

Revisiting “Mandingization” in Coastal Gambia and Casamance (Senegal): Four Approaches to Ethnic Change

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Abstract: “Mandingization,” the gradual process of cultural change whereby Jola peoples of the Casamance region of southern Senegal are becoming more like their Mandinka neighbors, is analyzed in this article as comprising four distinguishable processes: ethnogenesis, ethnocultural drift, ethnic osmosis, and ethnic strategizing. By distinguishing among these four processes and analyzing their interaction, we can understand the dynamics of Mandingization more clearly and also derive insights for understanding ethnic change generally. The current moment of ethnic change in The Gambia includes a resurgence in Karon Jola ethnic identity, but we need to view this process as contingent, not yet accomplished, and a challenge to the pattern of Mandinka dominance in a time of broader social change.

Résumé: La “mandingisation” est le processus graduel de changement culturel par lequel le peuple Jola de la région du Casamance dans le sud du Sénégal devient de plus en plus similaire à ses voisins les Mandinka. Ce processus est analysé dans cet article dans l'ensemble de ses quatre formes: ethnogénèse, courant ethnoculturel, osmose ethnique, et élaboration de stratégies ethniques. En distinguant ces quatre processus et en analysant leur interaction, on peut mieux comprendre les dynamiques de la “mandingisation” et aussi en tirer des conclusions applicables au changement ethnique en général. L'évolution ethnique présente en Gambie inclut une résurgence de l'identité ethnique Karon Jola, mais il est nécessaire de considérer ce processus comme une contingence pas encore aboutie, ainsi qu'un obstacle à la tendance dominante de l'ethnie Mandinka dans un contexte plus large de changement social.

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One of the most successful mid-level theories of ethnicity in Africa has been the “Mandingization” model of ethnic change among the Jola peoples of the lower Casamance region of Senegal and adjacent parts of The Gambia.¹ Briefly put, Mandingization entails changes in agricultural practices, local political systems, gender relations, and kinship systems that are seen by Jolas as well as by scholars who study this region as flowing from the process of conversion to Islam and progressive adoption of “Mandinka ways of living.” While the French geographer Paul Pélissier (1966) is given credit for initially noting this trend, Olga Linares provided the definitive work on this subject in her nuanced and carefully reasoned work, *Power, Prayer, and Production* (1992).

Through this reconsideration of Mandingization as a model of regional shifts in patterns of ethnicity, I propose a more general analysis of processes of ethnic change that attempts some synthesis of the existing paradigms. By holding in focus at once the actor orientation of situationalist analysis, the historical dynamism of the constructivist approach, and the primordialists’ insistence that cultural patterns are meaningful and powerful because of their ability to endure, I show that a complete analysis must integrate these perspectives while still maintaining conceptual clarity about the type of dynamic under consideration at the moment. Broadly speaking, I propose, first, that Mandingization as a sociohistorical process is best viewed as part of the larger processes of ethnogenesis and ethnocultural drift at work in this region over the past two hundred years, as shown by major historical studies of the region published since Linares’s work. Second, I present data on marriage and Mandingization from a Gambian community that generally reaffirm and extend Linares’s analysis by documenting the patterns of shifting ethnic identity that can accompany affiliation as processes of ethnic osmosis. In a third section, I discuss a cultural revivalist and ethnopolitical organization that points to the possibilities and problems of an emerging process of ethnic strategizing that might be called “re-Jolafication.”

Models of Ethnicity: Perspectives on Change

In a sweeping review of approaches to understanding ethnicity in Africa, Thomas Spear (2003) suggests that polarized debates about the nature of ethnicity are giving way to an approach that recognizes both the potential and the limitation of three distinct traditions of scholarship on ethnicity: instrumentalist, constructivist, and primordialist.² Instrumentalist analyses, as pioneered by Manchester School anthropologists, originated in observations of migrant workers who deployed ethnic markers in performances that were highly circumstantial and aimed at new urban political configurations, not positions derived from cultural complexes of rural origin (see Epstein 1958; Mitchell 1956). While successfully challenging the earlier fixed ideas about “tribalism,” these models had relatively little to say about the specific content of ethnic models, in particular the affective elements

that could become powerful political motivators. If ethnic identities could be taken off and put on so easily, reconfigured on a daily, hourly, even moment-to-moment basis, what made any particular characteristic salient?

A more thoroughgoing critique of ethnicity was launched by Ranger (1983), Fardon (1987), and Vail (1989), who argued that often the very categories under debate—and most certainly their reification—were the creation of the colonial encounter. In particular, these constructivists emphasized the flexibility of precolonial social networks and the ways that colonial administrators, missionaries, chiefs and elders, and educated African elites created increasingly fixed ethnic identities through systematic miscommunication, misconstrual, and manipulation. Lentz (2000) continues this argument by documenting how the famously decentralized peoples of northern Ghana came to acquire relatively fixed ethnic identities that could be recorded on colonial-era maps.

Traditional primordialism addresses the deeply affective, motivating power of ethnicity by marking its roots in metaphors of shared kinship, thus naturalizing the group. While this analysis may hold for some groups, Lonsdale (1992) has taken up this issue of the motivating force of ethnic categories under the rubric of "moral ethnicity"; his view is that, as disruptive as colonialism may have been, it did not (always) create social configurations with no connection to the past or continuity in terms of shared community standards. Rather, these standards of behavior that came to be associated with ethnicized "ourselves-ing" may have drawn on practices that predated the creation of the ethnic designation. Lonsdale juxtaposes this sense of "moral ethnicity" with "political tribalism" to capture the essence of the manipulation of colonial-era ethnic boundaries for calculated individual and group gain (2004:76). Peel (1989, 2000) also makes this type of argument, asserting that while "the Yoruba" as a single ethnic category is clearly a colonial-era artifact, the content and extent of the applicability of the term has been guided by longstanding, shared social and cultural patterns, was informed by the contours of precolonial states, and has been constructed more by Yoruba actors than European administrators, missionaries, or scholars.

As a complement to the instrumentalist, constructivist, and moral ethnicity approaches to the topic of ethnicity, a significant parallel line of argument addresses the nature of ethnic situations rather than the nature of ethnic identity. Essential to all of these approaches is the observation that ethnicity as a phenomenon is fundamentally an attribute of pluralistic situations, especially "the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy" (Comaroff 1987:307). As the subtitle of Barth's 1969 landmark volume says, we are considering "the social organization of cultural differences."

More recently, however, Eriksen (1998) has refocused our interest on the fact that in order for multiple ethnic communities to coexist, there must be a significant degree to which their "cultures" overlap. Put more

precisely, in a given social universe with an uneven distribution of behavior, knowledge, attitudes, and social organization, certain arenas are the exclusive domain of one or another ethnic group and mark group boundaries, but significant strata of “common denominators” must remain. It is a common assertion that ethnic groups are not simply culture-bearing units, yet we often fall into the fallacy that the sum of the descriptions of the various ethnic groups present in a given social context is sufficient to describe the relevant culture of that place. Clearly, this cannot be the case. If it were, the members of these multiple ethnic groups would have no basis for communication, shared social and political life, intermarriage, or any form of cooperation.

