

Women, Agency, and the State in Guinea

This book examines how women in Guinea articulate themselves politically within and outside institutional politics. It documents the everyday practices that local female actors adopt to deal with the continuous economic, political, and social insecurities that emerge in times of political transformations.

Carole Ammann argues that women's political articulations in Muslim Guinea do not primarily take place within women's associations or institutional politics such as political parties; but instead women's silent forms of politics manifest in their daily agency, that is, when they make a living, study, marry, meet friends, raise their children, and do household chores. The book also analyses the relationship between the female population and the local authorities, and discusses when and why women's claim making enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of other men and women, as well as representatives of 'traditional' authorities and the local government.

Paying particular attention to intersectional perspectives, this book will be of interest to scholars of African studies, social anthropology, political anthropology, the anthropology of gender, urban anthropology, gender studies, and Islamic studies.

Carole Ammann is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Routledge Studies on Gender and Sexuality in Africa

1. The Tunisian Women's Rights Movement

From Nascent Activism to Influential Power-broking

Jane D. Tchaicha and Khédija Arfaoui

2. Disability and Sexuality in Zimbabwe

Voices from the Periphery

Christine Peta

3. Love, Sex and Teenage Sexual Cultures in South Africa

16 Turning 17

Deevia Bhana

4. African Women, ICT and Neoliberal Politics

The Challenge of Gendered Digital Divides to People-Centered Governance

Assata Zerai

5. Widow Inheritance and Contested Citizenship in Kenya

Building Nations

Awino Okech

6. Women, Agency, and the State in Guinea

Silent Politics

Carole Ammann

Women, Agency, and the State in Guinea

Silent Politics

Carole Ammann

First published 2020
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2020 Carole Ammann

The right of Carole Ammann to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Open Access version of this book, available at www.taylorfrancis.com, has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 license.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ammann, Carole, author.

Title: Women, agency, and the state in Guinea : silent politics / Carole Ammann.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019049291 (print) | LCCN 2019049292 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780367189594 (hardback) | ISBN 9780429199547 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780429578663 (adobe pdf) | ISBN 9780429574443 (mobi) |

ISBN 9780429576553 (epub)

Classification: LCC HQ1236.5.G92 A46 2020 (print) |

LCC HQ1236.5.G92 (ebook) | DDC 305.42096652--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019049291>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019049292>

ISBN: 978-0-367-18959-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-19954-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Taylor & Francis Books

For Kaspar, Nyah, and Enna

Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| <i>List of Figures</i> | viii |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | ix |
| <i>Notes on Names, Style, and Published Articles</i> | xi |
| <i>List of Abbreviations and Acronyms</i> | xiii |
| Introduction: Women's Political Articulations | 1 |
| 1 Gendered Conceptions throughout Guinean History | 27 |
| 2 Contested Presidential Elections in 2010 | 51 |
| 3 Expectations of the New President | 78 |
| 4 The Guinean State Doing Gender | 106 |
| 5 Women's Limited Impacts on Institutional Politics | 125 |
| 6 Everyday Politics | 153 |
| 7 Struggling for Recognition: Interactions with Local Authorities | 179 |
| Conclusion: Women's Silent Politics | 204 |
| <i>Index</i> | 216 |

Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| I(1) Kankan's Dibida Market | 3 |
| I(2) A Typical Café in Kankan | 16 |
| 2.1 Election Board in the Fouta Djallon | 59 |
| 2.2 Supporting Banner for the Syli National in Kankan | 68 |
| 3.1 Poster of the 'Train of Change' | 87 |
| 6.1 Women Refuelling their Motorcycles in the City Centre | 156 |
| 6.2 Young Women at Mariam Bah's Wedding | 164 |
| 7.1 Women Selling their Commodities | 191 |
| 7.2 Women Selling on the Road next to Dibida Market | 195 |

Acknowledgments

One of the most beautiful privileges in doing anthropology is its social character, first and foremost during fieldwork. I owe a lot to many Guineans – men and women, young and elderly – who generously permitted me to gain insight into the joys and difficulties of their everyday life. The research participants have told me their stories and experiences, given me their points of view, patiently answered my many questions, and allowed me to spend time with them. Without them, this book would not have been possible. I especially thank the two research collaborators Djénabou Dramé and Thierno Abdoul Sow who have done an incredible work. I would also like to express my immense gratitude to the Fofana family for their big-hearted hospitality, the delicious food, and their general contribution to my well-being while staying at their home.

I thank my friends for sharing adventures, sharing food and drinks, for dancing, playing games, watching soccer, discussing, and remaining silent: Bouah Sangaré, Daouda Traoré, Djénabou Dramé, Kadiatou Diallo, the members of the association Kankan Ville Verte, Mamadou Toukara, Mamy Traoré, Mohamed Gbondouno, Sory Kourouma, Tenin Diawara, and Thierno Abdoul Sow. I also want to thank Amadou Doumbouya, Andrea Hodler, Chantal Zimmermann, Corinne Heim, Dominik Holl, Jay Straker, Katharina Zürcher, Laura Pestalozzi, Lucy Koechlin, Marion Bernet, Matthias Knecht, Michelle Engeler, Rahel Müller, and Sophia Völksen for the discussions and the unforgettable Sundays at the river side.

Special thanks go to my PhD supervisors Till Förster and Dorothea Schulz. I would also like to thank my colleagues for the fruitful collaborations during joint writing projects. I am grateful for the comments on presentations, proposals, draft chapters, articles, and the general support I received throughout this research from people at the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Basel and beyond: Aidas Sanogo, Alexander Vorbrugg, Andrea Buhl, Andrea Kaiser-Grolimund, Andrea Kaufmann, Anna Christen, Balz Alter, Barbara Heer, Bobby Luthra Sinha, Brigit Obrist, Filomena Mazumbar, Fiona Siegenthaler, Franziska Jenni, Frederik Unseld, Jana Gerold, Jennifer Giroux, Johannes Knierzinger, Kathrin Heitz-Tokpa, Kerstin Bauer, Lotte Nielsen, Lucy Koechlin, Mamane Amadou, Maren Larsen,

Mohamed Saliou Camara, Michelle Engeler, Miriam Giroux, Piet van Eeuwijk, Rita Kesselring, Sabine Schultz, Sandra Burri, Sandra Staudacher, Silke Oldenburg, Susann Ludwig, Till Förster, and Tina Lou Tra. Special thanks goes to Gernot Biersack for the language editing.

This research was made possible thanks to grants from several research foundations: Firstly, the grant by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) for the project ‘The Work of State Imageries: How Imageries of Governance and the State Constitute Everyday Practice in Conflict Affected West Africa’ (No. 124528) led by Till Förster, which this research has been part of for fifteen months; secondly, the one-year scholarship by the Research Fund Junior Researchers from the University of Basel; thirdly, a fifteen-month scholarship by the SNSF Marie Heim-Vögtlin Grant. I was able to conduct extended fieldwork in Guinea thanks to the Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft, and the Josef und Olga Tomcsik-Stiftung. Special thanks also goes to Susan Thieme and Marina Richter, as well as my colleagues at the Institute of Geography at the University of Bern who hosted me during the revision process.

I especially thank Regina, Ruedi, and Noëmi Ammann for being proud of me and for being there. In particular, I want to thank Kaspar Padel for being at my side during this long journey. And thank you Nyah and Enna for giving me endless joy and energy. You are simply wonderful.

This book has been published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Notes on Names, Style, and Published Articles

I have changed all research participants' names to protect their privacy and to ensure anonymity. However, there are some exceptions to this rule: The two research collaborators, Thierno Abdoul Sow and Djénabou Dramé, had asked to be cited by their proper names. I did not change the names of persons who can easily be identified due to their position, such as the mayor. If not noted otherwise, the data has been gathered in Kankan. I have translated the research participants' statements into English myself. I use double quotation marks when referring to academic literature or an extract from an interview. I use single quotation marks when referring to informal conversations, naturally occurring talks, field notes, and sediment knowledge.

Elements of this book have been published in earlier versions. Bits of Chapter 1 and Chapter 5 went into my overview on Guinean women in politics in the *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*.¹ Parts of Chapter 2 have already been published in a joint article with Andrea Kaufmann in *Mande Studies*.² Elements of Chapter 6 have already appeared as a book section in the edited volume on *University Graduates in Urban Africa*.³ Other parts of Chapter 6 have been published in an article in the *Journal of Culture and African Women Studies (JENdA)*.⁴ Lastly, bits of Chapter 7 went into an article published in *Stichproben – the Vienna Journal of African Studies*.⁵

Notes

- 1 Ammann, Carole. 2018. "Political Parties and Participation: Guinea." In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*, edited by Suad Joseph. Leiden: Brill Online.
- 2 Ammann, Carole, and Andrea A. Kaufmann. 2014. "Politics of Ethnicity in Monrovia, Liberia and Kankan, Guinea – A Comparative Analysis." *Mande Studies* (14):57–97.
- 3 Ammann, Carole. 2017. "Looking for Better Opportunities. An Analysis of Guinean Graduates' Agency." In *Dealing with Elusive Futures. University Graduates in Urban Africa*, edited by Noemi Steuer, Michelle Engeler, and Elisio Macamo, 93–121. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

- 4 Ammann, Carole. 2016b. "Women Must Not Become Lions – Social Roles of Muslim Women in Kankan, Guinea." *Journal of Culture and African Women Studies (JENdA)* (28):67–81.
- 5 Ammann, Carole. 2016a. "Everyday Politics. Market Women and the Local Government in Kankan, Guinea." *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afri- kastudien* 16(30):37–62.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| AU | African Union |
| CAN | African Cup of Nations (Coupe Afrique des Nations) |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CENI | National Independent Electoral Commission (Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante) |
| CEPI | Prefectural Independent Election Commission (Commission Electioral Préfectorale Indépendante) |
| CNDD | National Council for Democracy and Development (Conseil National pour la Démocratie et le Développement) |
| CNT | Legislative National Transitional Council (Conseil National de Transition) |
| CNTG | National Confederation of Guinean Workers (Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée) |
| CPF | Centre for Women's Promotion (Centre de Promotion Féminin) |
| CPRN | Provisional National Commission on Reconciliation (Commission Provisoire de Réflexion sur la Réconciliation Nationale) |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EDG | Guinea Electricity (Electricité de Guinée) |
| EU | European Union |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| PDG | Democratic Party of Guinea (Parti Démocratique de Guinée) |
| PDG-RDA | Democratic Party of Guinea-African Democratic Rally (Parti Démocratique de Guinée-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain) |
| PEDN | Party of Hope for National Development (Parti de l'Espoir pour le Développement National) |
| PEG | Guinean Ecological Party (Parti des Ecologistes de Guinée) |

xiv *List of Abbreviations and Acronyms*

| | |
|------|--|
| PUP | Unity and Progress Party (Parti de l'Unité de du Progrès) |
| RDA | African Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain) |
| RPG | Rally of the People of Guinea (Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée) |
| SNSF | Swiss National Science Foundation |
| UFDG | Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée) |
| UFR | Union of Republican Forces (Union des Forces Républicaines) |
| UN | United Nations |
| URFG | Revolutionary Union of Guinean Women (Union Révolutionnaire des Femmes de Guinée) |

