town unnoticed, driving a vehicle in the bush was an invitation to be the target of weary travelers. With the help of contacts in Spain, my friend, Mamadou Diallo, had managed to acquire a small sport utility vehicle that he used in his work as a tourist guide. As Mamadou drove back and forth between Taabe and Kedougou, his ability to provide rides to those travelling the roadways was much appreciated. For Mamadou, his many trips along the Kedougou-Takkopellel road constituted a practice of recognizing and placing kin and colleagues. Mamadou’s car was known in town, and he often stopped his car quickly upon recognizing members of his family, as once when he picked up a *dendiraawo* (cousin) I had never met. Driving past villages and passing by those hoping to benefit from a ride, Mamadou had to make on the spot decisions discriminating between the people whom he would bring along in his car and those whom he would only stop and greet. I often heard Mamadou musing to himself about which individuals he might have a responsibility to take along. On another occasion just before halting at the entrance of Kedougou to pick up an elderly woman, he quickly said to me, “Bee döo ko neeniraawe” (“these here are [classificatory]
mothers”). Many of these women were members of his mother’s generation, his deceased mother’s friends whom he felt obligated to help out.

While interlocutors offered normative accounts of how to employ honorific registers in southeastern Senegal, individuals in practice had to navigate quickly in these everyday moments on the road the showing of respect and the social placing of people. How do people respect, recognize, and place each other in motion? While recording conversations over a pot of tea provided an easily parsable speech event with spatial and temporal boundaries, I found that much of the day was composed of fleeting moments of social recognition through which people greeted each other and assessed their responsibilities towards each other along trajectories of movement. These everyday moments of peripatetic negotiation were an important modality through which individuals identify kin and colleagues. Far from the quintessential objects of more static kinship studies, these everyday moments of recognition loom large in significance as everyday rituals of recognizing relatedness. Indeed, while elicitations, ethnic jokes, or political rhetoric might be mined for an understanding of ethnic stereotypes, the socio-linguistic acts concomitant to driving, walking, or eating provide modes of typification through which relationships were evaluated and constituted.

Mamadou often pulled the car over just to greet someone or to launch an insult at someone with whom he had developed a relationship of license. For instance, in one trip to Taabe, Mamadou pulled to the side of the road and initially greeted an older man, only to call him “kikilaare bonde” (“dirty old man”). The man, Dansokho, whom I later learned is the grandfather of Mamadou’s older brother’s wife, asked Mamadou for goro juldere, hitting him up for kola nuts from the most recent festival. Mamadou refused as the two continued to launch casual insults at each other, blankly refusing each other’s requests. Both Mamadou and the man
both laughed as Mamadou finally pulled away. This practice of ritual license was understood by Mamadou to be an instance of *tanagol* where individuals removed from each other by one generation can disrespect and joke around with each other. In fact, in talking with Mamadou afterwards, I learned that he felt the need to launch such insults at him, whereas his refusal to do so would have brought his relationship with Dansokho onto uncertain footing.

Kinship and social relations were something to be discovered and developed quickly en route. Travelling on the roads along the Guinean border often provided for moments of recognition and connection-making. On one particular journey from Takkopellel to Kedougou, two women came up to Mamadou’s car and greeted him, asking if he was headed to Kedougou. Looking into the rear-view mirror, Mamadou said, “woo ko eŋ mussiɓe”, (“I hear we are kin”), whereupon the women replied “ko eŋ mussiɓe de” (“we are definitely kin”), soon finding themselves in the back of his vehicle. As a much-needed ride-giver in a region with intermittent public transportation, Mamadou was often under intense pressure to bring along friends and family while at the same time tending to his own affairs. Moments like this reveal an aspect of relation-making in Senegal that was often stressed to me by my interlocutors in Taabe. That is, entering into social relations is a process of discovery and social labor, an active doing conducted with one’s hands, feet, and tongue (from Chapter Five) in which one can uncover and develop relationships with others. For those standing on the sides of the road, hailing a car and developing tactics of phatic baiting to halt and establish a communicative channel with passersby was an important skill. Riding around in Mamadou’s car as with others, I commonly heard nicknames, kin terms, shared jokes, and honorifics reserved for in-law used as tactics to draw his attention.
Travelers closely monitored each other’s speech, and greetings were used as indications of the kind of person one was dealing with. To remain silent, and therefore to refuse to give out verbal clues was to deny fellow travelers a certain ability to assess one’s character and status. On several occasions, after jumping into a shared car and greeting others in a Pular or Wolof, I received utterances of relief from fellow travelers that I could respond to greetings. “Ye aŋ ko a neddō,” (“whew, you’re a person!”), a man said to me once, expressing relief that I could speak and respond to social cues. I heard similar things in reference to other travelers as well that viewed extreme laconic inclinations as a threat to fellow travelers, “si a wondi e neddō a haalay,” (“if you’re with other people, you talk”) one lady explained to me on a separate trip in reference to a taciturn traveler beside her. Given a relative lack of contacts in common while encountering strangers during travel, simple greetings were interpreted as indexing one’s broader knowledge of respectability in these social situations. Not merely a matter of comfort, other scholars have noted that the emergence of new modes of transportation have provided significant contexts of navigating social change and developing particular publics, as with understandings of sociability in Victorian railway carriages (Sapio 2013).

Expectations of respect and recognition on the road often provided signs through which travelers assessed each other and their intentions. A Bassari neighbor of mine who owned a 4x4 with which he made frequent trips to a sub-regional center along notoriously difficult roads. Travelling to and from his natal village, he often returned from home with tales that revealed individuals’ character through the trials of travel. His car would not infrequently get stuck, or break down, and those travelling along would have to find shelter and assistance in the villages along the way. On one particular journey with several riders on board, his 4x4 had broken down and he was forced to continue on foot in search of tools. On the way, he encountered a few men
sitting on the side of the road whom he greeted in Pular. Feeling chaffed by their lack of response, Kali continued on and managed to fix his 4x4 a short time later. Driving along shortly thereafter in his repaired vehicle still with riders on board, Kali later recounted his pleasure at passing by these men on the side of the road, who this time were waiting in anticipation to see if they would find a ride in his “empty” 4x4.

Social indexicalities—such as typifications of “Guineans” or other ethnic and national types—were not only constructed through face-to-face interactions or observation, but also built through evaluations of movement. Social models generated in this way read respect into forms of movement in and through the materiality of vehicles. Malians, for instance, were broadly associated with the heavy, new vehicles of long-distance freight. This was partly due to networks of wealthy Malians who dominated the poids lourd freight networks, mercury, mining, and other networks in light of the Dakar-Bamako highway that now ran through Kedougou. Particularly in the context of the Ebola epidemic, Guinean forms of movement were scrutinized in the borderlands of Taabe and in Kedougou City. As I travelled with Mamadou to and from Taabe, he and other fellow travelers would build models of social types through the forms of movement and travel. Local, Senegalese cars’ drivers were seen as slower moving and politer in contrast with overladen, hurried, and “rude” Guinean drivers. Respect in motion was shown by slower cars allowing faster cars to pass, and conversely, by honking in thanks for slower cars that made way. This road theory of respect informed Mamadou’s understanding of which cars were Guinean, and which were Senegalese. “Guinéens alaa respect,” I often heard, (“Guineans know no respect”).

Other anthropologists have looked at ways in which vehicles, as status symbol, brand, or index particular groups. For instance, in Norma Mendoza Denton’s Homegirls, merely driving a
two-door Toyota, Datsun, or Honda Civic becomes a possible gang identifier (Mendoza-Denton 2008). Not just as visual or status objects, travelers routinely assessed vehicular behavior, accounting for ways of driving in such a way that it blurred the boundaries between humans and cars. Under Kédovins’ theory of vehicular respect, those cars that honked were often interpreted as Senegalese, while those that didn’t were at often considered Guineans. Although Guinean chauffeurs were also revered for their ability to navigate precarious roads in less than pristine vehicles, they were also held to be reckless, crazy drivers. Guinean chauffeurs and travelers—often descending from the more temperate climate of the Fouta Djallon mountains—could be recognized by thick coats, scarves, and gloves, accessories that often betrayed their provenance by the time that they arrived in the heat of Kedougou.

These forms of evaluation were salient in the border zone close to the village of Taabe. Positioned in an area between the Senegalese and Guinean border posts, the Taabe plateau was an area where individuals often encountered cross-border travelers. Guineans were held to be disrespectful drivers, but particularly the youth also were deemed to lack the proper deference towards border officials. One day, for instance, the story of young men crossing the border post into Senegal spread like wildfire across the plateau. They had, it was reported, run through the border without stopping for the Senegalese border agents. On their way back through, they were apprehended. I found it striking that rather than a question of security, locals spoke of it exclusively as a violation of norms of respect (*teddungal*).139

Treating the materiality of travel and movement as a mode of social negotiation offers an important counterpoint to an analysis of typification and social evaluation based on the

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139 Residents of the plateau loved to tell stories of drunk Guinean border guards. A classic trope was their lack of education. A story I heard over and over again was of a Guinean border guard who looks at your passport for a long while, then asks what your name is. The Senegalese I talked to loved to joke about the irony of illiterate Guinean guards who couldn’t read the names off of a passport.
sociopoetics of verbal creativity in face-to-face interaction. The final chapter of this dissertation builds upon my discussion of mobility, teasing, and honorification by analyzing a namesake ritual in the village of Taabe. The next chapter in many ways integrates themes that have emerged throughout the body of this dissertation. These include the co-emergence of honorification and teasing, verbal creativity in naming, and ways in which individuals negotiate their place within larger collectivities or communities through talk. Through the analysis of a ritual naming ceremony, it examines how performances of teasing provide strategies for affecting one’s participation, thereby showing a seemingly localized ceremony to be a platform upon which individuals contest their belonging to larger collectivities. Not only a ritual that endows an infant with a name, thereby bringing him or her into social relations as a person whose name one can utter and embed in larger webs of social relations, these naming rituals provided a platform from which increasingly dispersed communities negotiated belonging and participation in home-towns.
CHAPTER EIGHT
Ritual Contingency: Teasing and the Politics of Participation

Introduction

The face obscured by a long flowing scarf, a stooped figure emerged from beyond a bamboo fence and slowly approached a group of elders standing in the compound of a small village in southeastern Senegal. A young infant in the lineage of the village chief had just been named at a *denabo* (naming ceremony), and kola nuts had been distributed to those in attendance as a material index of their witnessing. The figure appeared at once masculine and feminine, but its reliance on a long staff betrayed the stride of an elder. In cascading moments of recognition, cries of shock and laughter rebounded inside the small walled compound as the figure drew nigh. Shrugging off any hands that attempted to impede its advance, the cloaked figure thrust a staff into the earth, planted two feet beside it, and bellowed: “the name of this child has come and it is *Trash Owl*.”