This understanding that *shared* cultural patterns, not just the distinctive, exclusivist elements, are essential to the operation of multiethnic situations is, in fact, one of the keys to some of the unresolved conundrums of both the instrumentalist and constructivist positions. That is, how do individuals, especially when they are relatively immobile, part of a dense social network, and associated with the behaviors and beliefs of one ethnic group, conform so convincingly to an alternative pattern that their asserted (self outward) and attributed (community inward) ethnic identity changes? Part of the answer lies in the fact that these individuals do not remake themselves, their habits, or their social capacities completely; rather, they acquire (or emphasize) those elements that are necessary to signal the alternative ethnic identity. The specific qualities of the “boundary marking” conventions of a given system of ethnic identity are therefore relevant to an understanding of the extent and limitations of such flexibility.

Identifying the importance of “common denominators” allows me to distinguish some key concepts for my specific argument about the meaning of “Mandingization” in coastal Senegambia. Mandingization is a concept indexing changes in a system of ethnicity, but we need to be able to distinguish several different processes embraced by the term. The instrumentalist style of analysis has offered the most complete explanation for the process just outlined, whereby an individual, family, or community reassigns itself from one ethnic category to another without fundamentally transforming the system at hand. Following Barth (1969:21), I use the term “ethnic osmosis” for this maneuver.

Ethnogenesis, the creation of an ethnic category, is the constructivist’s logical counterpart to the idea of “ethnic osmosis.” Ethnogenesis can include both the “genesis” proper of an ethnic category and also the historical processes of “regeneration,” whereby major definitions of key boundary markers are renegotiated. The creation, definition, and redefinition of ethnic categories, in other words, constitute an on-going process. On the one hand, as with all cultural phenomena, ethnicity is never truly a given but must be continually recreated. On the other hand, at various points enough consensus exists about the structure of ethnic categories, along with minimal, constrained, or ineffective counterdiscourse to challenge the

status quo, such that a relatively stable notion of ethnic identities can be identified. Conversely, we can also identify periods of active ethnogenesis and periods of relative stability in ethnic group categories.

The corollary of this argument is that ethnogenesis is never an instantaneous event. By definition there is some period of time during which an ethnic category is “proposed,” progressively claimed by individuals, and eventually recognized more broadly. Likewise, ethno(re)genesis, the significant redefinition of an ethnic category and its boundaries, does not occur instantaneously but proceeds over a period of time during which it is tested and contested, and either succumbs to the status quo or becomes generally recognized.

While I want to broaden the sense of ethnogenesis to include regeneration on the structural level, a shift of attention to the role of motivated actors takes us to the realm of ethnic strategizing. At some level, an ethnic term must be enunciated for the first time, whether the definitional change or innovation has advocates who are social activists or is associated with a change in policy led by politicians and bureaucrats. At stake here are instances of a discursive, contested definition and redefinition of ethnic categories, and such “ethnic strategizing” is the activity of “ethnic entrepreneurs.”

While I insist on the relevance of identifying as much as possible the individuals involved in a particular moment of ethnic strategizing—colonial administrators, missionaries, scholars, chiefs, politicians, artists, and media personalities—we must also recognize that adoption of a novel term or the acceptance of redefined elements must engage the broader population. That is, it must be persuasive in the broader context of ethno(re)genesis. Of course, in some situations the persuasiveness of the categories may be carried by the weight of the bureaucratic or police force standing behind the agent. Persuasion by force is less necessary if the category proposed is seen at some level to “fit” lived and observed reality.

While ethnic osmosis and ethno(re)genesis are concepts regularly deployed in this type of argument, the consideration of “common denominators” calls for one more analytic frame: ethnocultural drift. Here we consider that not all cultural change has immediate ramifications for the definition of ethnic categories. To illustrate, let me pose a hypothetical situation. At some historical point, the first television receivers arrive in a multiethnic community. Their distribution is not random—particular individuals acquire television sets in ways that can be explained and are consequential—but let us suppose that at least initially their distribution is not skewed in terms of the existing patterns of ethnicity. Under these conditions, then, television viewing marks a major change in what people do with their time, the people with whom they gather, the kinds of information they have, and so on, but it does not mark a significant change in the system of ethnic categories relevant in this community. It may itself become, perhaps, a new “common denominator” (we are the television watchers) or the

source of new “common denominators” (we all share certain political ideas, thanks to points of view expressed on and disseminated by television). At some point, however, this new technology may be incorporated as an ethnic marker itself. For example: “People A do not have televisions because they are poor, and they are poor because they are lazy; we, people B, are better and our televisions are the proof.” Or conversely: “Those corrupt B’s watch television; we eschew television-watching because our teachers say it is not proper.” The marker “no televisions” may be stigmatized or may be a point of positive value; the marker is to a degree arbitrary though by no means inconsequential.

Ethnocultural drift, then, is a way of highlighting the impact of “flows”—particularly of objects, images, ideas—on systems of ethnicity (see Appadurai 1991). Or, to take a neo-Boasian view of the subject, we are attending to the impact of cultural diffusion on cultural boundaries (see Bashkow 2004). The incorporation of these novel elements in existing structures of ethnic distinctions in some ways gradates into ethno(re)genesis, but it differs in one key dimension. To the extent that the redefinition is based largely on a reassignment of the markers already at hand, or a new definition of shared “common denominators” as more narrowly ethnic markers, the effort will become more of a conscious, directed effort. Conversely, as novelties are incorporated into frameworks of local meanings in more organic ways, ethnocultural drift may go generally unremarked by the participants and be noticeable mostly to the outside observer. That is, ethnocultural drifts are “ethno-” because, as initially unmarked, they may become ethnically marked without a significant, directed, motivated effort due to the ways in which novel elements may become regularly integrated into already existing local patterns.

Let us turn, then, to an application of this analytic vocabulary to the case of the Gambian–Casamance borderlands.

Mandingization Defined: A Model of Ethnocultural Drift

The Mandingization hypothesis developed by Linares takes as a starting point the religious conversion of Jolas of the northern Casamance region from a system of autochthonous shrines to Islam.³ While her presentation pays close attention to variations in the practice and interpretation of Islam across this region and presents a critique of approaches that draw reductive connections between tenets of belief and practical economic advantage, she demonstrates that among Jola peoples, conversion to Islam involves changes in a broad spectrum of practices and beliefs that are not specifically religious.

Linares’s work proceeds by examining three Jola communities. In one located on the south bank of the Casamance River near its mouth, traditional religious practices are strong, the various tasks of rice cultivation are distributed between women and men, and local politics are mediated through the shrine system in which both women and men have access to

leadership roles. As she guides us through two other communities progressively north and east of this starting point, the practice of Islam becomes more rigorous and orthodox; men withdraw from rice cultivation and invest their energies in millet, sorghum, and peanuts; they retire from cultivation entirely at progressively earlier ages; and the practice of local politics is reshaped along Mandinka models of an *alkalo*, a sort of village headman for life, who consults with the elder men of wards founded by early settlers and acting on behalf of their immigrant clients. The constant among these three communities is that people identify as Jolas and speak closely related, if distinct, Jola languages.

While Linares in no way implies that this process follows an inevitable script or that Mandingization necessarily will encroach into the Jola heartland, these three communities are presented as "stages" or "variations" within a single "process" of the type I have identified as ethnocultural drift—by which one group borrows everyday practices from another. Linares takes as an important starting point the premise that "Mandingized" Jolas "accept that many of their attitudes and practical behaviors reflect *bu arabu bati kumandingaku* ('the path, the way of the Manding')" (1992:147–48). She does not merely take her informants' word for the origin of these practices, but through close analysis determines that while there is a considerable degree of cultural diffusion in play here, there are also instances of Jolas' "projecting many of their own cultural constructs on their Manding neighbors," thus highlighting various practices as approximating the values of their locally relevant Others (1992:204).

