



Women's Associations in Mali :

**Empowerment, Leadership, and Political
Mobilization**

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Urban & Environmental Policy
Senior Comprehensive Thesis
18 April 2008

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ii Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Paul K. Richter and Evalyn E. Cook Richter Memorial Fund Academic Small Projects Fund for funding this project. I would also like to thank the Occidental College International Programs Office, the Undergraduate Research Center, and Enid Busser for their help with this project.

A big ‘thank you’ goes out to my thesis advisors Dr. Martha Matsuoka, Prof. Robert Gottlieb. I would also like to thank Dr. Jane Jaquette, Dr. Elizabeth J. Chin, Dr. Adrian Hightower, and my friend Jim Barry who were all instrumental in making this project happen. I am grateful to Denis Bilodeau & Kadidia Dienta of USAID, Mali, for all of their connections, support, advice and help with this research. Thanks to Djeneba Ouattara for her translation.

I would like to acknowledge the Village of Kaara, more specifically Awa Sangaré, Moumine Sanugo, Ténéko Koné, Foncé Sangaré and the Women’s Association for their generosity, hospitality and knowledge that they shared with me. I am especially grateful to all the women of Bamako and Sikasso who inspire and encourage me. Fady, Walet, Ana, Mohamed, Aiyeto and all the family, I thank you for your hospitality, wisdom and opening your home and our hearts to me. Thanks to Trinh Tran, Brooke & all my new Peace Corps friends.

Finally, thanks to my mother and father who, despite my hesitation, joined me for part of my research and made many discoveries of their own! You are the bravest and most adventurous parents I know. Whether you follow your children or branch out on

your own, keep making discoveries. And to my sisters, who always pushed me to be ambitious and supported me in my ambitions.

iii Abstract

Women's associations represent an underutilized and under-recognized source of progressive indigenous motivation, unity, leadership and knowledge in West Africa. In the movement for decentralization and participatory development in Mali, women's associations can provide opportunities for the development of female leadership and women's political participation. Women must maneuver between the opportunities provided by a national policy of decentralization and entrenched gendered and religious norms that oppose their leadership at local as well as national levels. It is important to consider the hybrid processes of identity production that have formed current Malian gender roles, including influences from: the colonial project, the post-colonial development project, Arabic and Muslim customs, and the cultural conventions of Mande, Pular and other ethnicities. To assess the effectiveness of women's organizations in this environment, I look at the differences between women's organizations in the mostly agricultural and rural region of Sikasso and the urban capital of Bamako. The organizations I studied ranged from revenue generating, to trade and professional, tontine or capital-building, and socio-cultural. They differed in the importance of their regional and national networks and the ways in which they interacted with governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The most effective associations in politics and development had visionary leadership and progressive, articulated goals. Although some development organizations and government programs encourage these groups to become pipelines for women to enter local and even national politics, some women's associations did not seek to expand their roles while others had difficulty entering the political arena

despite official encouragement. I argue that, whatever the type of association, its level of politicization or the scope of its networks, all forms of association foster leadership and solidarity which are precursors to political mobilization and successful development outcomes.

I. Introduction

I.I Organizational Context: International Donors and Governmental Involvement/Regulation; Cultural Context of Gender Relations; Social Divisions: Rural/Urban, Class, New v. Old

The majority of Malian women live in rural areas¹, have limited access to education, deal with poverty, and issues of modernity (UN HDI report 2007/2008). These women are marginalized in the development and local political contexts. Nevertheless, they have a strong history of associative life that manifests itself contemporarily in the enhancement and formalization of older forms of associations as well as in the formation of new types of associations. Simultaneously, there is a keen interest from international donors and government agencies in the role of women in development and decentralization, and, since the establishment of democratic governance in 1991, an increase in female political representation. Whether or not women's associations encourage political or democratic participation or merely peg women in organizations of "development" to keep them from making systemic or significant changes in the political arena thus arises as a significant question. This situation is mirrored across the African continent. Is this new wave of women's associations an empowering or social change agent? Is the current trend in female political

¹ 69.5% of the total Malian population was rural as of 2005 according to the UN HDI 2007/2008. While the project report of Kaara women's association cited that 78% of Malian women live in rural areas (see Appendix VIII.II).

representation² in Mali reflected by the formation of new women's associations with different goals or roles than before? Is hierarchical change necessary for Malian women to achieve improved standards of living? Do women's associations have goals of creating social change or are they really just looking to achieve development while maintaining the status quo? Can they achieve development and improved living conditions without changing the social hierarchies that exist? Finally and most importantly, how do grassroots women's organizations in Mali empower women as community members and as elected officials? To begin to answer and understand these questions we must consider the historical context and intersections with international trade, colonial, post-colonial, and development projects.

As a young democracy with an impoverished population—ranked 173 out of 177 by the 2007/2008 United Nations Human Development Index report—this is particularly relevant. Mali has been a stable democracy since 1991, following a bloody coup that surprisingly launched the next 16 years of democratic governance. The Republic of Mali is located in the Sahelian region of West Africa that formed a large part of the former French West Africa, and the Ghana, Gao and Mali Empires. Gaining its independence from France as part of the Sudan in 1960, it then separated from Senegal to form an independent nation the following year.

In order to create national political coherence with effective locally appropriate governance, the policy of decentralization began in 1991 and was put in place in 1999. It is a policy that gives increased power to local administrative authority. It also requires diverse and democratic participation by community members in local decision-making.

² As shown by increased numbers of declared female candidates in the 2007 national legislative elections, increased numbers of female ministers appointed by the President Amadou Toumani Traore, the declaration of the first female presidential candidate in 2007, and increased numbers of women mayors.

After eight years of implementation, decentralization is still being explored, interpreted, and learned by citizens across the country. Educational campaigns spearheaded both by the Malian government and by NGOs aim to educate the citizenry of their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities within the processes of decentralization.

Current forms of local governance and authoritative structures and groups can shed light on these aspects. Local governance takes many forms in Mali depending on the location and the demographics of residents. Local rural governance usually consists of a Chief of the village (Chef du village), male village elders who meet with and inform the chief, a village association (Association Villageoise, AV) that is usually all men and mostly an agricultural association, women's association (association de femmes), religious leaders (Marabout, Imam, etc), administrative authority (mayor, representatives, bureaucrats). For local urban governance the structures are much the same (excluding the AV): Chief of the neighborhood (Chef du quartier); male neighborhood elders; women's association; religious leaders and administrative authorities. I exclude youth associations because I do not see them as performing the same types of service, infrastructural, and governing roles that I see these other groups and individuals doing. Although in this rubric I include women's associations, most Malians would not list the women's associations as local governing powers, even if they were visible in the community. Nor are they seen to be governing bodies by foreign authorities, organizations, or aid workers. This results in the oversight of the importance of women's groups. Women's associations are recognized by the government in a civil society capacity and can register with government services to have official association status. I exclude NGOs here because they are usually not connected to the community governance and grassroots

issues. They also rarely have local residents in their ranks and are thus “foreign” organizations, whether Malian or not. Nonetheless, the official government association status for women’s groups is more that of an NGO or other private entity than political organization.

Associative life facilitates complex networks, ranging from interpersonal networks to large national organizational networks. Nationally, the dissemination of information and skills, leadership, and organizational training is done in a top-down fashion through these networks with the help of NGOs and foreign donors. Foreign and international organizations train educated, potential female leaders. Female leaders do trainings within their own network of national women's associations. These national women's organizations then transfer information to leaders of local woman's associations. These local leaders are charged with the dissemination of this information within their communities and membership. Much is often lost along the way and often grassroots networks of women do not receive all the information intended to reach them.

In this paper, my analysis of women’s associations is at the intersection of influences by colonialism, feminism, historical precedence, cultural context. The long history of associative life in the area of current Mali set a precedent for current forms of associations and groups that range in size and character. Contemporary associative life interacts with politics and development in ways that alter the meanings and roles of each of these three aspects of society, all of which are influenced by the long history of Islamic and Arabic influences, animist beliefs, French patriarchal colonialism, and international development organizations’ priorities.

In this paper I attempt to engage the topic through multidisciplinary means of analysis, writing, and research techniques. I hope that readers from many backgrounds will be able to engage with the subject as I have through these different approaches. I attempt to use theory, ethnography, observation and analysis. Before and during the installation of the young decentralized democratic government in 1992, there were reports and studies conducted predicting female participation in the new government. Since then, there have been reports conducted summarizing women's involvement in politics and democratization and looking at some overlap with civil society and associative life, but few that comprehensively involved theoretical analysis and fieldwork for a wide audience. I hope for this paper to reach a wider audience because the stories of women in Mali hold powerful lessons that can be learned by those in governance, international development, academia, grassroots organizing, and female empowerment.

This topic has been developing since 2005 when I began to engage with aspects and offshoots of this topic which could continue to be developed into a more extensive analysis. I have become personally connected to and engaged in this topic in ways I did not expect on my first visit to Mali in 2006. Although women and gender are clearly keen interests of mine, I never directly acknowledged them to be stand-alone topics until just recently. I fell into the topic of gender in Mali because of being the only female undergraduate researcher on my first group trip to Mali in 2006 to install solar panels. Since then it has been a theme of much of my academic work. I am passionate about studying this theme in conjunction with social justice, post-colonialism, race and ethnicity, and contemporary and historical critical theory—each of these theoretical backgrounds have motivated questions that I pose and attempt to answer in this paper.

Questions of politics and its overlap with development informed my perspective throughout this project. In developing countries like Mali, politics and development are intimately intertwined; nation-state sovereignty is blurred by reliance on foreign development funds for government operations.³ Nonetheless, politics and development are two separate arenas. This raises questions of imperialist and post-colonial pressures on both government and development. It is critical to analyze gender relations, issues of reaching women and the demographics of development project recipients and political participants. Philosophies informing the implementation of development projects have shifted over time. It is imperative to engage women throughout the development process where they are otherwise absent because of disparate impacts felt by men and women in the targeted community.

The initial goals of my research were to (1) uncover the functions of Women's Associations in female leadership development and public participation, (2) examine how women maneuver within a national policy of decentralization and village, neighborhood, religious and gendered authoritative norms, and (3) develop a discussion of the implications of these dynamics. I found that through contemporary women's groups, women are being empowered and more women are taking on local roles. While women are being empowered as individuals and members of public decision-making, divisions among organizations and social groups make women's associations less effective at empowering women than they strive to be.

³ For example: Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, President of Libya, gave funds for the "new bridge" in Bamako and the new ministry buildings; USAID sponsors democratic governance and decentralization programming.

II. Research Methods

II.I Field Work, Research and Writing

My discussion in this paper is developed from participant observer fieldwork conducted mostly over 8 weeks during the summer of 2007. This project emerged from my initial interest in development issues and gender stimulated by travel to Mali in 2006 to install solar panels on a non-electrified village maternity. Discovering, during that research, the dynamic roles and experiences of women and the prevalence of women's associations in both rural and urban areas launched my investigation of women's associations and female political participation.

