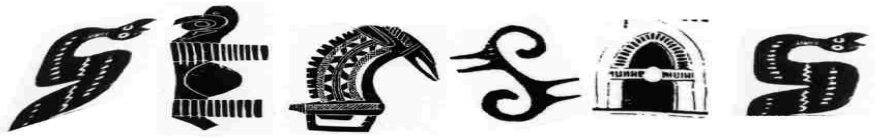

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Changing Gender Roles in Sabar Performances
A Reflection of Changing Roles for Women in Senegal

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"Diamono mooy dokh sopekou"
For every generation, people's roles change
(Mame Nogaye M'Baye, b.1927, personal communication, Dakar, 4/15/01)

"Music has become one of the most powerful means for women to express themselves."
"We cannot understand women's roles in musical performances without understanding women's roles in society."
Lucy Duran in *Women, Music and the "Mystique of Hunters in Mali" 1995*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to bring to focus the shifting roles for women in Senegal by looking at changing gender roles in traditional sabar drumming performances. These musical performances were observed among Wolof (major ethnic group of the Greater Dakar region) sabar musicians from four different griot families (almost all sabar musicians are members of *guewel* [griot] families). Sabar drumming is one of the most popular and widespread types of drumming in Senegal and is most often found in the capital of Dakar. Therefore, choosing to study sabar was important due to the fact that it is practiced, performed, and developed in a city undergoing constant and rapid social change, where people are exposed to a diverse array of cultures and communities. Gondola in her research in the capital city of Zaire writes, "The colonial city, by virtue of its

history as a milieu of fusion and diffusion and as a breeding ground for new cultural patterns, enabled African actors to reshape and reinterpret different structures and relations, including gender." (Gondola: 1997, p1)

It was imperative to study these transformations under griot musicians, as they are "the ones who know the history and stories behind the music" (personal interview, Tafa Faye, 4/12/01). Griot musicians are also considered "traditional" musicians, or musicians that practice traditional musical genres, therefore if we see changes in the griot's music, it is likely that those changes will be adopted by non-griot musicians and eventually accepted by the community at large. Traditional musical performances in many contexts can be seen as microcosms or models for the social structure of the community. Music in its performance also provides new perspectives and ways to study culture and in particular, gender within a cultural context. Therefore changes in these performances offer a window into changing gender relations and identities in contemporary Senegal. Ellen Koskoff in her research on women and music writes,

> *...what is needed now is a deeper analysis of the relationship between a society's gender structure, what ideologies surround gender, the nature of inter-gender relations, and how all these affect music behavior. Further, we must invert this question and ask how music behavior itself reflects and symbolizes gender behavior.* (Koskoff: 1987, p4)

Koskoff notes that we must not only look at gender roles in society and how they affect musical performances, but also how musical performances reflect society's gender roles. This study looks at the latter, beginning with the origin of gender roles in sabar performances, how these roles are changing, and how this transformation symbolizes changing roles for women in Senegal. The emergence of women in more prominent roles in government and the workforce was apparent during my stay in Senegal and people's acceptance toward women taking on these roles seemed to be increasing. This paper serves as an attempt to highlight gender in sabar music as an important aspect in the study of gender in West Africa specifically among the Wolof speaking peoples of Senegal.

Origin of Research

One afternoon a woman in my West African Percussion Ensemble at the University of Washington gave me a video to watch on a famous master sabar musician from Senegal. "You might find this interesting," she said as she handed over a VHS copy of *Djabote: Senegalese Drumming & Song from Master Drummer Doudou N'Diaye Rose*. In 1990 composer Eric Serra produced this video bringing together the 55 drummers of the Doudou N'Diaye Rose ensemble, including his 10 sons, 12 daughters, and the 80 members of the *Julien Jouga* choral troupe. The recording, spread over a week, was carried out on the island of Gorée off the coast of Senegal. The video is captivating as Doudou N'Diaye Rose, Senegalese master sabar musician and griot, orchestrates his ensemble with a vibrant and powerful presence. What impressed me even more was the row of women in the back of the ensemble with sabar drums strapped to their waists, drumming alongside the men. I was watching the video with a friend, Thione Diop, who is also a Senegalese griot, and coincidentally has a cousin who married into the Rose family.

"Women playing sabar?" I smiled.

"Yes," he said, "It's Doudou N'Diaye Rose, he teaches his women how to drum."

"Do you ever see women in Dakar drumming?" I asked.

"Oh no, women don't play sabar," He laughed.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because of tradition..." he said.

I pointed at the video. "But they're playing here..."

"Doudou N'Diaye Rose is different, he wanted to try and get women to start playing sabar".

Now I was interested. I have been playing West African Percussion for nine years and never before had I seen women playing traditional drums alongside men.[1]

"Why did he decide to teach his daughters to drum?" I asked.

"Because he thought they could." Thione replied matter-of-factly. I asked why women don't play sabar in his family. "Because women are suppose to dance and sing, not drum."

This began my journey to Senegal to talk with sabar musicians, including Doudou N'Diaye Rose and his family, about the phenomenon of women learning to play sabar. To ask why gender divisions exist in sabar music, why they are changing, and what people's reactions are to these changes, as well as changing roles for women in Senegal.

Research Methodology

Coming to Senegal as a female percussionist I utilized performance practice methods, by studying sabar drumming, to better understand the issues I would be discussing with the musicians in Dakar. This ended up being very helpful as I learned, among many things, the difference between two types of sabar rhythms, *Bakk* and *Mbalaq*. *Bakk* is a long non-repetitive composed phrase that all the seven drums play simultaneously, and *Mbalaq* rhythms are the more physically strenuous accompaniment parts, played for long periods of time, each of the seven drums with a different part. The controversy among many male sabar musicians is that the women in Doudou N'Diaye Rose's family could only play *Bakk* (less strenuous, but interestingly more mentally complex) and not *Mbalaq*. This, however, proved to be incorrect. After visiting four of the daughters of Doudou N'Diaye Rose and seeing them play *Mbalaq* rhythms I recognized from taking sabar classes, I knew they understood and were capable of playing these types of rhythms as well.

I observed sabar performances three to four times a week at baptisms (*Ngente in Wolof*), marriages (*Tak*), virginity ceremonies (*La Ban*), wrestling matches (*Lamb in Wolof*), women's association gatherings (*Tur*), and night sabar performances (*Tandabeers*). Much of social life in Senegal is formed around these gatherings. The gatherings reinforce the social relations of the community and also provide a time for drummers and dancers to display their talent. The performances were also excellent participant observation opportunities, as I was always forced to get up and dance, and had countless hours to observe interactions and intense communication between the men and women drumming and dancing sabar. A short conversation in Wolof I had with many other observers at these ceremonies always included the following,

"*Kai fecc*!" [come dance] Someone would beckon.

"*Deddet Mangi degguma fecc*." [no, I don't know dance] I smiled back.

"*Pur lan*?" [why?]

"*Mangi tugg sabar rek*" [I only play sabar] I would respond, to see what reaction I would receive. At times it was raised eyebrows, other times nodding, as they had come in contact with many foreigners learning to play Senegalese music.

"*Tugg sabar mangina*?" [playing sabar is difficult for you?]

"*Waaw*." [yes]

John Miller Chernoff in his book, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, talks about the importance of participant observation in saying, "Participant observation is particularly effective as a means of getting close to the experienced realities of social life and thus authenticating the importance of various factors within the research situation itself." (Chernoff: 1979, p35) I conducted over a dozen interviews both formal and informal with musicians from small neighborhoods, directors of well-known music ensembles at Daniel Sorano National Theatre, as well as women from various professional fields in Dakar.

My original objective was to focus on women sabar drummers in Dakar, why, historically, they were prohibited from drumming; and what is allowing some to learn to drum today. After talking with many musicians in Senegal and witnessing my first few musical performances at local ceremonies, I realized that it would be more informative to frame the emergence of women sabar drummers in a larger context. I decided to look at changing gender roles in Senegalese communities and how this is reflected in the music of sabar drumming.

Introduction

It is clear that more research needs to be done in the area of women and music in West Africa. Lack of research in this area is largely due to the combination of the male dominated field of African Studies, as well as the patriarchal structures of communities being studied in West Africa. Lucy Duran, one of the few scholars who has done extensive research on women and music in West Africa writes that the greater value placed on male versus female genres of music is a microcosm of male-female status in Mande society. Duran goes on to state that studying gender in West African music is of central importance in studying West African culture to "redress the prevailing view that women in West Africa play marginal roles as professional music makers." (Duran: 2000, p142). Not only does more research need to be done on women and music in West Africa, but also on the gender roles within West African musical performances. Thomas Hale in his article on female griottes (hereditary musicians in West Africa) states, "It is obvious that we need to learn more about the relationship between instruments and gender in both the Mande world and in neighboring areas." (Hale: 1994, p16)

Through extensive interviews this study looks at gender roles in sabar music, and through empirical evidence shows that various Senegalese traditional values and ideals shape these roles. It examines reactions to the emergence of women sabar drummers from a diverse group of musicians of griot (hereditary musician "caste") [2] and non-griot ("freeborn") origin and how this new phenomenon is a result of shifting social contexts in Senegal. It is important to note here that gender analysis within one's own culture or cross-culturally cannot exclude the researcher's own personal gender identity and experience. Therefore gender analysis is always contextual and dependent upon the role of the researcher in their own culture as well as their role in the culture she finds her/himself within.

Chapter One provides a brief background on music in West Africa and how it serves as a reflection of the social life of the community.

Chapter Two gives a background on the relationship between gender and music.

Chapter Three looks specifically at Senegalese sabar music.

Chapter Four looks at the origins and prevalence of gender roles in sabar performances.

Chapter Five looks at changing gender roles in sabar performances.

Chapter Six addresses changing roles for women in Senegalese societies.

The paper concludes by addressing the importance of these new fields of opportunity for women allowing them to not only fill important roles in Senegalese society but in musical performances as well.

Chapter One: West African Music; a Social Reflection

West African music is an extremely general term that encompasses a vast array of meaning yet has common threads and elements that set it apart from other music of the world. One of which being that it is not set apart from its social or cultural context and it often reflects the socio-economic and socio-political organization of the society. As author Tracy Snipe states, "Music, song, dance, and masks tell a story that relates to the daily lives and socio- political realities of the community, substantiating the concept that art is not superfluous in Africa." (Snipe: 1998, p25) In West Africa stress is placed upon musical activity being a functioning part of society and much of social life in Senegal and all over West Africa is focused on social events. While researching neo-traditional music in Ghana I spent most of my time observing naming ceremonies, initiations, marriages, possession ceremonies etc., surrounded by people who had spent hours preparing for the event and would spend the entire day at the event, making it a significant part of their everyday lives. In Senegal it was very similar, spending time with griot sabar musicians, I witnessed many important events in the lives of children, such as an initiation into adulthood, as well as for adults, such as the beginning of motherhood. Because musical performances are so common and present in everyday life, they also serve as a reflection of society.