Both the strength and the weakness of Linares's work is that she takes as her topic change *within* Jola communities. That is, she wants to interrogate why communities change fundamental aspects of their religious practice (and she carefully documents that for Jolas themselves, Islam is first and foremost practice and only secondarily ideology) and how these changes ramify through relations of production, village politics, and gender-kinship systems. What is largely absent from her work is a comparable sensitivity to the dynamism of the category of "Mandinka." That is, the analysis of "Mandingization" relies on a rather static model of Mandinka identity and practice with which Jola communities interact.

My critique of Linares's work is not so much substantive as conceptual; far from questioning her ethnographic work, I consider her text a model of clarity and methodological rigor. Undoubtedly, cultural change among the northeasternmost Jolas has been driven by their adoption of Islam and interaction with Muslim, Mandinka-speaking neighbors. This change has involved alterations in practice while categories of identity have remained constant: ethnocultural drift. Rather, I want to interrogate the basic concept of "Mandingization," a term that implies a directional process—"Jola become more like Mandinka." But to posit such a shift, which I am calling ethno(re)genesis, we must first consider the stability of these two concepts and the evolution of the distinction between them. To provide a historical

context for “Mandingization,” therefore, I first examine the complex social systems of this region in the period from European contact to formal colonialism (roughly 1500–1850), and then turn to the processes of ethnogenesis that started around 1850 and continue to the current day.

Historicizing Mandingization: Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnogenesis

The terrain of coastal Senegambia reflects an intense and spatially compressed ecological transition. North of the Gambia River, open Sahelian savannahs dominate. On the south bank, forests begin to appear and become progressively denser within a few hundred kilometers. In the midst of this transition, the vast mangrove estuary generated at the mouth of the Casamance River provides additional ecological diversity.

In this zone, a number of small states developed over the first half of the previous millennium to control the flow of forest goods, mainly kola nut and malaguetta pepper, into the trans-Saharan trade in exchange for iron, cotton textiles, cattle, and horses. Food surpluses from the region, particularly rice, as well as dried fish and mollusks and sea salt collected by evaporation, also entered these trade networks, although their contribution to this regional economy was minor compared to the forest and Saharan goods passing through. The records of the early European navigators indicate that these trade networks were controlled by very small states that were focused on taxing activity at market centers and controlling key waterways and portage routes.⁴

While similar in the structure of their economic interests, these states were differentiated by the language of their elite political class and their technologies of warfare and transportation. The Banyun states of the lower Casamance region (most prominently the Casa kingdom) specialized in transportation of goods and raiding parties by smaller canoes and short portages to navigate the complex mangrove swamps of the region. Mande states of the middle Casamance and Gambia River basin (such as Niumi) deployed the decisive military technology of the mounted warrior suited to the drier, more open savannahs. Complex historical ties among these small Mande states that were renewed through kinship bonds among the elites sustained trade with the central Mande areas of contemporary Mali.

Identifying these states by the language and strategies of the ruling elite, however, is very misleading. Recent work by the historians Donald Wright, George Brooks, and Peter Mark all indicate that polities throughout this region incorporated highly diverse populations. Localized groups speaking Bak languages grew rice on the floodplains from the Gambia River to the Cacheu River. (To foreshadow my argument, I refrain from using the common term “proto-Jola” for these groups because it contains a teleological fallacy and obscures the fact that their descendants may be found among contemporary Mandinkas and Jolas.) Jakhanke—Mand-speaking Muslims—both conducted long-distance trade and maintained

agricultural plantations worked by their students. Luso-african *lançados*—some Roman Catholics, some New Christians who revived their Jewish practices—built ties with local producers and merchants to assure supplies to European ships plying the triangular trade. While these various segments of the population facilitated trade and interaction with visitors and neighbors, the chronic instability and insecurity of the slave trade during these centuries tended to reinforce an individual’s identity as a subject and resident of a particular state rather than connections to more distant persons with whom one may have shared language, religion, economic interests, and/or origins but interacted only sporadically.

While all of these polities became more diverse because of the rise of the slave trade, not all adapted to this new challenge with equal success. The Mande states along the Gambia River were able to maintain themselves by redirecting their attention toward the previously marginal Atlantic seaboard, adding humans to their cargo and raiding nearby Bak-speaking peoples for additional captives. The Banyun states of the lower Casamance, however, gradually faded in importance over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The highly localized defense systems of the Bak-speaking cultivators, combined with their effective mechanisms for ransoming captive kin through the network of religious shrines, proved more effective in dealing with the threats of the Atlantic slave trade than the structures of the Banyun states did.

The transition in the early nineteenth century from the slave trade era to formal colonialism set the stage for the unfolding process of Mandinka ethnogenesis. While this process undoubtedly incorporated various Bak-speaking rice growers and some remnant *lançados* into the emerging category of Mandinka, the driving force of the early stage of Mandinka ethnogenesis was the antipathy between reformist Muslim clerics known generically as “the Marabouts” and the Soninke Mande kings who still ruled the states along the river, albeit with a reduced economic base after the demise of the slave trade.⁵ Indeed, throughout the second half the nineteenth century, the Soninke–Marabout wars ravaged the entire region, here a Marabout converting both kings and populace of an entire region to Islam on pain of death, there a Soninke king mounting a successful defense. Marabout warriors tended toward military excess, turning their annual military campaigns into exercises in the extraction of tribute and captives for their plantations—often targeting believers and nonbelievers alike—rather than exercises in preaching or effective conversion.⁶

Just at the point when the Marabouts converted the last holdout Soninke Mande kings of the lower Gambia in the final years of the nineteenth century, the British colonial administration colluded with French forces in neighboring Senegal to round up the last Marabout leaders and send them into exile. Not particularly endeared to the general population because of their extractive habits, the defeated Marabouts are today vaguely revered as heroes of anticolonial struggle without having founded the pow-

erful social organizations which subsequently grew in neighboring Senegal. In The Gambia, the various political, economic, and social trends of the colonial era gradually consolidated a model of Mandinka ethnicity as the rural body of uniformly Muslim peanut and rice producers who were the backbone of the colonial economy. The final proof of the crystallization of a widely recognized, singular Mandinka people came in the 1962 preindependence elections—the first to enfranchise the rural, that is Protectorate, population—when D. K. Jawara, soon to be prime minister and later president, was accused by his opponents in the Banjul elite (rightly or probably wrongly) of “tribalism,” of being a Mandinka politician serving Mandinka interests.

Many scholars assume that the history of Mande states led unproblematically to the contemporary Mandinka ethnic group.⁷ Indeed, the term “Mandinka” appears regularly in the accounts left by explorers and slave traders, so it has significant historical depth. Still, this reading of the prior social complexity and the wars that pitted Mande Marabouts against Soninke Mande kings highlights the relative historical novelty of “the Mandinka” as a unitary ethnic category. Today’s Mandinkas include the descendants of Soninke Mande kings, Jakhanke merchant-scholars, the more militant Marabout factions, formerly Bak-speaking converts to Islam, and almost certainly some *lançado* remnants. While I find no evidence of an advocate of this radical reorganization of ethnic categories (no ethnic strategist), the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was without a doubt a period of Mandinka ethno(re)genesis.