For this project I spent a month in the capital city of Bamako and another month traveling mostly in the southern region of Sikasso. I conducted additional research outside of the field following my return to the US. My research was mostly qualitative in nature, consisting of extensive interviews. My time was spent interviewing women and discovering the systems/networks of women's associations, locally, regionally and nationally and discovering their influence in female leadership building and empowerment within Malian cultural norms. I interviewed over 62 people in total. Most of my research was conducted among the Bambara (or Bamanan), Pulaar/Fulani, Touareg, and Senoufo populations. I was mostly in Muslim communities (which make up around 90% of the population—animist beliefs are prominent among populations of all religious affiliations). Most of those I interviewed had some formal training or education. Nonetheless, many association members had limited writing abilities and

were often not able to read the consent form I had in French. Some women also did not know how to sign their names. The consent forms also created confusion even among educated Malians—since US research methods are unknown in much of the world. Additionally, while the formalized/structured interviews were instrumental in initiating dialogue and relationships, I found that interactions with my interlocutors outside of the interview setting often revealed significant knowledge and information that I did not get when directly posing prepared questions.

Participatory research was the model I used in order to include all members of the community and create reciprocal relationships between participants, including the researcher and the community members. Thus, I tried to locate myself in the equation as participant and not just as observer or as actor upon the community. I sought for my involvement in the community to allow the residents' needs and desires to influence and shape my final research focus. I approached local youth organizations, community development groups, women's associations, governmental, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for their knowledge, guidance and input. I additionally offered my services and connections to these organizations. I specifically sought out women's associations and attempted to join women within private spaces such as their homes in order to reach this specific segment of the population. Under this model, I hoped to be regarded as a resource in the community—offering my skills and knowledge to the community for their purposes and goals. I found that I was regarded as such but often to an extent which I was unable to live up to—I was expected to have connections to NGOs, funding sources, and governments and to directly advocate for or provide funding for

projects. I was most commonly marked as a Peace Corps volunteer who would thus be in a role to provide services as opposed to extracting information or resources.

In attempting a participatory research model, I remained cognizant of my status, power, gender, and societal and cultural positionality in the research process. I am using the term “positionality” instead of merely “position”, to invoke the meaning of this word found in anthropological, multidisciplinary and critical theory literature informing my project (Cook, I. et al, 2005, p. 16-26). I was compelled to examine my own position in relation to the social and cultural interactions I experienced—most often when I was not consciously meaning to but rather when I was confronted by it within these situations. My positionality as a white, American, formally educated, funded, French and English speaking woman was an important factor in research, knowledge collection and production and must be considered in order to fully analyze the experience and project. Operating as a white, western woman, I was privileged and also isolated because of it.

I found, more often than not, that I was treated not as a Malian woman usually is treated, but as an honorary male within Malian society; as an educated American I was accorded the respect usually reserved for men (Schroeder 1999, xxii). This status as an “honorary male” in many circumstances translated into expectations/requirements on my time and attention. As a white, western woman in villages and sometimes in urban areas meant I was expected to drink tea, sit, eat, and discuss with men. I had to show respect in ways Malian men were often expected to, in terms of who I had to greet, who I had to meet and sit with. This consequently determined some of my physical spaces and time schedule. In the village of Kaara I entered the hut where, customarily, the male elders and chief gather to greet them—a space that in many villages women are not allowed to

enter. In this case the midwife was also allowed to enter the hut. I felt it was an honor to be accepted into a sacred and respected space where decisions are discussed and made—a place usually reserved only for men.

At moments when my womanhood was recognized, I was very obviously separated from Malian women and put in an altogether different Western female category—often approached by men but in the same breath asked about work, family, and housekeeping or other factors indicating my role as a white woman in a romantic or marriage relationship. I am, because of my positionality as a Western woman, unable to claim any personal understanding of the experience of navigating society as a Malian woman. My identity, gender role and status, were particularly important to the research because they shaped my place in the spaces in which I moved and the people with whom I interacted. I was, however, able to gain some access (though limited) to women's spaces that men normally could or would not access.

II.II Researcher Reflections and Feminist Methodologies

In the paper reject some of the tendencies of patriarchal academic conventions to abstract and detach research from the researcher. Instead, I use feminist methodologies to recognize the intrinsically engaged characteristic of research. (Ackerly, Stern, and True, 2006). Therefore, throughout this paper I am intrinsically integrated and in this section, explicitly so.

Because I do not speak Bambara language barriers limited my research and interactions. I made difficult methodological choices about when to use a translator, who

to hire and when to not use a translator. I was limited to more educated, and often male spaces in rural areas because of this lack of local language skill. This limited not only my space but also my ability to discuss freely with less educated women. In spite of this, I learned that nonverbal communication and observation can be powerful and intimate. While to conduct formal interviews I had to use a translator, spending time with women in domestic and market situations gave me insight into the lives of women.

While I often attempted to spend time with women in female dominated spaces, it proved difficult because of expectations that I spend time, and would be more comfortable spending time in male dominated spaces and relaxing, eating, drinking tea with men while women. The white, western woman is perceived as having different values than a Malian woman, she is thought to not know how to operate in the Malian domestic space and is therefore often excluded from it. This was a perception from women and men alike. Men also often held expectations that I discuss politics, gender or America with *them* instead of being in the kitchen, the field or drawing water with the women. This expectation never failed to annoy and frustrate me most at times when I was trying to do my research. Many times I felt they quite obviously valued their opinions over women's by assuming that I would prefer to spend my time with them and find out about women through their eyes. Male perspective and insight often did prove interesting and insightful but could not replace the words and experiences of Malian women.

My conscious choices of presentation and dress contributed to the mostly warm reception I received. I always greeted my interlocutors with indigenous greetings and only switched to French when my linguistic skills failed me. The majority of the time I

introduced myself with my Senegalese name, Khadidja Cissé , given to me by my host mother who I lived with for 6 months. I was named after Khadidja who was the first wife of the Prophet Mohammed, the first believer in his teachings, a wealthy woman who dedicated her life and fortune to the teachings of Islam. My Senegalese host mother told me that while she was alive the Prophet Mohammed did not take other wives—she was his true love and it was only after her death that he took other wives. Many consider Khadidja to be the most important woman in the Muslim religion and her name to be the most beautiful name a woman can have. It is a very common name but nonetheless, to hold the name of such a woman was an honor. People were often intrigued when I introduced myself with such a respected name. The last name Cissé came from my Senegalese host father. When in the village of Kaara, I introduced myself using the name bestowed upon me in a ceremony when first entering the village the year before, Astan Sangaré. I am unaware of any significance to the name Astan. The last name Sangaré is a bambara name, a very common name in Kaara, and the last name of the Chief, Foncé Sangaré.

Names are very important in West Africa and indicate among other things one's heritage, ethnicity, and caste. In Mali the system of "*cousinage*" is a social tool that creates joking relationships between groups of people with different last names. It serves to create amiable relations between ethnicities and castes with intertwined histories that often inform the joking. In Mali, my Cissé family name either indicates Peuhl ethnicity or a Marabout (religious or spiritual leader) family. Many times I was asked which one I was, I responded that I was from a Marabout family. Marabouts in Mali often are thought to have animist and mystic powers whether they are considered Muslim or not.

Claiming to be from a Marabout family was mostly to get a laugh out of those who asked, although they usually laughed either way. The choice to use these locally bestowed names and subsequent participation in *cousinage* implied to my interlocutors that I possessed an advanced knowledge of ethnic relations. It also implied that I possessed or operated with a surrogate indigenous ethnic identity.

I dressed in common West African fashions or mixed Western and local styles for most of my research—this meant wearing skirts and locally tailored outfits⁴. This choice of personal presentation often generated conversation and sometimes communicated a level of cultural fluency that allowed me entrance into more elusive spaces. At the time, my motivation for dressing in (what I considered to be) conservative and local fashions was mostly to gain respect and to present a respectful image of myself.

The power of storytelling is paramount in the Malian cultural and historical context. In Mali, the written language is limitedly used. A more common form of communication, education, and dissemination of information is the spoken word. Oral tradition is prominent even within contemporary Malian culture. While living in Bamako with a Touareg Malian family, I learned the importance of storytelling firsthand. In the evening we would sit outside before going to bed and talk, discuss the day, discuss life, reflect on the past, and tell stories. It was during one of these sessions that I learned many Malian folktales and myths that contribute to the national and public consciousness. And it was in this way that I first learned the story of Sunjata—even though I had been told to read the story in its book form many times before—and fairytales from throughout Malian folklore. History of storytelling in Mali and its importance (Adame Ba Konare). Ancestors and family line (past, present and future).

⁴ I wore pagnes (wrap skirts) or outfits such as *taille basse* (fitted skirt suits).

My process within this thesis has been influenced by my encounters with an understanding of storytelling. The power of storytelling is unquantifiable. For many Malians, being well educated means an education you learn within your family, one that comes from stories and parables, examples of how to live one's life and how to operate within society.

Arguably the most important storytellers are griots. The griot tradition is one of professional storytelling and a lifeline of Malian culture. While those who are not griots continue the stories of the past and present for the future, it is the caste of the griots that have formed much of the style and content of the oral tradition. Some argue that the griot tradition (re)frames and (re)works historical significance of the past/present while others assert that griots merely keep record. They can be seen either as conformers and subservient to authority or as reformers who offer social critique and stand up for those overlooked. A great deal of my understanding of Malian society and culture has come from this tradition and has informed not only my writing choices but also my intellectual approach.

III. Literature Review and Historical Perspectives

III.I Malian Culture, Gender and Power

This study situates the distinctive questions raised by development, feminist transnationalism and global politics within the local issues of Mali's women's associations. Thus the concept of hybridity can act as a frame through which we can attempt to understand the complex historical and contemporary influences that have contributed, and continue to contribute, to contemporary conceptions of Malian gender roles in development, governance, and civil society. To understand how hybridity is functioning in Mali we must examine popular and academic discourse. Here I interpret it to mean an ideology in which Malians as consumers and creators of culture and society are bent by global capitalist trends and at the same time refract them in ways that show cultural agency and national pride. This discourse takes place both on an academic level among the social elite and as a common social debate among the masses.

Before French colonization the political structure was very different than the formal government of today. Many past governance and political structures are still in place and hold different positions of authority. The larger regional and national authorities of times past were replaced with colonial authority and then an independent government largely modeled after the French governmental system. We see French patriarchal influences in education and social order since colonization. There are difficult relationships between French, globalized, formal education and customary family, cultural education, status and between indigenously constructed hierarchies and official

government authority (Adame Ba Konare, 17). The influences of the patriarchal French colonial project *la mission civilisatrice* are still felt today within this relationship. The Malian republic, modeled largely after the French governmental system, adopted at its onset, patriarchal authority and installed men at its helm. During French colonialism, they chose male authority within the region to locally administer the colonial project—enabling patriarchal hierarchy within government from its inception. The French, therefore had a direct role to play in the current perceptions of politics and government as male space.

Gender roles in Mali represent not only the multivalency of Malian culture and society but additionally the multivalent international influences. Gendered authority roles and patriarchal society reinforced and reformed for modernity/westernization by the colonial patriarchal system and French gendered educational project—*la mission civilisatrice*—which continues in some forms today. Hybridity must not be used as a concept to paint over the culturally and ethnically specific histories of Malian women. Within the borders of what we call Mali today, histories of more than seven ethnic groups have contributed to contemporary conceptions of gender, civil society, and governance. These are complex historical and contemporary concepts, constantly in evolution. Susan Stanford Friedman’s essay “Unthinking Manifest Destiny” delves into these concepts giving a transnational history of pottery,

The point of this story of Iraq-China ceramics is that the global travels of aesthetic cultural practices like ceramics involve the local articulation of ideas from elsewhere, a form of mediation in which local agencies transform the influences from outside until they become nativized in the vernacular of indigenous tradition.