This chapter was inspired by a striking performance that occurred in the aftermath of a naming ceremony (*denabo*) in the Fouta Djallon highlands of southeastern Senegal. A woman had missed out on the naming of her niece and as it would turn out, her namesake. Crossing paths with the village chief and other authorities in the moments after the ceremony, the woman disguised herself as an imam, and performed a parodic renaming in which she teased the infant, renaming her “Buubu Ñooge” (“Trash Owl”). This woman’s striking reenactment of the naming ceremony from which she had just been excluded became an entextualized name (Bauman and
Briggs 1990), and in the following days, it was taken up by those who felt that they were insufficiently compensated by kola nuts at the naming ceremony. Teasing the family of the child with this jocular name subsequently was mobilized in playful extortion in order to contest access to distributed gifts, which as I argue later, were material objects through which witnessing and participation were constituted in the naming ceremony.

This episode provides an opportunity to examine teasing as a form of social action. For many, humor and laughter present anti-structural forces that hold the capacity to critique normative orders or to control social behavior (Schieffelin 1987; Eisenberg 1987). Some scholars such as Mary Douglas have expressed a strong view of joking and teasing as a mechanism of social control through which interlocutors might subvert dominant norms (Douglas 1975b). For Bakhtin, for instance, folk laughter and the folk culture of carnivals and of marketplaces present a relief from normative orders (M. Bakhtin 2009), in examples of what Max Gluckman considered rituals of rebellion (Gluckman 1954).

Rather than positing a “location” for resistance or critique (see (J. C. Scott 1990; Gal 1995), the perspective of teasing allows for an analysis of how everyday routines of contestation relate to broader rituals and events or how they circulate through interdiscursive pathways as part of speech chains (Wortham and Reyes 2015). While Douglas and Bakhtin display a strong view of humor’s purpose to subvert normative orders, teasing can be an effective strategy particularly because those teased most often respond seriously and entertain their claims in conversation whereas teasers may eschew personal responsibility (Drew 1987). Rather than merely a mediation of interpersonal relations in terms of gender (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp 2006), of relational identities (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997), or of managing categorical relations (Radcliffe-Brown 1940), this chapter argues that teasing can also have implications for how
interlocutors expand their intersubjective time-space (Munn 1986) and motivate their claims to resources.

More broadly, routines of teasing during the course of a naming ceremony in southeastern Senegal reveal strategies through which individuals manage participation in village communities. I suggest that the politics of participation—how individuals are brought in and out of participation across unfolding encounters during the course of community rituals—are particularly contested in much of West Africa and governed by patterns of mobility between rural homelands and regional economic centers. In southeastern Senegal where village assemblies, NGO meetings, and community rituals appear to be dominated by elder men, an attention to talk at the interstices of formal speech events and unconventional strategies of recontextualization, like teasing, help account for alternative forms of political power and agency. Given increasing forms of mobility and movement between rural homelands and economic centers, the perspective of teasing and verbal creativity can help account for how individuals keep track of and include themselves in the social life of rural villages. After discussing the context of the naming ceremony (denabo) as a field of play, I turn to an analysis of Aunt Aissatou’s parodic teasing.

**Introducing the Denabo**

In Pular-speaking villages along the Guinean border, a *denabo* is a one-day affair in which the family of a newborn infant’s father invites in-laws (*esiraabe*) to a ritual shaving ceremony, followed by a ritual feast later in the day. During the ritual shaving of a *denabo*, infants are tended to and shaved by women of the father’s family as well as by neighbors and those present at the birth. Witnesses from the father’s family and in-laws, or *esiraabe*, look on as a formerly
nameless infant (*cuppi*) acquires a name, and through the name, becomes a person. In the culminations of the *denabo*, a religious leader, usually the *imam*, utters an Arabic text while facing east and grasping a long, wooden staff. While much of the day is interspersed by the giving and receiving of gifts that follow along axes of affinity, this initial naming ceremony presents a pivotal moment in which those who insinuate themselves into the ceremony are rewarded with gifts of food and kola nuts, thereby providing a material index of witnessing. Later in the day, the naming ceremony concludes as the main meal is served where the guests and most importantly, the in-laws, are presented with return gifts of food, tea, and rice cakes.

However, a narrow focus on these central moments belies not only the clusters of conversations through which decisions are made before and after the main event, but also ignores material and linguistic resources that are used to call in or exclude participants beyond the here and now. In a context where celebrations are managed over the course of many hours in increasing waves of activity, negotiating participation to various stages of the ceremony represents a central plot of the ritual. In this context of fission-fusion participant frameworks, highly performative displays were particularly effective in making representational questions a public issue, questions which were often otherwise treated in secretive meetings between village elders (*gundagol*). I suggest that a close attention to the contingency of participation prevents ritual analysis from too hastily presupposing the “community” of which the ritual is in service. Through an analysis of an incidental exclusion at a *denabo*, I point to interstitial action at the temporal and spatial edges of ritual as a place where issues of participation are played out.

The *denabo* is a naming ceremony which brings into relation the local host family of the father (*takanɓe*) and their in-laws, known collectively as *esiraɓe*.140 During a *denabo*, extended...
families welcome infants as social persons through the giving of a name, and manage relationships through the exchanging of gifts of food. More broadly, paying respect to one’s in-laws provides a central arena in which residents monitor each other’s speech. Forms of deference towards in-laws were marked by an honorific register unique to Pulafuuta.\textsuperscript{141} However, displays of deference that are indexical through honorific speech and through bodily orientation co-exist in this ritual space with teasing among ritual goers. In small clusters of face-to-face interaction, I often heard members debating their respective responsibilities, commonly contesting a distinction between junior in-laws (\textit{keyniraabe}) who could engage in license, and senior in-laws (\textit{esiraabe}) who were expected to show deference. In endogamous unions where individuals could claim to be kin or affines, the limits of affinity were often tested through just such displays of joking and verbal creativity.

The day of the \textit{denabo}’s naming ceremonies, the arrival of in-law groups was so keenly anticipated that news of their progress was of central concern. Travel was difficult in these borderlands between Senegal and Guinea where the steep mountain roads of the northern reaches of the Fouta Djallon mountains made auto travel near impossible. Attending a \textit{denabo} demanded that pedestrian groups of affines travel great distances with bowls of rice, sugar, and cloth on their heads. Columns of women heading to a \textit{denabo} could be easily discerned by their walking in lines and by the small bowls perched upon their heads; the brightly colored wax \textit{complets} that

\textsuperscript{141} Common terms included, \textit{esiraawo} (sg.), \textit{esiraabe} (pl.), \textit{esiraawoyaagal ngal}: the instantiation of the in-law relationship. Although often occasionally used in the singular, the term in the plural \textit{esiraabe} was more commonly deployed. As such, \textit{esiraawo}, in the singular, presents a marked form. The father of one’s wife is the central figure in the concept of \textit{esiraabe}. As an extension, the term also covers the more senior individuals of the family of one’s wife or husband.
the women wore contrasted with the surrounding green foliage. Those families who had access to
motorcycles sent out small groups ahead of the main column as harbingers of the families’
progress. The long-anticipated arrival formed the concluding act of the *denabo* and was
celebrated with the afternoon meal. In a region with spotty network and difficult travel
conditions, alerting the appropriate in-laws in the right order was achieved through a host of
intermediaries who were tasked with passing on news of the event. The timing of invitations was
a critical element of strategy, as in-law groups who were alerted just days before an event would
often protest being positioned as less valued participants.

Accounting for distant relatives as well as alerting kin and neighbors across the region
and further afield set the scene for a social drama that underlay the *denabo*. This ritual provided a
context for renegotiated roles that played on a distinction between *fuutuube* (or *putu*, in-laws) in
contrast to the *takanbe* (family of the newborn, hosts), with implications for the responsibilities
to cook, receive gifts, and to display deference. Aside from unaffiliated elders (*mawbe*) or the
young (*sukkaabe*) who themselves often attempted to take sides so as to benefit from gift
redistributions, individuals often fell into binary roles as either *fuutuube* (*putu* as generic) or
*takanbe*.

**The Denabo of bébé Aissa**
The *denabo* of bébé Aissa took place in Taabe, a small village in the foothills of the Fouta Djallon mountains in southeastern Senegal. Her father, Rune Diallo, was a nephew to the chief, and his wife, Hassatou Diallo, was in the lineage of Taabe’s imam. As guests arrived from surrounding villages and neighborhoods, they brought along with them gifts of rice, corn, or other offerings in calabash dishes carried on the top of women’s heads. Gifts from *fuutuube* (in-laws) to *takanbe* (hosts) were brought in circular calabash containers containing bars of peanut soap, onions, liters of oil, corn, and wax cloth *pagnes* to be made into colorful dress outfits (*complets*). *Takanbe* were careful to return to groups of departing *fuutuube* gifts which included bags of sugar, tea, kola nuts, honey, *cobbal* (rice cakes), and money, in addition to the tea prepared for the guests during the course of the ceremony, and the main prepared meal made from a sacrificed goat or sheep. Throughout the day, elder members of the *takanbe* group organized these reciprocal gifts for in-laws some of whom had travelled great distances to the celebration. In secretive negotiations inside huts (*gundagol*), the *takanbe*, as waves of in-law groups arrived and departed, gathered and plotted the best ways to reciprocate with gifts of
money and kola.

