

TRADITION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN SENEGAL

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INTRODUCTION

In Senegal these are the words to a well-known lullaby in the Wolof language:

Father Malamine, religious teacher (*marabout*),
Write me a talisman.
Talismans are not easy to find in Saloum
For Saloum has just two rooms.

The third room is only a kitchen,
And that kitchen belongs to the king.
That king is the King of Saloum.
Ayo Ayo,
Ayo Baby,
Little Baby.

Like many English nursery rhymes, the song is a coded way of talking about events and issues that could not be openly discussed. The words of the song refer to the 14th century, when the kingdom of Saloum in Senegal was divided into two warring factions (the two rooms) — converts to the newly introduced religion of Islam and adherents of the traditional Wolof religion. The “kitchen” mentioned in the song symbolizes the wives of the king — particularly his fifth wife, an older woman captured in war. She retained her belief in the Wolof religion, and so did King Saloum. The words of this Wolof lullaby refer to events, heros, customs, beliefs and social structures that existed five centuries ago.

They mark a particular moment in Senegal's long

history of kingdoms, empires, long-distance trade, and continuous cultural contact. The influence of these institutions is still to be found in the multilayered and multifaceted cultures that exist in Senegal today.

Visitors to the Senegal program at the Festival of American Folklife have an opportunity to experience some aspects of the traditional folk cultures of Senegal and to learn the way they shape and express cultural identities in this complex African society. Cultural identities embodied in personal presentation and other forms of expressive culture will be explored through crafts, music, narrative, dance, and foodways traditions performed in domestic, occupational and festive contexts.

Senegal's contribution to the culture of the Americas will also be featured. Visitors to the program may find that presentations by Senegalese Festival participants challenge their preconceived notions about African cultures, societies and forms of traditional artistic expression. The social complexity of Senegalese society, the importance of history in everyday life, the legacy of nine centuries of empire, the impact of Islam, and the relationship of aesthetics and morality are all visible through the lens of traditional folklife.



Topography and Ethnic Groups of Senegal. (Adapted from Thiame, Mangane and Sow. Géographie du Sénégal 1989 edition. Dakar: Nouvelles Éditions Africaines)

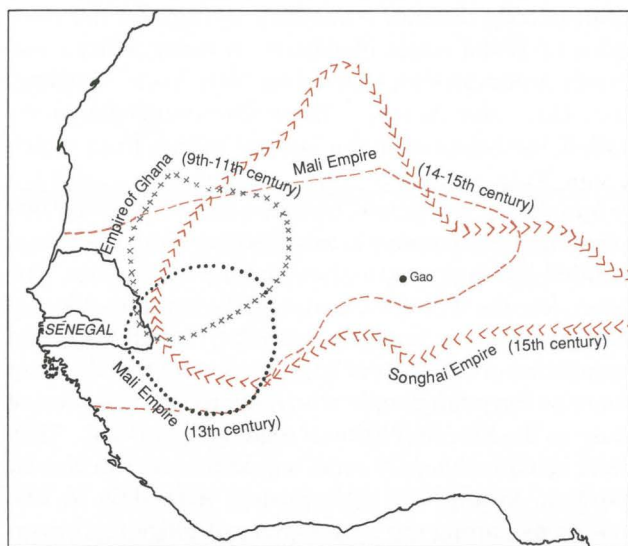
GEOGRAPHY

Located at the western most tip of the African continent, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, Senegal is the closest point of contact between Africa and the Americas. Its geographic position and its many rivers

The Senegal program has been made possible, in part, by the President of the Republic of Senegal, Abdou Diouf, the Office of the President, the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the Senegalese Embassy to the United States, the American Embassy to Senegal, the American Cultural Center in Senegal, Cheikh Anta Diop - Institut Fondamental de l'Afrique Noire, and administrative authorities in Dakar and in the various regions of Senegal.

made Senegal an important point of entry, departure and contact for the Wolof, Lebou, Serer, Toucouleur, Soninke, Peul, Diola, Manding, Balante and Bassari who call Senegal home as well as for peoples from other parts of Africa and from Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

For a little more than half of its width from west to east, Senegal is divided into upper and lower regions by the Republic of Gambia, an elongated enclave following and sheathing the River Gambia. The country of