Within traditional musical performances in West Africa social roles held by the community can be represented, reinforced and even reversed or commented upon, and musical arenas can serve as an area of open expression and commentary. Chernoff states, "Art reflects the social and psychological realities of its context, restating and representing them through the artistic medium which transforms or some would say distorts them." (Chernoff: 1979, p32) If art reflects the social realities of its context in West Africa, then through the study of West African art and music, one can gain insight into the social realities of the community. One of the most significant social structures in Senegal, as all over the world, is gender relations and identities. Senegalese music is as diverse as its people, therefore this particular study of gender in Senegalese music is narrowed to one musical type amongst the Wolof (major ethnic group) of Senegal. Sabar drumming is a one of the most common types of Wolof drumming found in the greater Dakar region, mostly among griot (hereditary musician) families. Since Dakar is a large capital city that has a long history of trade relations and exposures to various outside cultures, within the country and abroad, its musical styles are susceptible to constant transformation. As Kevin King, African-American professor and sabar dancer in Dakar mentioned to me, "Dakar is the most exciting place for sabar because it is always changing. Dances change, *Bakks* (long composed phrases played at intervals during sabar rhythms) change, and new rhythms are created." (personal communication, 4/29/01) These changes allow for the transformation or flexibility of social roles within the music. This paper addresses one of these social roles reflected in sabar performances, that of gender, and its influence in the music of sabar as well as the Wolof community at large.

Chapter Two: Music and Gender

> *As we know, music is a specific part of expressive culture. Music marks time, place and space differently than any other spheres of culture. Therefore, music provides a unique site for the performances and negotiation of gender. It allows, or may even require, different gender roles than do other aspects of culture. Music is also a space where we can allow the possibility that gender can be seen in new ways*. (Moisala: 1999, p3)

As Moisala states, music is a specific part of expressive culture. If women play important roles in music, it allows them to take on expressive roles within the community. In West Africa this is especially true where traditionally, due to various influences, religious and colonial, women have been encouraged not to speak out or voice their opinions in many circumstances.[3] Nevertheless, in many areas of music making within West Africa, women take prominent roles as singers, dancers and performers. These areas provide important and unique sites for self-expression and exposure. However, within the realm of instrumentation, women are rarely seen or heard. This lack of women instrumentalists in West Africa is a result of various factors within the culture from which the music emerges. Some important factors affecting musical performances include; ethnicity (the unique history and customs of the people who create the music), the genre (the style, form and context of the music being

played), and gender (the roles of men and women in the music and how they are expressed in the performance setting). When looking at the emergence of women instrumentalists in Senegal, the most significant factor within West African musical performances to address is that of gender structure and its influence on artistic expressions. John Miller Chernoff states, "Like language, kinship or occupation, music helps people distinguish themselves from each other." (Chernoff: 1979, p35) Chernoff in his study of African music, reminds us that music not only serves as a reflection and model of the social structures of the community, but also as a representation of the people themselves.

As music often serves as a system in which we represent the world around us, the study of gender relations in musical performances can serve as a window into the gender relations within that culture. Thomas Hale, who has done extensive research on griots in West Africa, has highlighted the difference between male and female griots and the different social roles they fill. Hale notes that gender plays a key role in the economic disparity between male and female griots, as well as the lack of recognition and lack of opportunity for travel given to these female musicians. Differences in gender roles were also recognized in Jan Jansen's article highlighting the music of a female griotte from Mali, West Africa. Jansen notes the influence of gender in public versus private performances in saying, "Only when they [female griottes], have arrived at a certain age, and when they have required a certain social status, are they allowed to perform in public...female bards in Kela perform in a different way from their male counterparts." (Jansen: 1996, p4)

Furthermore when changes in gender roles in music are observed, often they can be traced back to changes in gender roles within the community. Pirkko Moisala researched gender in Nepalese music and observed that, "...cultural changes among the Gurungs have affected their gender organization and performance of gender in music." (Moisala: 1999, p2) Again linking changing roles in society to changing roles in musical expression.

The problems with studying gender and music within a culture other than one's own is that both music and gender are culturally constructed concepts that are defined based upon the one's own gender roles and the music within one's own culture. This however is inevitable and cannot prevent one from studying specific expressive roles within other cultures, as it helps us to better understand that culture and in turn our own. West Africa is an area of the world many people need to gain a better understanding of, especially the roles of women within these societies. Far too often women in West Africa are misrepresented and misunderstood due to lack of research, generalizations, and researchers trying to define their place in society from a western perspective or standard. It is also evident that by looking at representations of gender through the culture's artistic expression, one can gain a better understanding of the gender structure in the community. Koskoff writes of the important connection between music, gender and social standing in saying,

> *Indeed musical performance provides one of the best contexts for observing and understanding the gender structure of any society. This may be so because in many societies the underlying conceptual frameworks of both gender and musical / social dynamics share an important structural feature; they both rely, to a great degree, on notions of power and control*. (Koskoff: 1987, p10)

Looking at women's roles in communities where musical performance plays a key role, one cannot ignore the representation of women within musical contexts. In regard to specific areas of West Africa, such as Senegal, Lisa McNee, in her book on Senegalese women's autobiographical discourses also states, "The Wolof system of genres defines performance contexts according to gender and gendered performance." (McNee: 2000, p61) Therefore we can see that among the Wolof of Senegal, the roles of women in music are of utmost importance, and by looking at how these roles originated and how they are changing, we can see how they suggest changing roles for women in Senegal. The relationship between gender behaviors in the community and those in the musical expression of that community seem to be mutually dependant. That is, the music may affect social relations or behaviors of the community and the community's social relations can affect musical expressions. This paper looks at this relationship from the standpoint of how gender in music is shaped and influenced by expected gender behaviors in the culture from which it emerges.

Chapter Three: Senegalese Sabar Music

Sabar drumming is unique to Senegal, West Africa and is most often played among the griot musicians (hereditary cast of musicians, oral historians, praise singers). There is usually an ensemble of seven drums played with one hand and one stick. The drums are tuned with pegs to tighten the goatskin drumhead. The drum itself is usually carved from the wood of the Baobab tree, and the sticks require special strength, as they are struck with force. Members of the Laobe people (Wolof wood worker caste) traditionally carve the drum shells, however, it is the male sabar musicians who skin and tune the drum. The traditional sabar ensemble usually includes the following drums. The *Mbung Mbung* drums are the instruments which play the *Mbalaq* accompaniment rhythms, defined by some as a mix between Latin rhythms and traditional Senegalese rhythms, and heard in almost all popular Senegalese music including Youssou N'Dour, Fatou Guewel, Thione Seck, and Soloman Faye.[4] These *Mbalaq* rhythms underlie all Wolof sabar drumming. The *N'der* drum is often considered the lead sabar drum and it tells the other drums what to play by playing certain drum breaks or calls. *Thiol*, the drum lowest in pitch, is considered the grandfather of all sabar drums. The *Talmbat* is similar to *Thiol* and is considered the tenor drum. Finally, the *Gorong Yeguel* is the newest addition to the sabar ensemble and functions similar to the *N'der*. It is said that Doudou N'Diaye Rose, Senegalese master sabar musician and griot, created this drum in the 1950's. Rose is known for standing and playing the *N'der* drum for 6 or 7 hours at a time, something that is typical for most sabar drummers. Because this is quite tiring for older drummers, Rose wanted a drum that sounded like the *N'der* but could be played sitting down. It is said that many griot musicians didn't think it was a good idea at the time, yet Doudou N'Diaye Rose created the *Gorong Yeguel* and now it is a popular drum found in most sabar ensembles. The *Tama* (Wolof talking drum) often accompanies sabar drumming. The small hourglass shape of the *Tama* is similar to the larger talking drums of other West African countries.

Sabar rhythms, *Mbalaq* (accompaniment rhythms), *Bakks* (introductory compositions or breaks), and improvisations, are complex and polyrhythmic with different purposes and significance. The structure of sabar is one of call and response, like most West African drumming, and reflects conversational modes. The supporting drums differ in rhythm and remain constant, while the master drummer has the opportunity to display his or her skill with various improvisational means. Any master drum variation will naturally highlight and bring into better focus a particular supporting rhythm and its corresponding relationships. The master drummer must keep the variations changing to give the music a multi-rhythmic perspective. On a basic level, one rhythm defines another and a second rhythm makes sense of the first. The master drummer in a sense acts as the guide that shows us the rhythmic possibilities within the music, as well as the importance of each supporting drum. The lead drummer in sabar will improvise and then at times make calls or breaks that will instruct the rest of the six supporting drums to follow him in a *Bakk*, or composed phrase to be played simultaneously.

Sabar drumming is played in two social contexts. For ceremonies and for entertainment or inspiration, as is true for wrestling competitions (*Lamb*). For ceremonies, sabar is played to an audience mostly composed of women, at marriages (*Tak*), baptisms (*Ngente*), circumcisions (*Jongo*), and virginity celebrations (*le ban*). Sabar is also used for entertainment for women's association weekly meetings (*Tur*), for the young Senegalese parties late in the night (*Tandabeers*), and for tourists or musical performances abroad.

Many of the contexts of sabar performances, with the exception of wrestling matches (*Lamb*), and *Simba* performances, are for women's gatherings and women do almost all of the dancing, as they are the majority of the attendants. While men drum and women dance, the importance of the interaction between the two is evident. The men begin playing sabar at the start of the ceremony as everyone sits in chairs or stands and watches the drummers. In most all of the ceremonies the men drum for almost 20 minutes with no dancing and finally one of the lead drummers will address the audience and say in a joking manner, "If you don't start dancing soon we will have to stop drumming!", at which time the women begin to dance. Each woman will come and dance in front of the lead drummer, one at a time, enticing him to play well for her. Many sabar musicians told me, "the men watch the women's feet to know what to play." A sabar musician, Babacar Faye, from the Sing Sing Rhythm family, a prominent griot family in Medina, told it to me quite eloquently in saying,

> *The dancer's feet are the pen and they draw the notes of what the drummer will play. A good drummer has to know how to read these notes. A good dancer makes it easy for the drummer to*

decipher what to play. (personal interview, 4/11/01)

Not only is the technical communication between the feet of the dancer and the hands of the drummer important, but also the subtle interactions that occur between the two. During sabar performances only one or two women get up to dance at a time. Before they get up to dance often they look a little nervous and finally, sometimes being encouraged by friends, they are pushed up to dance for the drummers. Their dancing is mostly for the lead drummer who will position his drum to face the dancer approaching him. The two stare each other in the eyes and the woman often lifts her skirt while dancing, showing her laced under skirt, or *lapa*, underneath (something almost all women sabar dancers wear). If the drummer thinks the woman is a good dancer it is evident in the way he plays with force and vigor. The woman dances until she initiates her own break and then runs off to sit back down with friends, often laughing or smiling at the attention she had just been given. Sometimes the dancing is very suggestive and the women use very athletic pelvic movements and direct those movements toward the lead drummer. The lead drummer in turn hits his drum at times that coincide with the movements of the dancer. At one performance I attended in Medina, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Dakar, known for its large amount of resident musicians, I observed a women's association gathering (*Tur*). At this particular event the women had a special guest arrive, Assane Thiam, a well-known *Tama* (Senegalese talking drum) player for Senegalese pop star, Youssou N'Dour. One very good dancer got up and came right to Assane Thiam's side. She danced up close to him, almost touching him in very sexually explicit ways while he played his squeeze drum with power and stamina. At one point she faced an electrical pole and placed her hands on the pole while he made pelvic thrusts toward her from behind. It is this interaction between the drummer and dancer that also reinforces gender roles in sabar performances. Koskoff comments on this sexuality in music and writes, "Sexuality, both self and other-defined, affects music performance...performance environments may provide a context for sexually explicit behavior, such that music performances become a metaphor or sexual relations." (Koskoff: 1987, p6) The women entice the men with charm while the men answer back with energy and a display of physical strength. Jean Cisse, Director of the Senegalese National Ballet at Daniel Sorano stated, "The interaction between the drummer and the dancer is almost a type of competition. The woman is enticing the man to be able to follow her steps with his drum, if he cannot, he is embarrassed, if he can, he is considered a strong drummer." (personal interview, 4/9/01). It was also explained to me by University of Dakar, African History Professor, Sarita Henry that there are groups such as "Kai Fecc" in Toubab Diallo that want to "devulgarize sabar dance", showing that for many, sabar dancing can have sexual undertones. (personal interview, 4/27/01). These sexual undertones in sabar musical performances not only play a major role in gender divisions in the music itself, but they also help to define masculine and feminine characteristics of the drummer and dancer. In these exchanges the drummer plays the role of the strong male, enticed by many females (the dancers), and he answers their flirtatious invitations with power and intensity. The woman appeals to the drummer by dancing with charm and beauty. These roles are also reflected in a society that traditionally praises powerful men with multiple wives as well as highlights the physical beauty of women. Changing gender roles in sabar music could suggest that women are beginning to express themselves in more powerful positions within the community.