Introduction

Women's Political Articulations

Prologue: Kankan's Dibida Market

In 2011, there were several markets in Kankan. Dibida, Kankan's main market, is located in the city centre. Sogbe, Kankan's second largest market, is still considered to be very central, while the markets of Missirat and Sénkéfara are less populated and to be found in the peripheral neighbourhoods. Nowadays, Dibida market is a closed area whose high ceiling ensures bearable temperatures. Vendors inside the market offer food on tables. Some sell vegetables from their own gardens near the Milo River, others sell fruits, kola nuts, and palm oil from the Forest Region, onions from Mali, and imported as well as locally produced rice. Outside the market, people continue selling items on stands or blankets on the ground. There, the vendors not only sell food, but also other items such as cosmetics and second-hand clothes. In addition, there are many ambulant vendors. However, a clear distinction between ambulant and non-ambulant vendors is difficult to make. Some vendors from inside the market send off their children to sell their commodities as ambulant vendors outside Dibida's walls. Through that practice, they hope to acquire customers who usually do not go inside the market. Women constitute the large majority of the vendors, though men occupy some of the tables as well. Contrary to their female counterparts, they typically sell non-perishable goods. When I asked the market women how much they earn, none could give me a precise answer as they do not make these calculations. Petty trade is not per se a profitable business, as Susanna Fioratta (2015) illustrates for the Fouta Djallon. Many market women buy the ingredients for supper with the money they earn during the day and are thus responsible for nourishing their families.

Kankan's intellectuals¹ depict market women as rather poor and uneducated; however, they do not constitute a homogenous category. The most prominent distinction among them is their ethnic background. Age is another important differentiation. Elderly women are associated with more experience and wisdom and have therefore more authority than younger vendors. If there is for example, a quarrel in the market, elderly women are consulted. Additionally, a differentiation regarding economic background can be made: The larger a vendor's table and the more expensive her commodities, the better is her (and usually her family's) economic situation. Ambulant vendors and women who sell their

2 *Introduction*

commodities on blankets on the ground are typically poorer than those who use a table. Market women, who are given names in accordance to the products they sell, differentiate between items of daily use, which ‘provide money swiftly’, and others such as cosmetics, jewellery, or clothes that people do not buy in economically harsh times. The religious background of the vendors is of minor importance, the majority of Kankan’s inhabitants are of Muslim faith. The market customers represent the whole range of Kankan’s (female) population.

In general, women in Kankan spend a considerable amount of time in markets. It is not only a workplace, but also a space to establish and foster social and commercial relationships and to express their aspirations and disappointments: On Dibida, similar to other markets, all aspects of human life are discussed and gossip is everywhere (cf. Storr 2008; Clark 2010, 15–17).² At Dibida market, many conversations are centred around family issues and local (gendered) norms such as marriage, illegitimate pregnancy, and both male and female demeanour within matrimony, followed by debates on shifting realities, religion, and the latest news. Elderly people accuse the youth of taking drugs and not listening to their parents anymore. Likewise, many conversations centre on the rice quality. Market women complain about the costs of living, putting a special focus on the high food prices before turning to their last subject of controversy, namely the lack of governmental support.

At the beginning of my fieldwork in Kankan, I faced difficulties in how to interact with women, while access to men of all ages was most of the time without any problems. Almost none of the women speak French and they do not have as much spare time as men do. Moreover, not all of them liked to give an interview in front of a voice recorder. I did not know how I would be able to talk to them informally and listen to their naturally occurring talks. Together with Thierno Abdoul Sow and Djénabou Dramé, the two research collaborators, I was wondering how I could tackle that difficulty. Finally, we came up with a solution: Kankan’s markets! They are an important social space for women’s political articulations. In 2011, Kankan was a city without public electricity and, therefore, at least one woman from every household had to go shopping in the market on a daily basis. Consequently, Thierno, Djénabou, and I decided to spend considerable time in Kankan’s markets. We were sitting on hard benches besides market women for long hours where we were observing what was going on and listening to their conversations. And from time to time, we were asking some questions.

Silent Politics Emerging from the Everyday

There are people who fight, but silently. Not everyone is noisy.

(Madame Kanté, head of the local Office of Women’s and Children’s Affairs,
interview, 21.02.2012)



Figure I(1) Kankan's Dibaba Market

Women and the State in Guinea

Recent scholarship has usually not regarded ordinary³ women in (Muslim) African societies as political actors. Past studies have narrowly focussed on women's access to, their presence in, and their influence on institutional politics (Goetz 2003). Furthermore, they have often analysed women's forms of popular resistance, struggles, and collective actions. However, by researching only women's agency in institutional politics, we oversee their political articulations "outside the male-dominated institutional sphere" (Waylen 1996, 11). This ethnographic study shows, in contrast, that ordinary women in Kankan, Guinea's second-largest city in terms of inhabitants, are talking and doing politics although they often deny doing so when prompted in interviews.

Based on one year of anthropological fieldwork, this book depicts from an actor-centred perspective women's modes of silent politics in Guinea – a country on which, in general, little social science research exists so far. It examines how

4 *Introduction*

women in Kankan articulate themselves politically within and outside institutional politics. Thereby, it does not consider women as a monolithic block, but pays special attention to the intersectional perspective, that is how age, ethnicity, religion, marital status, as well as women's educational, economic, and occupational background influence their agency. Throughout the book, I neither depict women as voiceless victims nor as noisy heroes who publicly unite to defend their rights. I rather give a nuanced picture by describing the political aspect of women's everyday agency. But before doing that we need to look briefly, at the historical and political context in order to be able to situate women's everyday agency in Guinea today.

When Guinea became independent in 1958, Ahmed Sékou Touré autocratically ruled the country for twenty-six years. In 1984, Touré died and General Lansana Conté took power in a bloodless coup d'état. Conté too, autocratically presided over the country until he died in office in 2008. After these two long-time Presidents, the short presidency of Moussa Dadis Camara between 2008 and 2009, and the tumultuous transitional period afterwards, Guinea's first more or less free and democratic presidential elections took place in 2010. They brought Alpha Condé to power, a man for whom the majority of Kankan's inhabitants had voted. Being aware that political transformations offer a privileged access to institutional framing, this book's central attention is the period from 2010, when Guinea was preparing the presidential elections, until 2013, when the transitional period officially ended with the holding of legislative elections.

Within the scientific literature and the country's elite, Guinea is praised for its high number of women within important political positions. Contrary to this view, I argue that the local and national institutional political sphere is not where Guinean women can successfully make claims – even though the national government officially promotes women's social, economic, and political empowerment. Women's possibilities to make decisions and set the political agenda, especially within political parties, are limited. In Kankan, this is also due to the huge influence of 'traditional' authorities,⁴ from whose sphere women are systematically excluded. Moreover, the state's focus on creating women's associations does not have an impact on the ground. Many non-governmental organisations (NGO), such as the foundation launched by Djènè Kaba Condé, Guinea's First Lady, which officially promotes women's advancement, however, seems to rather serve the interests of a small (female) elite instead.

Overall, I argue that women use modes outside the institutional settings to articulate themselves politically. It is rather by daily bargaining with local state employees or representatives of 'traditional' authorities that women are able to pursue their goals. This does not, however, mask the fact that those interactions are characterised by many power imbalances, not least because the latter are not familiar with the bureaucratic language. Ordinary women are most successful in reaching their aims by merging into what Asef Bayat (2010) calls 'passive networks', which enable them to make claims they would not be able to put forward individually if they do not have the necessary contacts.

In this book, I explore modes of silent politics; that is, what happens before ordinary women's claim making becomes visible to a larger audience or before they unite in institutionalised associations. I investigate moments when social problems become recognised as such and thus turn political. I call women's forms of political articulations that emerge from the everyday 'silent politics' because they are hardly perceptible, not easy to grasp, and because women typically do not perceive their actions as political. I argue that women's silent forms of politics manifest in their daily practices, that is, when they make a living, study, marry, meet friends, raise their children, or do household chores. Within Kankan's patriarchal structures, gendered norms generally proclaim that women are under the authority of either their fathers, brothers, or husbands. And even though women mostly bargain within the locally acknowledged gendered norms of Guinea's society, they are not passive victims as they are all too often depicted. Women's agency is manifold as they silently use various ways of influencing their lives and the lives of others.

This book documents the everyday practices that local female actors adopt to deal with the continuous economic, political, and social insecurities that emerge in times of political transformations. Women have been actively engaged in nationalist movements worldwide (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault 2000; Thapar-Björkert 2013), also in Guinea (Schmidt 2002, 2005; Pauthier 2018). Many scholars have demonstrated that motherhood has been a typical feature of women's mobilisation in the struggle for independence, and this is also the case in the postcolonial nations (Clark 2001; Van Allen 2009; Moran 2012; Bouilly, Rillon, and Cross 2016; for the Guinean case, see Dessertine 2019b, 8–9). While the politicisation of motherhood has worried some authors (e.g. de Alwis 2004, 133), others urge us not to generally "condemn women's mobilisation on the basis of their 'traditional' identities and concerns as mothers and home-makers" (Randall 1998, 192). As this book will illustrate, women in Guinea too, made and still make use of their social roles as mothers, aunts, sisters, wives, or household managers to make claims.

Women's Political Articulations

We women, we think that politics is a sleazy affair. Everything that is political does not interest us. We are already afraid if someone mentions politics.

(Aishatou Diakité and Djénabou Dramé, young graduates, informal conversation, 29.01.2013)

Here, women are generally only talking about the prices, because women are not interested in politics. Especially women who have not been to school are not interested in politics. They say that everything is expensive; the prices must be reduced.

(Djouba Boumbaly, female radio journalist, interview, 17.01.2013)

6 Introduction

I never liked politics. It is something that is not good at all! Politics can provoke problems between you and your friend because you like different politicians. Finally, your friendship breaks up. For me, this is the reason for saying that I do not like politics. Politics is not good! Politicians are there for a certain time and then they go with their pockets full of money. We ordinary people in contrast, we have nothing! We are here to struggle day and night; the politicians do not even know if we live or not! So, I never liked politics!