The process of Jola ethnogenesis is much more thoroughly commented upon in the literature. The creation of an ethnic category to encompass broadly similar yet highly localized peoples—that is, an “acephalous society”—by colonial ethnographer-officers is a common story in Africanist anthropology. Hyacinthe Hecquard, a French administrator at Ziguinchor, is credited with first using the term “Diola” to describe Bak-speaking rice-growers in the lower Casamance in 1852 in a report on his activities. However, these agriculturalists maintained systems of highly localized social organization, a successful defense strategy against first the warfare of the Atlantic slave-trade period, then the Mande jihadis, and finally the encroachment of French colonial authority, and also a defense in all periods against neighboring communities seeking control of scarce paddy land. Strictly local identities persisted into the late 1920s when the paths between rural communities were finally considered safe to travel for both French colonial officers and the soon-to-become Jola themselves. The 1930s saw the rise in importance of Roman Catholic missions in the rural areas on the south bank of the Casamance River and the increasing influence of Sheikh Mafouh, an Islamic scholar from Mauritania, in the rural areas of the north bank. Both of these religious traditions—through their distinct institutions, representatives, and media—contributed to the multiple forms of Jola ethnic identity.⁸

Here, then, we have the critique of the "Mandingization hypothesis." Clearly, Linares has documented that Jola communities in the midst of this process attribute the changes in their daily lives to the adoption of Mandinka ways. This ethnographic reality cannot be discounted, nor can we ignore the significant degree of cultural continuity that is indexed by the category "Mandinka." The error we can potentially fall into is one of assuming that while Jola communities have transformed themselves, their proximally relevant Other has been static. Indeed, as we have seen, the same antecedent groups reorganized to form both of the emerging ethnic categories of Mandinka and Jola; ethnogenesis was mistaken for ethnocultural drift. In the nineteenth century, some north bank Bak rice cultivators were converted to Islam by the sword and were subsequently incorporated into the emerging Mandinka ethnic group. What is remarkable is not that twentieth-century north bank Jola people converted to Islam and adopted some Mandinka ways, but that they did so and retained a Jola identity, or rather, converted to Islam but also participated simultaneously in the creation of the category of "Jola" despite adopting some Mandinka ways. What Linares describes is not so much a process of Mandingization, but rather one strand of the process of Jola ethnogenesis with the ethnic category in various instances and locations encompassing Muslims, Christians, and adepts of the traditional shrine system. While the boundaries of the Mandinka ethnic category are rather consistent across regions and social contexts as definitionally linked to Islam, the Jola ethnic category may be marked in context-dependent ways as linked to traditionalist religious practice, Christianity, Islam, or toleration of some combination thereof. Thus, with the benefit of the historical analysis of Wright (1997), Brooks (1993, 2003), and Mark (2002), we can clarify that Mandingization, while continuing as a process of ethnocultural drift, needs to be connected to the larger processes of ethnogenesis at work in this region.

One of the key dynamics that Linares described as contributing to Mandingization was marriage by in-migrants to local landowning families and sponsors of religious conversion. With her ethnography in mind as I conducted my research, I collected systematic data on ethnicity as a factor in marriage in one Gambian community.

Marriage Patterns and Ethnic Identity in a Coastal Gambian Town

This analysis is drawn from a larger study of the community of Kartong, a large village of twenty-five hundred people composed of roughly 50 percent Mandinkas, 17 percent Karon Jolas, and 10 percent Buluf Jolas. The remaining 23 percent of the population is drawn from eight other ethnic groups. Clearly, this is a community of considerable diversity, and the examination of each of the constituent groups is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that my focus on the three largest groups is justifiable on the grounds that they constitute the stable agricultural core of the community,

while the various other groups are seasonal migrants, temporary residents, or classified on some other grounds as “strangers.” In this section, I will examine patterns of ethnic osmosis as evidenced in marriage practices.

In order to explain the fundamentals of the relationship among these three groups in Kartong, let me briefly recapitulate the historical trends I have just examined with specific reference to Kartong and the area now known as “South Gambia” extending from the Alahein River, which forms the international border with the Casamance region of Senegal and extends north toward the urban area of Banjul (see Figure 1). The available historical texts that refer specifically to this region note the presence, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the small Mande kingdom of Combo made up of settlements near the Gambia River and various Bak-speaking peoples occupying the coastal areas and the zone along the Alahein River. By the 1840s Sabiji (known today at Sukuta, at the southern edge of the Banjul-Serekunda urban area) and Gunjur (immediately north of Kartong), which have long been centers of Islamic scholarship, became the strongholds of three prominent militant Marabouts: Omar, a Maure based in Sabiji, and Foday Kaba and his disciple, Foday Silla, two Mande marabouts living in Gunjur. Together they waged war on the Combo Soninke king, ultimately defeating him and forcing his conversion to Islam in 1875. Throughout this middle portion of the nineteenth century, the Bak speakers of this region were forced either to convert to Islam or retreat into the swamps of the Casamance region to seek shelter among their kin. Once the Combo Mansa was defeated, Foday Silla continued to pursue jihad against the Bak peoples to the south and southeast of Gunjur well into the Casamance region.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of great instability in the northern Casamance, with risks both from Foday Silla’s annual campaigns and from neighboring Bak communities as population growth put a rising premium on the available rice paddy land. Farmers coordinated their work in rice fields farther from their village in order to minimize their vulnerability to raiding parties either from the Marabouts or from the next village. At the turn of the century, just as the British arrested the last of the Marabout warriors, proto-Jolas from both the Karon and Fogny-Buluf regions started returning to South Gambia on a seasonal basis to collect wild rubber and process palm oil and to sell these forest products in the favorable markets at Banjul. Gradually they began to stay on in the region, reversing the migration of the previous half century. Initially they established small, entirely Jola, satellite communities, but after the Second World War the tendency shifted toward their relocation into larger, ethnically mixed villages.

There are two important distinctions between Karon and Fogny-Buluf migrations in this period. First, since Fogny-Buluf was a larger region and more densely populated, its outmigration spread over a larger swath of The Gambia, while Karon Jolas tended to congregate along the coast and in the Alahein River valley. Second, Fogny-Buluf Jolas tended to migrate after converting to Islam under the influence of Sheikh Mafouhd and his disciples.