Not only are there specific contexts for sabar drumming, such as baptisms and women's gatherings, but each sabar rhythm also has a specific purpose or time to be played. For example, *Narigoron* and *Thieboudienne* are played for marriages (*Tak*), and *Dagne* and *Thiol* are played for baptisms (*Ngente*) as well as marriages and virginity ceremonies (*La Ban*). *Barambaye* on the other hand is played for wrestling matches and is danced by men, a rare exception to be discussed later. *Bakks*, the long non-repetitive composed phrases, are also imitations of Wolof speech patterns and often have specific language phrases that accompany them. For example, my sabar teacher in Dakar taught the following drum phrase to me;

Sagganou sa goro lothiey ban
Yeukeuti ko dall niko yureul

Roughly translated by his nephew as a phrase sang to the mother of a woman's new husband, telling her new mother-in-law that she will please her new husband and treat him with respect. (personal communication, Gora N'Diaye, 4/10/01)

Traditionally sabar music was reserved for members of the griot "caste"[5] in Senegal. The main function of the griot musician is that of praise singer. Griots are most highly concentrated in Southern Mali, Northern Guinea,

Senegal, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. It is difficult to define griots in a sentence or two since their multi-functional roles are vast and complex, and today the term is used to encompass a large group of peoples and families from many different ethnic groups, each with an array of varying functions and roles. Talking about the large number of roles a griot can play in society, African ethnomusicologist Francis Bebey stated, "What exactly is a griot? It may be easier to ask what a griot is not." (Bebey: 1975).

Griots are among some of the best musicians in West Africa because they are committed to playing their instruments at a very young age. Mapathe Diop, a Wolof griot who resides in Seattle, Washington taught his son, Thione Diop, my teacher and friend, how to play sabar when he was 4 years old. One day I watched a video performance of Fatou Guewel, a very popular griotte from Senegal, with a friend, Mohammed Diop, who is *guer* (freeborn). Mohammed stated that, "the best musicians in all of West Africa could never be anything but *guewel* (griot in Wolof), because music is their heritage, their *thiossane*." (*thiossane* is culture in Wolof). A while ago he had also mentioned to me that he had wanted to become a dancer when he was very young, but his mother told him that he could not dance or drum because he was *guer* and not *guewel*. This is changing however, and many popular musicians today are not of griot origin. Salif Keita, a popular singer from Mali is an example. Keita in fact is a surname, which originates from the Mali empire. Sundiata Keita was the founder of the empire, and the name denotes noble status. Other examples include, Baaba Maal, Youssou N'Dour (who is *gawlo* or half griot), Ali Fakra Toure, whose family name is also of noble origin, originating from Askia Mohammed Toure of the Songhay empire. In 1999 Mohammed and I went to a Senegalese drum and dance performance at *On the Boards* in Seattle and saw his friend Tijan perform. Tijan has played kora, sung, and danced since he was a very young boy, but he is not of *guewel* origin, he is *guer*, like Mohammed. Mohammed mentioned that had he been *guewel*, perhaps he would have been much better, because for *guewels*, music is their life beginning at a much younger age. Though many non-griots are becoming musicians, most griots claim that these musicians may know the music, but they don't know the history. Babacar Faye, a *guewel* from Sing Sing Rhythm stated that *non-guewel* musicians could never play as well as them because it was not in their blood. (personal interview, 4/11/01)[6]

In Wolof *guewel* families the men play sabar drums (*tugg sabar* in Wolof) and the women dance (*fecc*). Men learn how to drum from their fathers, in a mostly informal atmosphere. The young boys observe their fathers drumming and begin to imitate the sabar rhythms on their handmade tin can drums. The fathers will correct their sons if they see them doing something wrong, either in the rhythm or in the technique. If the father feels confident in his son's *Mbalaq* or accompaniment rhythm he will ask the son to play an accompaniment part on one of the sabar drums for a ceremony or performance. The father will then encourage or critique him as necessary.[7]

This teaching method allows for the father to go about his drumming without spending much time teaching his sons how to play. The sons watch, listen, imitate, and practice. It was explained to me by my teacher and master sabar musician, Mamadou Diagne from Guedejwei, a town outside Dakar that his son, Abdoulaye, "...vu et joue..." ([he] watches and plays). He pointed to Abdoulaye who was sitting on the cement porch of a compound across the road, drumming on his small tin drum with a little stick playing *Narigoron*, a rhythm I recognized from the classes I had been taking. Weeks later in interviews with other sabar musicians, when asking the question of why they don't teach women in their family to drum, the response was often, "It would take too much time to teach them and it would be too hard for them to learn. They have never played before and so we would have to sit down, and take time to teach them the basics of sabar drumming." This is exactly what Doudou N'Diaye Rose did when he decided to teach the women in his family how to drum. He took the time to teach them, as he spent three solid months without ever leaving the house, to drum eight hours a day with his first three daughters. "No one ever saw me," he said. He also described the way he had to teach them to drum by starting with the basics of sabar. Some drummers and dancers learn from friends, through masters under intensive study, or at times, through ballets or professional musical ensemble training, however observation and imitation seems to be the most common means of passing on sabar technique and knowledge.

The context sabar drums are played in, the communication between drummer and dancer, and the teaching styles are only a few elements of the performance that influence the roles men and women play in the these musical arenas.

Chapter Four: Gender Roles in Sabar Music

The first week I arrived in Senegal everyone was preparing for a large festival called *Yomashura* in Arabic, (*Tamharit* in Wolof). Since I had come to Dakar to witness the emergence of women in sabar drumming performances, whenever I saw young girls simulating drumming by tapping their hands or drumming on empty plastic bottles, I took notice. One afternoon while I was in Pikine Talibou Bess, a working class neighborhood on the outskirts of Dakar, I saw a young girl constructing a drum with a small rusted tin can, a scrap of goatskin and some wire. I asked Gora N'Diaye, the nephew of my sabar drum teacher, why she was making a drum. "Those are the drums the boys play," Gora said. "Well what is she doing making one?" I asked, "She will play it on *Tamharit*," he explained. It was then that I started to notice it was these drums the young boys were using with one stick and one hand to play sabar rhythms, imitating their fathers. But that day the young girls were the ones preparing to play these drums, because it was *Tamharit*.

Tamharit is an Islamic holiday, also deemed the "night of no sins". On the night of *Tamharit* a large meal of couscous is prepared and everyone eats very quickly and in large portions because it is believed that one must fill their bellies very full to make them heavy, and grounded so that spirits will not be able to take over their bodies. It was this night that I ate the fastest I have ever eaten in my life. As we waited for the food young girls dressed in white cloth with white-painted faces came running into the compound from time to time playing these tin drums. Finally the food was ready and we all crouched around a large bowl and ate couscous and meat. I took normal size bites and Gora kept nudging me, "eat faster, eat fast!" We also saw young boys dressed in women's clothing running through the streets singing. I went out that night to watch the young girls playing their tin sabar drums. This would be the first time I would see young girls drumming where gender roles were reversed on this "night of no sins". It was later explained to me that the significance came from an Islamic legend of non-Muslims traveling through the desert that came across a Muslim traveler, they killed him for his money and fled. Later Islamic leaders found out about the crime and sent people out to search for the killers. The non-Muslim killers found women's clothing and dressed up as women for a disguise. Finally they were captured and put to death. The gender role reversals in *Tamharit* are explained by this story. The young girls drumming was just another way for women to take on a male role in Senegal, that of a sabar drummer.

Throughout my research many reasons were given to me as to why women dance and men drum. One of the first reasons was the origin story of the griot musicians themselves. In most of West Africa many of the musicians are descendants of a griot musician family. The origin story for griots, or *guewels* in Wolof varies greatly, depending on the ethnic group, region and family in West Africa, as it is passed on orally from father to son. Thomas Hale in his book, *Griots and Griottes*, notes that there are multiple stories for the origin of griots. In my research interviewing griots in Dakar, I found similar origin stories with slight variations. This is most likely due to the fact that all of my research was conducted in one region of Senegal. I found that the stories told to me help to explain the beginning of the social divisions in Wolof communities, as well as serve as one explanation for gender divisions in the music of the Wolof sabar. The eldest son of the Sing Sing Rhythm family told me the most common account that explained the origins of the griot. One afternoon I was escorted to the home of the Sing Sing family in Medina. Sing Sing is one of the most well-known griot families in Senegal, partly due to the fact that it is a very large family with many successful musicians including M'Baye Gaye Faye, the master sabar drummer for the internationally known Senegalese pop star, Youssou N'Dour. Coincidentally, I had also met two members of the Sing Sing family here in Seattle one week before I left for Senegal. The West African percussion ensemble I am a member of, Yeke Yeke, had a performance at the Annual Seattle World Rhythm Festival with guests from Los Angeles, Aziz Faye and his younger brother, both from the Sing Sing Rhythm family, and both successful and amazing musicians. When I entered the Sing Sing Rhythm house, my assistant whispered to me, "This is a typical *guewel* home, they are a successful family but they choose to keep the original structure of the home because they are a very traditional people." We were lead back into the room of Tafa Faye, one of the elder sons of the family, where we drank 5 shots of *atayaa* (very strong Senegalese black tea, or the de la force, with plenty of sugar). Tafa lit up a cigarette and the conversation began with an explanation of the origin of the *guewel* people.

> *A long time ago a Wolof village was fighting with a neighboring village. At one point the people decided they needed someone to accompany the warriors to battle to sing their praises and virtues*

in order to boost their confidence and morale and fight better in battle. They also wanted the same person to come home with the warriors and be the one to announce to the village the outcome of the war, who had died, who had survived, and who had done well. They appointed one man to be this praise-singer and announcer. After time they decided he should have an instrument to accompany his singing and announcements, this lead to the birth of the Wolof sabar drum. This man would go to war and lead the army on the front lines, singing praises, and return to make an announcement. All the villagers would gather to hear the results of the battle. This is why the Wolof name for griot is guewel, which means to gather. (personal interview, 4/12/01)

Tafa explained that this is the reason why women never played drums, because sabar was an instrument, traditionally, and most often still, played only by *guewels*, and the first *guewels* were men. This was largely due to the fact that in Wolof society, as in most cultures around the world, a woman would not be sent out to the front lines of a battlefield. I asked about the origin of the female griottes, and Tafa, as other sabar musicians I spoke with explained, that griottes came about either as the wives of griots, or as entertainment for the queen. But in all cases female griottes were never instrumentalists, only singers and dancers. Thomas Hale has noted that very little research has been done on female griottes, and not enough information has been gathered to determine their most common origin story. (Hale: 1998, p217) Thomas Hale also notes the following griot origin story as one common story found in his research among Wolof griots. This story explains the origin of the first griot as a man, as well as the origin of the sabar drums in relation to the griot peoples.