Stepping back from the *denabo*’s key moments—the shaving-naming ritual and the distribution of the main meal—the ritual action of *denabo* was spread out in time and space. Much of the planning and enactment of the ritual’s scenes happens in fission-fusion participant frameworks in which individuals group together and split apart in various spaces over the course of the day. Rune and Hassatou’s *denabo* dominated the entire western half of the village, much of which was inhabited by both sides of their family. While most groups were separated by age and gender, individuals continuously passed through those social fields in cross-cutting trajectories and momentarily patched themselves into other social situations.

Each of these scenes was a small social world that some might enter either as main protagonist, and others only as an observer and overhearer. While the women cooked, the elder men (*yeesoobe*) congregated in the chief’s compound where they sat on benches and relaxed on mats laid out on the gravel of his courtyard. While this area was primarily reserved for heads of household, a few younger men managed to smuggle themselves in to overhear this important talk of repairs to the mosque and local politics. They rarely spoke up themselves, and many managed to stick around by taking charge of cooking up round after round of *attaya*, a sweet, strong green tea. While at times the social management of space appeared segregated along lines of gender and age, constant circulation to and from these sites provided opportunities for individuals to momentarily break into and out of permeable clusters of intense social activity.

**The Ritual Shaving**

Having provided an overview of the intersecting social pathways navigated by hosts and guests, the following section focuses on the ritual shaving during which Rune’s daughter
acquired her name, Aissatou. Taking place in the morning at the compound of Rune’s now deceased father, the shaving ritual provided the first high point of the *denabo* where dozens of individuals from across the village crowded around, sitting on mats or standing on the outskirts. Managing seating arrangements occupied many of the participants, with prime locations and seats being reserved for honored guests and in-laws. Amid the audience who sat in a semi-circle around the *ngeru* (ritual space), some participants embodied the roles of playful suitors who teased each other, the newborn, and her family on marriage prospects. Older adult men jokingly remarked on the baby’s beauty, a comment that had the potential to invite envy or witches. Wondering if they would have a chance to marry her. “Meneŋ ko paykuŋ meŋ faalaa,” (“We want the little girl [as a wife]”) one man belted out to Rune’s brother, Mamadou. Guests and neighbors bandied about in the space around the location where Rune’s baby was being prepared. Finding one’s place entailed not only finding a place to sit among one’s social peers, but also navigating the verticalities of respective status in which more honored guests were provided with the chairs and benches.

![Figure 66 – Sitting in Preparation for the Naming](image-url)
Participants often tested the limits of their hosts in order to gain more access to goods or to gain entry into the important conversations. Only moments before Aissa’s shaving, several elder men from Taabe made searching comments to Rune’s elder brother, Mamadou, that alluded to their share of kola nuts that had been distributed after the naming.

**Figure 67 – “I Haven’t Seen Anything Yet”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Alaa ko yi’ii mi taw</td>
<td>I haven’t seen anything yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>Eh alaa ko yi’udaa</td>
<td>Eh you haven’t seen anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Eeyo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>No wata hawju ko e fudfàde woni</td>
<td>Don’t be in a hurry, we’re just getting started</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As parried by Mamadou, this exchange demonstrates the host’s critical verbal skill of pushing these kinds of pointed requests into the future while not disrespectfully foreclosing them prematurely.

As the critical moment of shaving grew nearer, Mamadou beckoned me to take a place by the ritual scene. I looked on as Rune and Hassatou’s infant was prepared and pampered, a ritual beginning with a washing in a small calabash. Rune’s sister sat with the baby on her lap and got ready to shave her head. Elder women in their family lineage sat nearby and assisted. Unsure of herself at first, Rune’s sister was aided by an elder woman who guided Rune’s hands as she dipped the razor in the water and began shaving the baby’s head. In the calabash swam a piece of bark which she soon used to comb down the baby’s delicate hair before they could continue to shave in delicate passes. While the name of the baby was chosen over the course of discussions between elders before the ceremony, the imam announced the name of the newborn after its ritual shaving. Facing east with a wooden pole in two hands, he began with an Arabic incantation of blessings on the master and declared the name of the child to be Aissatou in successive rounds of oration.

**Figure 68 – Blessings Upon the Master**
This text is a traditional “blessings on the master,” commonly cited throughout West Africa. Originating from 33:56 in the Qur’an, God and his angels send blessings upon the prophet “oh you who believe, greet him in peace.” This invocation is particularly efficacious since blessings offered in this way are multiplied by ten, given that they originate from God’s station.142 As the imam concluded, several members of the father’s family pressed small bills into the hands of the imam in a recognition of his ritual labor. Packets of cookies and, more importantly, kola nuts were distributed to those in attendance of the naming event. Rune’s elder brother began to hand out kola nuts to those closest to him, but soon passed large sacks on to others near him who continued to hand out cookies and kola nuts to those in attendance. Several bystanders began to demand a greater share, while others asked if their kin had already gotten some. Soon afterwards, several men took a goat to the back of the compound and prepared it for the festive meal that later would present the afternoon’s main event.

Just after the naming ceremony had been concluded, Rune’s paternal aunt (yaaye), Aissatou, rushed into the compound where the naming had just occurred from another direction.

142 Many thanks to Rudolph Ware for these insights.
She had arrived too late for the ceremony and carried a small calabash filled with an assortment of old junk—broken flip flops, shattered pieces of an old radio, a dirty sock, and shards of hard plastics—offerings to satirize the gifts of rice, cloth, and oil that were brought in by Rune’s many in-laws from surrounding villages. Many that I spoke with talked about this in terms of tanagol, teasing between one generation or because they Aisstou and baby Aissatou shared the status of namesakes. Busy with the preparation of her joke gifts, Aunt Aissatou, the youngest sister of the village chief and aunt of bébé Aissa’s father, had missed out on the shaving and the distribution of kola nuts and biscuits. Even though she lived just on the other side of town, no one had alerted nor fetched her in time. Although Aissatou surely knew that the shaving and naming ceremonies would not have had a definite starting time, the fact that they had gone ahead without her presence was striking.

Just after the main naming event, a first wave of attendees of the naming ritual streamed back through a nearby compound where much of the cooking had been taking place. It is here that I and several senior organizers of the naming ceremony ran into Aunt Aissatou and Maty, the first wife of the village chief.

Intercepting the village chief as he came through the compound, Aunt Aissatou demanded to know if they had named the child already, “ee y ko ka argol ngol nii kaa oŋ innii?” (is it on the

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143 Ironically, her intention to tease the host family with mock gifts is what made her late for the ritual in the first place.
144 The village chief’s first wife had been in attendance for the naming, but like Aunt Aissatou, missed out on the post-naming gifts.
way in that you did the naming?) (line 8). “Men innaali taw” (We haven’t [her] named yet), Aissatou continued, voicing her and Maty’s central role in the naming ceremony. At this point, Aissatou is already voicing one who has the authority to name the infant, a role that she will develop more later as she and Maty press their case. The chief’s response indicates that he understands Aissatou’s comments as protest that she had not received her fair share of kola nuts and return gifts: “Ah lanni hino gebal moŋ ngal ka innde moŋ,” (You already got your share, in your name [Aissatou]). Soon afterwards, another village elder teased Aissatou in a playful repartee, noting matter-of-factly, “a yi’ii bonooɓe ɓeŋ yaawaali arde,” (“You see the bad people never come early.”).

Aunt Aissatou’s absence was significant since she not only shared given names with baby Aissatou but was a primary namesake. Called tokora in Pular, having a namesake is a special bond that is often broadly invoked and remarked upon by Senegalese and West Africans. Newborns are most often named after respected individuals already in the family lineage, often a grandfather or grandmother (maamiraawo) as a way to connect new generations with their forbearers. When children are named after a family member, they are made to share in their namesake’s social status by being addressed with honorifics and treated with deference.

As Aissatou first learned of her exclusion, she and Maty accounted for their late arrival by saying “ah meŋ ɗaarike haa meŋ ronki” (we waited until we got tired), referring to her and Aissatou’s unsuccessful attempt to wait around to receive kola nuts from the ritual naming. This phrase is repeated several times between Aissatou and Maty almost word for word as they voice their combined frustrations.

**Figure 70 – “We Named Her Trash Owl”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spkr</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>ah meŋ ɗaarike haa meŋ ronki</td>
<td>ah we stood around there until we got tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>((group laughter))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aunt Aissatou’s absence was significant since she not only shared given names with baby Aissatou but was a primary namesake. Called tokora in Pular, having a namesake is a special bond that is often broadly invoked and remarked upon by Senegalese and West Africans. Newborns are most often named after respected individuals already in the family lineage, often a grandfather or grandmother (maamiraawo) as a way to connect new generations with their forbearers. When children are named after a family member, they are made to share in their namesake’s social status by being addressed with honorifics and treated with deference.