(Safiatou Dramé, training to become a doctor, interview, 14.11.2011)

These three quotations depict a general discomfort of women in Kankan of varying age and from different educational, ethnical, and economic backgrounds when they talk about politics. Many of them do not want to be associated with what they consider as ‘a dirty male business’. ‘Politics is for the politicians’ is a typical statement in this regard. Politicians in general and female politicians in particular have a controversial reputation in society; women (and men) consider them as greedy and egoistic. Especially since the presidential elections of 2010, they regard politics as a cause for the division between individuals and groups. The attitude of considering politics as a dirty, dishonest, immoral, and corrupt business is not specific to women in Kankan; it can be found in different places and contexts (Kerkvliet 2002, 10; Spencer 2007, 32).

Women who do not frequent a political party typically do not see themselves as political actors. Thus, Georgina Waylen’s (1996, 18) statement that women who are “involved in ‘the politics of everyday life’ [often] do not see their activities as political” also holds true for women in Kankan. They follow a conventional approach where the political includes only an institutional setting. Politics, in an emic perspective, is identified with the President, ministers, the parliament, elections, political parties, governmental policies, trade unions, and rebellions. Other spheres of people’s lives are considered as apolitical. People make boundaries between the political and other spheres to keep specific areas, such as religion or their families, outside of “contaminating” (Curtis and Spencer 2012, 179) politics. Women in Kankan use this boundary-making strategically, for example by framing their public protests in social or economic terms, in order to increase their credibility.

It is a recurrent challenge for anthropologists that the people we do research with and about, have a far narrower definition and conception of the political space, which they often confine and reduce to the practice of institutional politics only. However, if we narrowly analyse the institutional political sphere, we miss women’s political articulations⁵ that mostly take place outside the institutional setting. Therefore, I differentiate between Kankan’s women’s emic perception of politics – what Janine Dahinden (2016, 7), drawing on Rogers Brubaker (1996), calls the “common-sense” category – and my etic understanding of what constitutes the political – the analytical category. The lens used in this book traces the political, following Jonathan Spencer (1997, 9), “from mass rallies to village arguments, in some cases into houses and families and through the particularities of everyday practice.” Thus, I look for the political “at every level and in

every sphere” (Leftwich 1984, 12). Everyone can be a political actor, every form of agency can become political, and everything can be politicised (Kallio and Häkli 2013, 7–8).⁶

Generally, my approach to the political is influenced by Benedict J. Kerkvliet’s (2002, 2005) work on everyday politics. According to him, everyday politics:

involves people embracing, adjusting to, or contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of, or allocation of resources. It includes quiet, mundane, and subtle expressions and acts that indirectly and for the most part privately endorse, modify, or resist prevailing procedures, rules, regulations, or order. Everyday politics involves little or no organization. It features the activities of individuals and small groups as they make a living, raise their families, wrestle with daily problems, deal with others like themselves who are relatively powerless and with powerful superiors and others.

(Kerkvliet 2005, 22)⁷

In brief, I analyse politics as a category of practice (Curtis and Spencer 2012, 179) emerging from the everyday.

Silent Politics

When analysing the political articulations of women, youth, poor, and other politically marginalized groups, the work of Asef Bayat (1997, 2000, 2010) is insightful. He talks about a “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” which for him constitutes “a silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives” (Bayat 1997, 57). Bayat stresses that such ordinary actions just episodically result in collective action. Usually, they “are marked by quiet, atomised and prolonged mobilisation” – similar to what Benedict J. Kerkvliet (2002, 15) describes for the poor people in the Philippines’ rural areas and Susan Thomson (2014) for people in the Rwandan authoritarian state. This also holds true for women in Guinea. There, malcontent merged into mass mobilisation with women being actively involved on just three occasions: Firstly, during the general strikes in 1953; secondly, when market women protested against Sékou Touré in 1977; and, thirdly, when general strikes paralysed the whole country in 2006 and 2007. Most of the time, however, women’s political articulations are subtler and do not manifest in public protests.

One focus of this book is the women-state nexus. Feminist research pleads to analyse how the state affects women’s daily lives – and vice versa. How does the state produce and reproduce gender relations, but also relations between other groups within a society? Such a focus allows us to “include not only opposition, but also negotiation, not only struggle, but also strategic bargaining” (Rai 1996, 26). The state is very complex and cannot be divided from society. The state’s boundaries are blurred, fluid, and elusive; various actors constantly define and redefine them (Greenhouse 2002, 8; Nugent

2004, 198). The state and society constitute each other and all kinds of different actors are “doing the state” (Migdal and Schlichte 2005, 14). Anita Schroven (2010), for example, nicely describes the dilemma of state employees in a small Guinean coastal town during the general strikes of 2006 and 2007. While the bureaucrats see themselves as citizens confronted with the same everyday hardship the strikers protest against, they actually represent the very state addressed by the objectors.

Women’s political articulations can, amongst others, be perceived during encounters with and daily conversations about representatives of the local government in Kankan. Widows, for example, jointly meet the treasurer to claim their widow’s pensions. Local Big Women merge into an Association of Female Leaders when political instability threatens to turn into violence and market women subversively spread rumours about government’s mismanagement and misappropriation. In addition, they constantly complain about the costs of living in general and the high food prices in particular. Women also accuse the Guinean government of not providing basic services. Overall, this book discusses when, why, and how women make claims. Furthermore, it analyses when this claim-making enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of other men and women as well as representatives of ‘traditional’ authorities and the local government.

Because women in Kankan typically articulate themselves politically outside the institutional setting, I call their political agency ‘silent politics’. Their silent politics is “fleeting and intangible” (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 3); it is “surreptitious, indirect, and entwined” with women’s everyday lives (Kerkvliet 2005, 21). Silent politics manifests when women, for example, try to remain their husband’s only wives. Or when looking at highly educated women’s endeavours to find a suitable husband. Borrowing from Nomi Dave (2014, 19), silence – as well as silent politics – “exists as a dense presence, both intensifying and complicating existing structures of power.” Silent politics is not equivalent with invisibility or being mute;⁸ silence also involves using one’s voice to make claims. It is rather the ways of women’s political articulations that are generally not noisy; they are latently, but silently perceptible. Or as Madame Kanté’s (interview, 21.02.2012) statement above stresses, women can also fight silently.

Women’s Agency

Every day has its time because life consists of three days: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Yesterday is gone, today is now, but we do not know what will happen tomorrow.

(Diegnalen Bangoura, retired male soldier, group interview, 22.02.2012)

Agency, “inherent in human action” (Förster and Koechlin 2011, 7), is the lens through which I analyse women’s everyday life and their political articulations in urban Kankan. Much of the literature on agency examines a person’s capacity to act individually in a given context, “independently of structural constraints” (Rapport and Overing 2014, 3).⁹ Anthropologists have

criticized agency as being a Eurocentric concept because it focuses too much on bargaining (Keane 2003; Hastrup 2007, 26). Saba Mahmood (2001), for example, suggests that we think about agency beyond the notion of resistance. I do not understand agency just as bargaining based within present actions but, like the research participant cited above and following the sociologists Mustafa Emirbayer and Anne Mische (1998), in its three temporal dimensions. If we take the habitual context, the local social practices and norms, and the imagination of the future into account, we attain a more complete and nuanced understanding of a person's agency. Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 970) maintain that agency is "the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations." One's past experiences and habits, one's imaginations of what the future may hold, and one's judgments and evaluations of the present are interconnected and constantly influence agency, even though the temporal orientation of specific actions varies.

Through their repetition and continuity, past experiences add to order and stability in an individual's identity and in its agency. Habitual actions are incorporated into thoughts and bodily experiences. As Koulako Cherif, a man who works for a national NGO put it: "Habits are second natures; they cannot easily be changed" (interview, 17.12.2012). Through habitual actions, norms and social patterns are produced and reproduced (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 975–984). Norms of respectability and morality are gendered – in Kankan as well as elsewhere. Multiple and at times conflicting norms and moralities exist; they are not fixed but rather shaped and reshaped through daily interactions. Consequently, a plurality of femininities and masculinities exist (Connell 2005 [1995]). In familiar situations, repetitive activities are taken for granted and not something of which one is conscious (Rapport and Overing 2014, 7).

Life consists of more than habits and routines. Actors constantly imagine their future, which they at times "either hope for and try to bring about or fear and seek to avert" (Johnson-Hanks 2002, 872). When unknown and challenging situations arise, past experiences may not help; past responses may not fit: "As they respond to the challenges and uncertainties of social life, actors are capable of distancing themselves (at least in partial exploratory ways) from the schemas, habits, and traditions that constrain social identities and institutions" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 984). The outcome is a temporary dislocation that necessitates new, untried actions. These situations prompt the actors to scrutinize habits and past occurrences and to be creative in their search for alternatives; it is at this point that the imagining of possible new patterns is born (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 983–993). This may result in a conflict between current local gendered norms and the imagination of different possibilities (Rapport and Overing 2014, 7). Imagining always contains a political dimension as it produces powerful images of alternative ways of living together (Norval 2015). However, as the case of young, well-

educated women in Kankan will illustrate, young people do not always challenge the values of their elders. Along with Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 984), I agree that “the formation of projects is always an interactive, culturally embedded process by which social actors negotiate their paths toward the future.” Nevertheless, thanks to this “projective” or “foresightful” dimension of agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 983) people expand the horizon of their possible responses in the present.

Instability has an enormous impact on how many people on the African continent are making a future (Pelican and Heiss 2014, 8). This unpredictable future also influences the third dimension of agency, namely the present situation. People reflect on, ponder, judge, and evaluate possible responses with regard to the demands of specific, conflicting circumstances. Actors constantly deal with ever-shifting settings, a conscious process of daily manoeuvring. In some circumstances, they agree with and behave according to habitual practices, while in others, they may have to challenge, resist, subvert, and contest them. Possible courses of action are evaluated against the background of habits, on the one hand, and of imagined future trajectories, on the other hand (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 994–1002).

In her article “Bargaining with Patriarchy”, Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) argues that women strategically bargain over different aspects in life to enhance their social security and personal advantages without challenging fundamentally male supremacy. Taking this approach up, Orit Avishai, Lynne Gerber, and Jennifer Randles (2012, 404) write that “women are strategic actors who navigate and appropriate a complex terrain of domestic, economic, and religious practices and expectations in meeting the demands of contemporary life.” Haleh Afshar (1996) illustrates on the example of Iranian women and Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) on Bedouin women, how they simultaneously embrace and resist existing gendered systems. This also holds true for women in Muslim Kankan’s patriarchal society who understand the rules of the game and know how to play them. They mostly bargain within the boundaries of the socially accepted gendered norms as they fear the prospect of being stigmatised as a ‘bad’ woman. And sometimes they imagine new or slightly different values. Generally, a woman’s silent politics is more effective the older she is. Besides, the fact that many women provide for their families effects intra-household dynamics and gender relations more generally.