A long time ago, two brothers were sent by their mother to look for firewood. They fought over a branch that each wanted, and the elder unfortunately killed the younger. Not knowing what to do, he picked up the corpse and carried it toward home. At the moment he was about to enter his mother's house, he was spotted by his parents, who chased him away saying, "Go wherever you want with this dead person; we don't need it, we have no idea what should be done with it." The brother killer sat down behind the house in the shade of a large tree. At mealtimes he called and was brought his share. When the wind blew very hard, his voice was not loud enough. To remedy the situation, he obtained two sticks that he struck against each other. One night, termites hollowed one of his sticks out. The next day, the unhappy brother killer noticed that one stick was louder than the other was. Profiting from this discovery, he obtained a hollow log on which he struck his two sticks to produce melodious sounds. On the seventh day of his exile, two crows that were fighting landed on his head. He stepped back without touching them. One had killed the other and then scraped out a hole in the ground with his claws and buried the corpse. The brother killer imitated him - an event seen as the origin of burials - and returned to the house with the hollow tree trunk and the stick that he would never part with. The neighbors came to see them, asking him to make sounds from them and gave him various items to reward him. Since then they have forgotten his accidental crime and think only of his drumming. (Hale: 1998, p63)

Again showing the origin of *guewels* as a male profession, and the origin of sabar drumming as the craft of these musicians. Besides the *guewel* origin story, there were many other reasons given for the gender divisions in sabar performances. Various sabar musicians of both of griot and non-griot origin explained these divisions to me. The division explanations seemed to fall into two main categories, practical reasons and spiritual reasons. I will begin first with the practical reasons, which were the most common and widespread explanations given to me.

Some of the practical reasons were mentioned earlier, the communication between the drummer and dancer and the teaching styles of sabar drumming, which would require extra effort and time to teach women the craft. Another practical reason that was mentioned briefly was the context in which sabar drumming is played. Sabar performances are mostly played at gatherings where the majority of the attendants are women. Sory Camara states that, "...drums are beaten most often at events organized by women while stringed instruments are played for male events..." (Camara: 1976, p116) Camara also suggests that drums are an instrument of rhythm appropriate for dancing. These ceremonies organized mostly by women include marriages, baptisms, naming ceremonies, and women's association gatherings. At one of the baptisms I attended I was directed toward a seat in an inner circle of chairs and as I came to sit down among all the observers, I noticed that they were mostly all women, dressed elaborately in beautiful *boubous* and tailored dresses of bright and vibrant colors, with hours

worth of makeup, eye shadow, eyeliner and foundation covering their faces. No matter what I was wearing at these ceremonies, I always felt underdressed. Because most of the people watching were women, just about all of the people who would get up and dance to the sabar drumming would be women as well. This would fall into one of the practical reasons for gender divisions, a simple division of labor. If most women are dancing, then men are drumming. As in many West African cultures there are distinct gender divisions in everyday life as well. Some have termed them "strict" gender divisions, but "distinct" could be a better term, for they are divisions that are undergoing constant change and are allowing for significant flexibility. An example of a gender division in everyday life is simply eating customs. Most often when eating at the home of the Papa Diop family in Pikine Talibou Bess the women ate *Thieboudienne*, the national dish, around one bowl together and the men around another. However, if the food from one dish got eaten, it wouldn't be uncommon to see a woman dip her hand into the men's dish for one last bite. These distinct gender divisions in the community are reflected in the music as well.

Another practical reason for gender divisions in sabar music is physical strength. This was the most common reason given to me whenever I would ask, "...pourquoi les femmes ne jouent pas le sabar?" ("why don't women play sabar?"), and the response most often was because they are not strong enough. In Thomas Hale's research on women griottes he briefly addresses gender and instrumentation as he talks about the *balaphon* (West African xylophone) being a "man's instrument". Hale writes, The balaphon appears to be a clearly defined masculine instrument, perhaps because of its origin in the oral tradition of the Sundiata epic or perhaps because its an instrument that requires a certain amount of strength to carry and play with any vigor, a reflection of men's self image as the stronger sex. (Hale: 1998, p163)

As a woman percussionist of nine years I have played in a few West African percussion ensembles and in the past few years I really have come to recognize physical differences between male drummers and myself. Currently I play in an all Senegalese and all male (with the exception of myself), Djembe ensemble and during every performance I can feel my arm muscles burning and the skin on my hands often blisters and breaks. This also happens with the men in the ensemble, but one only need to glance at the difference between my arms and their arms to see who can play longer, faster and with more strength. I am sure that if I started to lift weights every day to build my muscles I could become a stronger drummer, however I also believe that there are innate physical differences between men and women, and that I may always be less strong than the men in the group. This is not to say that many women drummers are not stronger than many male drummers, or that women drummers cannot keep up with male drummers, only that our bodies are naturally structured differently. So perhaps women may never be able to play to the level of the men, but this does not mean that they don't have something very important and crucial to add to the ensemble, and perhaps something in their expression that a man could not compete with. One of Doudou N'Diaye Rose's daughters, Oumy N'Diaye, addressing the controversy that women only play *Bakks* and not *Mbalaq* (the more physically strenuous rhythms) stated, "No, we play *Mbalaq*, we play them very well, many people think we can't, but we can. Sometimes we may not be able to play for as long as the men, but some of us can, some of us can keep up." (personal communication, 4/28/01) Throughout the nine years I have been studying West African percussion I have come across numerous master drummers who have explained to me the phenomenon of finding blood in their urine after "playing very well". This is an occurrence that happens to many master drummers who play for an extensive period of time, using a lot of strength and in the process straining certain muscles in their bodies that results in urinating blood. This is just an example of how physically demanding drumming can be. Rokhaya Daba Fall, one of the only female Djembe players in Senegal, also explained to me that it was told to her at a young age that if a woman drummed, she would not be able to bear children. (personal interview, 4/22/01). This belief quite possibly could have stemmed from the notion that the physical strain of drumming could affect the female organs of a woman.

The last practical reason for gender divisions in sabar music that I will mention is the simple fact that many women and men believe that women don't have the time to learn how to play sabar. Especially if the women have jobs in town or at the market and then after work have to return home and tend to domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children, a very time-consuming occupation, there is little time. Kevin King addressed the unfairness of women being restricted by their family responsibilities in saying,

> *One thing that is depressing is that the best Senegalese musicians leave Senegal to pursue careers abroad, which affects the music here in Senegal. Especially the Senegalese National Ballet, they used to be a lot better than they are now. However, there is an amazing women sabar dancer, there, one of the best in Senegal. If she were a man, she would be long gone by now.* (personal interview, 4/29/01)

We went on to discuss how it is much easier for men to pursue careers abroad, as they have the ability to leave the family in the care of their wives and live abroad while sending money home from time to time. The wives rarely object because this ensures for them a more economically secure future for themselves, and for their children. It is the women's role as the key caregiver of the home and children that at times, restricts their opportunities. Mohammed Diop notes that this is one of the main reasons he believes there are gender divisions in sabar music.

> *In traditional society the women would stay home and care for the house because the men would have to go out and hunt, each had their own job to get everything done. It's the same for drumming, if the women are busy at home and do not have time to drum, then the men will drum.* (personal communication, 5/30/01).

Yacine Diedhu also addressed the important role of the woman as care giver:

> Our women's revolution came in the 1990s, yours came in the 1960s, so we are still adjusting. I think women should have rights, to do as they please, but what I don't understand is what are women suppose to do about the house work when they work outside the home? Women have important roles in child rearing, they have to find some way to compensate for that. (personal communication, 4/10/01).

Besides these practical reasons for gender divisions in sabar, many spiritual reasons were given to me. The first being the belief that the act of drumming, the contact between the dead skin that heads the drum, and the live skin from one's hand, symbolizes contact between the dead and the living. This contact between two opposites allows for contact with spiritual forces. Because of this, many drummers, and many Senegalese people as well, wear extensive amounts of talismans or protections. Drummers wear these on their arms, around their waists, and at times around their necks.[8]

It is also believed that evil spirits can come upon you when other people speak negative things of you. For example, the Wolof believe that if someone sees you and thinks or says something bad about you, then something bad can happen to you. However, if you are wearing protection, a talisman, which is most often Islamic scriptures tightly rolled up and encased in leather, then the bad spirits will go into the protection instead of entering your body. Especially for drummers, because they are often the center of attention at ceremonies and performances, they are susceptible to many people talking about them, both bad and good; therefore they must wear a lot of protection. There is also a protection rhythm played at the beginning and the end of all sabar drumming termed, *Ya nouy moom*.

> *Ya nouy moom, Mame Bamba*
> *Ya nouy moom*
>
> *Ba nouy doundak*
> *Ba nouy dee yepp*
>
> *Ya nouy moom, Mame Bamba*
> *Ya nouy moom*
>
> We are yours, Mame Bamba (prophet of the Mouride Islamic sect)
> We are yours

When we live
And when we die

We are yours, Mame Bamba
We are yours [9]

In Senegal it is also believed by some that women's bodies are not strong enough to endure the possibility of these spirits entering their bodies or visiting them in their sleep. Yacine Diedhu, a non-griot Diola explained, "It was told to me by my parents that women don't drum because their bodies can't handle the spirits that come with drumming." (personal communication, 4/7/01) Tafa Faye also notes that one of the reasons his father (head of the Sing Sing family) was such an amazing drummer was because he could communicate with spirits. (personal interview, 4/12/01).

It is also believed that the drum is an instrument of power, only associated with masculinity. In Thomas Hale's research on women griottes he asked why the women don't play the *kora*, one of the main instruments of the griot. He writes, "When asked why only men play the *kora*, griots simply reply that it is a man's instrument..." (Hale: 1998, p162) Hale goes to state that it is unusual for women to play an instrument associated with power. This "gendering" of instruments is seen in other cultures as well, even our own. In Mosiala's research on women and music in Finland she writes,

> *The pupils themselves adopt these gender roles early in life. One of the students remembered how, at the age of six, she was astonished to realize that a woman could not be a conductor or play trumpet. Another believed that any girl who wanted to play drums was boyish. At a young age she knew there are some things in music that are not proper for a girl to do*. (Mosiala: 1999, p4)

This is similar in the United States as well where very few women play either drum sets or percussion. These notions of what is and is not appropriate for women to do are deeply embedded in the cultures from which they emerge. When first asking Senegalese men and women why women don't drum sabar, the answer was often, "because that is the tradition". This is largely due to the fact that when traditions of any culture are so deeply embedded in the lives of the community, people rarely question why they exist, and it is not until one sees an individual or family transcending these roles that people begin to question why the roles were created in the first place.