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During this period of palpable frustration, Maty first proposes on line 15 a joke name for baby Aissa on line 15, calling her Buubu Ñooge, (Trash Owl), a charge that she casually repeats on lines 18 and 21. Buubu refers to an owl (buuburu) a reviled bird, which often presents the animal form of flying witches. Ñooge refers to rubbish, or trash. (Poetically, however, Buubu has the feel of a nickname that you might hear in this part of West Africa. In this way, it hearkens to a name like Duudu, which is a shortened form of the extremely common name Mamadou). While Aissatou attempted to tease the infant early on by giving it a joke name, the name didn’t “stick” in this first interaction, and the elders responded in a general defense of the ceremony’s organization. This first attempt to rename Bébé Aissa occurs on line 15, where Maty’s use of the imperfective aspect constitutes a first instance of naming “…onna mo…,” (-a) a casual performative act that she refers back to in the perfective aspect on line 17 “…men inni mo…” (-i).145

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145 In contrast to many other languages, Pulafuuta foregrounds aspect in which verbs are marked as complete or incomplete.
The ritual elders, however, are not drawn into a response by this attempt at renaming and continue to provide a defense for Aissatou’s exclusion. The response of another village elder draws attention to the site of the shaving (ngeru nguŋ) as having been accessible to all (line 22). His use of proxemic deictics on line 22, “no ndaygi dōo” reinforces his claims to the fact that the naming ceremony had been conducted in plain sight for all to see. The village chief insists that the gifts of sugar biscuits, kola nuts, and rice cakes had already all been given out to those in attendance. Aissatou soon leaves, appearing frustrated with her exclusion from the main naming event. At stake are also kola distributed during the shaving ceremony. Not only an incidental gift, kola co-constitute the ratified act of being an original witness, a point I return to later in this chapter.

A Parodic Naming (Re)enactment

The following encounter picks back up in the opening scene of this chapter with the cloaked figure of Aunt Aissatou. After Maty and Aissatou casually attempt to tease Bébé Aissa and adopt a voice of ritual authority, Aunt Aissatou returns only minutes later, bedecked in long headscarf in the style of a devout elder with the very staff that had been used in Aissa’s naming ceremony. Her arrival upon the scene ignites laughter and cries of surprise among those standing by. Planting first her feet and then the ritual staff into the gravel courtyard, Aissatou lifts her head
from underneath the flowing scarf and, facing east, recites “blessings of the Prophet” (from the Quran, 33:56) “Allah wa mo salli ala seydina: Mohammad wa salli:m.” (line 46). She continues to follow the ritual text closely, employing the honorific lexical register of “to come,” seenagol: “innde boobo no seeni doo…” (The name of a child has come here…). Aissatou bellows out the proclamation over and over again, as overhearers protest, laugh, and half-heartedly attempt to stop her.

While the imam’s original blessing had been performed in a quick, almost methodical recitation in which the boundaries between phrases were nearly imperceptible, Aissatou’s performance drew emphasis to parts of the text by her pausing frequently and extending the final vowels in emphasis (for instance, “salli:m”). In contrast to the imam’s previous incantation, whose tight cluster of linguistic blessings appeared impenetrable to response or contestation, Aunt Aissatou’s recitation was interspersed with calls to stop, with protestations and not infrequently with laughter.

Figure 72 – A Performative Renaming
BD = Mamadou (Rune’s older brother); Jom = the village chief; Friend = a friend of Rune and Mamadou; AD = Aunt Aissatou

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Spk</th>
<th>Pular</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>eh eh no- no-</td>
<td>eh eh no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Allah huma salli ala seydina:</td>
<td>(recites blessings on the master)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mohammad wa salli:m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Jom</td>
<td>hey he:</td>
<td>hey he:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>nangee be taw nangee be taw</td>
<td>grab her already</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>doo</td>
<td>grab her there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Jom</td>
<td>a y’ilii onoj wana goddiin faale</td>
<td>you see if it’s something you want you say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>oj wi’ay</td>
<td>(something)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>nangee</td>
<td>grab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>((continues)) ...Mohammad wa</td>
<td>((continues blessings of the master))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>salli:m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>uh uh accee diin doo de</td>
<td>eh eh stop that there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>nangee be doo taw</td>
<td>grab her there already</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>innde boobo no seeni doo:</td>
<td>the name of the child has come here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>ko Buubu Ñooge</td>
<td>it’s Trash Owl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>((laughter))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Jom</td>
<td>innde boobo no seeni doo ko</td>
<td>the name of the child has come here, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aissa o wi’ete</td>
<td>name is Aissa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Jom</td>
<td>ko Aissa o wi’ete</td>
<td>her name is Aissa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>o’o o</td>
<td>nope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Jom</td>
<td>ko Aissa o wi’ete</td>
<td>her name is Aissa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This embodied inhabitation of the figure of the imam—achieved through staff, scarf and body posture along with mastery of the honorific Pular and Arabic text—went well beyond the casual reference to Buubu Ñooge some moments before (see previously on line 15). Drawing on Goffman’s wry terminology, Aissatou had now created a scene, see (Goffman 1990), performing an over-the-top reenactment that offered a provocative alternative name for bébé Aissa. This was a scene in every sense—not only as an interruption of the ritual action through a satirizing performance, but also as an encircled performative space forged around her by an attending audience. Aissatou’s reenactment of the previous naming ceremony elicited both raucous laughter and admonishment from those present. Though interspersing their interjections with bouts of laughter, the men in attendance successively called for her to be stopped, “acceɛ dũŋ dũo de,” and playfully grabbed for her. In spite of the protests these men called out, Aunt Aissatou remained in character and repeated key parts of the text over the exhortations and shrieks of her audience.

The perspective of performance is relevant not only to semiotic displays on the center stage of the naming ceremony, but also to the temporal and spatial interstices of ritual frameworks. Aunt Aissatou’s reenactment demonstrates how individuals creatively make use of their position outside the ratified ritual to form an alternate act that draws on its juxtaposition to the main event. In the tradition of John Austin and later John Searle, Aissatou’s renaming might be considered in the context of speech act theory (Austin 1961; Searle 1983). Indeed if we were only to compare it to the ratified naming event earlier, it would appear to lack certain felicity conditions required as an explicit performative act of naming (e.g. a ratified, ritual orator). (Austin 1961; Searle 1983). The case of Aissatou’s parodic renaming constitutes an instance of
teasing and impersonation, however, which demonstrates that performatives cannot be viewed in the binary of success or failure. Beginning with Maty’s casual naming just after missing the ceremony, Aissatou finally resorted to a teasing routine complete with costume, prop, and parody of the extended naming oration. This renaming drew attention to itself by charging the name Buubu Ñooge with dissident indexicalities, by its poetic and affective qualities, and by the recruitment of an audience in the penumbra of the ratified naming ceremony. Rather than a key for social action accessing only a single type of performative act, Aissatou’s knowledge of the Qur’anic ritual text and honorific Pular provided linguistic tools that could be used creatively with various effects. In so doing, she was able to embed the official oratory into parodic routines that became interpreted and more-or-less tolerated as entertaining critique.

Indeed, the oratory performed by Aunt Aissatou and the imam constituted not so much a context of code-switching, but rather a performance that was not necessarily seen as containing different codes. While disciplinary linguistics distinguishes among languages based on structural regularities in underlying grammar, other perspectives in linguistic anthropology might leave this as a more empirical question. As such, we might ask how speakers distinguish among varieties, codes, languages throughout their social lives. While one might ostensibly attempt to resolve this issue through metalinguistic interviews, answers on the nature of language boundaries would provide only one perspective, conditioned by the contextual dimensions of the interview format. Instead, it is necessary to consider the conditions under which language users might offer different metalinguistic appreciations of languages and language boundaries. In the case of Arabic, assessments of the boundary between Pular and Arabic were not always stable associations.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{146} Rudolph Ware (personal communication) has hypothesized that Fulɓe, in contrast to Wolof, are more likely to identify Pular with Arabic because of perceptions of origins to the east outside of Africa.
For some Pular speakers in my rural field site, Pular and Arabic were not to be considered two “different” languages at all. Expressed to me in the village of Taabe and implicitly corroborated at times in Kedougou city, this view places Arabic in the spectrum of Pular. In this formulation, Arabic sits not as a separate code, but as the deepest, and most respectful register of Pular. Aliou, from a village at the base of the hoore fello plateau explained to me this very sentiment, claiming that Arabic was a vocabulary of respect and goodness. As such, it could be aligned closely with the replacement lexicon of honorific Pular. Knowledge of Qur’anic blessings in Arabic were linguistic resources that women wielded in addition to men. In this way, Arabic could also be creatively used to voice figures of religion and authority.

Rather than thinking in terms of linguistic boundaries, it is more useful to identify how language users assess barriers to using and learning. Do speakers assume that languages are “naturally” acquired as part of becoming an adult? Which rites, rituals, or education programs must one follow to learn particular varieties of language? These considerations apply not only to French, which is learned in Western schools, or Arabic, learning in Qur’an schools, but also registers within “Pular” itself, like bayliti and way of speaking learned in initiation ceremonies. Learning “deep” Pular in itself was commonly held to be something that required skill and special effort. Not even all rural speakers were understood to naturally acquire this register. As such, we might study the way that users learn deep Pular or Arabic in the same

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147 In the small village of Taabe, there were five Qur’anic teachers, and two to three active schools (dudal) during my time. The largest school was run by Taabe’s imam, who instructed students from Taabe’s Western neighborhood. Jules, from the funnaange neighborhood, had the second most active Qur’anic school in the village. At the imam’s dudal, anywhere from a dozen to two dozen students would study the Qur’an every evening. Gathering sticks and firewood before dark, these fires would provide the light in which these young scholars would study their aluwa (tablets) to learn letters and verses from the Qur’an. Situated under two baobab trees, studying the Qur’an under the glow of a wood fire was truly a transporting experience. The students sat in a circle around the fire, arranged in small clusters of students studying at the same level. The voices echoing into the darkness occasionally diverged only to come together in the recitation of a common texts. Students often helped each other out with pronunciations, modeled correct recitations, and also teased each other during these evenings. The eldest son of the imam often walked around the circle, checking in with students and exhorting them to stay on task. At the very end of the evening, when all the wood had been exhausted, the Imam himself would come around and verify the recitations of the students—sometimes individual, sometimes in groups—often repeating the lines for their reference.