Overall, in this book I look at how women’s agency creates and recreates cultural practices and gendered norms and how women use them for their own interests. Women’s agency in Kankan is not only influenced by contemporary bargaining processes, but also by past experiences and the opening-up of new possibilities regarding an imagined future. I use the concept of agency as proposed by Mustafa Emirbayer and Anne Mische to detect and depict women’s various modes of silent politics which do not always become visible when solely focussing on present bargaining processes (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

Researching Women in Kankan

Research on Gender in Guinea

This book aims to bridge some of the many research gaps regarding Guinea. The recent scientific reception of Guinea focuses mostly on the country's historical past and political transformation processes. Generally, there is bulk of scholarly work on the Touré-era but not much on the Conté period (see Chapter 1). Questions regarding gender in Guinea have been largely neglected (Dessertine 2019b). Nevertheless, there are a few notable exceptions: The historian Emily Lynn Osborn (2011) focuses in her book on political history in the Upper Guinea Region not on politicians and high offices, but rather tells the story of household and state-building by putting the emphasis on husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, foreigners and locals, as well as masters and slaves. The historian Elizabeth Schmidt (2002, 2005) highlights women's implication in the nationalist movement and Céline Pauthier (2007, 2018), another historian, draws attention to female representation, mobilisation, and political activities since the 1950s. The anthropologist Filomina Chioma Steady (2011) gives examples of female leadership in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, but does, however, ignore the influence of ordinary women on the state. Furthermore, the anthropologists Anna Dessertine (2019b) and Carole Ammann (2018b) provide overviews on women's involvement in Guinean state formation processes.

The anthropologists Karen Smid (2010) and Rebecca Furth (2005) both concentrate on the Fouta Djallon. While the former discusses the effects of Islam on female expectations and visions regarding their trajectories on earth and the afterlife, the latter looks at status and marriage practices. The demographer Aurélie Godard (2010) examines the social and economic organisation of women in the Guinean Coast Region. Together with others, she further does research on women and work in the rural environment (Godard and Meffe 2006; Godard, Meffe, and Petit 2007). There is also a gap in research regarding the region and the city of Kankan (Osborn 2011, 6). However, exceptions are some noteworthy authors writing about the Upper Guinea Region: Emily Lynn Osborn (2004, 2011) researches trade and politics before and during colonial rule. The geographer Mabetty Touré (2013) looks at gender in a rural context. Lastly, the geographer Monique Bertrand (1997) examines mobility, and Anna Dessertine (2013, 2016, 2019a) researches young people, mobility, and mining.

Kankan, a Guinean Secondary City

Kankan is the centre of the Upper Guinea Region, located some 650 kilometres northeast of the capital Conakry. According to the newest census, approximately 220,000 people are living in the city (Republique de Guinée 2014).¹⁰ Kankan is composed of 27 neighbourhoods and can be characterised as a secondary city (Ammann 2017). While the governor of the Upper Guinea Region and the prefect of Kankan are nominated by a president's

decree (Rey 2007, 41), the population elects the city's mayor. At the time of research, however, a so-called special delegation, consisting of members of the local Rally of the People of Guinea (*Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée*, RPG) ruled over the municipality because the former mayor had been dismissed in 2011 due to 'serious misconducts'. Since 1985, the Guinean authorities formally recognise the council of the elders' function (Rey 2007, 55). In Kankan, its members are male and usually descendants of the powerful Kaba or Chérif families. The *Sotikemo*, to whom the local population refers to as the city's 'traditional' chief, spiritually and politically watches over Kankan.

According to popular perception, each of Guinea's four geographical and administrative regions is home to one of the four main ethnic groups, the Fulani, the Manding, the Susu, and the people from the Forest Region, such as the Kpelle (Guerzé), Toma, and Kissi (Goerg 2011). Today, the Fulani are said to present the majority in Guinea, followed by the Manding and the Susu (Camara, O'Toole, and Baker 2014, 154–155). In Kankan, the Manding constitute the majority, whereas the Fulani community is the largest minority. Besides, a small number of people who identify with other ethnicities and originate from neighbouring countries also live in the city. The wars in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire have driven out Manding people from the Upper Guinea Region who had lived in these countries. Kankan has the image of a place where different ethnic communities live harmoniously next to each other. In reality, however, inter-ethnic cohabitation is much more complex and challenging, as Chapter 2 will demonstrate.

At the religious level, the Muslims, with an estimated share of 85 percent of the population, are Guinea's largest group (Camara, O'Toole, and Baker 2014, 257). Kankan is a Muslim religious centre with numerous mosques. Even though the large majority in Kankan is of Muslim faith, there are no apparent cleavages between Islam and Christianity, of which the population is proud. Islam is very present in people's everyday life. Religion as a basic principle with its habitual practices penetrates all spheres of people's lives; it shapes their daily experiences. According to the local perception, Kankan is not very productive at the economic level. A study by the United Nations (2013, 7) found out that the poverty rate in Kankan is higher than in the rest of the country. Moreover, it states that women and young people are the main victims of this difficult economic situation. Djénabou Dramé, one of the research collaborators, used to say '*ici, ça va à la kankanaise*,' meaning that everyday life is continuing, and things, especially at the economic and infrastructural levels, are not really progressing.

Kankan's society is patrilinear. Officially, public opinion regarding gender relations according to local meanings, articulated as religious and customary norms, is unequivocal. A woman's place, in Kankan, like in other West African cities, is at home, where women are in charge of the children and all domestic work (Bano Barry, Diallo, and Camare 2006, 12). The head of the household – the family's number-one breadwinner and decision-maker – is a man. Article 324 of the Guinean Civil Code, which was valid at the time of

research, stated: “The husband is the head of the family. He executes this function in the common interest of the household and the children.” Article 396 added that he exercises parental authority (République de Guinée 2015, author’s translation). The popular perception of a wife’s role is that of a subordinate, fulfilling her husband’s every desire and obeying his every command. During their childhood and youth, girls must obey their fathers; once married, women come under the authority of their husbands (Godard and Meffe 2006, 1056). However, daily realities paint a different, more subtly nuanced picture. Female agency is manifold and they do articulate themselves politically, as this book will show.

In Guinea, polygyny¹¹ has been officially forbidden since the Touré period (article 315, République de Guinée 2015). Nevertheless, its practice, namely taking up to four wives, was and is still widespread. According to the demographic and health survey of 2005 (République de Guinée 2006: 97), 53 per cent of married women live in a polygynous household. In polygynous families, one woman is usually responsible for cooking, washing, and ironing the husband’s clothes, and so on, for two to four days. During this time, it is also her right to spend the nights in her husband’s room. Afterwards, it is the next wife’s turn. A widow should remarry after some time; at best, one of her late husband’s younger brothers.

Doing Fieldwork in Kankan

Polygyny constituted one of the many personal challenges I faced when doing research in Kankan. Fieldwork is a fundamental social endeavour; the researcher with his or her convictions forms part of the experience in the field. Our multiple identities, our background, our habits, and our imaginations of the future highly influence fieldwork (Robben 2007, 61–63; Huggins and Glebbeek 2009, 9). I reflected elsewhere about how my identities have affected my research – from data gathering, data analysis, to the writing-up process. Overall, I would like to call for more reflexivity on our positionalities in anthropological research (Ammann 2018a).

The data for this study was collected during one year of ethnographic fieldwork and is based on interviews, group discussions, informal conversations, as well as observations of and participation in everyday life. The first phase of fieldwork lasted from August 2011 until March 2012. The second phase took place between November 2012 and February 2013. During the whole time, I was able to live in the house of the Fofana family. Madame Fofana, as I used to call her, was born in the mid-1960s and grew up in a polygamous family. Madame Fofana’s husband, a school director, had died in January 2009 due to an illness. She told me that he had a good salary and was well esteemed and connected. His death signified a major shift in the emotional, economical, and social lives of all family members.

Madame and Mister Fofana had four children: Diaka, born in 1990, was in her final year at the Julius Nyérére University where she studied management. Alpha was born in 1992 and frequented school in Conakry where he lived

with his grandparents. Doussou, born in 1993, also lived with them in the capital city and attended a technical college to study computer science. Ibrahima, born in 1995, was in the final year of high school in a private school in Kankan. Lastly, Sala, born in 1993 and originating from the countryside, had lost both his parents and also lived with the family. After Mister Fofana's death, Madame Fofana remained single. When I was wondering why she did not remarry, Madame Fofana laughed and told me that many people were pushing her to marry again. However, she preferred staying single and living her own life (interview, 14.01.2013). When her husband was still alive, Madame Fofana did not work for money. After his death, she suddenly needed to be the family's breadwinner. At the time of research, she produced *bonbons*, frozen sweets.

Crucial for my fieldwork was finding suitable research collaborators. After one month in Kankan, I started collaborating with Thierno About Sow and Djenabou Dramé.¹² The former had learned the basis of reading and writing during three years of school attendance and was unemployed at the time. The later had earned a bachelor's degree in political philosophy. At the time of research, she worked as a teaching assistant at the university and was a member of various NGOs. They were both in their mid-twenties, originated from Fulani families, and were born and raised in Kankan.

Thierno and Djénabou were not simple field helpers; in fact, they fit much more into Townsend Middleton's and Eklavya Prahdan's description because they acted as "interlocutor and 'fixer' of ethnographic relations;" they were "constitutive of the field itself" (Middleton and Prahdan 2014, 357). Indeed, Thierno and Djénabou influenced what I was focusing on, in which neighbourhoods I spent time, and with whom I spoke; lastly, they decided what they translated and how they did it.¹³ Thierno and Djénabou told me how to behave appropriately in ever-changing situations, how to approach delicate topics, and how to formulate questions. When we were unsure how to tackle a certain issue, the three of us sat together, discussed the problems, and had a go at a new strategy. Thus, our approach was always commonly reflected and readjusted. In brief, they had a huge impact on my understanding of the social, economic, and political layers of Kankan's population, and thus, they co-produced the data.

By participating in Thierno's and Djénabou's everyday lives (as they were in mine) and observing their agency, I gained a great deal of insight into local gendered norms. In certain situations, it was challenging for Djénabou to ask the research participants so many questions. Probably the most difficult interview for her was the one with her own father. In such situations, she turned to me and accused me jokingly of speaking too much. By saying so, Djénabou could hand over the responsibility for her 'rude' behaviour. She was also very cautious not to dwell too much into the participants' personal issues. It seemed as if Thierno, in contrast, felt at ease with the role of the person who asks questions – even though he was aware of his inferiority regarding schooling and economic background compared to many research

participants. The described difference between Therno and Djénabou hints at disparities regarding proper gendered behaviour in Kankan: While it is appropriate for a (young) man to be interested in and ask countless questions about a person's life, the same demeanour is difficult for a (young) woman, especially when she addresses elderly men.