In Senegal there are also taboos against women and drumming. When women are menstruating, they are supposed to stay away from the drummers and not touch the drums themselves. If they do, it is believed that it will bring bad luck to both the drummer as well as the woman. (personal interview with Tafa Faye, 4/12/01). This could have derived from the fact that during the week that a woman is menstruating, she can feel more physically tired than other times of the month. As with other taboos, perhaps they are created in order to ease adherence by the community to logical practices. Koskoff notes these taboos as well in saying,

> *The belief in women's inherent sexuality, often expressed in terms of menstruation taboos...may lead to a separation between women's and men's expressive domains and in some societies to restrictions imposed on certain women's musical activity*. (Koskoff: 1987, p7)

There are also taboos associated with women and intimacy. A drummer is not supposed to be intimate with a woman and then drum afterwards without taking what was called a "spiritual shower." An example of this is the Wolof wrestling match. Wolof wrestling, *Lamb*, is very popular in Dakar. Each wrestler also has their own sabar drumming group and the competition between the sabar groups representing each wrestler is almost as important as the competition between the wrestlers. I attended a few of these events and the sabar groups seemed to line the wrestling ring and the wrestler would come and talk with his drummers, often huddling in together. The night before the wrestling match the drummers construct new sabar drums and inside these drums place the wrestler's personal talismans or protections. The drummers also spend the night at the home of the wrestler so as not spend the night in the home of their wives, an example of this taboo against intimacy and drumming. Lucy Duran found similar findings among hunters in Mali and stated,

> *Hunters are suppose to be highly controlled in their relationships with women and indeed are praised for this quality in hunter's songs. Before the hunt, men are expected to avoid sexual relations...* (Duran: 2000, p147)

These menstruating and intimacy taboos certainly play a part in the gender divisions of sabar drumming, creating roles where only men drum and only women dance. However it is important to note a few exceptions. In wrestling matches I did see wrestlers dancing to the music of the sabar drums, however it was a different type of dancing than the dancing I saw women doing. This dancing was more a dance of force, a dance to show one's strength, rather than one's grace. The other exception I came across where men dance in traditional contexts is that of the *Simba* performance.

The *Simba* performance is based on an old Wolof legend and is a type of re-enactment of this story. In the story a whole village is burned down and the only person remaining is a young boy. Since this boy has no one to raise him, he is adopted and raised by lions. After he grows into his adulthood he becomes a type of lion-boy. After time, another village develops with a new community of people. The lion-boy tries to go and befriend the people of the new village but he is rejected because the people are frightened of his lion qualities. In the *Simba* performances Wolof men in their early twenties dress up as lions with elaborate face paint, cowri shells lining their clothes, and round calabash shells hanging in strategic places. They coat their bodies with oil, highlighting their muscles, as these men are almost always in very good physical condition. The men take on a new persona in these costumes and give frightening stares to anyone who looks their way. Often they even kick up the dirt behind them as if they are rearing to pounce on someone. I attended my first *Simba* performance after a sabar class in Guedejwei. MoDiagne and I had heard the sabar drumming from the beach where we had our classes. MoDiagne knew it was "*Simba*", as he had heard word of it earlier in the day. We followed the sound of the drums until we reached a roped off gathering of mostly young children. Two *Simba* lions stood outside and glared at us. MoDiagne motioned for me to follow him and we went over to a man selling tickets. "Nous allons faux acheter une billet?" (We have to buy a ticket?) I asked, "Oui, bien sur, tous les personnes faux acheter les billets, et si on n'achete pas un billet, il est tres mal." (Yes, of course, everyone has to buy a ticket and if you don't, it is very bad). It was later explained to me that part of the gathering is to raise money. During the performance there is constant sabar drumming, and the *Simba* lions dance to the drums with a dance of strength. While they are dancing they go around checking everyone's ticket, if you are caught without a ticket, you are beaten. During the performance a *Simba* lion came over and checked my ticket, then all of a sudden we heard a siren and everyone got up and ran. I started to get up, but MoDiagne told me to wait. The Dakar police came in and broke up the gathering. Apparently these *Simba* gatherings are not legal without authorization from the police because funds are gathered.

The ceremonies themselves where one finds these sabar performances also reinforce gender roles and identities, as this *Simba* performance certainly highlights the lion's masculinity. Naming ceremonies (*Ngente* in Wolof), which are held a week after the birth of a child, is a ceremony where the name of the child is given and the sex of the child is introduced to the community. The mother of the child is also celebrated as she is taking on her new role as a mother. The mother is elaborately dressed and makes sporadic appearances throughout the ceremony. At the last *Ngente* I attended the mother came out for the ceremonial eating of *lak*, a cream and grain dish, and then she returned to her home. Later she made an appearance at the sabar dance party dressed in a different outfit and ornately done over in eyeliner, eye shadow and foundation. Lisa McNee writes, "Naming ceremonies and other events also allow Wolof to stage and perform sexual identities that subvert as well as reinforce the apparently hegemonic sexual order." (McNee: 2000, p73)

Although there are these distinct roles for men and women, the knowledge of each other's art is apparent. Lisa Aronson writes of African women in the arts, in *African Women South of the Sahara* saying,

> *Through boundaries that female and male artists impose, these spheres are kept divided. Nevertheless, it is equally true that women's arts can complement those of men, women can affect the arts that men do and occasionally they can enter art professions traditionally dominated by men.* (Aronson: 1984, p119)

In Wolof society most women, whether they have ever picked up a sabar drum or not, know the sabar rhythms and can imitate them vocally. At a rehearsal I observed for a sabar performance group at *Cultural Centre Blaise Senghor* (named after the first president of Senegal, Leopold Sedar Senghor, who was very supportive of the arts and music of Senegal), the women danced and the men played sabar in their sabar troupe, *Sacre Foret* (sacred forest, where initiations in Senegal traditionally took place). Near the end of the rehearsal the sabar players left and the women continued to practice. To substitute for the sabar rhythms the lead dancer vocally imitated the rhythms with perfection. I had been studying the particular rhythms she was imitating and recognized rhythms such as *Narigoron* and *Lumbung*. This is similar to what Thomas Hale addressed in *Griots and Griottes*, when talking about the fact that even if the women cannot recite the epics in public, they are aware of the stories. Jansen also notes this knowledge of music despite restrictions against performing it, in saying,

> *A gender division with regard to musical instruments has also been observed in Mande. Generally speaking, men are said to play instruments while women are said to sing. Women play only certain rhythm instruments, such as calabashes or the karinyan, an iron rod. However, this does not mean that the women's knowledge is restricted to rhythm instruments...Therefore both female and male griots may share a great deal of their knowledge, but perform it in a different way*. (Jansen: 1996, p5)

This gives further evidence that gender restrictions in musical performances may be explained or justified by practical and spiritual reasons, but one cannot assume that women lack the ability to play the music they are restricted from. Thomas Hale goes on to state, "If a man is present, a woman will never take the platform with him." (Hale: 1998, p227) Reflecting a social structure where women and men are not able to share a stage together, as they are often separated in their music as well as within their communities.

Chapter Five: Changing Gender Roles in Sabar Music

As in all spheres of culture, music undergoes constant transformation. As Moisala states, "Music is also a space where we can allow the possibility that gender can be seen in new ways." (Moisala: 1999, p3). Not only can gender be seen or represented in new ways, but gender roles within music can also change. These changes are most often attributed to changing contexts within the community. Lucy Duran, in addressing changing roles in music among the Mande writes, "With the growth of urban culture since independence (1960), music has undergone various transformations that have partly been determined by changing contexts." (Duran: 2000, p41) These changing contexts include women's rights movements, education, communication, the influence of technology, as well as the influence of gender roles from outside communities. Besides these influences, music can also be affected by the influence of one musician or family. In *Women in the Arts* Aronson writes about reasons some women have entered male dominated fields among the Yoruba.

> *Women, who traditionally were excluded from the profession, are now becoming bronze and gold metal smiths. Even in the case of blacksmithing[10] in iron, a profession traditionally restricted to men, it has been possible for women (especially family members) to assist in the process and even smelt the iron itself. Among the Oyo Yoruba, for example, the blacksmith's wives and daughters will pound the ore, wash it in the river and burn it in the furnace. They can even describe the design of the furnace and the process of smelting. Among the Bambara, the blacksmiths (namu) are both men and women of a particular lineage. All namu have access to the supernatural powers associated with blacksmithing , including the knowledge of the smelting process itself. As a rule, however, a division of labor exists among namu such that men work with metal and wood while women are confined to clay as potters*. (Aronson: 1984, p122)

This highlights the occurrence previously mentioned of women's knowledge of male dominated fields of work, despite gender restrictions. It also hints at the influence of family in transcending gender roles, that is, wives and daughters of blacksmiths learning the craft from their fathers. This parallels with the influence of Doudou N'Diaye Rose in changing gender roles in sabar performances. Master sabar drummer, Djibi Diagne, told me that

his grandfather, also a master drummer, had never been seen dancing. Countless male sabar musicians were also quick to find many reasons as to why it is obvious that women cannot play sabar drums. Despite these apparent strict gender divisions in sabar music, they are beginning to change. One is beginning to see more men dance and in a few circumstances women beginning to learn how to drum.

Of the many sabar performances I attended in Dakar, I would see thirty to forty women, one or two at a time, get up to dance at a performance and perhaps one or two men. When men got up to dance everyone would laugh and squeal, because seeing them dance was such a rare sight in traditional sabar musical performances. One evening I attended a *Tandabeer* with Kevin King (night sabar drumming performance) called *Les Jeunes Guewels* (The Young Griots). At this performance the sabar drummers were younger drummers from some of the most prominent sabar drumming families, including the Sing Sing Rhythm family and the Doudou N'Diaye Rose family. At about 3:00am one of the drummers, Khadim Faye (a younger son from Sing Sing Rhythm), jumped up from his drum and ran out into the circle to dance. Everyone screamed as he began to dance with vigor, dirt flying all around him. A young man sitting next to me leaned over and said, "Il danse tres bien, n'est pas?" (He dances very well, doesn't he?) I nodded and smiled. Suddenly people came running out and started to place women's scarves on his head and one woman even placed her handbag over his shoulder. At first I thought they were doing this to tease him, to dress him up as a woman, but later it was told to me that it was a sign of admiration of his dancing. After a few more minutes the women pulled Khadim out of the circle, laughing. Then an elder woman came into the circle to make an announcement in Wolof. I leaned over to Kevin to get a translation. Apparently she was telling the drummers to stop the tomfoolery and drum so that the women could dance. She then asked the sabar drummers to play *Thieboudienne*, a dance for women (also the name of the Senegalese national dish). The performance continued in its traditional context, with women dancing and men drumming. Many men are also starting to dance in ballets and organized music troupes around the country. As for women and drumming, this is still more rare to see than men dancing, however it is apparent that some women are emerging as sabar drummers. The emergence of these women is largely due to Senegalese master sabar musician and griot, Doudou N'Diaye Rose. Rose was the inspiration to embark on this project and was also the musician who tied up my stay in Senegal in such a meaningful way.