The point is also that these origins from elsewhere are often forgotten, particularly as a given practice comes to symbolize the distinctive character of a given culture, people, or nation. Finally, the point is to underline one of the many instances in which the cultures of “the West” are “derivative” [. . .], though not uniquely so, since the story of Iraq-China ceramics demonstrates how all cultures combine derivation with innovation on a global landscape of interculturality (Friedman, 2007, 76).

While my topic is not one of art or artisanal production, Friedman’s articulation of cultural influences and hybridity can be helpful to my discussion. Some of the discourse on gender in Africa has a tendency to harken back to ideas of an essentialized, “traditional”, native African culture. In this paper I attempt to present the situations of women in Mali not within an essentialized “native” culture, but rather, as a “culture [that] combine[s] derivation with innovation on a global landscape of interculturality” and globalization.

Cultural gender conceptions play a large role in the participation of women in politics. Until the recent democratic republic of Mali, during colonialism and following independence, corruption, dirty play, authoritarianism, greed was rampant within the political sphere. It is therefore not surprising that politics is often perceived as a dirty and dangerous engagement—something unsuitable for women.

Une femme honnête et sérieuse ne peut faire la politique car la politique est l’art de nager dans l’eau sale, or une femme est censée éduquer les enfants, par conséquent, elle doit être exemplaire, toujours présente dans la famille au lieu de

passer son temps entre les différentes réunions politiques⁵ (Kadidia Dabo, 2001-2002, p. 33).

Respectable women entering politics risk being dirtied or corrupted by the system, structure and processes, which, in the above citation, necessarily exclude them.

Similarly, women who choose to enter politics are assumed to be unrespectable because they are interested in such an “unladylike” topic. Aili Mari Tripp (1994) astutely points out that these stereotypes do not just exist within the male population, saying “...there is also a view among many women that formal politics is a nasty business that women should not expose themselves to—i.e., that it is associated with corruption, bribery, and patronage” (p. 156-157). This is a critical aspect of politics and government, apparently arising from only recent national experiences of the 20th and 21st centuries, that must be considered when trying to understand its place in Malian society and, more specifically, its place for women.

In addition to these aspects of modernity discussed in the previous paragraph, aspects of animist beliefs impact gender formation and perception of roles. The animist and cultural perceptions of women as being “scheming”, “underhanded”, “mysterious”, or “magical” and seen as posing a threat to men. See Adame Ba Konare, 19, about Sunjata’s “step-mother” Sassouma Berete, “wicked, arrogant, full of intrigue, and manipulating the blood relations and links between her son Dankaran Touman and his unfortunate and infirm stepbrother, Sunjata. ... Dankaran Touman will experience the stereotyped destiny of children of ‘bad mothers’ in Malinke society—downfall and decrepitude.” Also see “It is believed that all great power comes to an end by the action

⁵ “The honest and serious woman cannot be in politics because politics is the art of swimming in dirty water. Since women are meant to educate their children, they must be role models and always present in the family instead of spending their time between different political meetings” (translation mine).

of women. These women who are young, beautiful, companions in pleasure, but who are also dangerous—they cannot be entrusted with secrets and must be carefully watched by those in positions of power” (Adame Ba Konare, 19). Gender operates in this case in a similar way that the caste system does—there are both good and evil characteristics that each caste or gender possesses.

Malian women engage in silent, patient political struggle but also in active, organized public struggle. “As Bloch put it in his study of feudalism, the great millennial movements were ‘flashes in the pan’ compared with what he called the ‘patient, silent struggles stubbornly carried on by rural communities’ to resist oppression and injustice (1970:170)” (Celestin Monga, 3). This characterization of resistance is appropriate for the work of Malian women because it demonstrates the long processes of sustained resistance that women engage in before embarking on organized mobilization or actions. Women’s associations can act as organizations of sustained resistance that facilitate movement into more public and visible forms of action.

Silent, patient struggle is seen and reflected in Malinke/Bamana values of womanhood. Conceptions of women can be seen in the history/myth of Sunjata. Adame Ba Konare describes the importance of the role of his mother, Sogolon, saying, “it is her capacity to accept social injustice and to endure the vicissitudes of marriage that forge the destiny of her son.” The story of Sunjata is especially important in the formation of national identity as it portrays the life and deeds of one of the most praised national heroes. Post-colonial national identity often harkens back the great empires—most notably the Songhai, Ghana, and Mali. Former first-lady of Mali, Adame Ba Konare explains, of the first years after independence, “the politicians imposed their dictate on

the historians, and the result was that history became a part of the overall nationalist project” (Adame Ba Konare, 17). This nationalist project attempted to reject colonial education and reinscribe an indigenous national history that commented on gender, social order, and cultural and political values. Because “the relation of Malians with history is both active and emotional” it is a living, breathing interaction in which “culture ... reconfigures history” and, I would argue, vice-versa (Adame Ba Konare, 21).

Women have mobilized politically and publicly in recent history without compromising their roles within idealized Malinke motherhood, and even re-inscribed them. The large numbers of women who mobilized in the 1945 rail strikes exemplifies Malian female public participation. The participating in the strikes were supporting their male family members and acting nobly on behalf of the kinship unit and larger community. Public discourse presents this movement in rhetoric of women fighting against the colonizers who were threatening family unity and customary kinship and social organization. Despite an historical role that might have foreshadowed a larger role for women in public leadership since democratization and decentralization, they are still highly underrepresented in local and national governance.

Malian women possess power within the family unit and responsibility and power sharing in the family unit is often segregated. Some in Mali often consider the family arena matriarchal, in an often gender segregated system of family control it is difficult to distinguish who is leading and who is following. Women often are in charge of most family finances, responsible for earning income, educating the children in many non-formal ways, providing food for their family, etc. With these responsibilities, a large amount of respect is afforded them. While their roles have changed over time, their

leadership within the family structure is vital. Contemporary trends point to a growing responsibility of women within the family structure. “Although there is a certain correlation between commoditization and greater stress on household control, this is not an entirely new phenomenon” (Maria Grosz-Ngaté, 98). Here, she suggests that women have historically taken on more stress and household control. There is an additional trend in migration that leads women’s roles to be invaluable in the survival of the family and community. As men leave for urban areas in hopes of monetary gain and search for rewards of modernity, they often leave the responsibility of providing staple grains to the women—a job conventionally held by the men. “Men may return late or not at all for a given cultivating season, or they may make contributions perceived to be adequate, but these problems are always dealt with by individual households” (Maria Grosz-Ngaté, 98). Within individual household negotiations, women are often left to make up for losses of men to migration and shortcomings of these migratory men to find work and/or return their earnings to the village family.

While she does not make claims in politics or development, Maria Grosz-Ngaté opens her argument on gender and labor migration in Mali to larger socio-political context. She states, “there may be some parallels between the focus on women’s actions at the household level and the role often ascribed to women in nationalist movements since both involve the construction of an imagined community” (Maria Grosz-Ngaté, *Labor Migration* 99). While men are left to make mistakes, take risks, venture beyond their ascribed roles, and not be penalized by the community, women bear the burden of maintaining the kin and imagined local communities and in a macro discourse a burden

falls on them as well, making it all the more difficult to transform their roles without threatening the integrity of the imagined community or nation.

III.II Democracy and Development and Africa

As is shown in the example of the rail strikes, women are seen in common discourse to be cultural purveyors and the foundation of community & family—both highly respected and valued roles within society. This lends an importance to women's roles but simultaneously may devalue the work of women outside of these sectors if this work is seen as detracting from their community and kin responsibilities. Literature on democracy in Africa often suggests that “the discrepancy between the collective ambitions of social groups and communities on the one hand and the individual expectations of citizens on the other is not due to a lack of will or to the people's familiarity with the “delights” of authoritarianism, but rather to the shortcomings of methods designed to integrate individuals into the democratic process” (Celestin Monga, 6). Malians are putting forth proposals to fix the shortcomings of their democratic process in hopes of integrating more individuals and groups into the ranks of a responsible, educated citizenry.

Nonetheless, the seemingly well-intentioned elite are working towards a democratization project that itself is problematic. In the following, John Michael Sears criticized the romanticized version of Malian politics, propagated by the ruling class.

The ‘enthusiastic’ view is held and set forth by various segments of the unity-seeking ruling class (local and foreign, State and NGO) of bringing to Mali a

Western-oriented, procedurally minimal democracy, and citizen identity commensurate with international financial institutions' and donor countries' vision of democratization as political and economic liberalization. Consequently, this hegemonic project co-opts selected indigenous and Islamic idioms of political and social identity, to reinvent democratization as 'moral governance.'

Cosmopolitan upper and upper-middle class actors thus apologize for highly personalized politics at the national and local levels, and articulate these more broadly with idioms of recovering rectitude and social cohesion that preserve and reproduce hierarchical social norms" (Sears, J.M., 2007, p. 1).

Here, Sears articulates the social and organizational divisions that reveal the deception of the overly enthusiastic claims of NGOs and elites.

When referring to political reforms that happened across the continent of Africa in the 1980s and 1990s and that opened up spaces for democratic engagement in many nations, Aili Mari Tripp asserts that, "women frequently had more experience than men in creating and sustaining associations" and therefore were better prepared and skilled to take on roles within civil society and government (Aili Mari Tripp, *The New Political Activism in Africa* 2001, p144). While she continues to suggest that this may have made entering politics easier for women than men, I interpret this to only be true if she were referring to their skills. This was indeed the case in Mali where "women were able to draw on a long history of maintaining social and economic networks, and thus to bring well-developed organizational skills to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)" (Aili Mari Tripp, *The New Political Activism in Africa* 2001, p144). When women are organized and mobilized their capacities are great. In 1945 large groups of rural women

(mostly wives, mothers, and daughters of railroad workers) went on strike against the French railroad authority along with the men who worked on the railroad in what is now Senegal and Mali. The women organized themselves and chose to march on Dakar and strike across the colonial territories. Experts as well as average citizens speculate that the strikes would have been a disaster without the mobilization of the women.

In recent history there are numerous examples not only of female group mobilization (as in the railroad strikes) but also of individual female leadership and heroism. Considering the legacy of those such as Aoua Keita and Aline Sitoé Diatta, how does the current political climate fit into a colonial or post-colonial tradition of female leadership and rebellion? First, these women were fighting against the powers of white colonial oppression—therefore standing in solidarity with the national community. This vastly changes the framing of their actions in public consciousness. Women's leadership has been increasingly recognized in the public since their involvement in the anti-colonial movements. Revolutionary Aoua Keita was a successful female leader, an exception rather than the rule. While recognized in academia, she is mostly invisible in the popular imagination.

Following the bloody coup of 1991 to oust the authoritarian regime, national conferences were held to form the new government democratically. Decentralization was a strong theme coming from rural representatives. It is often asserted that Malians have a strong history of decentralization from some of the great empires to today. Much of the national government structure was taken from the French system where the president holds a large amount of power and the assembly is less powerful. On the local level a large portion of government functions and services are decentralized including healthcare

through the CSCOM (Centre de santé communal) system, some taxes, etc. Localities may either raise their own monies through taxes (Mali has a very low rate of tax payments) or request monies from regional/national authorities.