Working with research collaborators raises questions of authorship, authority, and ethical considerations in general (Galizia and Schneider 2005, 8; Gupta 2014). As colleagues and I have argued elsewhere (Ammann, Kaiser-Grolimund, and Staudacher 2016), we plea for an anthropological writing that explicitly reveals the impact of research collaborators in our projects – not only in the PhD theses, but also in scientific books, edited volumes, and articles. Or in the words of Townsend Middleton and Eklavya Pradhan: “Incorporating their voices marks a definitive step in recognizing and perhaps getting beyond the ‘hidden colonialism’ at hand so as to chart a more inclusive and innovative ethnography for the future” (Middleton and Pradhan 2014, 371–372).

Intrinsic to my research was the focus on “the everyday, the ordinary and the seemingly insignificant” (Lewis 2005, 381). I grasped everyday life through three approaches: Firstly, the mapping of social actors; secondly, discourse analysis; and, thirdly, social-practice analysis. This circular approach was helpful in grasping new and constantly changing social spaces and perceiving the political articulations therein. The three components are interrelated and constitute each other; each approach is only fruitful with the knowledge gained through the other two (Förster et al. 2011). I used interviews, informal conversations, and naturally occurring talks for the analysis of discourses. I further collected (online) media articles. Generally, I identify with Claudia Roth's (2005, 185, author's translation) method of ‘situational research’ that entails waiting “with my questions for the right moments, those situations, in which they were appropriate and embedded.”

I participated in the daily lives of the Fofanas, Thierno, Djénabou, and other friends and acquaintances. I joined weddings, funerals, baptisms, and took part in public events such as the annual independence celebrations. Observations were undertaken on a daily basis, especially in the social spaces of markets and cafés. As a female research participant put it: ‘Women discuss their social problems where they sell or where they braid their hair’ (field notes, 09.01.2013). Men in contrast recurrently meet in one of the many cafés where they discuss and debate a large variety of topics. Amara Kamano, who was born in the early 1970s, stated: “In cafés, there is nothing people do not say. If you want to hear the city's news, you must go to the cafés; it is only there that you will hear certain things” (interview, 10.01.2013). Cafés, as social spaces, have many similarities to *grins*, the famous attaya-tea group. Both are meeting points where (young) people, mostly men, gather. “Grins [and cafés] thus function like a space of political expression and are presented as places where political opinion can be sampled” (Bondaz 2013, 69, author's translation).

Overall, I applied a variety of methods to research women's political articulations in the secondary city of Kankan. As each of these methods has its strengths



Figure 1(2) A Typical Café in Kankan

and limits, the application of a methodological diversity can help with the crosschecking and triangulation of data and, hence, validate them (deWalt and deWalt 2011, 102). Generally, there was no clear distinction between data generation, its interpretation, and writing it up; it was rather a circular process where every stage influenced the next one (Gupta 1995, 398–399).

The Chapters

The different parts of this book tell their own narratives; at the same time, they all contribute to the overall story by looking at the women-state nexus and women's political articulations in Kankan from various angles. Women are the main focus, but in some subchapters, they do not figure very prominently. Hereby, I want to illustrate that women's partial absence does also give valuable insight into women's political articulations in a Muslim Guinean city.

Chapter 1 deals with Guinea's historical trajectories. Hereby, I include data of how the research participants remember past conditions and events. I aim at demonstrating how women have contributed to the Guinean state and nation-building process. In this chapter, I demonstrate that elderly women, who have been or still are engaged within the institutional political sphere, started to do so during the First Republic when Sékou Touré wanted to make women one important pillar of his proclaimed revolution. I further argue that during the rule of General Lansana Conté, women were more pushed to the margins and no longer put on centre stage.

When I arrived in Kankan in August 2011, ethnicity was a constant topic of contestation. Chapter 2 takes this topic up and illustrates that in Guinea, ethnic belonging has not always been as important as it was before, during, and after the presidential elections of 2010. Here, I explain why and in which ways ethnicity has recently been politicised. Then, I elaborate on the contradicting governmental discourse and practices regarding ethnicity. In this chapter, I also demonstrate that when it comes to ethnicity, in most cases, gender is of marginal importance. The Association of Female Leaders serves as an example to show why and how women present their argument when leaving the predetermined path for locally acknowledged forms of female political articulations.

Chapter 3 analyses Alpha Condé's discourse of change as he strongly focuses on women and youths. It describes how the President, whose main stronghold is the Upper Guinea Region with Kankan as its largest city, embodies hope. Kankan's population expects that the coming into power of 'their' leader would facilitate its access to state resources, enhance the building of the city's infrastructure, and provide job opportunities. The chapter further shows that women adopt two main criteria along which the state's performance is evaluated: On the one hand, women expect the (local) government not to misappropriate public funds; and on the other hand, they mainly assess the state's performance according to its willingness and ability to reduce the food prices. Thus, Kankan's female population judges past and current Presidents, above all, by the food situation they faced at a certain time.

Chapter 4 analyses how the state performs and engages the issue of gender. The data illustrates that in Guinea, gender equality is locally understood as the promotion of women and the state depicts women as the needy and vulnerable part of society: The Guinean government and its employees frame the female population especially the not 'formally' educated women as immature and as victims. That is why the state bundles the different efforts labelled as 'women's concerns' within the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs. I argue that the government's official way of handling women complies with the international discourse on gender equality and women's promotion. In reality, however, ordinary women have difficulties accessing the different administrative units – also those of the Women's and Children's Affairs – which further enhances gender inequalities. In the second section of this chapter, I demonstrate how Djènè Kaba Condé, Guinea's First Lady, presents herself as a representative of the country's female population, even though she has little in common with an ordinary Guinean woman, who is not

highly educated and does not have a permanent and well-paid job. I explain why the behaviour of the Guinean First Lady can aptly be captured with the concept of the First Lady Syndrome described by Jibrin Ibrahim (2004) and of femocracy as defined by Amina Mama (1997): As soon as she became Alpha Condé's wife, Djènè Kaba Condé started campaigning for her husband and promoted gender equality and women's rights.

In Chapter 5, the focus lies on women within Guinea's institutional political sphere. The first section starts by providing an overview on women's increase in institutional politics at the continental level. Then, it highlights women's involvement in Guinean national politics. It further zooms in on Rabiou Sèrah Diallo, a trade unionist and the president of the Legislative National Transitional Council (*Conseil National de Transition*, CNT) between 2010 and 2014. In the second section, the chapter analyses women in the local political sphere by introducing two women who had highly visible posts. Then, it depicts three ordinary female members of local party branches in Kankan. On the basis of these examples, this chapter elaborates more broadly on women's roles within (local) political parties. It concludes by describing the ambivalent image of female Guinean politicians in local and national politics. Overall, I argue that women's claim making within Guinea's institutional politics is rather limited. Politics remains to be defined as a male domain. Within the sphere of party politics, women are not to express their ideas, make propositions, or raise new issues to discuss except for the well-educated women who hold important positions.

Chapter 6 deals with women's political articulations that emerge from the everyday. Based on the portraits of several women and concerning issues such as looking for a suitable husband, generating an income, and continuing one's education, it illustrates how femininities, masculinities, and gender relations are bargained over in daily life. The chapter demonstrates that even though the female research participants claim that their decision-making is limited and women mostly bargain within the locally acknowledged gendered norms of Kankan's patriarchal society, their agency is manifold and they use various ways of influencing their lives. This chapter further shows that women's strategies to reach their goals are diverse. They use 'sweet talks' with their husbands or intermediary parties if they want to convince them of certain issues. Making decisions relating to income-generating activities, family affairs, education, and marriage issues can create difficulties, thus women do so with discretion. Women also behave properly according to social and religious norms, for example by keeping the house and the children in order, by being polite to elderly people, by praying five times a day, or by not wandering around at night. Thus, they gain a reputation as a 'good' Muslim woman that allows them to pursue desired goals. Overall, I argue in this chapter that women in Kankan use their agency strategically to (re-)negotiate various forms of power and authority. They know in which situations it is suitable to remain silent and when it is legitimate to raise their voices.

Chapter 7 tackles the everyday bargaining of statehood through encounters between state representatives, ‘traditional’ authorities, and ordinary women. While in Kankan, the local government is an ambivalent sphere for women, the ‘traditional’ authorities are even more so. Women are systematically excluded from that sphere insofar as ‘traditional’ posts are exclusively reserved for men. Nevertheless, women can silently have some influence, as they advise powerful men through their positions as mothers, sisters, aunts, wives, or daughters. With the example of widows who claim their pensions, I illustrate that the formation of what Asef Bayat (2010) calls a “passive network” can be a useful tool for women to pursue their goals when dealing with representatives of the local government.

The chapter further emphasises that even if women are just rarely present during popular protest, the idea that they could be marching on the streets gives them some power. By closely looking at market women and their encounters with local state employees, it also illustrates that market women as collective actors can sometimes pursue their goals not least because they substantially contribute to their families’ budgets. Lastly, I argue that having personal relations to state employees is helpful in many ways: On the one hand, one has a direct access to a specific institution and must not take the hierarchical way which might never lead to the desired outcome. On the other hand, it enables people, also women, to act individually when addressing their problems.

Notes

- 1 In Kankan, people are called ‘intellectuals’ or highly educated when they have finished high school.
- 2 Already before Guinea’s independence women used market places to spread messages, as Elizabeth Schmidt (2002, 287–288) illustrates.
- 3 When looking at ordinary (men and) women, I mean average women (in Kankan) who are not, for example, highly educated and do not possess special social or economic resources.
- 4 These ‘traditional’ actors “do not simply inherit their position from their forefathers, nor do they stick to an unchanging model of what is appropriately labelled as ‘tradition’ and what is not. Very much as ‘tradition’ itself, ‘traditional’ actors are always in the making, and the driving forces of this process are deeply embedded in the political articulation of social difference” (Förster and Koechlin 2018, 242, quotation marks added).
- 5 Leaning on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001), I understand articulations as “ways in which actors express their own views and how this expression connects them” (Förster 2015, 209). Through articulations, social relations are established and political positions are shaped. They are always embedded within the local social discourse. More precisely, political articulations are those social practices through which members of a society communicate – verbally and non-verbally – how they want to deal with social problems, regardless of whether the actors consider them as political. Hence, political articulations are about how a society wants to live together and establish relations between various actors. Only if other persons perceive an actor’s agency as such – that is, when actors relate to each other – does it become socially relevant and can be considered as political articulations.