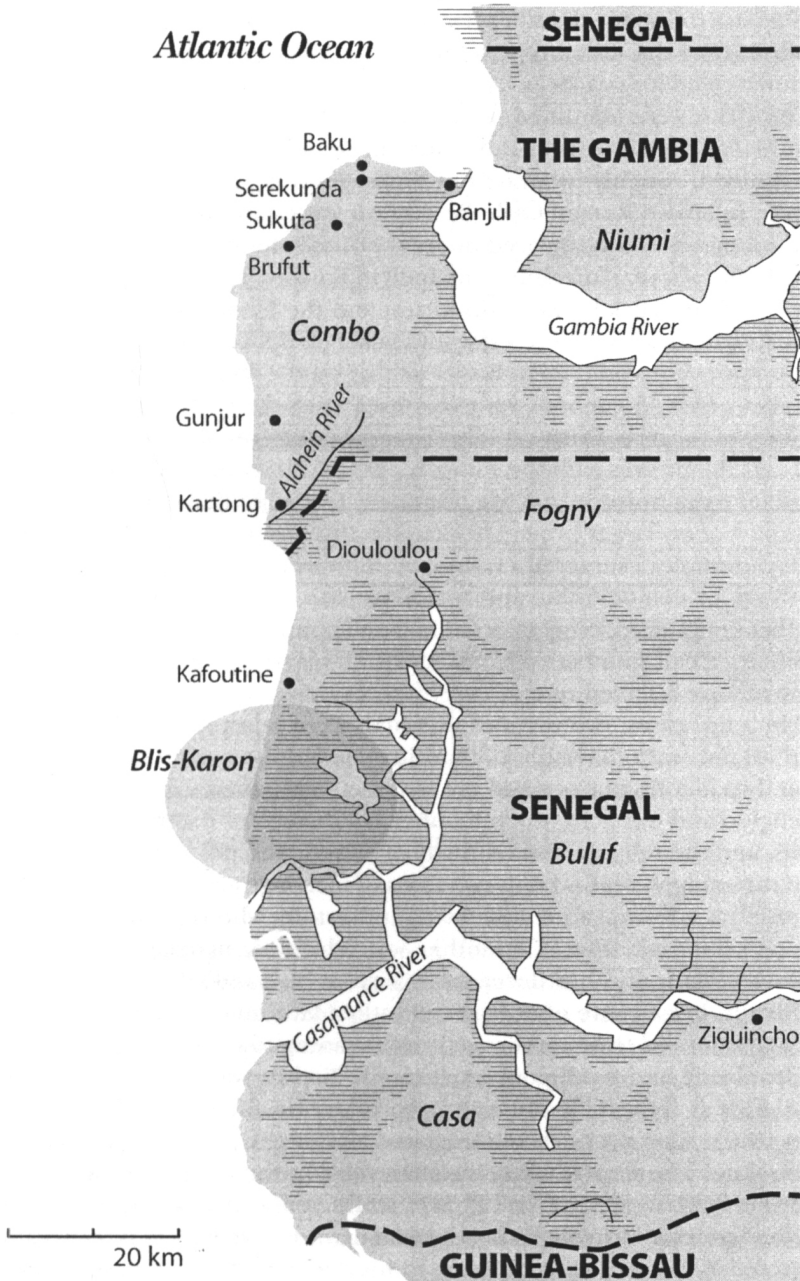


Figure 1: The Lower Gambia and Lower Casamance Regions
Hashing indicates the extent of mangrove swamps and floodplain rice paddies.
Ethnohistorical regions are indicated in bold italics.

The Sheikh's influence did not spread, however, to the more remote island communities of the Karon region and Karon Jolas generally retained their traditional religious practices.

The 1950s were identified by Karon informants in Kartong as a period of significant pressure from their Muslim Mandinka hosts to convert to Islam. Indeed, roughly two-thirds of Karon Jolas in Kartong are Muslims. However, in 1958 a Roman Catholic mission was established there. In 1960 the founding priest was replaced by another Irish cleric who opened an elementary school a year later and remained in Kartong for the next thirty-five years. The deal struck between this priest and the Mandinka *alkalo*, the village headman, was that the priest would make no efforts to convert Muslims to Christianity but would focus his preaching on the "heathen" Karon Jolas. At the same time, the school was to be open to all the children of Kartong, regardless of religion. Fairly rapidly, the remaining non-Muslim Karon Jolas associated themselves with the mission, though baptism and confirmation are still far from universal among nominally Christian Karon Jolas.

As part of my larger project to examine this multiethnic and religiously plural community, I surveyed a random sample of one hundred households on a range of demographic and socioeconomic measures and then drew from that sample randomly selected married couples to interview individually. Since a small number of Mandinka men marry polygynously, my sampling structure selected one of every four married women in each household. In a few cases, two wives of one man were selected, in which case I paired his data with that from both of his wives in the overall sample. Each person thus identified was asked the same set of questions, including his or her religion and ethnicity, the religion and ethnicity of parents and grandparents, and the religion and ethnicity of all past and present spouses.

In this sample, I found only two cases of marriage across religious lines. One case was a European couple living in Kartong who reported different Protestant denominations. The other was a leviratic marriage between a Christian woman and her deceased Christian husband's Muslim brother. Anecdotally, I was aware of at least one other Muslim-Christian marriage, but it was rumored to be rather weak and heading toward divorce.

This divide along religious lines can be tied to two pervasive cultural norms. First is the widely understood prohibition for Muslim men originating in the Quran and Hadith against allowing a daughter to marry a non-Muslim.⁹ The second norm is summarized by the adage that "a woman follows her husband in prayer." That is, while men may make autonomous decisions concerning religious conversion and practice, it is generally expected that his wife must conform to his decision. This doctrine is actually not part of orthodox Islam, as there are explicit texts in Islam that protect a woman's spiritual independence as long as she practices one of the other "religions of the book," that is Christianity or Judaism. However, this principle of male leadership in the religious life of the household is nearly universally held in The Gambia. Such assumptions shared across religious

Table 1. Patterns of Interethnic Marriage

	Sateedingo groups			"Stranger" groups						n	Exogamy rates of men	
	WIFE	Mandinka	Karon Jola	Fogny Jola	Balanta	Wolof	Fula	Serer	BTSKS			Toubab
HUSBAND												
Mandinka	36	3	5		2	3					49	0.27
Karon Jola	5	10	3			2					20	0.50
Fogny Jola		1	6								7	
Balanta				6							6	
Wolof	1				3						4	
Fula						2					2	
Serer	3		1				1				5	
BTSKS	2	1						1			4	
Toubab	1								1		2	
n	48	15	15	6	5	7	1	1	1	99		
Exogamy rates of women	0.25	0.33	0.60									

Note: Table is based on self-reports.

BTSKS: Bambara, Tilibonka, Susu, Kabunka, Serahuli

Exogamy rate not calculated for samples less than 10

(and ethnic) groups are key "common denominators" that make communication and community across categories possible.

In contrast to norms limiting marriage across religious lines, patterns of interethnic marriage in the sample were various and more complex (see table 1). First the grouping of Mandinka, Karon Jolas (1/3 Roman Catholic, 2/3 Muslim) and Buluf and Fogny Jolas (100% Muslim) as *sateedingo*—a Mandinka term meaning "children of the village" that identifies people born in the village of parents born in the village and thereby confers local political rights—shows that all interethnic marriages were either between two *sateedingo* or between a *sateedingo* and a "stranger," with no pairings of two "strangers" of different ethnic groups. While this can be attributed in part to the numerical preponderance of *sateedingo* in the community, it also reflects the strategy by which strangers try to marry into an established local family in order to achieve legitimacy and security in the community.

This pattern can also be seen when we note that one-third of Fogny Jola women were married to Mandinka men. Since Fogny-Jola were in-migrants

within the last half century, this pattern can probably be related to the history of a daughter's marrying into the family of her parent's landlord or patron, a pattern of Mandingization that Linares analyzed in the most Islamicized community she studied.

We can identify a contrasting pattern of interethnic marriage if we look at Karon men. Since we know that Christians are endogamous and one-third of Karon Jolas are Christian, we can identify that only three of thirteen Muslim Karon men were married to Karon women, a very high rate of exogamy. This pattern can be related to the pattern by which recent converts to Islam marry into a more established Muslim family, often the family of one's teacher or the sponsor of the religious conversion ritual.