The line between civil society and government is blatantly blurred in Mali. Foreign governmental and foreign aid organizations' interference in Malian national and local politics, social services, and economy is extensive. Because of the ambiguity of the role of local and foreign civil society players, their positions and actions thus become controversial. In a report funded by USAID and the United States Institute of Peace, former US ambassador to Mali, Robert Pringle, said that NGO's are the fourth leg of the economy and government in Mali (see Robert Pringle). The complex foreign and local NGO involvement in Mali has grown in a difficult historical context of colonialism, post-colonialism and imperialism.

International feminist and human/women's rights organizations attempted to forge ties with women's associations in Mali during the 1990's but many were largely unsuccessful, in part, because of rhetoric used and western feminist ideology (Wing 2002). Malian participants in the United Nations Beijing Conference on Women's Rights of 1995 found little connection with the objectives of the conference. Malians' struggle to form national unity and a coherent, effective political system is ongoing in the wake of the colonial regime.

Theories of development have been steering international donor funding preferences and programs in an ever-changing cycle of priorities, values, and theories. The instability of the international donor priorities has required Malians and Malian organizations to be flexible and malleable to access the funding preferences of the West.

Gender and Development (GAD) and Women and Development (WAD) (Schroeder 1999; Piché 1994) philosophies arose as reactions to the Women in Development (WID) theory that began during the 1970's but is still used today. WID, while attempting to incorporate women into a modernization theory model of development, left unquestioned the practices of that very development. During the 1980's, WAD came to the forefront, actively engaging women into development and allowing them to define development agendas. GAD, the most recent theory, allows for a more holistic view of development, incorporating women and men into the picture where one or the other is left out.

Women have a large and important presence in Mali's NGOs. They have created many organizations that either grew from associations or independently. Their presence extends to positions within foreign and international organizations as well. Tripp affirms that "... women have a strong presence in the country's NGO movement, and have been able to both ensure that development associations address women's issues and to create their own organizations devoted to legal issues, health concerns, credit matters, education, and enterprise promotion" (Aili Mari Tripp, *The New Political Activism in Africa* 2001, p144). While I believe the influence of women in the Malian NGO community is widespread, and their own organizations numerous, I believe it to be an overstatement to say that their interests are "ensure[ed]".

Associative life in Africa is strong and has a long historical precedence. Many scholars see current forms of associations as reactions to globalization, transnationalism, modernity, urbanization, colonialism or imperialism. Scholar Michèle O'Deyé offers psychological and socio-cultural reasons for the prevalence of associations in African urban centers. She states that "discourse among women's association members attests to

the strong need for membership and affiliation” (translation mine, O’Deyé 1985, 105). She asserts in her case studies of Dakar and Brazzaville that associative life in urban Africa is a form of historical preservation—to preserve or re-simulate customary kinship and social ties that are reformulated or destroyed with colonialism and modernity. Her analysis is limited in scope in relation to my topic—especially for rural associations—nonetheless, her extensive historical account of associative life in its many forms as specific to cultural and ethnic dominance inform my understanding.

Scholar John Uniack Davis discusses four types of rural associations in southern Mali and characterizes women’s associations not as transformative, rather, as ascriptive, static social groups that have little potential for social change or civic training. He states, of agricultural village associations (associations villageoises/AV), youth groups, women’s groups, and hunting groups that, “because of the nature of these organizations, not even more advanced levels of commitment such as leadership can be expected to foster civic values” (John Uniack Davis, 309). Additionally, his analysis is limited in scope and characterizes AVs in a separate category as more transformative and democratic than women’s groups. His mischaracterizations become clear from further analysis of nuance.

Many scholars argue that organizations such as women’s groups actually limit women to the agendas of the groups, are often co-opted/marginalized by male authority, and are frequently pegged into a corner by male authority/organizations that remove them/distract them from working in formal politics or towards real social change. I argue that, alternatively, these groups can have “transformative capacities” and that they are empowering to their membership (see Aili Mari Tripp, 1994). They create solidarity and

leadership, skills and spaces to share knowledge—all very important facilitators of social change movements—there is power in numbers and these groups are generating organized associations ready to mobilize.

IV. Findings: Women's Organizations and Groups

IV.I Associational Structure

There are various types of women's associations within Mali. From my research, I will place women's associations in five categories: revenue generating or training; trade or professional; tontine, credit or capital building; social or cultural; neighborhood, village or geographic. I would argue that in all these forms they foster leadership and solidarity. Many associations merge or transcend these categories. All the associations I studied and heard of were created out of motivation and initiative from within the given community. Many associations sought or were sought out by NGOs and other support for training and assistance; nevertheless, participant motivation came from within the community. Many were created by more educated women in a given community, or a woman who had connections with other associations and was inspired to create one in her own community.

Associations for revenue generating activities and training often seek outside assistance from other women's associations or NGOs to do activities or trainings with members. Shea nut trees are a common agricultural plant in Mali. I spoke with numerous associations who were participating in trainings for safe shea nut preparation for sale to large cosmetics, shea butter soap, lotion and other shea product preparation. Women's associations also participate in other types of member education. The village women's association of Kaara brought in Bambara literacy teachers to conduct a program

of 40-days for the mostly uneducated and illiterate women's association's membership. This program was self-funded by member dues and association savings.

There are many trade and professional associations in all social classes. Women in occupations ranging from vegetable sellers in the market to female jurists form associations. These associations help them know their job market better, keep up in their field, and make professional connections and engage in professional development.

There are various types of credit or capital building associations. Some of these associations use imported western style credit and capital building systems. Many more use a locally developed system that was used long before micro-credit became popularized in global NGO networks during the late 1970's by Mohammed Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (Grameen, 2008). Local knowledge of credit building is now recognized and encouraged by NGOs as well. A tontine is a group that operates on a system of no-interest credit. Many women's associations use tontine systems (some even call themselves tontines). The tontine is based on trust in others—a key aspect of all associations—it allows participants to gain access to a large sum of money without having to save for a long time and without being penalized with interest rates. Members decide on an amount to contribute. Each month (week or other decided periodic meeting) members contribute the decided amount. Each time one member (on a rotating cycle) takes the total that is contributed. This continues until every member has taken the sum one time. Cultural influences of trust and associative reliance are clearly illustrated within this system.

Social or cultural women's associations meet and save money to host and celebrate particular events. They will help each other with wedding, birth or death

ceremonies. They will all come together to host a harvest party or end of the year part for the neighborhood/village. In this way, they are enacting their roles as cultural purveyors. They often raise money for things such as getting outfits tailored for all the women out of the same fabric. More than one Malian NGO worker I interviewed disregarded such neighborhood or social/cultural associations as trivial and wasteful. This perspective fails to account for the benefits of such associations. Not only do they foster community cohesion, they often broaden their goals to include a larger social change agenda. Rather, these associations would enhance the work of larger NGOs and networks, were they to be targeted.

Neighborhood or village associations are geographically based and can support and enact all the above types of association activities/roles. They often are started as social/cultural associations but soon grow in scope and in interest to encompass many of the other goals of associations. I encountered numerous village and neighborhood associations now involved in both local politics and development that started as merely social groups for local women. In larger villages or larger neighborhoods there may be numerous associations or chapters of the same association that keep separate finances and conduct separate meetings but have joint meetings less regularly.

Among women's associations there is a common leadership structure. The basic organization is comprised of: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer. In many associations there are additional positions or multiple people splitting the responsibilities of each position. There are sometimes two or three different people responsible for the account—the bookkeeper keeps record of money in the association account, the accountant keeps the money itself, and a third person keeps the key to the account—they

are both responsible for making sure the physical amount of money in the account matches the books). Depending on the women's association and its purposes/goals there are different positions.

Current forms of local governance and authoritative structures and groups can shed light on these aspects. Local governance takes many forms in Mali depending on the location and the demographics of residents. As I discovered, local rural governance usually consists of a Chief of the village (Chef du village), male village elders who meet with and inform the chief, a Village Association (Association Villageoise, AV) that is usually all men and mostly an agricultural association, Women's Association (Association de femmes), religious leaders, administrative authority (Mayors, representatives, bureaucrats). For local urban governance the structures are pretty much the same (excluding the AV): Chief of the neighborhood (Chef du quartier); Male neighborhood elders; Women's Association (Association de femmes); Religious leaders and administrative authorities. Although in this rubric I include women's associations, most Malians would not list the women's associations as local governing powers, even if they were visible in the community. Women's associations are, thus, not seen to be governing bodies. Nonetheless, they are recognized by the government and can register with government services to have official association status. This association status is more that of an NGO or other private entity.

IV.II Grassroots and Leadership Case Studies

I profile here a few examples of organizations and their female leaders in Mali. They represent a cross-section from rural to urban areas. They each possess strong leadership qualities and have different stories, different organizational and social contexts but similar cultural restrictions and challenges to face. Their lives offer views into the experience of female leadership in Mali. What goes into it? What does it look like to be a female leader in Mali? What does it mean for one's family life? For one's job? The locations, communities and environments of these women are essential to understand.

IV.II.i Villages in the Region of Sikasso

I describe two case studies in the village of Kaara and the village of _____. The village of Kaara has not the average women's association—it is a remarkable village in many ways. The village of _____ represents another example of a unique organization and demonstrates a differences in village groups and situations. Both of these villages are located in the southern mostly agricultural Region of Sikasso. They are both relatively geographically isolated villages that but have significant populations. Neither is located next to a main or paved road. They are both Muslim villages but Kaara is Bambara and _____ is Senoufo. All of the residents of Kaara speak Bambara and some speak French. Most of the residents of _____ speak both Bambara and Senoufo but few speak French. The region is often touted as having an active associative life as well as being a bastion of development and aid work—while this is often accepted as true, I have not found empirical evidence that the Region of Sikasso has significantly more activity in these arenas than other regions of Mali.

The Kaara village women's association Sininesigi "those who think of the future"—a remarkable association—compelled my research into the functions and roles of women's associations in Mali. The name of this association is significant in meaning. It indicates the core value and goals of the group.

When I arrived in the non-electrified village of Kaara, Mali with a small team of volunteers, researchers and NGO workers we met with the healthcare staff and examined the clinic building and the maternity building where we decided to install the solar panel and lighting. I traveled to Mali to examine the gender issues of renewable energy projects such as this one. On the second day, an older woman approached me as I was drilling a light switch into the wall. Quickly realizing my proficiency in Bambara ended and began with "thank you" she had a young man assist in translating her words into French for our brief conversation. She introduced herself as the President of the Women's Association of Kaara and explained that she came to thank me on behalf of the entire organization and all the women of Kaara. I looked at her perplexed "a women's association?" I thought, "I didn't know there was a women's association!" The Malian nationals at the NGO we partnered with, the researcher on my trip with previous experience in Mali never told me there was a women's association—a key piece of information to leave out. When speaking with the women of the association they told me they raised the money for the construction of the maternity clinic, they ran Bambaran literacy trainings for village women, they acted as a parallel village authority to the male elders that I never would have known existed.

Sininesigi Kaara has accomplished projects in agriculture, education, health, savings, and many other areas of community development that are more difficult to

characterize. The project areas of Kaara women express the desires of village women—while sometimes listed in different orders; they are almost always the same. The association raised money for the maternity clinic (part of the CSCOM) that was in a state of disrepair. They pooled their funds and paid for rehabilitation of the clinic. Their most recent project is the establishment of a community and private garden. It is a women's garden where they grow crops in shared plots as well as in private plots. They must give a percentage of the proceeds from selling the crops they grow in their individual plots back to the community garden. They are able to keep a portion of their profit for personal and family expenses. Money raised from selling crops from the community plots goes to the group as well.