The territory that is now Senegal was at various times within the domains of the West African empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhay. The impact of these locally based kingdoms still resonates in Senegalese culture and society today. (Adapted from Thiam and N'Diaye. Histoire du Sénégal et de l'Afrique, 1976 edition. Dakar: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines)

Senegal is virtually one vast plain, with the exception of a few short hills in the extreme southeast and on the Cape Verde peninsula near the capital city of Dakar on the coastline. It is bordered by the salt waters of the Atlantic and interlaced by the fresh waters of its many rivers. Wide differences in rainfall have contributed to a range of environmental zones from advancing desert in the north, to sandy savannah in the country's mid-section, to fertile forests in the south. Different languages and cultural groups live within this climatic and geographic variety.

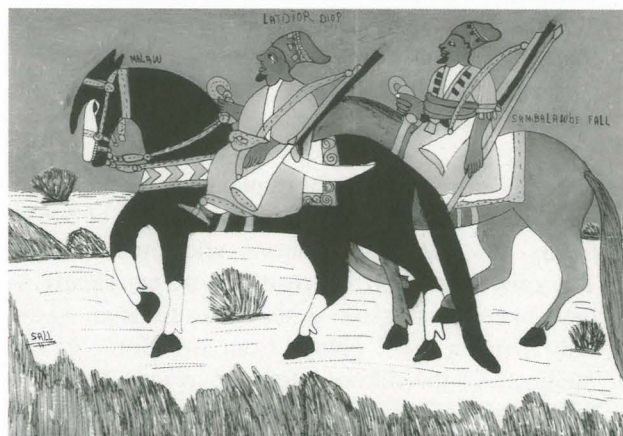
HISTORY

Migrations, invasions, the dominions of African empires (Ghana, Mali, Songhay), conquests (Wolof, Portuguese, French), long distance trade and widespread religious conversions to Islam have all contributed to Senegal's complex history as a nation. The quest for commerce and for converts to Islam helped build the empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and the kingdoms of the Wolof people. The quest for long distance trade still motivates Senegalese who come to the United States. These far reaching political and economic structures shaped a unique cultural heritage, widely shared and

bearing the imprint of all the cultures that have interacted with one another on Senegalese soil.

The earliest records of Senegal's past, archeological sites in the central part of the Senegal river valley, testify to the existence of settled communities 6000 years ago. The rise and fall of kingdoms over the past 900 years is documented in part by epic poems composed and transmitted across the generations. They are eloquent records of Senegal's past and persist as rich and lively oral traditions in the languages of the Manding, Wolof, Serer, Toucouleur, Diola, and Soninke. Such oral and written texts attest, for instance, to a strong metalworking tradition that was already ancient by the 10th century. At that time, the empire of Ghana, known for its trade in gold, expanded its dominion from its capital Koumba-Saleh, in the territory of modern day Mali, to the state called Tekrou, which is now part of Senegal. Soninke blacksmiths living near the ancient site of Tekrou in the town of Bouki-Diawe trace their profession back to the Muslim prophet Daouda (David of Judeo-Christian tradition), whom they credit with the invention of metal tongs. They also credit Daouda as the recipient of mystically obtained knowledge about the properties of metals, the secrets of the forge and the appropriate uses of metals within a traditional context. Those skills and knowledge remain the birthright of these artisans today.

Prior to the 20th century, the boundaries that define modern Senegal included a wide variety of societies, from relatively egalitarian communities who lived by small scale agriculture, hunting and foraging, to highly structured monarchies and a succession of empires from the 10th century onward, based on long distance trade and agricultural surplus. The history of Senegal as a political and geographic unit is relatively recent, dating back only 150 years from the time when, under French



Senegalese reverse-glass paintings often illustrate historical events and personages. This popular image shows Lat Dior, one of the last Wolof rulers, who is celebrated for his valiant resistance against French colonizers. For nearly 40 years (1857-1896), Lat Dior Diop and his trusted military chief, Samibalaube Fal, opposed French annexation of their kingdom, Cayor. Lat-Dior's horse, Malaw, is remembered for its strength and speed. (Painting by Sall)

colonial administration, the present outlines of the country were established. The citizens of Senegal regained their self-governing status in 1960 and retained both political boundaries and a developing consciousness of themselves as Senegalese. The influence of these earlier social forms has been profound on the traditions that are part of the Senegalese way of life today.