148 A secretive register of transformed sounds and syllables that can be understood as a more elaborated form of pig latin.
frame—and recognize that for some, “different languages” are much like different registers of the same language that require special work to acquire. As an analyst, it is therefore necessary to resist the temptation to establish linguistic boundaries from the outset.

For most Muslims of southeastern Senegal, Arabic is encountered exclusively as a language of religious instruction and worship. As such, use of Arabic outside of religious contexts is rare. Wury, a baker from the village of Taabe often performed an Arabic greeting to friends in front of larger gatherings, to which others in the know would respond in the know. This was often performed as a tongue-in-cheek greeting and played upon the way in which Arabic was reserved for religious contexts. Arabic can thus be thought of as a register of iconic goodness, devoid of any contextual interference. That is, rather than expressing respect through multimodal sign configurations whose meanings can be parsed in a variety of ways, Arabic is inherently good.

The name Buubu Ñooge became a popular topic of conversation in the village of Taabe for days to come. Voicing by others of Aunt Aissatou’s reenactment came to stand for a dissatisfaction and a call for an increased share of kola nuts distributed after the official naming. Referring to Buubu Ñooge as opposed to Aissa, in effect, indexed a particular stance (Du Bois 2007) in relation to the host family’s distribution of kola nuts. For some time, Aunt Aissatou only referred to baby Aissa as Buubu Ñooge and performed the name in front of Rune, the baby’s father, “mi andaa mo [Aissa]…miŋ ko Buubu Ñooge mi andi” (I don’t know Aissa, me, I only

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149 At the household in Kedougou, for instance, I overheard several women discussed this aspect of the Qur’an. One day a visiting friend began chatting about Qur’anic instruction in Kedougou. She mentioned that some who learned the Qur’an did not properly learn the letters, memorizing only the strings of verses. Many in town, she lamented, did not welcome talk of the Qur’an. Her vision of Kedougou’s resistance to the Qur’an fit with popular conceptions of their old Kedougou neighborhood, Daande Maayo. This was seen as a place of un-Islamic activities—of babies out of wedlock, of people obsessed with making money, and of children who did not respect their elders. For this woman, learning the Qur’an however, was beneficial in practical ways. She repeated certain verses when she wasn’t sleeping well, or when she wanted to calm and control her body. Not only the code itself, but she claimed that those who were not good, that is those individuals did not share in the qualia of goodness could not even pronounce certain Arabic verses. This, she insisted, was a sure way of knowing if someone was good or not. Bandits, bad people, simply could not memorize and recite certain Qur’anic verses.
know about trash bird). Her utterances were often accompanied by negative evaluations of the 
denabo, during which Aissatou and some other women hadn’t received their fair share. During 
this time, the jocular name provided a way for other women in the community to voice their 
dissatisfaction with their level of inclusion in the naming ritual. For these women, uttering 
“Buubu Ñooge” interdiscursively harkened back to Aissatou’s original moment of dissent in 
getting passed over. Rather than overt challenges to their status within ritual hierarchies, these 
performative, teasing voices provided useful tools for individuals to test the limits of 
participation and inclusion.

As the joke name began to spread throughout the village in subsequent interactions, it 
soon became a rallying cry for Aunt Aissatou and other women who felt they also had been 
passed over during the naming ceremony. As such, Buubu Ñooge was available to individuals to 
voice and make reference to, often through linguistic devices that allowed them to voice the 
name, while at the same time eschewing responsibility. For instance, the day after the naming 
ceremony, a local woman referred to the renaming, “a yi’ii hanki be innno mo kadì woo inne 
wonde.” (“you see yesterday they had named her another name it is said”). By using the 
quotative marker, woo¹⁵⁰ to create distance between her voice and the actions of another, the 
woman could make reference to Aissatou’s irreverence without personally claiming to be the 
source of this information. These women could therefore refer to bébé Aissa’s joke name and 
avoid authorship by reporting on Aunt Aissatou’s renaming. This name was particularly useful to 
the women who quoted it because they were able to humorously extort Rune and his family, 
while at the same time appearing only to report on an act of teasing performed by Aunt Aissatou. 
This strategic evasion of responsibility is similar to ways in coastal Senegal in which poetically

¹⁵⁰ The quotative woo can also be used to quote individuals or to mark speech that is heard indirectly from another source (e.g. 
“woo o andaa,” “they said they don’t know” or “Mamadou woo o yehi,” “Mamadou [it is said] left”).
pleasing insults performed during xaxaar performances could be uttered while eschewing any personal responsibility (Irvine 1992).

Eventually, these days of onomastic extortion eventually paid off. In the evening of the day after the naming ceremony, I asked the village chief about bébé Aissa, and he told me that the name had finally been removed: “Be wadânaama kaaba, be wadânaama maaro, be wadânaama caabune. Jooni ko bébé Aissa jooni. Jooni be yejjiti noogo on. Đuŋ ittaama tòn jooni, men itti đuŋ fop jooni ye”. (“They were given corn, they were given rice, they were given soap. Now it’s Bébé Aissa now. Now they forgot the trash part. That was taken off there now, we got rid of that now”). I visited Aunt Aissatou soon thereafter and found her content with the resolution and never again heard mention of the name Buubu Ñooge.

Yaaye Aissatou’s parodic teasing of bébé Aissa’s naming ceremony presents an example of teasing practices that were broadly woven into the denabo. Teasing infants is common practice both by both men and women in the extended families. While some remarked on a girl’s beauty151 in a tongue-in-cheek marriage proposal, others pointed out how ugly the infant was. “Oo doo ko totiiru,” (“This one here looks like a mongoose”) Aissa’s grandmother exclaimed when she first saw her. These routines of teasing often split interlocutors into two factions of detractors and proponents. Remarking on an infant’s ugliness was widely considered a way of keeping away witches or jealous gazes.

Aunt Aissatou was particularly well suited to evade personal responsibility for her teasing as she could also have grounded her joking in terms of tanagol, the practice of joking between generations of grandparents and grandchildren. In the past, structural approaches to joking relationships have often tracked how categorical relations render relationships of license and

151 Derman notes that while jocularity often accompanied young girls’ naming ceremonies, male infants’ occasions were more somber (Derman 1969).
teasing intelligible and have considered such institutions as contributing to social cohesion (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 1949). Yet noting a systematic relationship between social categories does not exhaust an analysis, but only provides a field of play upon which actors later build tropes and expand.\footnote{In a critique of structuralist analyses of joking relations, for instance, Douglas argued that anthropologists “treated joking rituals as if they arise spontaneously from social situations and as if the anthropologists’ sole task was to classify the relations involved…” (Douglas 1975b, 90). To simply stop at such a relation would be to take for granted a static social structure that could be modeled through a classification of joking practices.} In the case of Aissatou, the success of her performance which relied on minimization of intertextual gap (Briggs and Bauman 1992) with the previous, ratified performance, was striking and constituted a naming that was referred to and talked about by Taabe’s residents for days to come. Even when analyzed in terms of social roles and responsibilities, routines of teasing do not presuppose, but entail the dynamism of the relations of kin and affines (Silverstein 2003). Furthermore, a performative analysis of teasing and parody demonstrates a strategy for negotiating access to material distributions and for expanding one’s intersubjective time-space (Munn 1986) in the form of participation in ritual frameworks as articulated through access to kola nuts.

**The Stakes of Distribution**

Analyses of ritual contingency follow an approach that views semiotic displays as contingent rather than assuming integrity and success (Keane 1997). Participants may be late, performances may fail, and unratiﬁed participants may break into the participation frameworks. At stake are the inclusion of individuals as ratified participants, how individuals renegotiate responsibilities during the course of ritual events, and how participation is mediated beyond the here and now of physical proximity. The openness of participant frameworks, conceived of as potential overhearers (Goffman 1981) or shadow conversations (Irvine 1996), combined with an
attention to how speech is subsequently reported upon and voiced, reveals the ever-present possibility of symbolic hijacking and mockery from the sidelines. The heightened capacity for novel teasing performances to become entextualized as provocative critiques following along extended interdiscursive pathways means that it is particularly effective in the social work of contesting participation and redistribution.

Aissatou’s missing out on kola nuts distributed in the aftermath of the naming ceremony was no small thing, since receiving kola is in effect to witness the naming. I suggest that the diffused residence of kin, colleagues, and neighbors across regional economic centers has increased the stakes of distribution in ritual ceremonies. For decades, villages like Taabe had become points of origin for cyclical rural migrations in which many residents spent much of the year in regional economic centers. As such, these villages have increasingly becoming ritual and communal anchors for peripatetic residents who spent much of the year in more economically vibrant areas such as Kedougou City or the gold mining concessions. For decades now, villagers have perceived a collapse in the social life of the village, with fewer and fewer youth and individuals remaining amid the draw of work in Dakar, in gold mining areas (*diouras*), as well as in the Gambian border area. As such, while the naming ritual might appear to happen in a contained village, it provides an important site through which individuals measured, maintained, and built relationships with dispersed populations.

A central concern for village chiefs and ritual organizers in rural areas like Taabe was to ensure a fair distribution of ritual objects like kola nuts. Residents were concerned with providing enough gifts and food since these redistributive rituals were centers of social gravity that could bring in far flung friends and relatives. Days after naming rituals, weddings, or funerals, attendees evaluated the success of the occasion. Those that were held to be good,
(weelugol), were ones in which appropriate individuals felt compensated or in which one had eaten well. Many events were put on hold so that certain key members living at a distance might be able to attend. During these naming rituals and other ceremonies, I regularly met villagers’ distant relatives and brothers whom I was meeting for the first time, all drawn to Taabe for naming ceremonies, religious holidays, and funerals.