One of the most memorable projects for the women of Kaara was the Bamanan literacy training they underwent. The association pooled funds to bring literacy trainers to the village and conduct a 40-day workshop. While not all women participated, many did. I interviewed multiple women in the village whose only formal education was the 40-day training session. They spoke of the session with fondness. In most villages most women have not participated in such extensive literacy trainings. One young married woman told me she would love to continue studying. She went to school and loved it. If there were a second cycle school she would love to continue. Her love for learning was obvious. She also expressed interest in learning how to sew in order to have another skill. "I would be able to help my family if I had other skills" she said. Later in the conversation she affirmed that women's groups work harder than men's groups do. She then expressed her interest in working with other groups outside of just her village in order to collaborate. Her comments were refreshing. Another woman added to her ideas,

stating that women who study are able to speak and express ideas, but if you do not study you will not have the knowledge to speak in public.

Mme Awa Sangaré is the midwife of the CSCOM and the secretary of the women's association, married to the pharmacist, has children, and is a co-wife. Her village is in many ways remarkable for its motivation, accomplishments, "liberalism", and focus. She is remarkable in her motivation, leadership, and the way she navigates through the male dominated rural medical field and engages her fellow villagers in projects and goals. Her travels and extensive interactions with educated professionals makes her understanding of the world outside village life and her knowledge of it unique within her village setting. She brings to the other village women an understanding and vision that helps drive them and the association that without her would not be as focused or accomplished as they are. While she brings an elevated level of political and world understanding, she understands and respects her place within the social politics of the village. While she is listed as a leader of the association, she does not consider herself to be more of a leader than the president who is the figurehead and respected elder of the association of women.

Awa was dedicated to helping me with my research. While I gave her criteria for women I wanted to interview, she chose them individually. She accompanied and facilitated all interviews. After a few interviews she began to think I was not satisfied with the responses of women to my questions. She then began to take a more active role in the interview process. She then murmured suggested answers to women that fit in with the stated goals of the association that she gave me. My companion/translator/friend and I noticed this immediately because, while done in a quite voice, it was in front of us,

during the interview. At first I just laughed. Awa, a smart, ambitious, organizer was trying to capitalize on our real or imagined connections and resources. This may have been interpreted a preventing analysis of the “true” opinions of village women. Conversely, having Awa as “facilitator” and “translator” of interviews provided insight into social hierarchy, knowledge and Awa had an accurate idea of what I would want to hear from the women. She also wanted to show solidarity of group goals.

It was hard to discover the roles of the bureaucrats in the village, Oumar Kanta (Agricultural investigator CMDT - Compagnie Malienne de Développement des Textiles) and Moumine Sanugo (Centre de Santé Kolondieba) in the creation of the Kaara women’s association. While it was asserted by everyone—Oumar, Moumine and the women—that the women were the inspiration and the motivation behind the group’s origins, it became clear that they played vital roles in the organizational aspects of the group. Awa was the in close contact with them about many aspects of the women’s association, including the project proposal and the official registration of the association. These documents were clearly typed and processed by Oumar and Moumine because they were written on computers—outside of the village in a larger town—and were written in a high level of French. While they each possessed strong Malian cultural ideals of women’s roles, they recognized the necessity of women working towards development and needing resources to do so. They supported the women technically and encouraged them to pursue more ambitious projects. Meanwhile, they seemed to be spatially segregated from the women in the association and mostly had consistent interaction with Awa. They did not attend meetings with them association but would be in contact with the president and other leaders.

IV.II.ii City of Sikasso

The city of Sikasso is the urban center and regional capital of the southern Region of Sikasso. It is a relatively large urban center with many resources and a diverse and vibrant community. Before the instability of neighboring countries and the civil war in Cote d'Ivoire the region was a busy trading hub for ground transportation of goods between coastal countries and Mali. It is the base of many local NGOs and home to many regional offices of national and foreign NGOs. There are many community and neighborhood associations within the city. Among others, I visited a citywide women's cooperative, leaders of two neighborhood-based associations, and a citywide association.

In the city of Sikasso Mme Aissata Goïta is very influential. She is the president of a women's association, started the CSCOM in her neighborhood, works at the mayors office/city hall and ran for office in the last election.

Mme Namama Berthé is another influential and important women in the city of Sikasso. She is the president of a citywide women's association of influential women who are leaders in their neighborhoods, political parties, or professions, a representative to network and trainings, and works at regional administrative office of the sous-prefet.

IV.III Organizational and Donor Structures

In this section, I highlight a few associations and organizations that are influential in the status of local women's associations contemporarily. I examine briefly: Groupe

Pivot/Droits et Citoyenneté des Femmes (Group Pivot/Rights and Citizenship of Women, GP/DCF), Association pour la promotion du leadership féminin (Association for the Promotion of Female Leadership, APLEF), United States Association for International Development (USAID), Programme pour le gouvernance partage (Program for Shared Governance, PGP), Ministère pour la promotion de la femme de l'enfant et de la famille (Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family, MPFEF). These organizations are just a few of all the organization I visited in Bamako and at their local offices in Sikasso.

These organizations each cover different scopes and categories. Groupe Pivot/Droits et Citoyenneté des Femmes (Group Pivot/Rights and Citizenship of Women, GP/DCF) is a group that organizes eight associations and NGOs that work for the work of civil society for the rights of women. Their member organizations include AJM (Association des Juristes Maliennes), AMDH (Association Malienne des Droits de l'Homme), APDF (Association pour le Progres et la Defense des Droits des Femmes), CADEF (Comite d'Action pour les Droits de la Femme et de l'Enfant), COFEM (Collectif des Femmes du Mali), FOMADDH (Forum Malien d'Appui a la Democratie et aux Droits Humains), ODEF (Observatoire des Droits de la Femme et de l'Enfant), REFAMP (Reseau des Femmes Africaines Ministres et Parlementaires). Each of their member organizations works within their target/member groups on organizing, education, and capacity building efforts. Some of these groups work on a grassroots level while others are working mostly in elite communities of membership.

The Association for the Promotion of Female Leadership (Association pour la promotion du leadership féminin, APLEF)—now a women's association based in

Bamako—was created out of a remarkable program that took university educated women from Bamako to rural areas where they conducted research on local issues and attempted to gain an understanding of regional and rural life. For many of the participants it was a unique experience—as they had never lived in a village setting. They were sensitized to rural issues, especially those of women. Their research was wide-ranging and related to their areas of study. Out of this program grew APLEF—a women’s association with the goal of addressing the issues of female empowerment that these women encountered during their internships.

The United States Agency for International Development, USAID, is a foreign organization funded by the US government to implement development projects in developing nations. USAID is under the direction of the US Congress and the US State Department. They extensively fund programs for gender and democracy and often fund women’s associations trusting that this will increase female political representation.

Programme pour le gouvernance partagé (Program for Shared Governance, PGP) works extensively in Bamako as well as throughout Malian regions. Their programs include education on decentralization for candidates and community members. They encourage all groups and demographics from each community to effectively integrate them into truly shared governance.

Ministère pour la promotion de la femme de l’enfant et de la famille (Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family, MPFEF) is a Malian government ministry that works in collaboration with NGOs, local women’s associations, political candidates and other local and national groups. They participate in campaigns for human

and women's rights and recently have been very active in encouraging female political candidates.

V. Discussion

V.I Governmental and Development Context Makes a Difference

Corruption throughout the government, private sector, and civil society has had important consequences for gender equity. Corruption is rampant in these organizations but sometimes the line is blurred between just capitalizing on opportunities and malicious corruption/embezzlement/mismanagement of resources and funds. So few opportunities arise for many Malians that it is thought you may only get one chance and must jump on it if one does present itself.

Here, we live in the village and people in the village don't really know how to base their judgments on the program of the different candidates. Normally, people should choose a program that will benefit the community. But, here in Markala, people rather vote for the candidates who have financial means. So, if you have limited means, like us women, it's really difficult for you to win. However, there are 9 villages around where the people said that they wanted nobody but Ba'Bintou, whether my party gives them money or not. Sure enough, people from these villages wouldn't take anything from my party and we did win the vote in all these areas. Other villages said that they wouldn't keep voting for anybody without getting anything in return. So, when certain candidates heard that, they went ahead and gave 250,000 CFA F, 100,000 CFA F, or 50,000 CFA F to different villages. If you don't have that kind of money to give away, it's really hard to win the majority of the votes; and therefore, the parties that had that kind

of money won in the latter villages. (Traoré Bintou Diarra, from USAID interview, 2004)

Some corruption and exclusion of women in political parties can often be attributed to prejudices against women. Women can also be a casualty of party politics and collusion for certain candidates.

For example, during the last elections, somebody tried to buy me out with half a million CFA Francs and offered to make me 2nd assistant -supervisor so I would not support another female candidate because they didn't want a woman to become a mayor. I told them that I was born a woman before I even got to know about politics. So, I rejected their offer and I stuck to my integrity. My purpose and mission are to serve women's cause and that's what I'll stick to; and actually the whole village knows that about me. (Traoré Bintou Diarra, from USAID interview, 2004)

Party line divisions are often stronger than gender unifiers within Malian politics as is indicated by the following remarks: "If all women decide to go as independent candidates, because our different parties wouldn't like to lose us (their female candidates), they would be forced to abide by our rules. If we unite around a strategy like this, we wouldn't have had only 4 female officials. We had 3 last elections and 4 this time, that's not much progress" (Traoré Bintou Diarra, from USAID interview, 2004). This statement also leads to the issue of party prioritization of candidates. Many women often do choose to run as independents because they do not feel welcomed or supported within parties. In the 2007 legislative elections, many women attested to being effectively pushed out of their parties line-up and made last minute decisions to run as

independents. Within party politics—candidates are prioritized and often women are pushed aside and relegated to “social organizing” or pushed out of parties.

A survey of all female council members elected in the 2004 communal elections was conducted by USAID and *partners*. While I have not found any analysis of this survey, it has served as a tool to highlight and database female participation in local politics and to profile them. The survey shows that there is a very low rate of female participation in communal politics. Nationally there is an average of 6.68% female council members. The region with the highest rates of female council members is Bamako, with 21.6%. This is more than 3 times the national average and more than two times all other regional averages. While not surprising, considering it is the capital city those living in the capital have greater access to information, this fact emphasizes the disparity between rural and urban areas in Mali.

In the region of Sikasso, where I conducted most of my rural field research the same survey found that the average age of councilwomen is 46 years old. When asked for their profession 100 said they were homemakers and 45 listed employment outside the home, while 2 did not respond. This was one of the questions with the highest response rate. And, while many women said they were “*menagères*” in rural Mali this often includes doing small business and agricultural work so as to feed one’s family and make ends meet. 11 widowed/5 single/69 married/62 did not respond. The amount of education of councilwomen ranged from illiterate (11), literate in Bambara (2), literate in French (14), some amount of primary school (50), and some amount of secondary school (23) (45 did not respond, either indicating no education or active choice not to respond). This variation in education indicates that women of all educational backgrounds may be

able to participate in government. While I have not found statistics on the educational levels of councilmen, it is commonly accepted that men of all education levels may enter politics. Conversely, it is not commonly accepted that women of any educational level enter politics—making it sometimes even more discouraging to women with little or no schooling.