THE PEOPLE

At first glance it might seem that performance traditions and cultural identities in Senegal might be organized along the lines of people who speak the same language, live in the same community, share a common history or ancestor and practice the same religion. However, visitors to the Festival's Senegal program are likely to encounter different traditions and beliefs presented by speakers of a common language and just as likely to hear different languages spoken in the presentation of similar styles of dance, music and crafts. These experiences indicate the complexity of the relationship between Senegal's ethnic identities and its folk traditions.

The simplistic notion of tribe can mislead understandings about Senegalese culture and identity. Individuals create their cultural identities within a complex social environment composed of groups defined by such things as kin relationships, religious belief, mutual assistance and economic production. In a book on Manding oral traditions, Donald Wright observes:

Holding together Mandinka [Manding], Serer, Wolof, and Fulbe [Peul] society and lending unity to the wider Senegambian social and cultural region were a tripartite social structure and strong kinship relations. Freeman, artisans, and captives were the three major class divisions throughout much of the Western Sudan... Uniting persons in different parts of the Senegambia, giving individuals the framework for their own identity, and providing a measure of the sense of unity that tied together the various ethnic groups was kinship...

Class and status seem to have played more important roles than ethnicity in the establishment of settlements, interpersonal relations and intermarriage. The only restriction on marriage seems clearly to have been one of class: a Mandinka freeman would only marry a "free" person from any ethnic group. Members of the different [ethnic] groups did intermarry on a wide scale, and this intermarriage and the subsequent mixture of ethnic groups seems to have been a key element in the development and long-term stability of political institutions in the area.

The Wolof people are the largest ethnic group in Senegal, representing well over a third of the nation's

population. As early settlers of the region and as builders of kingdoms (the Jolof, the Waalo, and the Cayor, from the 13th to the 19th century), the Wolof have given Senegal its most widely spoken language and have influenced many of the traditions practiced nationwide. Ubiquitous Senegalese traditions like *chieboudienne* (fish with rice), the *sabar* dance style, the *grand boubou* mode of dress are all of Wolof origin.

Although most Wolof are farmers, on-going traditions of long distance commerce account for the presence of Wolof street merchants in many African and North American cities including New York, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. These farmer-merchants are called *Baol-Baol* after the general region from which many Wolof originate. They customarily would leave home during the period between harvest and the first planting to earn money in towns so they could purchase needed goods to send to their families back home. The Serer, like the Wolof, were among the earliest settlers of Senegal. The late Senegalese scholar, Cheikh Anta Diop concluded on the basis of linguistic studies that the Serer were an Egyptian people who migrated to their present base in the Sine and Saloum regions of Senegal. They have remained largely rural, supporting themselves by farming, fishing and cattle-raising. According to oral traditions, during the *jihads* (wars of religious conversion) of the 12th and 13th centuries they moved from the north of the country towards the south, to avoid forced conversion to Islam. Since that time, the Serer have lived mainly in the western mid-section of the country. They are the second largest ethnic group in Senegal, many of whom continue to practice locally-based sacred traditions.

The Toucouleur share common ancestry with the Peul who have traditionally roamed throughout West Africa, both as herders in search of grazing ground and as warriors. The Toucouleur broke away from the Peul to embrace Islam. They are the third largest group in the country. In contrast to the Serer and to the Peul, they are fervently orthodox in their practice of Islam. Toucouleur travelers to the Arab countries in North Africa were the first people in Senegal to adopt Islam. From the middle of the 13th century, they propagated this religion throughout Senegal through jihads, or holy wars. By the 14th century, their homeland in the eastern midlands of Senegal had become the seat of the Islamic empire of Tekroul. A close connection to the Islam of the Almoravids (warrior priests who traveled throughout the Mediterranean) can still be seen in the Arab influenced singing style of the Tidiane religious brotherhood, to which many Toucouleur belong.