Because of this preoccupation with appropriate representation and success, the distribution of kola nuts at naming ceremonies was keenly monitored. At the same time that the performance of a naming ritual necessarily includes those members through configurations of textually and materially mediated signs of presence, they necessarily exclude others. Certain organizers such as the village chief often felt intensely responsible for making sure that appropriate parties got their share. These elders had to make calculations about how to appropriately distribute in such a way that those who received gifts would “count for” other groups of possibly non-present dependents. While those present often had a claim to distributed gifts, those performing the distribution (sendugol) always had an eye on those individuals who were not present and needed to be accounted for. As such, the distribution of gifts like kola not only functioned as a form of reciprocation for those present at community rituals, but also could extend participation to those who might not have been originally or actually present at the ritual action. Ritual organizers would call out the names of those who had sent money or gifts in absentia. These forms of “standing in” for or excluding provided mechanisms for contesting relative age, rank, and experience.

In short, to witness the baptismal moment of name giving is not a straightforward matter of hearing. Rather, it is semiotically mediated through configurations of signs which constitute a state of ratification and participation. Indeed, states such as participation, overhearing, or
witnessing all demand an explanation of the semiotic modalities through which local actors conceive of inclusion. Distributed to witnesses just after the naming of bébé Aissa, gifts of kola thus mediated a person’s ability to report on an event, to be a ratified authority on a *denabo*. Rather than simply assuming co-presence to be coterminous with participation, this episode provides a reminder that ratified participation is negotiated through complex linguistic-material configurations.

At another naming ceremony I attended, kola nuts were put aside and entrusted to a third party, to be given to the imam at a later date. Not only deference or distribution, the gift of kola provided a material channel that allowed those present to enlarge the framework of participation to those non-present. These kola nuts subsequently followed along intermediaries, from those present at the original naming ceremony, to the imam’s wife, and ultimately on to the imam himself. As such, they provided a linguistic-material index of his ratification as a witness for the naming ritual. Reports of what happened during the naming rituals travelled alongside the kola nuts, thereby positioning the *imam* as an individual who could authoritatively talk about the naming ceremony. In the days after the event, the *imam* invoked the chosen name and remarked on the occasion as a ratified witness instead of asking others for news of the event. In this way, kola in exchange across time and space can be seen as a mediator of participant frameworks, bringing in and including individuals beyond the otherwise limited here and now of ritual action. Aunt Aissatou’s humorous reinterpretations were not only about claiming a greater share of rice, or kola, but also about claiming a ratified role for herself in the *denabo* of her namesake, bébé Aissatou. In an important sense, to be given a kola nut was to witness the baptismal moment. Without gifts of kola to ratify their participation in the official naming event, Aissatou and other disenfranchised parties picked up on and disseminated Buubu Ñooge in order to rectify the
exclusion.

**Teasing as Social Action**

As embodied by Yaaye Aissatou and other women of Taabe, teasing presented a powerful form of social action through which they were able to negotiate their position within a community ritual. Although past approaches to teasing have emphasized different aspects (see for example (Pawluk 1989; Keltner et al. 2001; Queen 2005; Hay 2000; Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997), teasing has generally been understood to entail a critical element towards a present party\(^{153}\) accompanied by metalinguistic signs of “non-serious” play. Many approaches of teasing have looked to solidarity-building between participants (Hay 2000), often understood in a dual sense of bonding and biting (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997), while some focus on the differences between groups of men and women (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp 2006). Teasing has been shown to occupy an important role in language socialization, (Schieffelin 1987; Eisenberg 1987; Miller 1987), through which children learn how to access resources, deal with the world, or manage uncertainty.

While structural analyses of teasing as play could contain teasing within the idiom of categorical relationship, the processes of interdiscursivity and performance provide a way of understanding how teasing allows individuals to build links to forms of participation as materially-mediated. Analyses of teasing in the tradition of CA have looked to its organization in practice rather than assuming functions based on the structural positions of actors. Looking closely at the organization of responses and their sequentiality, Drew notes, “If teasing has a

\(^{153}\) Haviland demonstrates that teasing need not follow neat clusters of speakers and hearers and shows instead how interlocutors can talk through one another, feeding each other lines in such a way that the targets are often picked out in interaction. Fisher’s analyses of dropping remarks in Barbados similarly examined how targets were constituted in interaction as those overhearers who were baited into response (Fisher 1976).
social control function, it is interactionally, not structurally generated” (Drew 1987, 250).

However, since routines of teasing are so contextually specific given laminated histories of use, this chapter has examined how individuals made use of the ritual context of naming ceremonies while paying particular attention to processes of interdiscursivity and to the field of play provided by a ritual context and by the social relations of affinity and kinship. Employed during this naming ceremony, teasing emerged as a strategy for articulating broader claims in order to gain access to distributed ritual goods and through them, to positions within ritual participant frameworks.

The perspective of teasing has important implications for the analysis of contingent ritual action in a broader spatial framework beyond the central stage where overhearers, late arrivals, and talk around the edges of these social situations may use unconventional means to renegotiate their place or to recontextualize ritual action. For instance, during Bassari initiation ceremonies in nearby Guinea, missteps and mistakes during the course of ritual combat are often picked up on by the audience and offer future interdiscursive opportunities for teasing and humorous retellings (Gabail 2012). In this way, one can expect that future initiates enter the ritual knowing about these behind-the-scenes frames for interpreting missteps, mistakes, and things out of the ordinary. Through the powerful performances of Yaaye Aissatou, teasing thus presents a powerful tool, “a device for reformulating others’ speech and actions, and thereby proposing an alternative reality, without seriously doing so” (Mulkay 1988, 79).

Examining routines of teasing help account for how interlocutors manage the contingency of participation, an issue that in West Africa is intertwined with the materiality of kola nuts. This analysis of a naming ritual in the rural hinterlands of Senegal may appear to be a classic anthropological topic that organizes village-based social relations. However, the emergence of
rural villages as ritual anchors that are regularly visited by itinerant migrants renders analyses of participation in community rituals all the more significant (Whitaker 2017; Whitehouse 2012; Piot 1999).

Teasing was used more broadly as a way to reveal the stakes or to prompt others to insist upon the value of social ties. Given the levels of in and out migration from rural zones across Africa, the perspective of teasing provides a view on how individuals weave themselves back into and prompt others to place themselves within natal communities. Rune’s brother, Mamadou—who left the village for long periods of time—was often teased about not being from the village, a charge he often had to counter with highly-monitored repartees. Arriving in Taabe after a long period of absence, Mamadou often had to parry these tongue-in-cheek accusations of being a stranger and no longer having business in Taabe: “aŋ a jeyaaka dôoo” (“you’re not from here”). These everyday forms of teasing provided a linguistic web of playful entrapment that was constantly remade and undone in casual exchanges by individuals coming in and out of Taabe. Furthermore, by means of routines of teasing that drew attention to pronunciations of Wolof and French sayings deployed back in the village, youth coming in and out of Taabe and regional economic centers evaluated each other and assessed each other as competent modern subjects or alternatively as villageois, rural subjects. These identity assessments are particularly important in the context of networks of mobile, transnational populations that move to and from natal villages as “cultural anchors” that may be more or less successful in maintaining a spatial ritual hegemony (Whitehouse 2012).

The case of Buubu Ñooge furthermore demonstrates the importance of examining performances in the interstices of the ritual stage as a way to account for whom ritual semiosis counts. In a context where material exchanges co-constitute states of witnessing and
participation, who counts for whom or the way in which participation is mediated across social space often delineates a critical dimension of ritual action. The way in which Buubu Ñooge was circulated furthermore demonstrates the permeability of rituals as participant frameworks that can reveal evidence of rich interdiscursive pathways motivated by incisive parodic performances. Methodologically, this suggests that analyses of ritual action benefit from an attention to the framing of talk, before and after, through which participants organize and recontextualize ritual participation. Furthermore, rather than analyzing social action only after individuals have already arranged themselves in neat circles of conversation or normatively appropriate participant frameworks, this chapter suggests that ritual analysis also follow along pathways of movement, as individuals collide in the interstices of multiple participant frameworks. As demonstrated by Aissatou’s provocative performances, ritual stages provide a field of possibility that individuals may use to play with, contest, and exploit new conditions of possibility for their roles in community rituals. While many anthropological approaches to ritual have focused on the center stage as a locus of social and symbolic action, ritual can also become defined by what happens at the edges.
CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

Although this research was inspired by sanakuyaagal “joking relationships,” I ultimately found these routines to be merely the tip of the proverbial iceberg, belying a wealth of interactional routines through which individuals constituted relations through the intertwined sociopoetics of naming, kinship, and affinity. By first examining sanakuyaagal and later placing it alongside other routines of social relation-making, this dissertation shows that sanakuyaagal is not a singular practice, but one part of a larger strategy of routinized relational work. In this way, I showed honorification and license to be linked processes of recognizing and placing others. While Radcliffe-Brown took alliances between social categories in many ways as preconstituted, his initial intuitions that respect and license were linked were nonetheless well founded.

These routines of social connectivity offered Kédovins useful interactional tools for responding to contexts of social and economic precarity. In some cases they offered ways of making contact, drawing others into one’s influence or using careful language to bait wealth or money. At the same time, interlocutors adopted verbal, material, or bodily strategies for insulating themselves against possibly searching, revealing talk. This research thus engaged in an analysis of routines of verbal creativity partly to show ways in which sociability could be resisted. These moments of disjuncture—shielding one’s person through clothes or critiquing sanakuyaagal by talking about the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade—constitute modes of social action.
in their own right. Tracking these moments necessitates not only an attention to talk, but also to the semiotics of bodies, clothes, and infrastructure.