The structure of the survey also allowed me to examine ethnicity through the lens of marriage patterns by following matched sets of "she said, he said" data. That is, since I asked all respondents about their own ethnicity and the ethnicity of their spouse, I had two sources of data on each individual. In sixteen of the ninety-nine sets of complete data, I noted some type of discordance, some of which are worth examining in depth.¹⁰

Pattern A is the most straightforward (see table 2). In each case, a woman was identified as Mandinka by her Mandinka husband despite the fact that she identified herself as Jola (Karon, Buluf, or Fogny). In three of the five cases, the woman reported that she had at least one Mandinka ancestor. Note that one woman gave two responses, saying she was both Mandinka and Karon Jola.

Pattern B is basically the same, although the genders are reversed.

Pattern C is similar to pattern A, although the husband identified himself and is identified as a Serehuli, an ethnic group found in northern Mali and southern Mauritania historically and linguistically related to the Mandinka.

Pattern D is perhaps the most interesting because it shows the most volitional form of Mandingization as ethnic osmosis. A woman who claimed that all her ancestors, her parents included, were Karon Jola and that her husband was Karon Jola nonetheless claimed to be Mandinka.

These responses are difficult to parse. While ethnicity is widely acknowledged to be a "muddy" concept, and self-identification and ethnic identification by others do not necessarily match, we rarely have such concrete data substantiating this point. It is even more remarkable that this disconnect is found in data on married couples, whom one might presume would have more of a consensus view on these matters. One of the clearest conclusions we can draw is that men seem to be more invested in the process of Mandingization than women are. As seen in patterns A and C, even men with known, acknowledged non-Mandinka ancestors may suggest that their wife, who claims to be non-Mandinka (or at least problematically Mandinka), *is* Mandinka. Likewise, pattern B includes a man who claims to be unequivocally Mandinka despite his wife's suggestion that he is a Karon Jola. Similarly, in the data on the overall patterns of interethnic marriage,

Table 2. “She Said, He Said”: Discordant Reports about Ethnicity in Marriage

	She Says about Herself	He Says about Her	He Says about Himself	She Says about Him
1a	<i>JOLA FOGNY</i>	<i>MANDINKA</i>	Mandinka	Mandinka
1a	<i>MANDINKA + KARON JOLA</i>	<i>MANDINKA</i>	Mandinka	Mandinka
1a	<i>KARON JOLA</i>	<i>MANDINKA</i>	MANDINKA	MANDINKA
1a	<i>Karon Jola</i>	<i>Mandinka</i>	MANDINKA	MANDINKA
1a	<i>Jola Buluf</i>	<i>Mandinka</i>	MANDINKA	MANDINKA
1b	Mandinka	Mandinka	<i>Mandinka</i>	<i>Karon Jola</i>
1c	<i>Karon Jola</i>	<i>Mandinka</i>	Serehuli	Serehuli
1d	<i>Mandinka</i>	<i>Karon Jola</i>	Karon Jola	Karon Jola
2	<i>FULA</i>	<i>WOLOF</i>	Mandinka	Mandinka
2	Jola Buluf	Jola (Non-specific)	<i>Serer</i>	<i>Wolof</i>
3	Mandinka	Mandinka	<i>Susu</i>	<i>Mandinka</i>
3	<i>TILIBONKA</i>	<i>MANDINKA</i>	Serehuli	Serehuli
4	FULA	FULA	<i>Mandinka</i>	<i>Fula</i>
4	Jola Fogny	Jola (Non-specific)	<i>Mandinka</i>	<i>Jola (Non-specific)</i>
5	<i>Mandinka</i>	<i>Scottish</i>	Scottish	Scottish
5	<i>German</i>	<i>English</i>	English	English

Note: *Italics* indicate “ambiguous” ethnicity. SMALL CAPS indicate that the person in question claimed a polyethnic genealogy.

we recall that it was Muslim Karon Jola men who sought a Muslim wife of another ethnic group in three-quarters of the cases. Only the single case in pattern D provides a case of a woman asserting a Mandinka ethnic identity not shared by her husband or any of her ancestors.

Clearly, many Senegambians experience no cognitive dissonance in reporting a genealogy that includes ancestors of multiple ethnic groups and then placing themselves in one, the other, or even in more than one category simultaneously. That is, there is no overwhelming tendency to retrospectively homogenize one’s ancestry. However, there is clearly a preference, again particularly among Fogny Jola men, for movement in the direction of becoming Mandinka.

While Linares’s work focused on the processes of ethnocultural drift—aggregate change of practice within a consistent ethnic identity—this investigation of marriage patterns opens a door to understanding Mandingiza-

tion as ethnic osmosis as individuals shift their identity in the context of changing practice. The distinction between these two cases is enlightening. “Fatiya,” the most Mandingized village studied by Linares, was a frontier community founded in the wake of the displacements of the late nineteenth century. The founders (conquerors, in fact, who drove away a few remaining Banyun families) were Muslim Jolas, as were all of the subsequent immigrants they had attracted by offering them farmland. Their practice of Islam—and standards of behavior associated with being Muslim but more proximately tied to Mandinka cultural norms—was guided by Mandinka Islamic scholars in a neighboring community. Thus for immigrant men, accepting land from the town owners and attempting to marry immigrant sons to founders’ daughters were fundamental to the local politics of land tenure and also consolidated the ethnocultural drift of a Mandingized Jola ethnic identity. In Kartong, however, a community with a much more complex ethnic composition, similar marriage strategies in a significant number of cases led individuals to change their ethnic affiliation—Mandingization in the mode of ethnic osmosis.

The Kayong Kalorn Association: Strategic Action toward Rejolafication

Let me turn, now, to the third major approach to Mandingization, an analysis of a process of ethnic strategizing. While highly variable in its local forms, Mandingization is often portrayed as something of a juggernaut. Indeed, except for the period of the Marabout Wars, Mandingization has proceeded largely at a local level without named advocates. But what has been missing in Linares’s work and other discussions of Mandingization is any discussion of a counterdiscourse.

The Kayong Kalorn Association has been at the vanguard of the assertion of a strong Karon Jola identity. It was founded in 1993 or 1994 by a group of Karon Jolas in Brufut as the first organization to represent Karon Jolas both in the home region and in the various communities throughout The Gambia and Senegal where they now live. This organization was built on the precedent of hometown associations aimed at regrouping the migrants from an individual Karon village. Various documents and statements express three purposes for the organization: “to revive and maintain Kalorn’s [Karon Jola’s] cultural heritage; to create awareness in socio-economic, health, agriculture and educational issues affecting the Kalorn region at large; and to assert that the Karoninka [Karon Jolas] are a people in The Gambia” (Kayong Kalorn 2000). This third goal must be understood in the context that most non-Jola Gambians do not distinguish among the various Jola subgroups. Indeed, the national census and all government publications include only a generic Jola category. To these ends, the organization sponsors three main lines of action: a weekly radio program on the national radio service, an annual cultural festival, and a performance troupe.

While the national radio service broadcasts daily in Mandinka, Wolof, Fogany Jola, Fula, and Serahuli, the weekly hour-long Kayong Kalorn program is the only one in Kulornai, the Karon Jola language. The program includes a summary of national and international headlines along with a number of short sections featuring community news such as obituaries, communications from the leadership of the association, a discussion of “pure Kulornai,” and letters from listeners. The main portion consists of a freewheeling discussion of Karon history, culture, and current issues among the four co-hosts and an invited guest. Interviews on the program have included a wide variety of guests and topics, from doctors speaking on malaria prevention and HIV/AIDS transmission, to advice to students and teachers from a school administrator, to discussions of Christianity by a Roman Catholic priest and of Islam by a trained Ustass (teacher in a Quranic school). A banker encouraged savings and investment, and a soil scientist spoke on improved farming practices.