Formal education is not a prerequisite for entering politics in Mali. But from the survey of council members in the District of Bamako, it is shown that all had been formally educated (see Appendix). Their levels of education ranged from elementary school to masters degrees and doctors in pharmacy. The Bamako respondents left few questions unanswered, while respondents from other areas left many of the questions blank. The high level of education of Bamako female communal representatives is shocking in comparison to the education obtained by those in other regions. These highly educated Malian women represent a minority in Mali. The majority of Malian women still have no formal education. Although it is difficult to tell why they would be so well educated, I would infer that higher levels of education make women more likely to engage in politics. The other very sharp difference seen between these urban women and their rural counterparts is the overwhelming number working outside the home and many in a professional environment. While I believe the responses from rural women are skewed because they often perform revenue-generating activities as a part of their “*menagères*” activities/responsibilities but do not think of it as a job outside the home.

Women’s associations can legally declare their status as associations. This could give them legitimacy and power for governmental purposes, for NGOs, and official and

international recognition. During previous administrations, women's groups were officially recognized as part of a larger centralized entity. This entity was not efficient and did little to help the associations. Since democratization, women's associations are under the law number 04-038, 5 August 2004 (see Appendix d.). This law governs registered associations and what can be considered an association. It excludes cultural groups and political groups most notably. Thousands of women's associations are not registered with local authorities under this law. While it is unnecessary for many associations to function and continue projects, it can be an asset for many associations because it designates legitimacy that could facilitate access to and partnerships with larger associations, NGOs and government aid.

Development programs reinforce and contradict both of these western imperialist impositions. Nevertheless, because some women ask why they cannot be included in politics—and attribute it to money and other such things I see a striking similarity with western female struggles. Additionally, to play on and win foreign development funds they must adapt to the current popularity of gender equality they are catching on and some are trying to exploit this without actually achieving it. But mostly in rural and some in urban areas people at whom these international funds are targeted towards don't have the education and access to information to know about them. Is social change necessarily an aspect of international development discourse, and does it then imply imperialist pressures?

Western/French influence in gender roles during colonialism and modernization, negatively affects the development of these countries—even though the west did not develop with gender equity. They are now “developing” in a humanistic sense because of

growing gender equity but they are still far behind some developed countries/ahead of others depending on what “development” means.

The following quote points to the line, or lack thereof, between governments and NGOs. “I personally need some help from NGOs. I don’t mean financial help for me personally, but I mean funding to sustain and carry out women’s projects. Women will always remember that kind of support. Up to today, a lot of women pound millet by hand with their babies on their back. If we female officials were to be able to provide them with grinding mills, they would really appreciate it and that will be a great asset for us for the upcoming elections” (Traoré Bintou Diarra, from USAID interview, 2004). Even elected officials feel there is no government funding to be attained and actively seek out NGO, private, and foreign funding.

NGOs are working with all of these types of associations to enact development and/or political change. Many NGOs in Mali consider women’s associations to be important actors in community initiatives. The NGOs I encountered in Mali work on issues of environmental sustainability, small credit and accounting education, democratic governance, small business development, agricultural support, education and literacy, health, and women’s rights. All had initiatives or departments to specifically target women’s associations for access to women on a local level. They see women’s associations as already established networks of women that give access to this otherwise marginalized and difficult to access community.

V.II Gender Roles Make a Difference

The discussion of gender (in)equity, women's rights, and gender roles in Mali is diverse and ever-evolving. Conversely, employment of the word "feminist/ism" is extremely rare. This word is used only among educated elites and often even among the small population that utilizes the word, it holds derogatory or inappropriate meaning for the Malian context. Although I interviewed many urban elites for this research, none but one utilized the term to describe themselves, their colleagues, their work, women's rights movements, or female political mobilization. Mme Bouare Bintou Founé Samake of WILDAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa) observed that, "il faut faire genre sans faire genre."⁶ Her comment indicates the stigma associated with gender equity and the importance of framing one's work and discourse to be palatable for the Malian context. Even educated Malian gender activists have felt their issues, concerns, cultural contexts, and societal perspectives excluded from the international Western dominated feminist discourse. The perspectives vary on the United Nations Fourth World Conference, Beijing 1995 but it is clear from Susanna Wing's article that Malian women did not feel integrated into the issues of the conference and some felt excluded.

Additionally, interpersonal and intimate relationships between men and women demonstrate gender in decision making. Public power negotiations occur in both public and private space. Many interviewees attested to the influence women have on men in private, which translates into influence on public decision-making. In some cases, women bring their concerns to the men and trust that the men will address these issues and solve the problem. In other cases, women tackle issues themselves, without going through male authoritative channels. Often men will delay decisions to have time to discuss the issue with their wives and then reconvene and make the decision. Other

⁶ "You must do gender without doing gender."

times, women bring concerns to men and ask them to represent them in addressing the problem. In cases where women wish to take public office or take on public authoritative roles in order to address problems they see, they ask for their husband, father, uncle, son or brother's approval when taking public positions.

During the 2007 Senegalese Presidential campaigns a Senegalese friend, educated president of a women's association and activist, asserted that a particular candidate could not be president because he is from a griot family—she explained that he would never be able to run the country, be a leader and have the skills and dependability required of a good president. She said it was in his blood. Her strongly held animist beliefs parallel those held by many in Mali—about castes, gender, age, and other identity signifiers.

V.III Social Exclusion

Who is left out of women's associations and why is this a concern for women's associations? What about women in urban areas who do not feel connected to a tight knit community of women? Young women are left out or are not interested or do not feel embraced. This could have to do with cultural priorities of age. Youth must be embraced to really create social change and empower all women. Training future female leaders cannot only happen within the home but in social and political organizations such as women's groups. In the following, I discuss two examples of youth and urban women who have not been embraced by existing women's associations and their reactions.

On a brief hiatus from my normal research, I went to Djenné with two white American friends to visit the famous mosque and see the culture and architecture of the

ancient city. We walked throughout the narrow streets of town. After I teased the children trying to extract money from us, as was my custom in situations of this kind, we met a young woman who started making conversation with us. She then invited us to her house to sit for a while. Only a few meters down, we entered the very small courtyard of the house she shared with a grandmother, a sister, her sisters children and her own child. As we talked I found out much about her life. One friend of mine sat and sketched a picture for her, another friend just took in the situation and played with her child occasionally. We shared stories of our lives and, rather than a research visit, I had planned to make this purely social. She told me she was a single mother, never married. She and I were close in age. I asked her about life in Djenné, her life in Djenné. She expressed a great desire to leave and go to a larger place with more opportunities. Her French was good and she had gone to school up through high school but would not advance high enough to go to university. When I told her about my research and why I was in Mali, she became interested. She told me about a youth association her friends had started. We left her house to go meet these friends and ask them about the association. As in typical teenage/young adult fashion they were sitting on wooden benches by a boutique⁷ but the guys and girls were all hanging out together—something not always seen among young Malians, especially outside the capital. We sat down and started just hanging out with them. The jokes were typical about relationships, names and ethnicities, fashion. When we finally got to discussion the youth association, the girls told m they had requested funds from the government for their association in writing. I was impressed by the organization of them. After socializing for a while

⁷ A boutique is similar to a convenience or corner store. In addition to small items, like snacks, it also carries ingredients for local dishes, such as spices, and household items.

longer, we left the group, she walked us back to our campement⁸ and on the way she explained to me that the other girls really had not intention of using the money they hoped to receive from the government to form a youth organization. They would split it three or four ways and that's it. I appreciated her honesty. She admitted it was dishonest of them (even though these were her friends) and expressed that she thought women's and youth organizations were good for the community and people. Such young and vibrant women with education and motivation felt without opportunity, not embraced by the older women's associations, civil society organizations and government. The irony of this type of corruption is that many women's associations do not have the educated members who have the capacity to write letters to government officials or offices asking for funds or seeking resources in other places. The skills of young women such as this would be very useful for women's orgs were they to embrace them. These young women did not have the motivation or desire to create social change. Today younger women have higher rates of school attendance and literacy than ever before. There are fewer middle-aged women—those who make up the majority of women in associations—who have the education and literacy skills to work with NGOs and governmental organizations.

My friend who is educated, works at a ministry, has children, a co-wife and husband, is Touareg and does not feel connected to a community of women in her neighborhood or otherwise. She has talked with friends about creating a women's association to give them support, financial and otherwise. It would be a multicultural, multiethnic community. She lives in a Peuhl-Touareg household in a Bambara city where she speaks French, Touareg, and Bambara. What a complicated situation where

⁸ A campement is a type of hotel or hostel that can range in quality and price.

these types of communities could thrive—not only in the type of homogeneous groups of women that they started in. There is so much potential and desire. These associations are being re-invented in the face of multiculturalism, etc. Although some Malians would argue that this is an historical precedent because of peaceful multiculturalism in Mali for centuries under each of the major empires' rule, etc.

Women's associations of all kinds are tools for self-empowerment, social cohesion, and solidarity. Women testify to the fact that they are positively impacted by their participation in women's associations. Many formerly illiterate and uneducated women in Kaara testified to their feelings of self-empowerment and accomplishment at learning how to read and write in Bambara during the literacy training of the women's association. Although they were unable to read the human subject's release forms themselves, they were proud to sign their names in Bambara. They expressed an intense respect for and appreciation of learning. Numerous women expressed interest in nothing more than going to school. Although many of them saw it as too late for themselves to pursue it further, the subject of education was top priority when it came to their children.

Local women's associations have few requirements for participation besides commitment, monetary contributions (based on reasonable financial ability of members), and participation. They do not require any formal education—something that is well known. Yet they often serve to educate members and to provide literacy and financial training—demonstrable skills that can be helpful to females ascending to public positions of power. Additionally they provide valuable leadership skills that are unquantifiable but prepare women to take on leadership roles that require public speaking and

Women's associations are segregated by financial ability. Networks often regroup associations of different financial status but within each association there are often negligible wealth differences in membership.

In order for women's associations to pursue substantive goals of development and political change, they must see the possibility of a different reality. The concept of development involves a vision of the future, of change, of reformation and advancement. Developing such a vision of the future is difficult to approach with the uneducated or limited schooled women who make up many women's associations across the country. This difficulty is exacerbated in the village setting because many village women have never left their village or been further than surrounding villages. Discussion of change, visions of the future, new opportunities with village women's association must be limited to a definite concepts and practical changes: school building repair, hiring additional health care professionals, building wells or irrigation systems. It is not that they do not envision a better life, but they do not see this better life as structurally different than the one they live. This could be caused by lack of access to information and resources and lack of critical thinking training. These visions are all within a realm of pre-given social and political structures. This is not only caused by limited access to higher (or any) education; women don't have access to conversations about or with women who enact change or envision society differently.

Nonetheless, we can see some transformative capacities of women's associations and see the visions of rural women, whether they are able to articulate it or not.

Peasants in Africa and, more generally, people living in rural areas had no such limited views on the significance of their citizenship during the first phase of the

democratic liberalization that occurred between 1989 and 1993: like other social groups, they wanted the quest for dignity to be a top priority on the national agenda... The strong belief in the necessity to change the way the state functions has always been a characteristic of African peasantry, as Ela has shown (1982, 1990) (Celestin Monga, 4).

I characterize this problem as more relevant to village women because village men often have access to discussions of other men who enact change. Women often see some of their barriers as concrete and tangible: illiteracy, poverty, and family responsibilities. Many women are aware of their limitations and assume that these limit their opportunities, while men with just as limited education are informed of opportunities. Men are encouraged by other men in conversations and on the radio to run for local offices even if they are not literate, have little money and many family responsibilities. Therefore, the real barrier for women is the lack of this discussion, lack of encouragement and lack of awareness that their gender is the factor that changes their choices. This proved to be a difficulty for me in my research because I had to reframe my discussion and figure out how to get at questions of societal change without using academic discourse. It also introduced important questions of how change occurs.