The very first morning after my arrival in Senegal I found the phone number for master sabar musician, Doudou N'Diaye Rose, the first master drummer to teach women in his family how to drum. After calling a few days in a row, my assistant, Yacine and I found out that he had four homes, one for each of his wives. The next challenge was finding when he would be at which house. Since Rose is often on international tours, and when in Dakar overwhelmed with places to be and things to do, it is rare to find him at home. After weeks of missing him on the telephone, we decided to simply go to the house we knew he would be at that particular day and stay there, even if it meant all day, until we met with him. On April 19th, 2001 we went to his home in HLM 1, outside of Dakar, at the lunch hour, around 2pm. Finding his home was a little tricky, but the closer our taxi got to his neighborhood the more people could direct us to his home. Finally we found his house and we were invited inside to find thirty people around 4 huge bowls of *Thieboudienne*. We were escorted into a room where his wife was relaxing watching television and answering the phone, which rang off the hook. We waited until Doudou had finished eating, and then he entered the room and sat down.

"*Salaam Malekum*" he greeted.

"*Malekum Salaam*" [Islamic greeting] we responded.

"*Nanga def*?" [Is peace with you?] he asked.

"*Yangi fi rek*" [We have peace only] we replied.

"*Ca va*?" [How are you?]

"*Ca va bien merci*" [Fine, thank you]

"*Ani wa keur ge*?" [How are the people in your home?]

"*Nunga fa*" [They are fine]

"*Daka sa jaam yaram*" [Is peace with you?]

"*Jaam rek*" [We have peace only]

This is a typical Wolof greeting, very long and quick, which at times even repeats itself, and is often accompanied by, "*Numa Nala*" [I have missed you] and the response, "*Malarow*" [I have missed you more], if you are greeting an acquaintance, friend, or family member.

"*Degg Wolof*?" [Does she understand Wolof?] He asked my assistant, Yacine.

"*Deddet, degguma*...", she replied.

"*Degg francaise*?" he asked. "*Deddet, degg anglais, tutti rek francais et wolof*..." [No, she speaks English, only a little French and Wolof.]

Yacine introduced our project, explaining how I was inspired to come to Senegal after seeing women in his family playing sabar in his video recording, *Djabote*, which translates as "a very sacred Wolof word for family (personal communication, Thione Diop, 5/30/01). Doudou was very pleased to hear this and was interested in talking to us more. Unfortunately he had to go perform at a political rally in Dakar (most of these rallies have sabar drumming and dancing), but arranged to meet with us the following morning. Kine N'Diaye, one of his daughters, then came in and we were able to talk with her quite a bit. Kine N'Diaye, one of Rose's first daughters lives in New York City and comes back to Senegal often to visit, therefore she speaks very good English. I explained to her my project and why I wanted to come and talk to her father and his daughters about women becoming sabar drummers. "It's the same as in the US," she stated, "Women are starting to do things that traditionally only men would do." Kine explained that she first began to drum when she was around 10 years old in the early 1980's. "Drumming allowed me to understand the traditions of my family. Even though having a woman drum is not a part of our culture, it is a part of my family." She went on to explain the importance of women in the Rose family learning to drum, to "pass on the knowledge for preservation...we never know when we will die and this information will be lost." I asked if the Rose daughters played both *Bakk* and *Mbalaq* (I had been told by many male sabar musicians that the women in Doudou's family could only play the *Bakk* rhythms (the less physically strenuous rhythms of sabar). "Of course we can play both," she laughed, "We also play at ceremonies. Many people think we only play for international tours but this is not true, we have played for many marriages, baptisms, and women's gatherings." (personal communication, 4/19/01). Weeks later I would meet another daughter of Doudou N'Diaye Rose, Oumy N'Diaye, who would also testify to playing in ceremonies. Oumy herself played in her own daughter's baptism (*Ngente*). Before the interview with Oumy she also demonstrated sabar drumming for me and I recognized *Mbalaq* rhythms in her demonstration, giving further proof to the Rose daughters' ability to play both types of rhythms and also play in ceremonies as well as performances. Before finishing our conversation with Kine, we set up a day to return to talk with Doudou N'Diaye Rose, this time at the home of his second wife in Grand Dakar.

When we arrived at the Rose home in Grand Dakar we were escorted into a large room with many people watching a French futbol (soccer) match on television. We waited, again for hours, for Doudou to arrive. Yacine fell asleep, I watched the futbol game, and finally he arrived apologizing for his lateness and asking us to eat *Thieboudienne* with him. We ate on the floor around a bowl with at least 12 people, and afterwards went upstairs, and waited for him to pray. Before even beginning the interview I was taken aback by Doudou N'Diaye Rose's humbleness, sincerity, and generosity. My assistant and I felt welcomed into his home and comfortable in his presence. This was impressive as he is a man of great importance and power in Senegal. Doudou N'Diaye Rose was born in 1928 and at the age of 73 he has gained international fame as one of the best percussionists in West Africa. He has four wives and 38 children, a sign of great power and prestige in many West African societies.

I began the interview by asking if there was an origin story behind the gender divisions in sabar drumming and why traditionally women only dance and men only drum? Doudou replied,

There is no origin story behind this. Before, elders did not want their daughters to do things men did, they didn't want them to go to school because women had their own work and men had their own work. It was also believed that women were not strong enough to drum. However, now with the evolution of time and with development and influences from other places, women are beginning to realize that they can be educated and get important jobs in Senegal. (personal interview 4/20/01)

Doudou first decided to teach women to drum during the opening ceremonies of the first annual *Quinzaine de la Femme* (The Fifteen Days of the Woman). This week that celebrates women in powerful roles in Senegal, began in March of 1981 by the Ministre de la Development Social (later renamed the Ministre de la Femme et Famille), Maimouna Kane. Doudou told us that as he drummed he heard the names of women lawyers, doctors, and businesswomen, all with jobs that traditionally were held only by men. Doudou explained that he thought that if women can achieve these positions, then women should also try and learn how to play sabar and it was then that he decided to teach the women in his family how to drum. (personal communication, 4/19/01)

When I first decided to teach my daughters to drum I called the whole family to come and gather. I told them my idea. At first my daughters were not excited, they said they didn't think they could do it because they have seen how men play in ceremonies and how much they sweat. They didn't think they would have the strength. 'Also', they said, 'our brothers have been learning since they were very young, and we are older and won't be able to do it'. But I said, 'No you must at least try.' The first lesson I gave them only three of my daughters showed up, Coumba Rose, eldest daughter of my first wife, named after my mother, Dado Farba, eldest daughter of my second wife, and Ame Thiam, also a daughter of my second wife. Other daughters saw these three daughters doing well and progressing and thought if their sisters could do it, then they could do it also. I stayed in the house for three months straight, I didn't see anyone outside the house, but everyone came and watched me teaching my daughters how to drum. After we had rehearsed enough to be able to put on a thirty-minute performance we went to RTS (Radio Television Station in Dakar) and spoke with Director Cisse Madiabel. I told him I had a women sabar drum group [RTS features many local Senegalese musicians on evening programs]. Cisse said, 'Women sabar drummers don't exist' and I said, 'Now they do'. Cisse said he would have to see them play before letting them perform on television. After my daughters played for 5 minutes he was extremely impressed. They recorded a drumming session and announced on the TV and radio that they were going to play a show with women sabar players. I had decided to call them "Les Rosettes", after my mother. Everyone watched TV or listened to the radio to hear something they had never heard before, women drummers. When they showed my daughters on TV, I was so proud. They had beautiful traditional boubous on that I made for them and had their hair plaited all in the same fashion, people were very impressed. The next day my phone rang constantly. People began to write letters and call to congratulate me on my success in teaching women how to play sabar. The television event took place in 1980. Everyone loved it but I was concerned as to what the elders would think. One day I received a letter from the organizers of a very important event. A large group of elders organizes an event every two years to nominate and award to drummers the title of Chef Tambour Major (Master Drummer). The event brings together traditional guewel (griot) drummers from all over West Africa to share information, display their talent and be named master musicians. I received an invitation to this event. I thought that maybe I was being called to be criticized, so I was extremely nervous. It was a gathering that all Senegalese guewels would attend from the 10 regions of Senegal. Even guewels from neighboring countries such as Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso would come to meet, drum, share, and recognize their knowledge. To be nominated as a Chef Tambour Major, your skills would be tested. For example, you would be asked to recite a particular Bakk. Every person, type of person, or state of being a person is in has a Bakk. When your Bakk is played it affects your inner spirit and then your physical state of being. For example, if a lion approaches you, you are supposed to stand still and play the lion's Bakk. If you do this correctly, looking the lion square in the eyes while drumming, then after time the lion will lie on the floor in a trance. When he lies down, you have to change the rhythm to another rhythm, which hypnotizes him to keep him still, and then you slowly back up until you can get away. This is an example of a test they might give, what to play for an approaching lion, or they might ask what to play for the announcement of a funeral or the wake keeping of a woman who has

recently passed away. Whether the funeral is for a woman or a man, when it will take place, all these things. If you answer all of the questions right you can be nominated the master drummer or guewel of the village or town, neighborhood or city. Everyone is invited but only guewels take part in the drumming. Originally kings and queens would also attend. The ceremony is held in a huge area that fits 6 thousand people with over 300 elders and the guewel has to drum in the middle for everyone to hear. To become a Chef Tambour Major you have to know one thousand of these different rhythms and different Bakks from all over Senegal for people and animals and then after you are tested and if you pass you can become a Chef Tambour Major - licensed. I passed and then afterwards the elder said, 'We also saw you on TV teaching your daughters how to drum,' then I started shaking, and they said 'we are not going to tell you its bad, actually, we are going to congratulate you for it. We didn't believe it was possible and didn't consider it, but now we see it is possible and that women can play sabar.' I was relieved. (personal interview 4/20/01)

This is the story, translated by Yacine Diedhu, from Doudou N'Diaye Rose's account of how he first came about to teach the women in his family how to play sabar. I then asked him if the teaching techniques he used to teach his daughters are different from those he uses to teach the young boys. As mentioned earlier the teaching techniques for sabar drumming are ones of imitation and observation. This also was one of the practical reasons given as to why master sabar drummers didn't teach women to drum because it simply "would take to much time to start from the basics." Doudou explained that the way he teaches his daughters to drum is different than his sons.

For the boys they hear me play all the time and imitate my playing, also at times I will ask a boy to play an accompaniment part for a performance. Then I will call them one by one and test them to make sure they know and are playing all the rhythms correctly. For the women I had to first show them how to hold the drum and stick. Then I had to teach them the basics, the alphabet, before the language, and the communication, and then I taught them how to solo. (personal interview 4/20/01).

Doudou N'Diaye Rose's daughters are now teaching their daughters, ages 4-12 years old, how to play sabar. Les Rosettes plays four times a month at Club Med, occasionally at ceremonies and weddings all around Senegal, and on international tours. Doudou says he has heard of a few other master sabar drummers beginning to teach women to drum, but that many of them have lost patience and given up. Besides the many daughters of Doudou N'Diaye Rose there was one other female drummer I met in Senegal, Rokhaya Daba Fall, said to be the only female Djembe player in Senegal.