Originally, the Peul were nomadic. They were herders who traded milk and milk products with farming communities for millet and other agricultural goods. In Senegal this group was spread throughout the eastern border region popularly known as the Fouta, and in the

southern part of Senegal popularly known as the Casamance near the frontier between Senegal and Guinea Bissau. Over time, contact with other ethnic groups influenced some Peul to settle and to practice agriculture. Most of these sedentary Peul are concentrated in the Casamance region. Peul, both nomadic and sedentary, have a characteristic love of cattle and a tradition of pre-Islamic religion.

Today most Manding are farmers living in the Casamance. During the 14th century, the first wave of Manding, also called Soce, arrived in Senegal as part of the expanding empire of Mali from the southeast. In the 19th century, a second migration of Manding people came to settle in the country as converts to Islam by El Hadj Omar, the warrior *marabout* (Islamic religious teacher/counselor) of the Toucouleur. They are related to the Malinke in the Republic of Guinea, and to the Bambara in the Republic of Mali. They brought with them the 21-stringed instrument of troubadours called *kora*, the lute called *gambare* and the type of drum used in social and ceremonial dance throughout most of Senegal today. Similarities between Manding dance and music traditions and those of the Serer, Soninke (also called Sarakole) and the Diaxankes bear witness to the close relationship between these ethnic groups. Together, the Manding, Soninke, and Diaxanke make up eight percent of Senegal's population.

The Diola live in a number of communities related by language, history, forms of traditional artistic expression and shared traditions of government. The sixth largest ethnic group, they are among the only groups in Senegal to have retained ceremonies in which forest spirits are embodied in masks. They cultivate rice and harvest the products of the palm trees which grow abundantly in the Casamance. Diola communities located on river banks and the Atlantic coast also practice fishing as a way of life. Most groups in Senegal are stratified internally with ranked, inherited status groups based on family and occupation. But Diola social organization is based on egalitarian, small-scale, self-governing communities in which age and initiation are the major criteria for participating in religious ritual and community decision making. Ethnic groups closely related to the Diola are the Balante, Mandjak, and Mankangnes, who have similar traditions, artistic forms and livelihoods.

The Bassari, who live in the extreme southeast of the country, are among the smallest and least well-known of the ethnic groups of Senegal. Numbering about 10,000, they account for less than two percent of the nation's population. Because access is relatively difficult to the steep hills where they live, they have had less continuous contact with outsiders than other ethnic groups. They traditionally made their livelihood by hunting, gathering and farming.

Another small group, the Lebou, are a Wolof speak-

ing people of the Cape Verde region, which includes the capital city of Dakar. They are traditionally fishermen. Lebou oral historians trace their origins as a people from the intermarriage among Wolof, Serer and Manding fishing communities. Today, they share occupational traditions such as boat building styles and reverence for particular water spirits with the Niominka — fishing communities of rural-based Serer. Their dance and music traditions, however, are closer to Wolof styles.

Senegalese have developed strategies for easing the stresses that occur when different people live together. Among them is "*cal*," the traditional joking relationships between ethnic groups. Similar joking traditions exist within families and between people with specific surnames. For example, the N'Diayes and the Diops jokingly call each other their slaves and accuse each other of being gluttons. The same playful accusations fly between the Peuls and Diolas and between specific family members in several ethnic groups.

A more serious unifying practice is Islam, introduced to Senegal in the 13th century through both voluntary conversion and jihad (holy war). The latter were conducted by the invading Almoravids and by decree of converted Senegalese monarchs. Ninety-five percent of the Senegalese population now define themselves as Muslim. In addition to practicing the "five pillars of Islam" required of all, Senegalese Muslims are likely to identify with one of the four major Islamic brotherhoods of the country: Tidiane, Quadrya, Mouride, or Layyen. The brotherhoods exist throughout Senegal, and within a single family, men and women may belong to any of the four brotherhoods. It is a matter of personal preference.

The religious brotherhoods exist within the Sufi (mystical) traditions of Islam. These religious practices include testimonials, preaching, call and response, chanting and group singing. They often resemble revival meetings held among African Americans. During the chants, believers experience a reaffirmation of their faith and sometimes become possessed by what they describe as the light of the Divine.