20 Introduction

- 6 Some social anthropologists have criticised this broad, “diffuse and nebulous” (Curtis and Spencer 2012, 168) usage of the political (e.g. Candea 2011).
- 7 AbdouMaliq Simone (2004, 12–13) similarly describes how people in African cities are reaffirming coalitions: “Sometimes people coalesce in organization that have names, but where it is unclear to almost everyone what precisely the organization is and what it does. At other times, an event may trigger an entire neighborhood into apparently unfamiliar courses of action but with a synchronicity that makes it appear as if some deep-seated logic of social mobilization is being unleashed. At still other times, the ways in which localities both activate and resist change in relationship to the decisions of government authorities construct tentative platforms for people to collaborate in ‘silent’ but powerful ways.”
- 8 In the scientific literature, silence is often important when traumas and war are researched, for example Holocaust survivors and their descendants, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (Ross 2001), or Persian migrant women in Australia (Warin and Dennis 2008).
- 9 For an overview on anthropological literature on agency in Africa, see Mirjam de Bruijn, Rijk van Dijk, and Jan Bart Gewald (2007), Casey High (2010), as well as Dieter Neubert and Christine Scherer (2014). Lastly, Francis Nyamnjoh (2007) writes about methodological and ethical challenges of researching agency in Africa.
- 10 Here, I add up the numbers for Kankan centre and Karifamoriyah, a nearby village that is today considered as part of the city. Generally, these figures must be handled with care: O’Toole and Baker (2005, 121), for example, indicate the number of Kankan’s inhabitants as 278,000 at the beginning of the 2000s.
- 11 I use the term *polygyny*, referring to men marrying multiple women, rather than *polygamy*, a term hinting to multiple male or female spouses. The new Civil Code officially legitimised polygyny again in 2016 (République de Guinée 2016).
- 12 Thierno and Djénabou have asked to be cited by their proper names. Elsewhere, I have reflected extensively on our collaboration and their contribution to the processes of data gathering and data analysis (Ammann, Kaiser-Grolimund, and Staudacher 2016).
- 13 Unfortunately, my knowledge of Maninkakan remained basic. Consequently, Thierno and Djénabou translated the research participants’ statements into French. Not being able to communicate in the local language is a major shortcoming of my research and it increased the importance of the two research collaborators.

Bibliography

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. “The Romance of Resistance. Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women.” *American Ethnologist* 17(1):41–55.
- Afshar, Haleh. 1996. “Women and the Politics of Fundamentalism in Iran.” In *Women and Politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Afshar, 124–144. London/New York: Routledge.
- Ammann, Carole. 2017. “Imagery of Kankan, a Secondary City in Guinea.” *Basel Paper on Political Transformations* (11–12):25–34.
- Ammann, Carole. 2018a. “Challenges and Opportunities of Doing Fieldwork as a Woman on Women in Guinea.” In *Women Researching in Africa. The Impact of Gender*, edited by Ruth Jackson, and Max Kelly, 217–234. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Ammann, Carole. 2018b. “Political Parties and Participation: Guinea.” In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*, edited by Suad Joseph. Leiden: Brill Online.

- Ammann, Carole, Andrea Kaiser-Grolimund, and Sandra Staudacher. 2016. "Research Assistants. Invisible but Indispensable in Ethnographic Research." *Tsantsa* 21:152–156.
- Avishai, Orit, Lynne Gerber, and Jennifer Randles. 2012. "The Feminist Ethnographer's Dilemma. Reconciling Progressive Research Agendas with Fieldwork Realities." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42(4):394–426.
- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou, Alpha Bacar Diallo, and Mohamed Campbel Camare. 2006. "Étude situationnelle sur la famille en Guinée." Accessed 30. 03. 2017. http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/barry_baro_alpha_amadou/etude_famille_guinee/etude_famille_guinee.pdf.
- Bayat, Asef. 1997. "Un-Civil Society. The Politics of the 'Informal People'." *Third World Quarterly* 18(1):53–72.
- Bayat, Asef. 2000. "From 'Dangerous Classes' to 'Quiet Rebels'. Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South." *International Sociology* 15(3):533–557.
- Bayat, Asef. 2010. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Bertrand, Monique. 1997. "Kankan entre mobilité et ancrages." In *Petites et moyennes villes d'Afrique noire*, edited by Monique Bertrand, and Alain Dubresson, 241–277. Paris: Karthala.
- Bondaz, Julien. 2013. "Le thé des hommes. Sociabilités masculines et culture de la rue au Mali." *Cahiers d'études africaines* (209–210):61–85.
- Bouilly, Emmanuelle, Ophélie Rillon, and Hannah Cross. 2016. "African Women's Struggles in a Gender Perspective." *Review of African Political Economy* 43 (149):338–349.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 1996. *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the new Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou, Thomas O'Toole, and Janice E. Baker. 2014. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*. 5 ed. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press.
- Candea, Matei. 2011. "'Our Division of the Universe.' Making a Space for the Non-Political in the Anthropology of Politics." *Current Anthropology* 52(3):309–334.
- Clark, Gracia. 2001. "'Nursing-Mother Work' in Ghana. Power and Frustration in Akan Market Women's Lives." In *Women Traders in Cross-Cultural Perspective. Mediating Identities, Marketing Wares* edited by Linda J. Seligmann, 102–126. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Clark, Gracia. 2010. *African Market Women. Seven Life Stories from Ghana*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Connell, Robert William. 2005 [1995]. *Masculinities*. 2 ed. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Curtis, Jennifer, and Jonathan Spencer. 2012. "Anthropology and the Political." In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*, edited by Richard Fardon, Olivia Harris, Trevor H. J. Marchand, Mark Nuttall, Cris Shore, Veronica Strang, and Richard A. Wilson, 168–182. London: Sage.
- Dahinden, Janine. 2016. "A plea for the 'de-migrantization' of research on migration and integration." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39(13):2207–2225.
- Dave, Nomi. 2014. "The Politics of Silence. Music, Violence and Protest in Guinea." *Ethnomusicology* 58(1):1–29.
- de Alwis, Malathi. 2004. "Feminism." In *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, edited by David Nugent, and Joan Vincent, 121–134. Oxford: Blackwell.

- de Bruijn, Mirjam, Rijk van Dijk, and Jan Bart Gewald. 2007. "Social and Historical Trajectories of Agency in Africa." In *African Alternatives*, edited by Patrick Chabal, Ulf Engel, and Leo de Haan, 9–20. Leiden: Brill.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2013. "Le lu ne meurt jamais. Mobilités des individus et pérennité de la résidence dans un village malinké de Guinée." *Géocarrefour* 88(2):131–138.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2016. "From Pickaxes to Metal Detectors. Gold Mining Mobility and Space in Upper Guinea, Guinea Conakry." *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3(2):435–441.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2019a. "Une justice foncièrement autre? Pouvoir et foncier en contexte minier guinéen." *Revue internationale des études du développement* 2(238):141–164.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2019b. "Women, Power, and the State in Guinea." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, edited by Thomas Spear. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.538.
- deWalt, Kathleen Musante, and Billie R. deWalt. 2011. *Participant Observation. A Guide for Fieldworkers*. 2 ed. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Anne Mische. 1998. "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103(4):962–1023.
- Fioratta, Susanna. 2015. "Beyond Remittance. Evading Uselessness and Seeking Personhood in Fouta Djallon, Guinea." *American Ethnologist* 42(2):295–308.
- Förster, Till. 2015. "The Formation of Governance. The Politics of Governance and Their Theoretical Dimensions." In *The Politics of Governance. Actors and Articulation in Africa and Beyond*, edited by Till Förster, and Lucy Koechlin, 197–218. London/New York: Routledge.
- Förster, Till, Barbara Heer, Michelle Engeler, Andrea A. Kaufmann, Kerstin Bauer, and Kathrin Heitz. 2011. "The Emic Evaluation Approach – Epistemologies, Experience, and Ethnographic Practice." *Basel Paper on Political Transformations* (3).
- Förster, Till, and Lucy Koechlin. 2011. "The Politics of Governance. Power and Agency in the Formation of Political Order in Africa." *Basel Papers on Political Transformations* (1).
- Förster, Till, and Lucy Koechlin. 2018. "Traditional' Authorities." In *Oxford Handbook of Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood*, edited by Anke Draude, Tanja A. Börzel, and Thomas Risse, 231–249. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Furth, Rebecca. 2005. "Marrying the Forbidden Other. Marriage, Status and Social Change in the Futa Jallon Highlands of Guinea." PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin.
- Galizia, Michele, and Jürg Schneider. 2005. "Einleitung." In *Fremde Freunde. Gewährsleute der Ethnologie*, edited by Charlotte Beck, Romana Büchel, Michele Galizia, Simone Prodolliet, Jürg Schneider, and Heinzpeter Znoj, 7–15. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag.
- Godard, Aurélie, and Barbara Meffe. 2006. "Travail des femmes et ethnicité en milieu rural guinéen." Accessed 19. 06. 2013. <http://www.erudit.org/livre/aidelf/2006/001467co.pdf>.
- Godard, Aurélie, Barbara Meffe, and Véronique Petit. 2007. "Diversification et complémentarité des réponses des ménages ruraux face à la pauvreté en Guinée Maritime." In *Dynamiques de pauvretés et vulnérabilités en démographie et en science sociales*, edited by Bruno Masquelier, and Thierry Eggerickx. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain.
- Godard, Aurélie. 2010. *Le travail des femmes en Guinée maritime. De l'organisation sociale à l'organisation économique*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Goerg, Odile. 2011. "Couper la Guinée en quatre ou comment la colonisation a imaginé l'Afrique." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 3(111):73–88.