I met Rokhaya on Ile de Goree, the slave island off the coast of Senegal near Dakar. Rokhaya is in her mid twenties and has been drumming since she was 10 years old. Rokhaya's teacher, Saku, a master drummer, was born and raised in Dakar. Saku left Dakar in his thirties and moved to Holland to teach Djembe. While in Holland, he had both men and women in his Djembe classes. When he returned to Dakar, he met Rokhaya, who expressed an interest in learning how to drum. Since Saku had seen that women could learn how to play Djembe in Holland, he agreed to teach her. Saku dedicated extra time to teach Rokhaya how to become a good Djembe player because he saw that she was committed to learning the music. It is important to note that she has chosen to live on Goree because she is known and accepted on the small island as a female drummer. When I asked her if she would ever move to Dakar and drum so that women in Dakar would see her, she said she couldn't. When asking why she stated,

I would never survive there. Because many men get jealous when they see me drumming. So many people would say bad things about me in Dakar that it would overtake my body and I would die. Here on Goree people know me and accept me as a women Djembe player. (personal interview, 4/22/01)

When talking about her physical body being taken over she is referring to the belief that when many people say bad things about you, bad spirits will enter your body and affect you physical health. Despite her belief that she will not be accepted in Dakar, most musicians and non- musicians I spoke with expressed that they would enjoy seeing women playing sabar. Regardless of the reaction, the emergence of women sabar drummers, I argue, is a

result of changing roles for women in Senegal, and as these roles are deeply entrenched in Senegalese culture, they take time to change.

Chapter Six: Changing Roles for Women in Senegal

Music as all art is a reflection of society. Especially with West African music, which is such a huge part of the social and cultural life of the people. Music performances then serve as models for social structures of the community. As women are taking on more visible and audible roles in society, those roles are reflected in their emergence in public musical performances. When looking at changing roles for women, we must also look at the traditional roles they held, and, for many, continue to hold in Senegal.

> *Women in sub-Saharan African cities work inside and outside the home in a variety of occupations. Whatever the origins of the women, the occupations they pursue tend to fall into certain categories because of women's differential access to education and the constraints imposed by the sexual division of labor, both colonialist and indigenous. Although most black African nations have enacted laws that forbid discrimination on the basis of sex, only very few women have been able to overcome the socio-economic constraints which keep women illiterate, poorly paid, or marginally self employed*. (Treiber: 1996, p109)

Most West African cultures are male dominated, or patriarchal. The origins for this social structure are debated. Some believe that women held much more powerful roles in West African communities before the coming of colonization and that through colonization European nations imposed Western notions of women's inferiority on West African cultures. In an article on Signares of Senegal, George Brooks also notes, "Women held positions of leadership and wealth in Senegal before European influences...there were many wealthy traders with property and titled 'signares' of Senegal (derived from the Portuguese word *senoras*)." (Brooks: 1976, p19) Therefore the statement that women's roles in Senegal are improving due to "westernization" could better be described as women's roles improving due to education. However, despite its origins it is apparent that women in West Africa are often seen as subordinate to men. Lucy Duran states, "The Mande are patrilineal, patriarchal, and patrilocal. In the male dominant discourse, women are regarded as subservient to men; in its most extreme articulation this is expressed in the phrase, 'the woman is a slave in marriage'". (Duran: 2000, p140) Thomas Hale also describes his countless interviews with male griots in Gambia, Mali, and Senegal, who confirm what seems to be the general tendency of men "especially in Gambia and Senegal to treat women as second class participants." (Hale: 1994, p15) One day while I was talking loudly and excitedly about my research to my assistant, Yacine, one of the men that was accompanying us commented on my vocal nature. Yacine heard him make some comment to the taxi driver and overheard him state "women are suppose to whisper..." These views toward women in Senegal are changing, however, as more women, through education, are entering fields traditionally dominated by men and upon seeing women in powerful positions, both men and women in Senegal begin to rethink traditional views toward women. Gondola writes on the changing roles of women in West Africa in saying,

> *Women in the African city have gained social as well as economic power. They now participate in several sectors of the economy as entrepreneurs, trading with other African countries as well as Europe*...(Gondola: 1997, p81)

When looking at women's roles and their changes in Senegal, one has to also look at women's roles in Islam, which came to Senegal in the 11th century. Senegal is over 90% Muslim, and the religion has a tremendous influence on women's roles and agency in Senegalese communities. Although Islam in West Africa is practiced differently than in North Africa or the Middle East (women are not as "hidden" as they are north of the Sahara), many women are still, what was referred to me as, "protected". My assistant, Yacine Diedhu, is what the Wolof term, *Ibadu*, a type of orthodox Muslim. Yacine is not allowed to shake the hands of men, because, as she explained, "women are like a jewel to be protected." (personal communication, 4/12/01) In many circumstances musicians would come up to us, shake my hand, then go to shake Yacine's hand and pull back quickly, apologizing profusely. Yacine is also restricted from going out at night, dating, and dancing in public, as well as

publicly showing any form of emotional expression. She stated to me at one point, "I will always abide by someone's rules. Now I abide by my father's rules and when I get married I will abide by my husband's rules...people think we are oppressed, but we are not, we just have certain roles here." (personal communication, 4/21/01) Although this seems contrary to women achieving more important and audible roles in society, Yacine's profession, that of a translator for foreign researchers, is a symbol in itself of women's progression in Senegalese communities today. Her occupation is also an example of the profound impact of education on women in Senegal. Hartmann-Mahmud states, "...it is in the realm of education that Muslim women have made the most progress and in which the most promise for the future lies." (Hertmann-Mahmud: 1996, p2) Treiber also notes the restrictions for women advancing in communities has much to do with education in stating, "Within the system, upward mobility is possible almost exclusively for males, because women have limited access to education." (Treiber: 1996, p5) Therefore despite the fact that many researchers claim, "...religion reinforces and perpetuates these structural inequalities" (Remy: 1975, p371), women in Islam are still seen advancing to very powerful positions in society. Bernal in her essay on *Islam, Transnational Culture and Modernity in Rural Sudan* writes that there are countless accounts of changing traditions for women in African Islamic societies from dress to marriage to employment, she sums it up in saying,

> *Thus, even as women become the symbolic focus of fundamental reform of local traditions, women are gaining greater control over their marital destiny, obtaining education, and in a few cases even governing their own incomes through formal employment*. (Bernal: 1997, p145)

Bernal goes on to say that Islam and expanding horizons for women are not necessarily processes in opposition of each other.

Women's Roles in Senegalese society were often described to me as complementary roles. However as Moisala points out, these roles may be complementary but are not equal if they are hierarchically arranged. She writes, "Although each gender has its own function and place in the Gurung social system, they are also hierarchically arranged." (Moisala: 1999, p6) McNee also notes, "A strictly complementary distribution of roles automatically locks both sexes into particular spheres of activity." (McNee: 2000, p75) These roles are however changing as more women are going through formal educational systems and gaining important positions in the workforce and the community.

During the month I was in Senegal there were election campaigns in full swing for the April 29th, 2001 election for the Senegalese National Assembly. While watching these campaigns it was evident that women had taken very vocal roles in expressing political opinions. I often saw women speaking on television about different women's issues and there was also a political party dedicated to women's rights, *The Parena Party* (there are over 50 political parties in Senegal). The newly appointed Senegalese Prime Minster, Madame Madior Boye, the first woman Prime Minister of Senegal, is also a symbol for women beginning to take important political positions in government and other sectors. One article wrote, "The president of Senegal recently named a well respected lawyer and politician as the country's first woman Prime Minister. Madior Boye is not only Senegal's first woman Prime Minister but she is also one of just a handful of women to hold such a senior post in Africa." (Brief Article, *Jet*: 2001). The Economist also wrote, "Mme. Madior Boye has been appointed, supposedly confirming the president's promise to bring women to the fore." (Brief Article: *The Economist*: 2001) When watching the elections on television, Leon, one of the men living in the house I stayed in, stated,

> *Women in Senegal are changing. Before women would always be behind the man and now women are starting to stand out in front. See here, the women at these political rallies chanting, dancing, singing, giving speeches, this never used to happen...we even have women candidates now!*
> (personal communication, 4/22/01)

Later he said, "C'est comme ca les femmes Americaine, vous voulez faire tous les chose des les hommes" (It's like American women, you want to do everything the man does). I laughed,

"Non, les femmes Americaine soulement voulons avoir les choix pour faire qu'ils veulent." (No, American women only want to have choices as to what they want to do).

There are many other examples of women's political voices beginning to be heard in Senegal. One is the development of the political organization, GPF (Groupements Promotion de les Femmes), Organization for the Promotion of Women with the emblem of Mame Diarra Boussou (mother of Cheikh Amadou Bamba M'Backe, founder of Mouride Islamic sect). As well as positions in government such as the Minster of Women and Families, now held by Madame Aminita Fall. On one of my trips to Goree Island I spent the day at La Musee de les Femmes (The Women's Museum), dedicated to honoring Senegalese women in traditional as well as modern roles. On one plaque inside the museum it read,

> *Women are active in the harvest, culture, transport, and transformation of agricultural products in small-scale business and handicraft production as well as in trading activities. Women are moving up in the business world in administration, law, teaching, and other sectors. But even so the tendency is still strong to underestimate, undervalue, and marginalize their contribution.* (personal visit, 4/15/01)

Showing once again the importance in recognizing women who take powerful and important roles in Senegal as well as recognizing the importance of the roles they currently fill. As more women begin to gain access to key positions in the workforce, in politics, and in other arenas, and political systems and society begins recognize and support these endeavors, we will see changes in the music that reflects these social structures. John Collins, an ethnomusicologist from Ghana, West Africa looked at reasons for the emergence of women in Ghanaian music and wrote,

> *This growth in the prominence of Ghanaian women pop artists over the last 20 years or so, can be put down to four major reasons; the effect of government policies, the impact of foreign women artists, the utilization of traditional music by Ghanaian pop musicians and the boom in Christian gospel music.* (Collins: 1996, p178)

It is important to note the effect government and outside cultural influences has on women's roles in West African societies and how those roles affect the emergence of women in Ghanaian music. Pirkko Mosiala also notes that the fact that music displayed in a performance setting provides space for new roles to be expressed in saying,

> *...the performative nature of music, and its ability to alter our state of consciousness allows for an interesting and possibly radical, if not revolutionary, site in which new kinds of gender performances and gender identities can evolve and which, eventually may transgress the gender boundaries of any society.* (Moisala: 1999, p15)

Not only do gender roles in society affect gender in music, but gender in music can also have a profound impact on gender roles in society and may even allow for women to transcend gender roles which, at times, can restrict their educational, occupational and musical goals or aspirations.

Conclusion

Doudou N'Diaye Rose's contribution to sabar music and its effect on the way in which women are viewed is only one example of the impact music can have on the Senegalese community at large, and in the same sense the impact the community has on its music. Koskoff writes on the importance and power of music in saying, "...we must also begin to address the evaluative role music plays in defining and reflecting established social and sexual orders and in acting as an agent in maintaining or changing such orders." (Koskoff: 1987, p15) Music is not only a reflection of society, but also a catalyst that can help citizens of the community see gender roles in new ways. In Dakar, perhaps if more women are seen in powerful positions, more people will begin to accept them in other male dominated roles, such as sabar drummers. Furthermore, if more women begin to express themselves through the sabar drums, perhaps more people will see this and begin to be accustomed to these changing roles for women in Senegal. Thomas Hale writes,

> *Social and technological changes effecting many West African societies are enabling them, [women], to break into new areas of music making*. (Hale: 1998, p243)

In an interview with Senegalese pop star, Fatou Laobe, she noted the flexibility of art and music and how it must adapt to changing times. Because of its flexibility it also allows women to perhaps take on roles or express themselves in ways that may not yet be accepted in the community. Upon seeing women expressing themselves on television, in music, and through political systems, other women gain the courage to enter fields they were traditionally restricted from. Laobe also noted that she believed the most important result of Rose teaching women in his family how to drum, was that it was giving women the courage to be able to express themselves openly and in public spheres.