Coexisting with devotion to the word of Allah is respect for the power and the will of local spirit forces. Called *jinn*s in Islamic lore, these spirits inhabit and animate the land, the forest and the waters. Some of them are the continuing presence and influence of deceased ancestors on the world of the living.

Combined manifestations of the two systems of belief pervade the everyday lives of many Senegalese and inform language and other symbolic systems such as material culture and music and dance traditions. The technique of reverse glass painting, known as *fixes sous verre*, is used to illustrate both locally-based and Islamic mythology as well as scenes of traditional Senegalese life. The art form was imported from the Near East during the 19th century as tableaux for Islamic religious



Samba Diabare Samb and Amad N'Diaye Samb play the haram, a traditional lute, to accompany their singing about the history of the Wolof people. Oral historians, musicians and praise singers to the powerful and wealthy, these griots — members of the occupational class of performers — continue to play an important role in contemporary Senegalese society. (Photo by El Hadj Malik M'Baye)

instruction. During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, the narrative paintings by Senegalese artists became very popular in Senegalese households. Some are portraits of famous as well as ordinary people. Others represent events in the lives of local Muslim saints. The paintings also depict spirits from Senegalese cosmology.

HOW HISTORY INFORMS DAILY LIFE

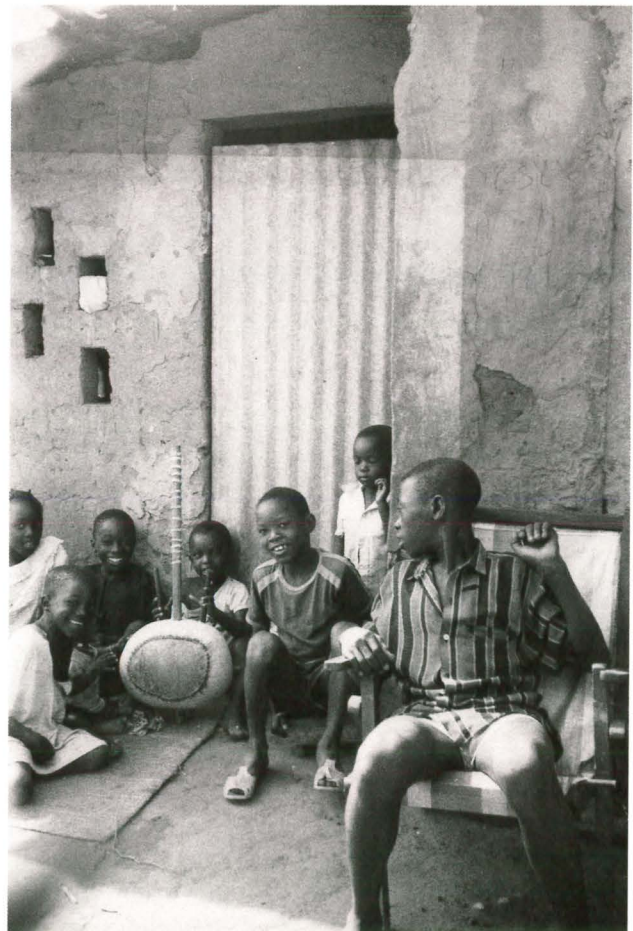
The people of Senegal live with their history in very personal and meaningful ways. Whether they are born into a Wolof, Serer, Manding, Toucouleur, Soninke or Diola household, children still at their mothers' breasts begin to learn about the origins of their families, their names, their clans, and about the occupations and exploits of their ancestors. Wolof lullabies often tell portions of the baby's genealogy and sing praises for the infant's illustrious origins. In Senegal as in much of West Africa, knowledge about one's history is not merely fascinating information. It is part of the foundation on which one constructs his or her cultural identity.

Artistic speech, song and dance help situate individuals in a continuum of kinship links, past and present. For example, professional oral historians, *griots*, who can trace families back 13 generations, practice their art and knowledge in negotiating a marriage, naming a child and establishing birthright to a particular occupation or status. These griots, who may also be musicians, traditionally have been advisors, confidants and praise singers of the rich and powerful. Because of their recognized ability to affirm or damage an individual's social identity with their oratorical skill and detailed family knowledge, griots are both respected and feared by their patrons.