The annual cultural festival is usually held in early June just before the beginning of the rainy season and the start of cultivation. Each year it is hosted by a different community in The Gambia. Participants generally arrive over the course of a Friday and there is some informal dancing and socializing Friday night. The formal program is on Saturday afternoon with a closing performance Sunday morning. Reports on the first few festivals indicate that they included demonstrations of plowing techniques, palm-wine tapping, and *piyin* (a divination practice used at funerals and other occasions), and a collective visit to a traditional spirit shrine—though these aspects have largely been dropped from the program in later years.

The program is videotaped throughout. I was told by several Kayong Kalorn members that a copy of the tapes was always presented to President Yahya Jammeh, who reportedly watched them repeatedly with great enthusiasm. Indeed, President Jammeh was invariably listed on the program as the guest of honor, though usually the minister of youth, sports and culture or the director of the National Council for Arts and Culture was deputized by the president to convey his greetings. The organization symbolically reached out to the head of state, and through his delegates, and even more personally through the imagined scene of him watching the videotape, saw him reaching back to them.

President Jammeh’s interest in the Kayong Kalorn is not an irrelevant sidebar. Though Jammeh was in no way directly responsible for the formation of Kayong Kalorn, it is not coincidental that the association was formed just as Jammeh came to power in his 1994 coup. Dawda Jawara, the deposed head of state who had served since independence in 1965, was a Mandinka. Jawara was at times accused of ethnic favoritism, but frequently did not need to make this explicit. His political idiom tied him to the numerically largest and the politically dominant ethnic group of the country. Jammeh has danced closer to this line; for example, he reportedly encouraged Senegalese Jolas to cross the border to vote in the 2001 elections. For the

most part, however, his political strategy has been a combination of strong-arm politics (limiting press freedom, prosecuting opposition politicians, etc.) and carefully cultivating an image as a “man of action” in the realm of development and as a “man of Islamic piety” in other areas. The rise of a Jola president, then (Jammeh is a Fogy Jola), clearly helped create the public space for this cultural revivalist organization. Key to this relationship between Yahya Jammeh and Kayong Kalorn is the association’s assertion of their distinct identity as Karon Jolas, as opposed to the more numerous Fogy-Buluf Jolas.

After being repeatedly invited to the association’s annual festival, President Jammeh indicated in 2000 that he would attend in person. Organizers claimed the key to securing his attendance had been scheduling the festival in Fajikunda, an urban neighborhood with a significant concentration of Karon Jolas and a convenient location for him. The main Saturday program that year became not much more than a political rally. Though it was scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m., the first ministers and dignitaries arrived an hour later, and the president and his entourage arrived at 5:00 p.m., clearly enacting a mundane exercise of privilege and power to keep others waiting. The program consisted of the requisite crescendo of protocol speeches and introductions. Each address, presented in English and translated into Kulornai, made some reference to the unanimous loyalty of the Karon people to President Jammeh and his party, the APRC. The president’s speech made only one passing reference to the support that the APRC enjoys from “110 percent of Karoninkas” but otherwise generally praised the association for preserving their cultural traditions and working for the development and prosperity of the country. Still, the point had been made by the preceding speakers, and indeed by his very presence: the Kayong Kalorn Association and the Karon people were loyal to the APRC and Jammeh appreciated that support.

By the time the speeches were over, there were barely twenty minutes of daylight left. Two brief dances were performed before Jammeh and his entourage made their exit. The president, who reputedly relished the taped performance of Karon dancing, made sure by his very presence that there would be very little dancing that year. One of the leaders of the association himself commented on the irony: an event initially intended to raise awareness and inspire pride among the Karon people themselves had been nearly completely subverted by the other goal of the organization: raising the political profile of the group in national politics.

There are several important aspects to the ethno(re)genesis indicated by the Kayong Kalorn Association. On the one hand, the rise of a Jola president has been a tremendous source of pride and collective self-confidence in the face of the widespread yet subtle prejudice against the Jolas for being non-Muslim or not-sufficiently Muslim. On the other hand, the Kayong Kalorn Association has never made any explicitly political demands other than “being recognized as a people in The Gambia.” There has been no

call for any kind of affirmative action or redress by the government for past neglect. Quite the opposite: the organization is constantly exhorting the Karon Jolas to raise themselves up, become more educated, and seek higher professions to support the development of the group and of The Gambia.

President Jammeh's association with the Kayong Kalorn organization is thus perhaps best characterized as a case of strategic ambiguity. After all, much of the purpose of Kayong Kalorn is to assert the identity of Karoninkas (*kalorn*, Karon Jolas) as distinct from Jolas (*kujamaat*, Fogny Jolas). A similar group of Fogny Jolas would have had a much harder time precisely because of the likely accusation that they were "tribalists" trying to capitalize on their affinity with the president. The Karon Jolas are useful to Jammeh because they are *like* his group but they are *not* his group. The clearest example of this tie is Jammeh's repeated "invitation" (an invitation it would be foolish to decline) to the Kayong Kalorn performance troupe to accompany him on tours of the countryside or to represent The Gambia internationally. On the other side of that coin, the Kayong Kalorn Association can express their support for Jammeh—can claim Jammeh as *like* themselves—without appearing to be making explicitly political demands. The relationship remains safe because there is no quid pro quo: like the members of many other organizations, they express their loyalty to the president, encourage the preservation of their culture, and work for national development.

Besides this political positioning, another major theme of this ethno(re)genesis has been the effort to mark Karon ethnicity as unconnected to religion. Repeatedly at the annual festival one hears statements such as "it does not matter if we are Muslim or Christian, we must all remember that we are Karon," and the gathering, like the radio program, is self-consciously inclusive of all religious traditions. Each year, the festival opens with prayers from an imam and a priest, and it may include a visit to a traditional shrine or a theatrical presentation of the operations of such a shrine. Ironically, in Kartong the main context for announcing the meetings of the local branch of the Kayong Kalorn was the community announcement segment at the end of Sunday mass. Indeed, one of the Christian Karon Jolas at the festival in 2000 complained during the business meeting that "there are a lot of people who convert to Islam and act like Mandinkas, especially in Kartong. They don't want to associate with this organization." Ethnic strategizing in this case is a direct commentary on ethnic osmosis; the attempt to redefine the boundaries of the group comes in response to the longer term trends of Mandinka cultural dominance and the tendency of individuals to shift their identity over time.

And yet one of the officers of the association told me that he was raised in a Muslim Karon family speaking only Mandinka, that in most social circumstances he considered himself ethnically Mandinka, but that he became more interested in his Karon Jola heritage as an adult, started attending Kayong Kalorn meetings, traveled repeatedly to the Karon Jola homeland,

gradually mastered Kulornai, and became an officer in the association once he felt he had reestablished himself as a Karon Jola and could speak comfortably in public in Kulornai. In this individual we see both “ethnic osmosis” and “reverse osmosis.” Thus, in decoupling religion and ethnicity, he has effectively undone the fundamental connection between conversion to Islam and Mandingization—a process that we can perhaps call “Rejolafication.” At any rate, the Kayong Kalorn Association is intensively involved in a conscious, strategic process of making Karon ethnicity meaningful as an identity unconnected to religious tradition and relevant in Gambian politics.