- Goetz, Anne Marie. 2003. "Women's Political Effectiveness. A Conceptual Framework." In *No Shortcuts to Power. African Women in Politics and Policy Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, and Shireen Hassim, 29–80. London/New York: Zed Books.
- Greenhouse, Carol J. 2002. "Introduction. Altered States, Altered Lives." In *Ethnography in Unstable Places. Everyday Lives in Contexts of Dynamic Political Change*, edited by Carol J. Greenhouse, Elizabeth Mertz, and Kay B. Warren, 1–34. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Gupta, Akhil. 1995. "Blurred Boundaries. The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State." In *The Anthropology of the State. A Reader*, edited by Aradhana Sharma, and Akhil Gupta, 211–246. Malden: Blackwell.
- Gupta, Akhil. 2014. "Authorship, Research Assistants and the Ethnographic Field." *Ethnography* 15(3):394–400.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. 2007. "Playing One's Part. The Imaginative Framework of Agency." *Irish Journal of Anthropology* 10(2):26–34.
- High, Casey. 2010. "Agency and Anthropology. Selected Bibliography." *Ateliers d'anthropologie* (34). Accessed 12. 09. 2019. doi:10.4000/ateliers.8516.
- Huggins, Martha K., and Marie-Louise Glebbeek. 2009. "Introduction. Similarities Among Differences." In *Women Fielding Danger. Negotiating Ethnographic Identities in Field* edited by Martha K. Huggins, and Marie-Louise Glebbeek, 1–27. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Ibrahim, Jibrin. 2004. "The First Lady Syndrome and the Marginalisation of Women from Power. Opportunities or Compromises for Gender Equality?" *Feminist Africa* 3:1–14.
- Johnson-Hanks, Jennifer. 2002. "On the Limits of Life Stages in Ethnography. Toward a Theory of Vital Conjunctures." *American Anthropologist* 104(3):865–880.
- Kallio, Kirsi Pauliina, and Jouni Häkli. 2013. "Children and Young People's Politics in Everyday Life." *Space and Polity* 17(1):1–16.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1988. "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender & Society* 2(3):274–290.
- Keane, Webb. 2003. "Self-Interpretation, Agency, and the Objects of Anthropology. Reflections on a Genealogy." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2):222–248.
- Kerkvliet, Benedict J. 2002. *Everyday Politics in the Philippines. Class and Status Relations in a Central Luzon village*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kerkvliet, Benedict J. 2005. *The Power of Everyday Politics. How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe. 2001. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. 2 ed. London: Verso.
- Leftwich, Adrian. 1984. "Politics. People, Resources and Power." In *What is Politics. The Activity and its Study*, edited by Adrian Leftwich, 62–84. Cambridge/Malden: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lewis, Desiree. 2005. "African Gender Research and Postcoloniality. Legacies and Challenges." In *African Gender Studies. A Reader*, edited by Oyèrónké Oyewùmí, 381–396. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2001. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent. Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology* 16(2):202–236.
- Mama, Amina. 1997. "Feminism or Femocracy? State Feminism and Democratisation in Nigeria." In *The Expansion of Democratic Space in Nigeria*, edited by Jibrin Ibrahim, 37–58. Dakar: CODESIRA.
- Middleton, Townsend, and Eklavya Pradhan. 2014. "Dynamic Duos. On Partnership and the Possibilities of Postcolonial Ethnography." *Ethnography* 15(3):355–374.

- Migdal, Joel S., and Klaus Schlichte. 2005. "Rethinking the State." In *The Dynamics of States. The Formation and Crisis of State Domination*, edited by Klaus Schlichte, 1–40. Burlington: Ashgate.
- Moran, Mary. 2012. "Our Mothers Have Spoken. Synthesizing Old and New Forms of Women's Political Authority in Liberia." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13(4):51–66.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2002. *Faces of the State. Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Neubert, Dieter, and Christine Scherer. 2014. "Agency and Worldviews. An Introduction." In *Agency and Changing World Views in Africa*, edited by Dieter Neubert, and Christine Scherer, 1–13. Münster: LIT Verlag.
- Norval, Aletta J. 2015. "Imagining Otherwise. Dislocation, Subjectivity and the Articulation of Political Demands." In *The Politics of Governance*, edited by Till Förster, and Lucy Koechlin, 180–193. New York: Routledge.
- Nugent, David. 2004. "Governing States." In *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, edited by David Nugent, and Joan Vincent, 198–215. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis. 2007. "Epilogue. Theorizing Agency in and on Africa. The Questions are Key." In *Strength Beyond Structure. Social and Historical Trajectories of Agency in Africa*, edited by Rijk van Dijk, Mirjam De Bruijn, and Jan-Bart Gewalt, 334–338. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- O'Toole, Thomas, and Janice E. Baker. 2005. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*. Lanham/Toronto/Oxford: The Scarecrow Press.
- Osborn, Emily Lynn. 2004. "'Rubber Fever', Commerce and French Colonial Rule in Upper Guinea, 1890–1913." *Journal of African History* 45(3):445–465.
- Osborn, Emily Lynn. 2011. *Our New Husbands Are Here. Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State from the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2007. "Tous derrière, les femmes devant! Femmes, représentations sociales et mobilisation politique en Guinée (1945–2006)." In *Perspectives historiques sur le genre en Afrique*, edited by Odile Goerg, 221–237. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2018. "'La femme au pouvoir, ce n'est pas le monde à l'envers.' Le militantisme au féminin en Guinée, des années 1950 à 1984." In *Femmes d'Afrique et émancipation: entre normes sociales contraignantes et nouveaux possibles*, edited by Muriel Gomez-Perez, 73–111. Paris: Karthala.
- Pelican, Michaela, and Jan Patrick Heiss. 2014. "'Making a future' in contemporary Africa. Introduction." *Journal des Africanistes* 84(1):7–19.
- Rai, Shirin M. 1996. "Women and the State in the Third World." In *Women and Politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Afshar, 26–40. London/New York: Routledge.
- Ranchod-Nilsson, Sita, and Mary Ann Tétreault. 2000. "Gender and Nationalism. Moving Beyond Fragmented Conversations." In *Women, States, and Nationalism. At Home in the Nation?*, edited by Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, and Mary Ann Tétreault, 1–17. London/New York: Routledge.
- Randall, Vicky. 1998. "Gender and Power. Women Engage the State." In *Gender, Politics and the State*, edited by Vicky Randall, and Georgina Waylen, 184–205. London: Routledge.
- Rapport, Nigel, and Joanna Overing. 2014. *Social and Cultural Anthropology. The Key Concepts*. 3 ed. London: Routledge.

- République de Guinée. 2006. *Enquête démographique et de santé, Guinée 2005*. Conakry/Calverton: Direction Nationale de la Statistique (DNS) du Ministère du Plan.
- République de Guinée. 2014. *Arrêté N° 3015/MP/SG/2015. Portant publication des résultats préliminaires du troisième recensement général de la population et de l'habitation réalisé du 1er Mars au 02 Avril 2014*. Ministre du Plan.
- République de Guinée. 2015. "Code Civil de la République de Guinée." Accessed 09. 07. 2019. <https://sites.google.com/site/guineejuristes/codes>.
- République de Guinée. 2016. "Nouveau Code civil." Accessed 09. 07. 2019. <http://www.mccguinee.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NOUVEAU-CODE-CIVIL-DE-LA-REPUBLIQUE-DE-GUINEE-Fevrier-2016.pdf>.
- Rey, Pascal. 2007. "Le sage et l'Etat. Pouvoir, territoire et développement en Guinée Maritime." PhD Thesis, Université Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux III.
- Robben, Antonius C. G. M. 2007. "Fieldwork Identity. Introduction." In *Ethnographic Fieldwork. An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Antonius C. G. M. Robben, and Jeffrey A. Sluka, 59–65. Victoria: Blackwell.
- Ross, Fiona C. 2001. "Speech and Silence: Women's Testimony in the first Five Weeks of the Public Hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission." In *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery*, edited by Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Margaret M. Lock, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds, 250–279. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Roth, Claudia. 2005. "Die eigenen Augen, der fremde Blick." In *Fremde Freunde. Gewährsleute der Ethnologie*, edited by Charlotte Beck, Romana Büchel, Michele Galizia, Simone Prodolliet, Jürg Schneider, and Heinzpeter Znoj, 184–201. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2002. "'Emancipate Your Husbands!' Women and Nationalism in Guinea 1953–1958." In *Women in African Colonial Histories*, edited by Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi, 282–304. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2005. *Mobilizing the Masses. Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939–1958*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Schroven, Anita. 2010. "The People, the Power and the Public Service. Political Identification During Guinea's General Strikes in 2007." *Development and Change* 41 (4):659–677.
- Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2004. *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities*. Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press.
- Smid, Karen. 2010. "Resting at Creation and Afterlife. Distant Times in the Ordinary Strategies of Muslim Women in the Rural Fouta Djallon, Guinea." *American Ethnologist* 37(1):36–52.
- Spencer, Jonathan. 1997. "Post-Colonialism and the Political Imagination." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3(1):1–19.
- Spencer, Jonathan. 2007. *Anthropology, Politics, and the State. Democracy and Violence in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Steady, Filomina Chioma. 2011. *Women and Leadership in West Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Storr, Virgil Henry. 2008. "The Market as a Social Space. On the Meaningful Extra-economic Conversations That Can Occur in Markets." *The Review of Austrian Economics* 21(2–3):135–150.
- Thapar-Björkert, Suruchi. 2013. "Gender, Nations, and Nationalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, edited by Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola, Georgina Waylen, and Laurel S. Weldon, 803–827. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Thomson, Susan. 2014. "Accepting Authoritarianism? Everyday Resistance as Political Consciousness in Post-Genocide Rwanda." In *Civic Agency in Africa. Arts of Resistance in the 21st Century*, edited by Ebenezer Obadare, and Wendy Willems, 104–124. Rochester: James Currey.
- Touré, Mabetty. 2013. "Les rapports de genre et la filière néré en Haute Guinée." PhD Thesis, Université Toulouse.
- United Nations. 2013. "Programme conjoint des Nations Unies pour la région administrative de Kankan (PCK)." Accessed 17. 12. 2019. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/guinea/docs/operations/programme-conjoint-snu-region-kankan.pdf>.
- Van Allen, Judith. 2009. "Radical Citizenship. Powerful Mothers and Equal Rights." In *Power, Gender and Social Change in Africa*, edited by Muna Ndulo and Margaret Grieco, 60–76. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Warin, Megan, and Simone Dennis. 2008. "Telling Silences: Unspeakable Trauma and the Unremarkable Practices of Everyday Life." *The Sociological Review* 56(2):100–116.
- Waylen, Georgina. 1996. "Analysing Women in the Politics of the Third World." In *Women and Politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Afshar, 8–25. London/New York: Routledge.

1 Gendered Conceptions throughout Guinean History

Introduction

In the past, gender identities in Africa “have been particularly fluid and contested” (Miescher and Lindsay 2003, 4). As the media all too often depicts Africa as one unit, it is especially important to note that “there is no generic ‘African’ woman (or man), and that African women’s and men’s lives, like those of all people, are fluid and change over time” (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, and Osirim 2008, 5). Thus, this chapter analyses how women as a social category have been constructed politically, economically, and socially throughout Guinea’s history. Hereby, the scope is not to give an overview on the complex history of today’s Guinea, but rather to provide the basis for understanding ongoing debates and contestations surrounding the Guinean state as historical, political, social, and economic legacies that shaped and still shape the population and the state apparatus. The focus lies on how the research participants remember past conditions and events. Another emphasis is put on women’s influence in the state formation and nation-building processes. What political roles and social places in the Guinean society did its past Presidents assign to women? In which ways did their discourse and actual practices regarding Guinea’s female inhabitants vary? And how have women conformed and adapted to and possibly subverted these ideas?