Often referred to by Senegalese as caste, a particular form of occupational and social class exists within the traditional social structures of the Wolof, Toucouleur,

Serer, and Manding ethnicities. Each of these classes is distinguished from the others by birthright to certain traditional knowledge, skills, and practices that are subject to restrictions or taboos recognized by the society as a whole. Within these ethnicities until very recently, the knowledge and skills required to produce textiles, perfumes, hairstyles, jewelry, and many forms of artistic performance were family or clan secrets zealously guarded by supernatural sanctions against transmission to outsiders.

For example, Khadydiatou Samassa is a Soninke resist dyer from Bouki-Diawe in the Fouta region of Senegal. She remembers when she was growing up that people who stole knowledge of resist-dyeing from her family and tried to practice it elsewhere were subject to supernatural curses. These made their hands swell when they touched the dye pots and thus prevented them from working. Among the Soninke people, the practice of resist-dyeing was historically restricted to the nobility, and the art continues to be passed down from older to younger generations within the same families. But in urban centers such as Senegal's capital city of



Children from the family of Manding griot, Kemo Diabate, come from a long line of distinguished kora players and oral historians. From an early age, they become familiar with their inherited profession by playing child sized versions of this many stringed musical instrument. (Photo by Diana Baird N'Diaye)



Diola festive occasions such as naming ceremonies, initiations, and weddings include the dancing of bugur. (Photo by Diana N'Diaye)

Dakar, these professions are now open to outsiders.

The craftsperson who can claim membership in a family whose ancestors practiced their art for the royal courts is well respected. Certain family names, such as Cissokho, Diabaté, Kouyaté, and Konté are synonymous with playing the kora and the *balafon* and singing Manding epic poetry. From interviews with the Cissokho family, I learned that Bakary Cissokho's father made his son promise that every one of his 11 children would learn the kora. According to Bakary Cissokho, truly great talent was inherited by particular family members. This gift was identified early in life and nurtured and protected with charms and secret family rituals.

In contrast, among Diola and Bassari peoples, only gender, age, circumcision and marriage status qualify people to learn and participate in particular traditions. The practice of a wide variety of traditional crafts is open to anyone who meets criteria of gender and age; a single exception is knowledge of metalworking which is passed on through family lines.

THE PRACTICE OF IDENTITY

In Senegal individuals often use traditional arts of personal adornment, artistic performance and hospital-

ity to construct public presentations of themselves. Cultural values about personal beauty include behavior and movement as well as dress and personal adornment. Virtues such as personal integrity (*djom*), personal cleanliness (*set*), self-respect (*faida*), patience (*moun*) and generosity and graciousness in the treatment of guests (*teranga*) are taught to Senegalese children growing up in a traditional home. Virtually from the first few hours of a child's life until the time an elder attains the status of ancestor at burial, arts of adornment and speech help people learn and project these ideals. Grandmothers in Senegal massage and mold the heads of their grandchildren to encourage a beautiful form. While the child is still very young, stories and proverbs massage and mold the child's growing sense of his or her place in the world and of community aesthetics and morality.

Throughout Senegal, people now in their thirties and forties who grew up in the country can remember stories their grandparents told at night about the two Coumbas.



Collection J. Benyoumoff - Rep. int.
DAKAR — Fils d'un Chef

Senegalese tailors create elegant personal adornment for men as well as women. In this 19th century photograph, a Senegalese nobleman wears a richly embroidered robe called a grand boubou, leather babouches (slippers) and a gris-gris (amulet) on a chain enclosed in a silver case. These articles are still very much a part of Senegalese formal dress today. (Photo courtesy Elliason collection, Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African Art)



These Wolof women at a traditional healing ceremony in Senegal exemplify the qualities of faida (self-respect) associated with the arts of personal adornment and carriage. The two women in the center of the photograph are using toothsticks (sotchi). Selected from aromatic trees, these sticks are handled publicly with an elegance not unlike that of a 1930s screen actress wielding a cigarette holder. (Photo courtesy INTRASAHÉL)

In a Wolof version of the story, Coumba Am N'Deye (Coumba with a mother) and Coumba Amoul N'Deye (Coumba without a mother) are half-sisters. Although indulged by her mother, Coumba Am N'Deye is ultimately devoured by vultures because of her lazy, impatient and spoiled behavior. But Coumba Amoul N'Deye, despite the unjust treatment of her evil step-mother, gains great good fortune because she is courageous, polite, helpful and hard-working.