Overall, however, it seems that such ethnic strategizing is an indication of a historical moment when individuals from a relatively weak or marginalized group have spotted an opening to assert a revised order of ethnic groupings. The Marabout warriors Foday Kaba and Foday Sillah embarked upon their program of ethnic strategizing in the context of the final days of the slave trade, the waning influence of the Soninke kings, the boom in peanut production, and the initial stages of British and French colonialism. Their program to rework the sociocultural landscape between the Lower Casamance and the Lower Gambia rivers was only partially accomplished in their lifetimes, but their efforts set the stage for the more peaceable scholars of Islam such as Sheikh Mafoudh, who made the faith the dominant force in the region.

The present moment, likewise, is one of broader turmoil. Peanuts have lost their dominance in the economy, tourism and a new financial sector are on the rise, and most significantly, a Jola president is setting a new national tone. But the situation is still fragile and in flux. Jammeh presents himself both as a traditionalist Jola (the biannual International Roots Festival includes a stop in his home village where Jola dance and reenacted rituals are featured) and as a pious Muslim, as his flowing gowns and ever-present prayer beads testify. Kayong Kalorn imagines Jammeh as an admirer of their cultural performance and ethnic distinctiveness, although his appearance at the festival became merely an extended enactment of political loyalty. And even at the annual festival I heard complaints from various attendees that their Mandingized cousins did not want to join the association. The very fragility of their claims—and the effort they put into making them—is evidence that the restructured Kalorn ethnicity they imagine is not yet secure—that ethnic strategizing has not yet become full ethno(re)genesis.

The hundred-year momentum of Mandingization cannot be underestimated. This is not some abstract historical force, but rather the accumulation of individual “investments” in the performance of ethnic styles. James Ferguson (1999), building on the work of Judith Butler (1990), points out that cultural repertoires are built out of the cumulative choices of individuals that have very real costs.¹¹ In preferring one crop over another or one farming technology over another, one measures the investment not just in agricultural returns or even in social statements about identity, but also in structures of muscle, habits of body, calluses, and capabilities. In recogniz-

ing kin and making gift exchanges with them at one set of religious holidays instead of another, one has to consider the decisions not just as financial and religious choices, but also in terms of long-term consequences for future support and reciprocity. Worship at a church, at a mosque, or at a traditionalist shrine is not merely evidence of conviction, but also an investment in community reputation.

In this performance theory analysis of ethnicity, the various models of ethnic change meet. Individuals invested in their daily routines—routines that have meaning as markers of ethnic boundaries as well as practical benefit, spiritual merit, social and physical pleasures and pains—act. If they change their behavior but do not challenge the framework of ethnic categories, ethnocultural drift results. If they adopt the social patterns and habits of body marked as across ethnic boundaries, they have pulled off the feat of ethnic osmosis. But the conscious ethnic strategist acts in ways that confound the categories, speak to new cultural possibilities, and impute new meanings to old patterns of being. And in the moment when the strategist’s vision is broadly accepted as “the new normal,” whether or not the strategist is still present to witness the event, the ethnic category has seen its regensis.

Conclusions: Understanding Ethnic Diversity

In this article I have revisited the notion of Mandingization in order to broaden and deepen our understanding of this process. Linares’s work established (with nuances I have glossed over here) that agricultural technologies, village political structures, and gender relations were all radically transformed in Jola communities in the Casamance in concert with the process of conversion to Islam. Since they retained a Jola identity, I call this pattern ethnocultural drift. I have expanded our understanding of three aspects of Mandingization.

First, particularly for the middle third of the twentieth century, Mandingization must be seen in the context of the on-going processes of ethno-genesis in the region. Much of the fluidity that Linares documented was part of the continued working out of the very boundaries of the ethnic categories of Mandinka and Jola. Second, as marriage patterns in Kartong show, Mandingization is an on-going process; despite a general trend of “Mandingization” at the level of ethnic osmosis, many individuals maintain a sense of their own ethnic identity that is tolerant of hybrid histories, and it is not uncommon for one’s ethnicity to be sufficiently ambiguous to defy easy categorization. Finally, the project of the Kayong Kalorn Association, though only partially realized, is evidence of a “push back” against Mandingization, suggesting that this is not a predetermined, inexorable process of cultural change.

I have argued, therefore, for the conceptual independence of interrelated processes of change. The actions of individuals to reassign themselves

from one ethnic category to another do not necessarily threaten the system of categories, while individuals may try to restructure the definition of the categories without assigning any new identity to themselves. From a more structural point of view, we may see that significant changes in cultural repertoires do not necessarily redefine ethnic categories—or they may become implicated in the processes of ethno(re)genesis.

While these refinements of our understanding of the historical patterns and contemporary social dynamics of ethnicity and religion in the Senegambian region will be of interest to specialists, I feel strongly that this material contains a lesson that is much more generally applicable to our view of the world around us. We should remember that a mere century ago this region saw a period of violent jihad that transformed populations, redefined cultural identities, and continues to influence ethnic identification. Yet Gambians have rather fairly gained a reputation for tolerance and peaceful coexistence in a context of considerable diversity. While portions of this article have focused on the creation of the differences and the negotiation of these ethnic categories, I think the overall lesson is the value of looking for models of tolerance and sustained cultural diversity.

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Notes

1. Following Linares, I refer to "Mandingization," not "Mandinkization," despite the orthographic discrepancy with the ethnonym "Mandinka" as used in *The Gambia*. There is an extensive parallel discussion of Mandingization among Balantas in Guinea-Bissau starting with Teixeira da Mota (1954) and continuing through current scholarship. However, a systematic comparison with the Jola case is beyond the scope of this paper.
2. The general direction of Spear's (2003) argument—and indeed my own—of attempting to reconcile multiple approaches to ethnicity follows closely from Comaroff (1987).

3. Literally, shrines to spirits of the earth. See Linares (1992) for the operation of these shrines in the political realm, Baum (1999) for a historical view that links these shrines to resistance to the slave trade, and Sapir (1970) for more symbolic analyses of this religious system.
4. For good general histories of the region, see Brooks (1993); Sanneh (1989); Mark (2002); Wright (1991, 1999); and Baum (1999).
5. The most prominent of the Marabouts active in the Kombo region were Foday Kaba and, especially, Foday Silla. These two warrior-clerics were strongly influenced by Maba Diakhou who was, in turn, inspired by El-Haj Cheikh Umar Tal. While on pilgrimage to Mecca, Tal was appointed as the head (Cheikh) of the Tijaniyyah sufi brotherhood for the entire Sudanic region.
 Note that "Soninke" in Senegambia refers to being an adept of the traditional Mande religious practices, not, as in the area on the contemporary Mali-Mauritania border, to a distinct ethnic group (see Schaeffer 2003).
6. See Wright (1997); Quinn (1972); Gailey (1965); Barry (1998); Nugent (2007).
7. One scholar who argues that "Mandinka" is a more recent ethnic category is Amselle (1998).
8. On the role of religion in Jola ethnogenesis, see Baum (1990, 1999); Foucher (2003); Lambert (2002); and Mark (1977, 1978, 1985).
9. The one exception to the prohibition against allowing a daughter to marry a non-Muslim, which is widely debated in The Gambia on theological, social, and material grounds, is the marriage of a daughter to a Toubab, that is, a white foreigner.
10. Although 100 households were contacted, one set of paired data was incomplete reducing, *n* for this analysis to 99.
11. For a similar approach to ethnicity, see Bentley (1987). Frank (1987) cautions against linking style in material objects in this region too closely with ethnicity, but does demonstrate how style can mark various aspects of identity.