By looking at routines, I also draw attention to their spatial, material embeddedness. Routines occurred not only in neatly formed participation frameworks, but helped make possible movement and build out participation and involvement across time and space. Yelling remarks out of the back of the bus, insulating oneself from interaction in private cars, and walking along highly precarious roads along the Guinea-Senegal border thus all afforded particular frames of evaluation for interactants. In some contexts, to be recognized and to create opportunities for oneself—or to remove oneself from social pressures—were the most basic social skills to cultivate.\textsuperscript{154} Sanakuyaagal routines and other forms of verbal baiting drawing on affinal or namesake connections were used to sift through these busy market contexts. Viewed in this way, linguistic anthropology has much to offer anthropological approaches to the built environment, since interlocutors co-constitute infrastructure through their management of participant frameworks in what we might call emergent human-infrastructure arrangements.

Through the poetics of granularity, I showed how strangers and locals typified and placed one another in collectivities of various scalar configurations. Viewed in this way, any diversity inherent in \textit{wealth in people} is not given \textit{a priori}—as in a community of diverse individuals—but emerges through the practice of mutual relationality. This research has implications for the ways we think of kinship in social life. It can be viewed alongside with other work in linguistic

\textsuperscript{154} Movement understood as wayfinding as informed by phenomenology and ecological approaches often view space as built through daily routines of individuals in the world (Ingold 2000). In contrast to Cartesian space as points on a map, wayfinding conceptualizes a process of movement as embodied knowledge that is learned through routine practices grounded in implicit connections between places, people, and activities. Even while phenomenological approaches take space and movement away from a purely mental and towards an embodied practice, too often, they risk prioritizing individual practices of perceiving—such as experiencing the city as a pedestrian observer (de Certeau 1984)—that ignores power relations and overlooks the extent to which mobility emerges through the enactment of social relations. This includes managing family structures across space, taking advantage of the hospitality of distant relations, cobbling together transportation opportunities in a difficult environment, or interpreting responsibilities and intentions of others in crisscrossing trajectories of social movement.
anthropology that looks at kinship as a productive idiom that can be deployed in interaction to configure relationships through kinship indexicalities (Agha 2007; Ball 2018). This research thus poses questions as to the usefulness of strong distinctions between “real” and “fictive” kinship relations. In many ways these two categories seem to parallel dichotomies between the play and serious—those kinds of displays that are held (beforehand) to be consequential and those that are not. Kinship has traditionally been understood to be founded upon the sharedness of a particular substance like bone, marrow, or blood. In many ways, however, poetic substance as in the sharing of names entailed a kind of mutuality of being, interpreted in creative ways for diverse interactional ends (Sahlins 2013). As McGovern has argued elsewhere, we need not assume that the interactional tools of kinship and affinity have been forged in the context of a “stable” rural context (McGovern 2012).

In particular this research shows two major implications for the study of kinship. Whereas West Africa has long appeared to be the heartland of lineality, my research suggests that lineality and proximity can be in many cases analogous ways of figuring group membership. For instance, whereas certain communities southeastern Senegal do figure kinship based on particular apical ancestors along “lineages” (leñoł, leyyi in Pular), in many cases these are figured alongside place-based groups, in which communities trace “lineage” as those originating from a common place. Within the logic of proximity, one’s ancestors having previously resided together can engender kinship relations generations later. In short, the kinship, names, and alliances of one’s consociates can be made to bleed off into one another, in a way that mirrors the analogic sociopoetics of verbal creativity I analyzed in this dissertation. Secondly, kinship emerges as an achievement, and offers one possible strategy for particular individuals to amass
particular kinds of social capital. The status and breadth of these relationships is often negotiated in social interaction.

These interactional analyses of *sanakuyaagal* routines have implications for understanding this routine as a form of conflict management, or more broadly how interactants manage stance or alignment. Rather than mining categorical social alliances for their political implications, however, this research suggests that interlocutors’ ability to manage stance and alignment is not constrained nor predetermined by joking correspondences. The socialization into partly shared interactional norms meant that even *sanaku* “archrivals” could collaboratively weave stories by voicing and ratifying shared principles of connectivity. Those scholars and activists invested in conflict management would therefore learn as much from an analysis of interactional norms and routines as they do from any ostensibly “fixed” group-based alliances or categorical oppositions.

**Future Directions: Routines, Awareness, and Modes of Objectification**

This research has practical implications for understanding the diverse mechanisms through which people produce and reconfigure social collectivities in moments of rapid economic change. Drawing on the phenomenology of Heidegger and also the social anthropology of the Manchester School, this research points to precarity, friction, and disjuncture as possible moments of reflexivity in which previously implicit sign relations or assumptions may come to be publicly performed.

Moving forward, this research offers insights for examining routines as sites for the production of social meaning. I suggest that an emphasis on routine and materiality may help compensate for broader interpretations of literature on linguistic ideologies that have risked
viewing them merely as clusters of attitudes speakers have about various “languages.” Recent work has demonstrated the urgency of looking at the particular routinized frameworks through which hegemonic forms of inequality are disseminated. Deborah Cameron, for instance, identified the male bonding ritual as an important habitual, embodied routine through which the chauvinism is propelled in social life (Cameron 2016). In these routines, as with *sanakuyaagal* performances, individuals are socialized into habitual acts of typifying and placing interlocutors in ways that may not always be above the level of awareness. Viewed in this way, generically-organized routines of *sanakuyaagal* show how practices of objectification and typification are patterned. This latter routine thus foregrounds particular linguistic signs (such as patronyms) as bearers of social meaning through which social types are constructed.

Looking at routine furthermore allows for an investigation of the ways in which particular phenomena are rendered metalinguistically available as objects of public negotiation. Indeed, the question of what kinds of phenomena, and under what conditions particular sociolinguistic phenomena are able to be made aware to social actors has been a productive avenue of inquiry of debate. Michael Silverstein has argued that indexical forms, in particular, are resistant to metapragmatic reflection, in contrast to other referential, morphologically isolable forms (Silverstein 1981). Methods in linguistic anthropology are premised upon the fact that not only signs of which social actors are actively aware carry indexical information, but also those that often remain under the level of awareness. That is, not only highly available shibboleths of group membership do social work and constitute relevant markers of distinction.

Work in linguistic anthropology that has uncovered such naturalized carriers of meaning is productive because it shows that certain linguistic ideologies may circulate even under the level of awareness. Furthermore, these tools allow analysts to examine the kinds of distinctions
are naturalized or taken for granted, and how they come to be objectified publicly and accounted for in socially meaningful ways. Jane Hill’s project on the everyday language of white racism and Mock Spanish, in particular, provides an example of how particular forms, which remain under the level of awareness of most Anglo-American speakers, may nonetheless circulate certain ideas about speakers of Spanish as types of people (Hill 2008b).

Indeed, a tension between “habitual” and “objectifying” modes has underlain much anthropological methods more broadly. Bourdieu in particular reflected upon these simultaneous modes of habitual, embodied learning as habitus, which stand alongside his illuminating discussions on objectification, processes through which social actors may adopt a theoretical attitude to phenomena (Bourdieu 1977). His formulations draw from phenomenological approaches—for instance Heidegger’s distinction between Vorhandenheit (presence-at-hand) and Zuhandenheit (readiness-at-hand) (Heidegger 1927). Whereas Zuhandenheit conceptualized a relation with objects or signs within habits of being and doing, Vorhandenheit was for Heidegger the taking of a theoretical attitude on an object. Versions of this dual nature of practical knowledge and theoretical attitude are articulated in other forms, such as Gilbert Ryle’s distinction between knowing how and knowing that (Ryle 2009, 1949).

While reflexivity is a fundamental capacity of human beings that renders us builders and not only users of the semiotic tools we deploy in everyday life, I suggest a more nuanced approach to the conditions of possibility for which humans adopt reflexive attitudes to semiotic phenomena. In this way, reflexivity is not an individual, but a dialogic process. While metalinguistic awareness is predicated upon particular, perceivable grammatical structures, the kinds of semiotic objects that are rendered objects and made to matter are fundamentally social processes, rendered relevant in public interaction. Moments when routines break down and when
interlocutors have to negotiate partially overlapping understandings often afford moments of dialogic reflexivity in which attention is brought to particular practices.

In certain phenomenological traditions, moments of breakdown and failure often constituted a shift from habitual to objectifying modes of engagement—such as when a hammer malfunctions and one analyzes it as a tool (Heidegger 1927). Things (or rather conversations, translations, attunements, etc.) may thus offer such monuments of “break down,” affording visible signs through processes of friction. In such cases, states of uncertainty or precarity may be powerful modes of seeing when they drive actors who can’t take for granted the smooth constitution of habitual action. Routines of objectification and typification—that is, how semiotic signs are rendered perceivable and publicly salient—are legible through power, as in contexts of uncertainty and liminality. Likewise, conflicting norms or frames of interpretation such as ambiguous Malinke-Peul relations, or the policing of particular taboo nicknames, afford opportunities for interactants to spell out and theorize previously implicit assumptions.

The act of objectifying something and typifying it is a political one if, in many cases, the ability to name a thing and typify could be monitored in political regimes of surveillance such as the U.S.S.R. (Lemon 2009). Goffman’s concept of civil inattention, for instance, has been adopted by other scholars who have looked to ways in which particular social markers—race and gender in particular—position individuals as “open persons” who may be subject to public scrutiny in ways that other interactants may not even be able to account for (Goffman 1966; Gardner 1980). I suggest that these social categories—and in particular positions of precarity such as undocumented immigrants and strangers in the borderland region—afford frames for viewing distinctions that might have been taken for granted by more privileged actors.