At the same time, some tales, such as the exploits of tricksters Bouki the Hyena and Leuk the Hare, hint at tolerance and even admiration for those individuals audacious enough to break the rules and clever enough to achieve their goals in seemingly impossible circumstances.

Personal adornment is a primary means of individual expression. Aesthetic variety and innovation are characteristic features of Senegalese traditional arts of personal presentation. These traditions provide opportunities for highly valued personal and cultural statements. Good grooming in Senegal indicates a person who has self-respect and the expectation of the respect of others. Good grooming and cleanliness (*set*) are Muslim values as well since one is called five times a day to present oneself before God without physical impurity.

Performed arts — music, dance, and verbal arts including such genres as Malinke epic poems, Toucouleur lullabies, Serer wrestlers' chants, the use of proverbs, children's games, and the incantations and pronouncements of healers and diviners — also make highly valued statements about personal and cultural identity.

Performances construct identities in many ways and in many contexts. Some performances by professional artists honor or occasionally satirize an individual and his or her family. Other performances, like an individual's

gestures and comportments, announce his or her own identity to the community and the world. Senegalese express admiration for subtle and discreet displays of personal creativity within the framework of tradition, and in certain circumstances, a boastful chant is accepted and even applauded.

For instance, in the Sine and Saloum regions of Senegal, the performance of social identity is exemplified in the *lambe*, a wrestling tradition which originated with the Serer and which has become a tournament game associated with harvest celebrations all over Senegal. The object of the *lambe* contest is to force an opponent off balance so that his body touches the ground. *Lambe* competitions take place each year in the Sine region of Senegal in the months of January and February, the period following the harvest and prior to the first planting of the new year. At other times of the year, wrestlers farm and raise cattle as others do, but during the harvest celebration, each champion wrestler represents his village in bouts with the champions of other villages. The excitement surrounding the *lambes* can be compared to that of Americans during the World Series.

Before a match, each wrestler prepares himself with the help of his personal marabout who prescribes a detailed set of rituals, medicines and talismans to insure the wrestler's success. Then, in the midst of an entourage that can include hundreds of the wrestler's supporters, drummers, his marabouts and singers, the combatant proceeds to the village where the match is to be held. He announces and presents himself to the assembled crowds, dancing and reciting poetry that tells of his prowess. These poems suggest common roots of a tradition which includes the rap songs of young African Americans and the inventive, boastful rhymes of former world champion boxer Muhammed Ali.

Another arena of personal presentation is that defined by the formal reception of guests. It is not mere



Souley N'Diaye, a Serer wrestler takes on a fighting stance at a lambe tournament in the village of Samba Dia in the Sine region of Senegal. In his hand he holds a talisman made of born. (Photo by A. Lamine Drame)



Headlines of the front page of the Senegalese daily, *Le Soleil*, for February 9, 1990, announce articles that reflect contemporary interests: the lives of Senegalese vendors (modou-modou) in New York City, a recent lambe wrestling tournament and the nutritional value of black-eyed peas (niébé), a traditional part of the Senegalese diet. (Courtesy *Le Soleil*)

coincidence that observations made by visitors to Senegal frequently concern the elegance of dress and movement of Senegalese women, the dignity of the Senegalese comportment and the warmth of Senegalese hospitality. Each ethnic group has elaborate traditions concerning the treatment of guests. In Senegal, the Wolof word *teranga*, "hospitality," is often invoked by Senegalese regardless of ethnic group to express pride in the complex of traditions for the proper treatment of strangers. *Teranga* includes both material generosity and generosity of spirit. The traditions of *teranga* — the preparation and presentation of food, attention to remembering and repeating names in greetings, alertness to the anticipated needs of a guest — are ultimately related to the aesthetics of the host's personal presentation. The ability to offer *teranga* is an important virtue which transcends ethnic and regional boundaries. Hospitality shown towards a visitor marks a host as being well brought up and of good character and good family background; a person of whom praises can be sung and whose family history is worth recounting. It is interesting to note that *teranga* has become an

element of advertising rhetoric used for nurturing a growing tourist industry. Hospitality in this sense is an issue which Senegalese are beginning to consider at a national level in pragmatic terms, weighing hard currency against cultural distortions.