Obstacles for women's associations include lack of: financing, communication between rural and urban areas, formal education and literacy, communication between men and women in power within the same communities. Financing is often listed as the number one obstacle in completing projects and pursuing goals. Because poverty is a number one obstacle for women specifically and all Malians in general, financing women's association projects takes commitment, most quantifiably financial

commitment. All women's associations require regular member contributions. These contributions range from 50F CFA (roughly \$ 0.12 USD as of April 2008) for local village/neighborhood associations to 10,000F CFA (roughly \$24.11 USD as of April 2008) for associations of wealthy individuals. These huge financial gaps and segregation by means contribute to social separation and hinder the empowerment.

There is not enough outreach to village women (and, I would argue, to less educated village groups regardless of gender) through this complex information chain, demonstrating that it is not always effective in reaching these important sections of the female population. The bottleneck in this chain is right before the local women's associations. It is extremely difficult to work with village women. Rural areas are isolated economically and socially by the lack of communication and transportation networks.

There is a disconnect between professional class women's associations and working class women's associations. Professional female organizations (female jurists, doctor's, nurses, entrepreneurs) in urban areas do not have enough strong network ties with small local women's organizations. Some networks are trying to create ties between the two. Fostering such communication and cooperation would help create solidarity for a national women's movement and could help with women's political involvement and with pushing through development initiatives that are identified by Malian women as beneficial.

VI. Conclusion & Discussion of Possible Recommendations

VI.I Women's Groups Empower Women Personally and in the Community Context

It is clear from my research that women's groups provide needed services and infrastructure that government and male structures do not. Without many resources and limited financial ability, they are able to leverage funds and manpower from within their community. They have been successful in supplementing and enhancing literacy training and education, healthcare, economic growth, and access to credit within their communities. Nonetheless, social divisions between the female rural masses and their urban and educated counterparts limit their transformative capacities. They are additionally neglected in government and NGO initiatives because of these divisions.

VI.II Possible Governmental and Political Implications

Associations could be pipelines for women to enter politics. Conventional wisdom in international and Malian NGOs suggests that associations already are pipelines for women. This is an important issue to investigate particularly because donors and even the Malian government dedicate funds to encouraging associative life with the goal of encouraging women to enter electoral politics. While I argue that women's associations empower women and, therefore, can have democratic educational impacts, I do not have data to support a direct correlation between female political representation and associational leadership or activity.

There is still much to be understood about women's associations and their space in public life. There is still political progress to be made for Malian women as well. For example, the 2007 legislative elections were predicted to be an historic landmark for female participation in the election process. While female participation was high, the numbers of women elected were disappointingly low. 200 female candidates declared their participation at the beginning. This number narrowed quickly to around 28 women who made it to the second round. After the second round of the election, 15 women were elected. While many women declared their candidacy and expressed interest in running for public office, the small number of 15 female legislators out of 147 in total is disappointingly close to the numbers of the previous election. These results were in despite of an extensive campaign by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and Families (MPFEF, Ministère pour la promotion de la femme, de l'enfant et de la famille). It was a solidarity campaign geared toward women to get them to vote for female candidates—any and all female candidates. While this campaign in particular was contended in public debate, the outcome of this election demonstrates the strides still to be made in the political arena. The one female presidential candidate in 2007 and the numerous women running for the legislature heightened awareness of female political participation and spurred public debate. While there is increasing respect for and participation of women in large national elections, on a local level there is still much more male dominance in public authoritative roles.

Women have the potential to shape Malian politics not only as candidates for elected positions but also as an important voting constituency. Empowerment and solidarity of female voters has the potential to create extensive political change. Women

are a large voting block in urban and in rural areas. “In some villages, there are 400 voters and 300 of those are women,” confirmed one female council member (Traoré Bintou Diarra, from USAID interview, 2004). The apparent high rate of female voter participation indicates a potentially untapped resource. Women need not only participate in politics on a representative level to create change. They can also voice their opinions in one of the most basic forms of democratic participation: in the voting booth. NGO and governmental efforts have been made to educate female voters of their power and responsibility, and to convince them of the importance of voting in solidarity for female representatives. In order for female representatives to win elections, this education must extend further into the masses of urban and rural women.

VI.II Conditions on the Capacity of Associations to Empower Women

The nature of this paper is more exploratory, analytical and observatory than judgmental, thus I will shy away from making many recommendations. There are problems associated with recommendations I would make for many reasons. First, since I am not Malian, I would be imposing my own personal, cultural and societal perspective and priorities upon these recommendations. Nevertheless, I have some that I have chosen to highlight that I hope reflect my observations and some of the vision, hopes, and perspectives expressed by Malians I interviewed.

For women’s associations to achieve their goals of solidarity and grassroots empowerment, social divisions across rural/urban, class, and educational boundaries must be bridged. These serious disconnects are exacerbated by geographical separations and

the poor transportation and communication infrastructures in Mali. Rural women are isolated and have few resources or ways of connecting with educated women. Since village women often have less access to information through educational forums and media, it then may fall on the educated class of women to go back to the village and create serious and strong ties with rural women. Women such as midwives can be especially helpful in bridging these gaps. As can male bureaucrats that work in villages. While not all bureaucrats have been educated in gender equity or are motivated to do so, some may be open to bridging these gaps as well.

NGOization has negatively impacted the US and foreign funding: people and associations change their goals to fit into foreign priorities. While it is important to keep donors' priorities in mind in order to leverage funds, fraudulently developing "projects" is not the solution. That said, donors must make connections in the community and the foreign funders are in need of on the ground contact to gain a realistic perspective on situations there. They must have follow-through, follow-up, and pursue local knowledge to a greater extent than they are currently doing. Donors also need to understand the desires of local community members, the validity of them, and the lengths they will go to achieve them. Relations between donors and communities are a two way street but this exchange must be respected by donors and understood by community members.

Remembering an historical respect for and value placed on women and their roles examining contemporary role can be illuminating. An interesting and dynamic question to ponder for women and men is: what does it mean to reconnect with historical values and roles of each sex in the globalized community. Keeping onto or going back to some culturally historical roles might be good for women and men alike—for example: men

are responsible for the staples like grains: rice, millet, corn. With the emergence of labor migration and commoditization, women have taken on more of these responsibilities. This has disrupted the family unit while, some gain opportunities and others become trapped in a cycle of unemployment and poverty. Holding men accountable for fulfilling these duties, would free time for women and give young unemployed men purpose, activities, and jobs.

Women's associations are a growing social movement. For them to be effective in their efforts, they must connect with each other and receive outreach from the educated, connected, and privileged NGOs and associations. I believe that gender, democracy, Malian culture, and development are compatible in contemporary Mali. It may be possible to reconcile seemingly irreconcilable aspects of society to create uniquely Malian interpretations and solutions to the difficulties facing the nation and women's associations may be one of the paths to finding solutions to greater political and societal problems.

VII. Afterlife

There are many factors I was not able to address in this thesis that deserve further discovery. Discussion should be had over factors I only briefly discussed including: youth involvement and the assumption of Sikasso as a particularly vibrant region in terms of women's associations and development. Considering the higher numbers of female political representation in other regions this would be particularly interesting to discuss in terms of whether or not it is true and also whether this would impact female political representation. Exploration of women's associations within the northern regions of the country including in majority Touareg, Songhai and nomadic communities would also be particularly interesting to discuss. While I visited the north briefly on my first trip to Mali and was intrigued by this issue there, I was unable to pursue it for this project. There are specific ethnic, gender and lifestyle issues in the northern arid, desert north that pose particular problems not present in the southern agricultural region of Sikasso and capital of Bamako.

VIII. Appendix

VIII.I List of interviews

VIII.II Kaara “Sininesigi”

VIII.III Loi No° 04-038, 5 August 2004

VIII.IV Organization chart

38	Kadiolo	Nimbougou	1944		M		
39	Kolondieba	Bougoula	1962		M		
40	Kolondieba	Farako	1967		M		
41	Kolondieba	Kadiana	1970		M		
42	Kolondieba	Kadiana	1964		M		
43	Kolondieba	Kadiana	1969		M		
44	Kolondieba	Kebila			M		
45	Kolondieba	Kebila	1961		M		
46	Kolondieba	Kebila	1971		M		
47	Kolondieba	Kolondieba	1958		P		Secondaire BT2
48	Kolondieba	Kolondieba	1977	C	P		Secondaire 9e A Fondamenta le
49	Kolondieba	Kolondieba	1963	M	P		
50	Kolondieba	Kolondieba	1965		P		
51	Kolondieba	Mena	1953		P		
52	Kolondieba	Nangalasso	1963		M		
53	Kolondieba	Tiongui	1972		M		
54	Kolondieba	Tiongui	1968		M		
55	Kolondieba	Tiongui	1978		M		
56	Koutiala	Fagui	1961	M	M		1er Cycle Fondamenta le 1er Cycle Fondamenta le
57	Koutiala	Fakolo Goudie	1966	M	M		
58	Koutiala	Sougouna	1953	M	M	I	
59	Koutiala	Goudie Sougouna	1964	M	M		6e A Fondamenta le 1er Cycle Fondamenta le
60	Koutiala	Kafo Faboli	1968	M	M		1er Cycle Fondamenta le
61	Koutiala	Kafo Faboli	1976		M		
62	Koutiala	Koningue	1976	C	P		Secondaire
63	Koutiala	Konsequela	1981	M	P		DEF 6e A Fondamenta le
64	Koutiala	Konsequela	1957	M	M		1er Cycle Fondamenta le
65	Koutiala	Kouniana	1953	M	M		
66	Koutiala	Koutiala	1947	M	P		Secondaire
67	Koutiala	Koutiala	1947	V	P		Secondaire
68	Koutiala	Koutiala	1959		M	I	
69	Koutiala	Koutiala	1949	V	P		Secondaire
70	Koutiala	Koutiala	1952	M	P		Secondaire 6e A
71	Koutiala	Koutiala	1956	M	P		Fondamenta

						le
72	Koutiala	Koutiala	1952	M	P	Secondaire
73	Koutiala	Koutiala	1958	M	P	Secondaire 9e A
74	Koutiala	Koutiala	1959	V	M	Fondamenta le 8e A
75	Koutiala	M'Pessoba	1972	M	M	Fondamenta le
76	Koutiala	M'Pessoba	1948	M	P	Secondaire 1er Cycle
77	Koutiala	Nafanga	1965	M	M	Fondamenta I
78	Koutiala	N'Golonianasso	1960	M	M	Fondamenta le 7e A
79	Koutiala	N'Tossoni	1969	M	M	Fondamenta le 6e A
80	Koutiala	N'Tossoni	1967	M	M	Fondamenta le
81	Koutiala	Songoua	1964	M	M	Fondamenta le
82	Koutiala	Sorobasso	1982	M	M	Fondamenta le
83	Koutiala	Yognogo	1972	M	P	Secondaire 1er Cycle
84	Koutiala	Zanfigue	1955	M	M	Fondamenta I
85	Koutiala	Zangasso	1969	M	M	Fondamenta I
86	Koutiala	Zangasso	1968	M	P	Secondaire 9e A
87	Koutiala	Zebala	1969	M	M	Fondamenta le
88	Sikasso	Danderesso	1965	V	P	Secondaire
89	Sikasso	Danderesso	1968	M	P	Secondaire
90	Sikasso	Dembela	1958		P	
91	Sikasso	Diomatene	1954		M	
92	Sikasso	Doumanaba	1971		P	8e A Fondamenta le 6e A
93	Sikasso	Fama	1968	M	M	Fondamenta le
94	Sikasso	Farakala	1965	M	M	B
95	Sikasso	Farakala	1969	M	P	Fondamenta le 9e A
96	Sikasso	Finkolo	1982	M	M	Fondamenta le
97	Sikasso	Kabarasso	1965	M	M	
98	Sikasso	Kabarasso	1960	M	P	
99	Sikasso	Kapolondougou	1969	C	P	6e A