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155 Not only routinized genres of social interaction and the materiality of movement and space afford different forms of awareness, but scholars have shown how different forms of attunement to speech, channels, and interlocutors shape one’s
Humor

This research concludes by reflecting upon a body of literature that has loomed in the background of my research: humor. Humor stands on rather unstable footing with respect to comparative work, at once masquerading as an analytical category and a discrete phenomenon on the ground. This dissertation suggests that humor can be usefully viewed as a language ideology—a way of thinking about relationships between interior states, responsibility, and public behavior. It thus helps us gain a purchase on ways of assessing responsibility and a way of thinking of relationships between personal states and linguistic performance.

Understood as joking relationships, sanakuyaagal have been examined as forms of humor which present an enormously encompassing category (see for instance Apte 1985). Many scholars of humor, for instance, have strived to discover what makes things “funny” as the essence of humor. Significant research has been conducted on the linguistic mechanisms of humor (Attardo 1994). However, studies of laughter in interaction (Glenn 2003; Jefferson 1985, 1984) and interdisciplinary studies (Provine 2001) have shown that linking laughter to a concept of humor as assessed by what we have come to call a “sense of humor” represents only one situated view of humor, constituting what we might call a linguistic ideology. Indeed, such a narrow view of humor appears increasingly misplaced since recent research on laughter capacity to gain perspectives on the semiotics of interaction. Goffman famously remarked in his essay “Alienation from Interaction,” how attending to different aspects of a speaker’s performance—their face, voice, the channel, or even one’s own performance—provides can unsettle and disrupt various aspects of one’s encounter at the same time that it allows one to attend to particular interactional details (Goffman 1957). Garfinkel’s “Breaching Experiments” can thus be viewed as a methodology of employing interactional disruption through the unexpected and awkward as a way to probe the background expectations of normal interactional life (Garfinkel 1967).
demonstrates that laughter actually occurs more frequently in response to social situations, to status acknowledgments, and in other pragmatic functions (S. K. Scott et al. 2014).156

Philip Glenn, an interactional sociolinguist, for instance, traces a history of the study of laughter that first sees it as a physiological phenomenon (Glenn 2003). Only recently, he argues, have researchers begun to see laughter as a fundamentally social phenomenon. Robert Provine, for instance, has conducted imaginative research that has looked into laughter as part of a deeper evolutionary adaptation linked to tickling and “non-other” recognition (an important adaptive capacity) at the same time that he has found it to be quintessentially social. As such, laughter is not merely the “language of humor” (Zijderveld 1983) but instead a communicative and semiotically saturated part of human interaction that is subject to socialization. In this sense, laughter can be usefully compared to response cries in the way that they blur the boundaries between “natural” response and “intentional” communication157 (Goffman 1978).

Evidently not universal, the concept of humor emerged at a particular juncture in Anglo-American history such that it became a way of linking laughter and sensibility as a basis for personal evaluation (Wickberg 1998). Wickberg locates the emergence of the “sense of humor” as a historical category in 19th century Anglo-America, at which time it occurred in relation to other “sensibilities”, that were being cultivated as ways of seeing and being the world (Wickberg 1998). Humor in the Middle Ages, for instance, had referred to a physical substance of one of

156 One consequence of this is that fact that “funny” is not to be found independently of its performance and place within social action more broadly.
157 One evolutionary backstory to Goffmanian interactional questions is the distinction between Duchenne and non-Duchenne laughter, both of which evolved on separate evolutionary pathways (named after a nineteenth century French physiologist). The Duchenne laugh (or relatedly, smile) activates the zygomatic major muscles at the corner of the mouth as well as the orbicularis oculi, which produces what are commonly called “crow’s feet”. Duchenne laughter is produced in response to social situations and cannot be faked as it arises spontaneously and often uncontrollably in interaction. Non-Duchenne laughter was a later evolution, which likely allowed the genus Homo greater symbolic and linguistic capacities of voicing and dissimulating. For a good discussion, see Gervais and Wilson, who offer the following hypothesis: “We consider laughter to have been a preadaptation that was gradually elaborated and co-opted through both biological and cultural evolution. We hypothesize that Duchenne laughter became fully ritualized in early hominids between 4 and 2 mya as a medium for playful emotional contagion. This mechanism would have coupled the emotions of small hominid groups and promoted resource-building social play during the fleeting periods of safety and satiation that characterized early bipedal life.” (Gervais and Wilson 2005).
four types (the four humor, yellow and black bile, phlegm, and blood). In a shift from objective to subjective, humor increasingly became something to discern, including ways that one could laugh with, and not just at people and things that were in their character humorous. This also opened the door for processes of second order social indexicality and naturalization that could establish a sense of humor as an ethical and moral locus through which one could evaluate others.

Linking laughter and humor is not the only way of conceiving of these phenomena, however. My Senegalese interlocutors often thought of sanaku joking as a social activity, often as a form of jokkere enday (“the pursuit of relations”) that entails the cultivation and extension of reciprocal relations with broad categories of individuals. Whereas senses of humor can be cultivated as part of broader sensibilities within individual-oriented Western views of personhood, identities of caste and lineage often provided embodied frameworks for understanding different expectations for engaging in play and teasing. Like Keane’s treatment of ethics, humor in broad terms has certain biological and cognitive affordances that render laughter a part of human semiotic capacities (Keane 2015). As such, laughre’s unique evolutionary pathway, which includes inimitable Duchenne as well as dissembling non-Duchenne humor, has freed it to operate broadly in human symbolic and communicative capacities.

We might ask: are sanakuyaagal routines funny? This question, which appears relatively straightforward at the onset, is predicated upon assumptions about humor and laughter that unsettle concepts of humor and personhood. While laughter has until recently been most commonly associated with the humor-content of jokes (most often canned), laughter instead is a patterned display that is frequently used as a metacommunicative contextualizing strategy to provide conditions and expectations for interaction. For example, in early analyses of laughter,
Jefferson found that laughter produced before or after utterances provided cues that invited interlocutors in response (Jefferson 1984). In short, laughter is in large part more a product of emerging interaction between individuals than merely a reaction to humorous content. Highlighting joking relationships as resources that mediate social relations, rather than linking laughter and humor based on Anglo-American conceptions of the sense of humor, ironically parallels this corrective view that insists on laughter as socially significant display.

While the concept of sense of humor is certainly not an alien concept for many West Africans, I have found it useful to maintain a more expansive view on the interrelations between “humor”, teasing, and the self in West Africa. I found that what we would call humor or the tendency to engage in conversational joking was often conceptualized in terms of lineage or caste membership. For instance, in the village of Taabe, the Fulɓe lineage of Pateaɓe (who bear the name Diallo), were broadly understood to inherit a personality characteristic of taking slights lightly. This was often offered as an explanation for certain relational quirks or special considerations. Although villagers recognized differences among Pateaɓe, they nonetheless were evaluated against knowledge that this pragmatic response to teasing was an inherited and embodied difference. Similarly, blacksmith caste families (waylube or taffoobe) in Taabe were viewed differently with respect to joking and teasing. More often than not, these artisan families were the ones described as jalni, (funny, or literally, laugh-provoking), and their teasing was renowned throughout the village. While “noble” individuals also engaged in similar teasing and joking, frames of evaluation were at times different for these groups.

This research has shown that assumptions regarding the categories of play, teasing, or art, joking, and humor have implications for how we understand social action to be consequential. The frame of play is thus not a domain of social life that is isolated from broader politics and
relations, but a particular way of thinking about ambiguity, responsibility, and sensibility.

Examining frames of play, humor, or linguistic ideologies of embodiment affect the way in which social and linguistic elements are objectified and typified in social life. Rather than trying to find a humor code—the language of humor in terms of mental frameworks or a quest to systematize categorical incongruities—the study of humor also offers an interactional, social analysis. I suggest that an attention to the ways in which social actors make assumptions about connections between intentions, semiotic displays, and responsibility offers a productive avenue of inquiry involving humor.
Continuation of Figure 14 – Origins of *Sanakuyaagal* As Told by Dudu

40. Faye mm mm
41. Dudu o wii mi heboi godfüun o wii awa o rii o wii oo
   he said I went and got something and he said ok
   he came and he said
42. Faye mm mm
43. Dudu o wii hin yah juda o yehi o judi serero on
   yàkki
   he said here go and roast the serer went and
   roasted it and ate it
44. Faye mm mm mm
45. Dudu o yihu tun dün dō on no sinta yìiyàŋ dāŋ no
   sinta e makko nanni
   he saw that blood was dripping from him you
   hear
46. Faye mm
47. Dudu o wii e aş ko honto (.) honduŋ gaŋu ma ko
   honduŋ gaŋu ma o inni koo
   he said where did you hurt yourself how did you
   hurt yourself and he said
48. Dudu hay fuss gaŋaali laŋ
   it’s nothing
49. Faye mm
50. Dudu o inni haa (.) hay fuss gaŋaali dündo fow
   hobitiike dün dō fow a itti
   he said I’m not injured this all here just came off
51. Faye mm
52. Dudu dündo fow ittaama o inni woy o jaʃaali
   haalude yehi non haa booyi
   this here all was taken off he said he refused to
   speak of it and that’s how it went for a while
53. Faye mm mm
54. Dudu o haʃi fopp o haʃi o haʃiri koŋgal ngal o
   haʃi fopp haa gayni
   he tied it all he tied up his leg he tied it all up
55. Faye mm mm
56. Dudu haʃi haa tiidi yìiyàŋ dāŋ acci dümamaade yehii
   noŋ haa
   he tied it up tight and the blood stopped coming
   out. it went like that until
57. Faye mm mm mm
58. Dudu o wii hida anvndi o inni eey o inni ko min hetti
   dōo hetti ka busal an
   he said you know he said yes I’m the one who
   sliced a piece of my leg
59. Dudu jonnu ma yàkkudaa bayra a wii hida weela
   he said here go and get something and gave it to
   you to eat because you are hungry
60. Faye mm mm mm
61. Dudu dʊn woni hakkunde peul ko dʊn woni
   hakkunde peul e serer
   that was between Peul and Serer


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