In both Hale's work on griots as well as in Jansen's work with a griotte in Mali, we see that often even if the women cannot perform in public, they are aware of the musical knowledge. Showing that the restrictions may not be on the knowledge itself, but on the expression of that knowledge. Jansen writes, "Therefore both female and male griots may share a great deal of their knowledge, but perform it in a different way." (Jansen: 1996, p5), and as Hale states, "If a man is present, a woman will never take the platform with him." (Hale: 1998, p227) Reflecting a social structure where women are not seen in powerful roles in public, though they may hold very important roles within the home. It is because women do not express this power in public that perhaps people begin to think their authority is limited. However, when they begin to emerge in superior positions, people take notice. When Rose told his story of speaking with the elders he said,

> *...afterwards the elder said, 'We also saw you on TV teaching your daughters how to drum,' then I started shaking, and they said 'we are not going to tell you its bad, actually, we are going to congratulate you for it. We didn't believe it was possible and didn't consider it, but now we see it is possible and that women can play sabar.' I was relieved*. (personal interview, 4/20/01)

Because music, in itself, is a public performance, then it provides a site for women to express themselves to the community in a strong and compelling way. As Moisala writes,

> *...the performative nature of music, and its ability to alter our state of consciousness allows for an interesting and possibly radical, if not revolutionary, site in which new kinds of gender performances and gender identities can evolve and which, eventually may transgress the gender boundaries of any society*. (Moisala: 1999, p15)

Gender boundaries in Senegal are restrictions based on expected social behaviors that women and men adhere to and enforce. Senegalese women observing other women in important positions in the community (positions traditionally held by men) and becoming successful in those positions, can create models these women can look to when making career or life choices. As more women become exceptions to these social and cultural norms, expectations begin to change, perhaps giving women the courage to set high standards outside of the norm of society. Mosiala reminds us that being an exception to a social norm always requires a great deal of courage. She writes, "...even though she dreamed of playing drums and becoming a conductor, she felt it 'safer' to stay in the 'role of the woman'." (Moisala: 1999, p5) Women are also given more courage to embark on new fields and roles in the community if they are shown support for taking on these challenges. This support can be expressed through government policies protecting women from employment discrimination, government positions being appointed or elected to women (an expression of community support), or assistance given to women to attend formal educational institutions. Beyond this, the need to recognize and praise women who have taken on these roles in their communities is of utmost importance.

During my stay in Senegal I saw many instances of individuals and communities recognizing women's achievements. On the plane ride into Dakar, Oumar Ba, Diplomatic Counselor for the President of the Republic of Senegal, talked extensively about the powerful role of the 1st lady of Senegal, as well as Senegal's first woman prime minister. (personal communication, 3/30/01) Upon arriving I was informed of the elections for the National Assembly and saw various women on the RTS news program the following evening, as both commentators as well as political participants. Before leaving Senegal, I visited *Musee de la Femme* and was informed by Doudou N'Diaye Rose of *Quinzaine de la Femme* as well as *Le Jour de la Femme*, a national

museum and two national holidays dedicated to recognizing women taking powerful roles in Senegal. Recognition events such as *Quinzaine de les Femme* inspire people like Doudou N'Diaye Rose to make changes in his life that ultimately affect the lives of many women in Senegal, as well as around the world.

In his novel, *Arrow of God*, Achebe mentions the Igbo proverb, "A man must dance the dance prevalent to his time." (Achebe:1974), reminding us that in every culture, as societies change, the artistic expressions must also be prevalent to the time. In the same sense, in the field of African Studies, as gender roles change in society, as well as in artistic expressions, ethnographers and ethnomusicologists need to highlight those changes. In this particular instance the artistic expression is music, sabar drumming, which may prove one day to be an important voice for women in Senegal. As Duran states, "Music has become one of the most powerful means for women in West Africa to express themselves." (Duran: 2000, p141)

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Djabote; Senegalese Drumming & Song from Master Drummer Doudou N'Diaye Rose. PRV - Le Cri du Loup, Arcanal: 1993.

Informants

- Ba, Oumar, Diplomat Counseillar pour la President de la Republic du Senegal, non- griot, Wolof *3/30/01, 4/2/01, SICAP Bourgiuba*
- Cisse, Jean, Director of Senegalese National Ballet, Daniel Sorano, non-griot, Serer *4/9/01, Daniel Sorano Theatre, Dakar*
- Diaye, Lahad, master sabar drummer, Dakar, griot, Wolof *4/9/01, Daniel Sorano Theatre, Dakar*
- Diagne, Djibi, master sabar and djembe drummer, Pikine, griot, Wolof *4/14/01, Pikine, home of Djibi Diagne and Assane Thiam*
- Diagne, Mamadou, master sabar drummer, Guedejwei, griot, Wolof *4/5/01, 4/9/01, Home of Diagne, Guedejwei*
- Diedhu, Yacine, university student, Ibadu (orthodox Muslim), non-griot, Dioula *4/7/01, 4/16/01, SICAP Bourgiuba*
- Diop, Mohammed, African art distributor, Seattle, non-griot, Wolof *3/26/01, Seattle, WA*
- Diop, Thione, master sabar drummer and dancer, Seattle, griot, Wolof *3/24/01, Seattle, WA*
- Fall, Rokhaya, female djembe drummer, non-griot, Wolof *4/15/01, 4/22/01, Goree Island*
- Faye, Babacar, master sabar drummer, Sing Sing Rhythm family, Medina, griot, Wolof *4/11/01, Centre Culturelle Blaise Senghor, SICAP*
- Faye, Tafa, master sabar drummer, Sing Sing Rhythm family, Medina, griot, Wolof *4/12/01, Sing Sing Rhythm compound, Medina*
- Henry, Sarita, University of Dakar, Professor of African History, Dakar, African-American *4/27/01, SICAP Bourgiuba*
- Khadre, Abdou, master sabar dancer, griot, Wolof *4/28/01, Home of Oumy N'Diaye and Khadre, Pikine Talibou Makk*
- King, Kevin, University of Suffolk , Professor of English, Dakar, African-American *4/10/01, 4/29/01, Home of Sing Sing Rhythm family, Medina*
- Laobe, Fatou, professional singer, non-griot, Laobe, Wolof *4/19/01, HLM 5*
- M'Baye, Nogaye, elder woman from griot family, Pikine, griot, Wolof *4/6/01, Home of Papa Diop, Pikine Talibou Bess*
- N'Diaye, Gora, university student, griot, non-musician, Wolof *4/1/01, home of Papa Diop family, Pikine Talibou Bess*
- N'Diaye, Kine, female sabar drummer, daughter of Doudou N'Diaye Rose, griot, Wolof *4/19/01, HLM 1, Home of Doudou N'Diaye Rose's first wife*
- N'Diaye, Oumy, female sabar drummer, daughter of Doudou N'Diaye Rose, griot, Wolof *4/28/01, Home of Oumy N'Diaye & Abdou Khadre, Pikine Talibou Makk*
- Rose, Doudou N'Diaye, master sabar drummer, griot, Wolof *4/19/01, 4/20/01, 4/21/01, 4/22/01, Homes of Doudou N'Diaye Rose's 4 wives*
- Seck, Leon, house guardian, non-griot, Dioula *4/22/01, SICAP Bourguiba*

- Samb, Fatou, master sabar dancer, griot, Wolof *4/10/01, Centre Culturelle Blaise Senghor, SICAP*

Notes

1) Women in West Africa are known to play drums, however not in the same context and not in the same arena as men. These are women Baga drummers of Sierra Leone, Ben Ka Di female percussionists from Mali, as well as calabash drummers among the Toucouleur (descendants from the Fulani ethnic group) in Senegal.

2) Though people of griot ancestry belong to a musician caste, individuals may or may not practice their birthright.

3) Many scholars have noted that traditional West African cultures did not abide by an ideal that silenced women. Many believe that through the introduction of foreign religions and through the process of colonization, views held by other cultures toward women were adopted. For example, among the Igbo in Nigeria, during colonial times it was decided that the women would be taxed in the market place. Many of the women who worked in the market, did not agree with this new policy and staged political protests against it. This is only one example of women from traditional West African communities defying the widespread misrepresentation of women in Africa being quiet and subservient by nature of their cultural ideals before the coming of colonization. (Van Allen: 1976, p59) McNee also notes, "scholarly erasure of women's words complies with colonial policies that actively curbed women's political and economic roles in order to impose western models on African societies. (McNee: 2000, p79)

4) There are two types of *Mbung Mbungs* sabar drums, *Mbung Mbung Bal* and the *Mbung Mbung Tugoune*.

5) The concept of caste in a West African context is a problematic one, which has undergone a great deal of reconsideration by various scholars. Scholars have emphasized the social power of griots and other casted groups such as smiths, and leatherworkers to show that they are adaptable groups of people within their own societies. (McLaughlin: 1997, p3)

6) A woman can also hold the title of *griotte*. Many griots are women in West Africa. Mohammed Diop's griot in Dakar, Senegal is a woman by the name of Sokhna Koume. Mohammed talked about how she would recite the names of his father, grandfather and great grand father and so on, not necessarily with specific dates and times but associating each person with a specific historical event that occurred in the area. Other female griottes that have gained international attention in Senegal include Kine Lam, Fatou Guewel and N'Deye M'Baye (female griots sing, but do not play instruments, and more research needs to be done on female griotte music and origins).

7) Women are taught to dance in a similar fashion, observation and imitation.

8) As do people in the Byfall Islamic sect, with leather-encased photographs of Cheikh Amadou Bamba (prophet of the Mouride Islamic sect) hanging around their necks.

9) Before beginning to drum in class with Mamadou Diagne, he and I would play this rhythm at the beginning and at the end of our practice. It was the first rhythm he taught me. One day, I was late to his house in Guedejwei, something that happened frequently with unreliable *car rapides* and taxi rides from my house in SICAP Bourgiuba. Unfortunately, that day he had a performance we had to attend across town right after class. MoDiagne still wanted to do the class so we quickly grabbed the drums and chairs and briskly walked out to the beach. We sat down and began, quickly doing an overview of *Narigoron, Lumbung, Barambaye*, etc., forgetting to do the *Ya nouy moom* protection at the beginning. Then we finished and ran off to the performance. I can't remember if I thought about this or not that evening, but that night I had a very strange dream, unlike any I have ever had. I was lying awake on my bed when I saw something in the corner of the ceiling, I looked up and it came shooting down at me in a cloud-like form and the moment it got up to my face it stopped and took the shape of a face looking at me as if trying to decipher what I was. It wasn't a frightening face, thinking back, it

was just extremely startling. I guess I must have screamed, because the next thing I knew three people from my house came knocking at my door, "Kirsten, Kirsten!" they yelled, coming to make sure I was all right. I opened the door and apologized for my bad dream, feeling how sore my throat was from screaming (I have never screamed out loud in a dream before). Without thinking I went to my bag, grabbed the protections that were given to me the first day I arrived in Senegal and put them back on. I then got back in bed and quickly fell back asleep. The next day I explained what had happened to my assistant and translator, Yacine, "Someone must have seen you drumming and said something bad about you," she said. "Make sure you wear your protections." Whether or not this was simply a bad dream, it is evident that some believe in the possibility of being spiritually affected by the act of drumming.

10) It is also interesting to note here that griots and blacksmiths belong to he same hereditary "caste" in West Africa.

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