							Fondamenta le 6e A Fondamenta le 1er Cycle Fondamenta le
100	Sikasso	Kapolondougou	1977	M	M		
101	Sikasso	Kignan	1947	V	M		
102	Sikasso	Kignan	1947	V	P	I	
							2e A Fondamenta le 5e A Fondamenta le
103	Sikasso	Klela	1953	M	M		
104	Sikasso	Kolokoba	1959	M	M		
105	Sikasso	Kolokoba	1960	V	M		
							1er Cycle Fondamenta le
106	Sikasso	Koumankou	1965	M	M		
107	Sikasso	Kourouma	1964		M		
108	Sikasso	Lobougoula	1964	M	P		Secondaire
109	Sikasso	Lobougoula	1956	M	M	I	
110	Sikasso	Lobougoula	1946	V	M	I	
							Fondamenta le
111	Sikasso	Miniko	1963	M	M		
112	Sikasso	Miria	1955		P		
113	Sikasso	Niena	1961	M	M		B
114	Sikasso	Niena	1951	M	P		Secondaire Fondamenta le
115	Sikasso	Niena	1965	M	M		6e A Fondamenta le
116	Sikasso	Nongo-Souala	1970	M	M		6e A Fondamenta le
117	Sikasso	Pimperna	1976	M	M		6e A Fondamenta le
118	Sikasso	Sanzana	1959	V	M		Fondamenta le
119	Sikasso	Sanzana	1973	M	M		Fondamenta le
120	Sikasso	Sikasso	1964	C	P		Secondaire 9e Fondamenta le
121	Sikasso	Sikasso	1962	M	M		
122	Sikasso	Sikasso	1962	M	P		Secondaire
123	Sikasso	Sikasso	1962	M	P		DEF
124	Sikasso	Sikasso	1951	M	P		Secondaire 8e A Fondamenta le
125	Sikasso	Sikasso	1960	M	M		
126	Sikasso	Sikasso	1952	M	P		Secondaire 8e A
127	Sikasso	Zanferebougou	1972	M	M		Fondamenta

									le
									7e A
									Fondamenta
									le
128	Sikasso	Zanferebougou	1967	M		M			
129	Sikasso	Tella	1961			M			
130	Yanfolila	Baya	1962			M			
131	Yanfolila	Baya	1963			M			
132	Yanfolila	Baya	1967			M			
133	Yanfolila	Bolo Fouta	1952			M			
134	Yanfolila	Bolo Fouta	1952			M			
		Djiguiya de							
135	Yanfolila	Koloni	1972			M			
136	Yanfolila	Grouandiaka	1957			M			
137	Yanfolila	Sankarani	1962			M			
		Samou de							
138	Yanfolila	Siekorole	1951			M			
		Wassoulou							8e A
139	Yanfolila	Balle	1958	M		P			Fondamenta
									le
		Wassoulou							8e A
140	Yanfolila	Balle	1955	M		M			Fondamenta
									le
		Wassoulou							7e A
141	Yanfolila	Balle	1958	M		M			Fondamenta
									le
142	Yorosso	Karangana	1975	M		P			Secondaire
143	Yorosso	Koumbia	1979	M		M			
144	Yorosso	Koury	1942	M		P			Fondamenta
									le
145	Yorosso	Mahou	1964	V		M			6e A
									Fondamenta
146	Yorosso	Mahou	1959	M		M			le
									8e A
147	Yorosso	Yorosso	1955	M		M			Fondamenta
									le
									23
TOTALS			1962	11 V		45 P		11	2 B
				5 C		100 M			14 F
						2 sans			
						reponse			
				69 M					2 DEF
				62 sans					
				reponse					

VIII.VI Bamako female councilors spreadsheet

Bamako	Cercle	Commune	An de naissance	Married/ Celebata ire/Veuv e	Menagere ou Profession	Ecole
1	Bamako	I	1970	M	P	Secondaire
2	Bamako	I	1950	M	P	Maitrise
3	Bamako	I	1960	M	P	MSC
4	Bamako	I	1958	M	P	Secondaire
5	Bamako	I	1958	M		
6	Bamako	I	1958	M	P	Maitrise
7	Bamako	I	1947	M	P	DEF
8	Bamako	I	1968	M	P	DEF
9	Bamako	II	1966	M	P	Superieur
10	Bamako	II	1960	M	P	DUTS
11	Bamako	II	1949	V	P	Superieur
12	Bamako	II	1967	M	P	DEF
13	Bamako	II	1963	M	P	BAC+2
14	Bamako	II	1946	M	P	MSC/Secondaire
15	Bamako	III	1952	M	P	BT
16	Bamako	III	1949	V	P	Secondaire
17	Bamako	III	1954	M	P	BAC+4
18	Bamako	III	1950	M	P	Secondaire
19	Bamako	III	1952		P	BT
20	Bamako	III	1952	V	P	Superieur
21	Bamako	III	1955	V	P	Secondaire
22	Bamako	III	1946	M	P	DEF
23	Bamako	III	1970	M	P	Superieur
24	Bamako	IV	1951	M	P	BAC+4
25	Bamako	IV	1951	M	P	Secondaire
26	Bamako	IV	1953	M	P	Secondaire
27	Bamako	IV	1956	M	P	Secondaire
28	Bamako	IV	1949	M	P	Secondaire
29	Bamako	IV	1954	M	P	Secondaire
30	Bamako	IV	1972	M	S/E	Secondaire
31	Bamako	IV	1959	M	P	Secondaire
32	Bamako	IV	1952	M	P	Secondaire Brevet Prof des
33	Bamako	IV	1953	M	P	Banques
34	Bamako	IV	1959	M	P	BT 9e annee
35	Bamako	IV	1958	M	P	fondamentale
36	Bamako	V	1952	M	P	Maitrise
37	Bamako	V		M	P	Superieur
38	Bamako	V	1963	M	P	Maitrise 9e annee
39	Bamako	V	1961	M	M	fondamentale
40	Bamako	V	1956	M	P	BT/Secondaire
41	Bamako	V	1951	M	M	Secondaire

42	Bamako	V	1961	M	M	Superieur
43	Bamako	V	1964	M	P	Docteur en Pharmacie
44	Bamako	V	1954	M	P	Secondaire
45	Bamako	V	1939	M	P	DEF
46	Bamako	VI	1949	M	P	ENSEC
47	Bamako	VI	1953	M	P	11e annee
48	Bamako	VI	1960	M	P	CAP Diplome de l'Ecole Nationale des Telecommunicatio ns
49	Bamako	VI	1947	M	P	Maitrise du second cycle
50	Bamako	VI	1947	M	P	
51	Bamako	VI	1955	M	P	
52	Bamako	VI	1954	M	P	Fondamentale Secondaire/ENSE C
53	Bamako	VI	1950	M	P	
54	Bamako	VI	1958	M	P	Secondaire
TOTALS			1955	4 V	3 M	
				49 M	49 P	
				1 sans reponse		
					1 sans reponse	
					1 sans emploi	

VIII.VII Kaara Association List of Members

- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ténéko Koné | 2. Awa Sanogo | 3. Awa Konate |
| 4. Sitan Sangaré | 5. Minita Sangaré | 6. Alima Doumbia |
| 7. Bintou Sangaré | 8. Sitan Sangaré | 9. Rokia Sanogo |
| 10. Setou Doumbia | 11. Baya Mariko | 12. Korotoumou Fane |
| 13. Mayata Sangaré | 14. Minata Sangaré | 15. Mariam Sangaré |
| 16. Kadia Fane | 17. Korotoumou Sangaré | 18. Mama Ballo |
| 19. Diassira Sangaré | 20. Fanta Mariko | 21. Minata B. Sangaré |
| 22. Korotoumou Sangaré | 23. Maimouna Sangaré | 24. Macoura Sangaré |
| 25. Kadiatou Sangaré | 26. Fatoumata Doumbia | 27. Rokia Sangaré |
| 28. Alimata Sangaré | 29. Minata Diakite | 30. Chata Diakite |
| 31. Sali Sangaré | 32. Rokia Sangaré | 33. Adiaratou Doumbia |
| 34. Djenebou Doumbia | 35. Maimouna Diakite | 36. Mamou Sangaré |
| 37. Bourama Diatou | 38. Adama Saly Sangaré | 39. Diata Doumbia |
| 40. Djeneba Doumbia | 41. Bintou Konate | 42. Chata Sangaré |
| 43. Dadiatou Koné | 44. Saly Sangaré | 45. Fanta Diakite |
| 46. Sanata Sangaré | 47. Kadiatou Sangaré | 48. Mariamou Sangaré |
| 49. Fatoumata Diakite | 50. Solo Saly Sangaré | 51. Setou Diakite |
| 52. Awa Togola | 53. Fanta Diakite | 54. Chata Doumbia |
| 55. Sendia Sangaré | 56. Chata Sangaré | 57. Sitan Doumbia |
| 58. Adiaratou Doumbia | 59. Naminata Sangaré | 60. Mariam Diakite |
| 61. Mariam Sangaré | 62. Kognouma Sangaré | 63. Rokia Sangaré |
| 64. Fatouma Sanogo | 65. Mariam Sangaré | 66. Mamou Sangaré |
| 67. Naminatou Doumbia | 68. Adiara Konéte | 69. Sitan Sangaré |
| 70. Maimouna Sangaré | 71. Adiara Konate | 72. Minata Sangaré |
| 73. Rokia Koné | 74. Sounkoura Sangaré | 75. Rokia Doumbia |
| 76. Sitan Doumbia | 77. Assitan Mariko | 78. Fatoumata Koné |
| 79. Fanta Sangaré | 80. Sanata Doumnia | 81. Kadiatou Togola |
| 82. Korotoumou Sangaré | 83. Alima Sangaré | 84. Mamine Doumbia |
| 85. Fakouma Fane | 86. Korotoumou Sangaré | 87. Maman Doumbia |
| 88. Maimouna Sangaré | 89. Chata Djire | 90. Minata Ballo |
| 91. Mariamou Coulibaly | 92. Awa Koné | 93. Mariamou Doumbia |
| 94. Saly Fane | 95. Saran Doumbia | 96. Saly Koné |
| 97. Lalla Barry | 98. Awa Diallo | 99. Awa Barry |
| 100. Penda Boley | 101. Awa Traore | 102. Sabi Dembele |
| 103. Stou Coulibaly | 104. Adiara Diallo | 105. Alousatou Barry |
| 106. Aissa Diallo | 107. Adama Sangaré | 108. Salimata Fane |
| 109. Djeneba Ballo | 110. Tene Dembele | |

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