SENEGALESE TRADITIONAL CULTURES IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Entering the apartment of Fatou and Mamadou Diouf, a model couple whom you might meet in New York City, Washington, D.C. or Atlanta, you are likely to find yourself surrounded by the sounds, smells and tastes of their old home in Senegal. As you stand in the lobby, you may hear voices speaking a mixture of Wolof and English. Walking through the doorway, you may be treated to the smell of incense created with ingredients brought from Senegal. You are sure to be greeted by men and women dressed in a variety of traditional styles from grand boubous — voluminous robes embellished with richly textured embroidery, — to *turkie* and *chaiya* — shirts and drawstring pants in resist-dyed cotton. On the VCR, you are likely to catch the performance of *halam* music or see the videotape record of a neighbor's naming ceremony held the week before in the building's community room. If you are lucky enough to be in Anta's home at mealtime, you will certainly be invited to partake in a meal of *chieboudienne* (fish with red rice) or *mafe* (ground nut stew) from a large, common tray and share in a ritual of tea drinking after the repast. Perhaps Fatou's younger sister will be visiting from Dakar and braiding the hair of a friend with the help of one of the Dioufs' older daughters. Mamadou may be preparing to attend the weekly meetings of his Islamic brotherhood on another floor in the same building.

The Dioufs feel a need to provide a home away from home, to create an environment that is congenial according to Senegalese ideas about what is beautiful and morally correct. Senegalese living in cities in the United States rearrange parts of an environment built according to American ideas. They provide appropriate settings for events such as meals, family rituals, the five daily prayers that are part of Islamic spiritual practice, and tea ceremonies. The Dioufs, like many other immigrants to the United States, enrich the American cultural landscape with their folkways — music, decorative art forms, foodways and other traditional expressions of identity.

Part of an earlier immigration, Africans kidnapped for slavery in the Americas also brought a cultural heritage with them across the Atlantic Ocean. Originating in the region of Senegal and neighboring countries of the Western Sudan, the animal tales of Hare and Hyena they brought with them were nurtured through many generations and can still be heard in the U.S. Virgin Islands, in Louisiana, and in the Carolina and



Senegalese artists and craftspeople who have come to the United States have found markets for their traditional forms. In the three photographs above (from left to right) Astou Adje Thiam and Awa Biteye braid the hair of a customer in a New York beauty shop; a Senegalese tailor measures a client for a custom-made outfit; and a Senegalese metalworker by birthright displays his jewelry in an American shopping mall. (Photos by Martha Cooper; courtesy City Lore)

Georgia Sea Islands today. They form part of the contributions of Africa to the American continent.

Many other contributions by Senegambians to the cultures of the Americas have also been documented. They include the rice technology brought to the Carolinas during the 17th century, additions to the American vocabulary of words such as "goober" for peanut and "gumbo" for okra based stew, the introduction of rich and nuanced artistic traditions of music, movement and personal adornment exemplified in forms such as the banjo, jazz dance, and cornrow hair-braiding. In the past 20 years, contacts between Senegalese and Americans, especially African Americans, have resulted in a continuous exchange of artistic and expressive forms. Mutual influences are most evident in music, language, dance and personal adornment.

Shared foodways and performance traditions result from the long history of African contact with the Americas. They have become part of the cultural repertoires of many in the western hemisphere, particularly African Americans and Caribbean peoples. The traditions Senegalese bring from home and continue to practice in the United States are an additional source of our cultural enrichment.

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Kora Music from the Gambia. Smithsonian/Folkways Records 8510.

Gambian Griot Kora Duets. Smithsonian/Folkways Records 8514.



Members of the Laayen, a Senegalese Muslim religious brotherhood, share tea and conversation after a meal in a New York City apartment. (Photo by Martha Cooper, courtesy City Lore)