Human agency is always an outcome of its three temporal dimensions. Here, I deal with its past dimension, as this highly influences the present. When looking at the connection between the past and the present, it is important to note that remembering and forgetting – either individually or collectively – are related in multiple, intricate ways; the past and the present cannot be separated. When talking about the past, people always give their own interpretations. Further, the past informs how people experience the present and the presence influences how people remember the past. Memories are not fixed because remembering is an ongoing process. Memories can change as the actors’ social experiences change. This becomes evident when individuals and groups from the local, national, as well as international levels use records of the past to make claims to critique present circumstances (Connerton 1989, 3). In the Guinean case, especially the memory of the First

Republic under Ahmed Sékou Touré is politicised: Different groups interpret this time by applying a victim and perpetrator dichotomy (Arieff and McGovern 2013; Camara 2014, xvii–xix).

In what follows, I look at how various actors have shaped and reshaped gender relations in Guinea. I analyse how the Guinean state has influenced them and how the research participants evaluate these efforts retrospectively. This historical perspective helps in understanding how gendered norms are bargained over in the present and how they are imagined to be in a future to come. I firstly discuss the Muslim migration into the Milo River Valley. I show on the one hand, how Kankan was founded, and on the other hand, how the processes of household building and state-building were mutually interlocked, and as such, how women have been an important factor in their spouses', brothers', and sons' success. Secondly, I introduce how the French colonisers forged the Guinean colony through a male bureaucracy. Thirdly, I demonstrate how the anti-colonial Democratic Party of Guinea-African Democratic Rally (*Parti Démocratique de Guinée-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*, PDG-RDA) has been established and explain women's engagement within the nationalist movement. Fourthly, I provide an overview over the First Republic (1958–1984) under the independence hero Sékou Touré. Here, I illustrate how Touré represented himself as the nation's father and as a promoter of women and gender equality. Fifthly, I discuss women's minimal political influence during Lansana Conté's reign between 1984 and 2008. I also illustrate why national strikes paralysed the country in 2006 and 2007 and what role women played therein. Lastly, I show how the Guinean population experienced the turbulent transitional period since Lansana Conté's death.¹

Gender in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Times

Household Building as a Pillar for Pre-Colonial State-Building

In the seventeenth century, Muslim clerics from the North founded the state of Baté in the Milo River Valley, the origins of present day Kankan (Kaba 1976b, 410). Its main villages and towns were clustered around the Milo River that served as an agricultural, transportation, and communication basis. Baté's inhabitants trace their history back to Sun(d)jata Keita and the Mali Empire and feel culturally and historically associated with the Mande world (Osborn 2011, 13). Interestingly, the epic of Sun(d)jata Keita is spiked with women who – in their roles as mothers, wives, and sisters – influence the course of actions of their male relatives (Osborn 2011, 6; Dessertine 2019, 3).

In Baté, all villages and towns had their own chiefs, male members mostly of the Kaba family (Goerg 1986, 184). Baté's inhabitants focused on agriculture and religious studies. Agriculture limited the families' material wealth and men depended on the contribution of the female family members to cultivate their fields. Men rarely had more than two women, as they could not afford the bride wealth. Not relying on warfare, the Muslim migrants had to

establish good relations with their non-Muslim neighbours, especially members of the Condé family who were perceived as the “owner of the lands” (Osborn 2011, 43).

Emily Lynn Osborn (2011, 41) advocates taking into consideration the households’ role when analysing state-building in West Africa. She emphasises that in pre-colonial Baté, households were essential for the building and durability of the state: “Stories about sibling rivalries, religious differences, and deviant wives – and the idealized gender roles that are woven through them – present, in effect, an account of the workings of power and politics in the nascent state of Baté” (Osborn 2011, 23). Women could not take up leadership positions, and state-building was a “thoroughly masculinist and patriarchal” affair (Osborn 2011, 3). However, Osborn highlights that households were important pillars of state-building and consequently, women had some indirect political influence: Baté’s male elites were eager to avoid conflicts within the households because they could have devastating effects on their state-building efforts. Furthermore, women could use their social roles as mothers, daughters, and wives to influence their male relatives. Especially elderly women after menopause could attain a respected status (Osborn 2011, 3, 32).

Around the late 1760s and early 1770s, Brahima Condé attacked Baté. Some people fled the region, others were captured. Alfa Kabiné Kaba, a devout and learned Muslim and Baté’s chief at that time, found refuge in the Fouta Djallon (Osborn 2011, 50–54). When armies of the Fouta Djallon theocracy defeated Condé Brahima, Kaba and his followers returned to the Milo River Valley where they founded the city of Kankan. Once again, the region did not base its existence on warfare; but instead the practise of building up a household constituted an important factor in the state-building process (Osborn 2011, 50–56). Alpha Kabiné Kaba is said to have introduced a political system of city growth through marriage of foreign men to local women called *Nabaya*. Thanks to this system, merchants and migrants have been integrated into Kankan’s households. Especially single men from the Mande region north of the city could profit from *Nabaya*, as they were usually allowed to marry one of Kankan’s women. Thus, marriage was an important state-building strategy (Osborn 2011, 57).

By the early nineteenth century, Kankan had become a “major centre of commerce and production” (Osborn 2011, 19) and of Islamic erudition (Goerg 1986, 191). Those days are remembered as a time when the city grew and prospered under the benevolent guidance of Alfa Kabiné Kaba who is referred to as *M’Bemba*, ‘our grandfather’. Kaba is presented as an ideal man; a devote Muslim, wise and just, without martial ambitions (Osborn 2011, 59–62). At that time, not only men but also women were engaged in trade. But while men’s long-distance trade in gold, kola nuts, slaves, and salt was quite profitable, women’s localised commerce such as growing vegetable and dyeing cloth were less lucrative. These new economic patterns had an impact on gender relations in Kankan: Its households were still an essential element of statecraft; however, with the accumulated wealth invested in slave

labour, men were less dependent on the collaboration and contribution of their female relatives, therefore gender relations within the households shifted. In the accounts of those times, women figure less prominently than before and tales of ‘bad women’ whose actions had a devastating effect on the whole city had vanished. Women were rather depicted as simple and subservient. Emily Lynn Osborn (2011, 62–67) takes this as a sign that men were less afraid of women’s agency because they did not have to rely on them like in the decades before.

Bemba is the nickname of an elderly man who is very active in Kankan’s political and cultural life. He claims to know its history well and talked about Kankan’s founding time in every of our conversations. When I asked Bemba about women from Kankan who were positively remembered until today, he mentioned Fadima Jenné, Alfa Kabiné Kaba’s mother: “Fadima Jenné accepted that her son was within everyone’s reach so that they could profit. Not every woman would do this. Today, if a man distributes everything, his mother or someone within the family might become angry and discredit him. Fadima Jenné however, has been very famous and far-sighted” (interview, 10.12.2012). Bemba depicted Fadima Jenné as a ‘good’ wife and caring mother who had submissively carried out her duties and had not complained about her son supporting Kankan’s population in manifold ways. Hence, Bemba’s narration follows the same line as Osborn’s (2011, 64) statement that Fadima Jenné “presents a concentrated ideal” of female behaviour.

Colonial State-Building: Women’s Influence Decreased

In the mid-nineteenth century, Baté’s young men became more and more attracted by the idea of expanding their territory through warfare. During their military campaigns, men accumulated slaves and wives as symbols of power and wealth. Baté’s households were still symbolically important for state-building, but no longer sites of political production and reproduction. Thus, as the importance of Baté’s households changed, women’s ability to indirectly influence politics as mothers, sisters, and wives decreased radically. Emily Lynn Osborn (2011, 74–91) underlines that, in the narratives between 1850 and 1881, women mostly figure as victims of men’s violence.

In the last third of the nineteenth century, the Manding trader and warrior Samory Touré conquered a significant part of West African territory. Samory Touré built Mosques and the conquered people had to convert to Islam. His many wives and thousands of slaves served as a proof of Samory’s wealth and power (Camara, O’Toole, and Baker 2014, 8). Initially, the Kaba, Kankan’s leading family, entered into a fragile alliance with Samory Touré. When the Kaba rejected Samory’s wish to marry into their family, the latter lay siege to the city and finally occupied it in 1881. Samory Touré’s reign of Kankan lasted for ten years (Osborn 2011, 109–111).

Initially, the Samory Touré and his warriors successfully fought against the French colonisers. Thus, the Manding ruler became a hero and was especially praised as an idol during the Guinean struggle for independence (Camara, O'Toole, and Baker 2014, 8). Kankan's population, however, does not remember Samory as a hero because of the negative consequences his warfare had on the city (Osborn 2011, 109–111). In the local narratives of Samory Touré, women do not figure prominently, demonstrating that Kankan's "male elites no longer relied on their wives as they once had. Men could accumulate wealth and power through warfare in the form of booty and slaves, which reduced men's dependence on their female relations and constrained the influence of women's household roles" (Osborn 2011, 99–100).

Since 1879, the French advanced into the Upper Guinea Region,² but its final occupation was only achieved after a long military conquest (Goerg 1986, 225). Almost a decade after their first inroads into the interior of what would later become Guinea and Mali, they also conquered Kankan in April 1891 (Goerg 1986, 236–237). Due to its business activities, the city already had more than 10,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the twentieth century – more than Conakry at that time. Especially the commerce with rubber was lucrative, and a significant part of Kankan's population profited from its collection and trade. The thriving and vibrant city of Kankan was also an economically important region for the French colonisers. In 1914, the last section of the railway between Conakry and Kankan had been finished, thus tying the city closer to Conakry and its port (Goerg 1986, 275–291).

The French colonial power's goal was to install an impersonal bureaucracy "dedicated to mobilizing and managing male colonial subjects" (Osborn 2011, 182) by using "territorial measures and demarcated borders – not personalized relationships – to anchor their power and structure the state" (Osborn 2011, 125). By 1890, the colonial system tried to eradicate the influence of local 'traditional' chiefs. At the same time, the colonial educational system created opportunities for young men; also for those who had no ties to one of Kankan's leading families. With the introduction of colonial schools and the new administrative practices, a small male elite evolved in the urban centres (Camara, O'Toole, and Baker 2014, 9).

Unlike local political leaders, the colonisers did not use the domestic sphere to articulate and enlarge their political power; even if the colonial administrators married African women, they and their children were considered to be irrelevant for state-building. Colonial officials also spatially separated their household and the office of rule (Osborn 2011, 128–135). Anna Dessertine (2019, 1) confirms that women's influence during the colonial period radically decreased during the colonial period; it was restricted to the domestic sphere – like in other French colonies. Overall, a "masculinization of the political domain" occurred (Dessertine 2019, 4). Summing up, in Guinea, like in other parts of Africa, "the colonial state manipulated gender identities [...] with the result that the gender relations became more imbalanced than during pre-colonial times even though both periods are marked by patriarchal societies" (Pankhurst 2002, 119).

Women within the Nationalist Movement

In Guinea after World War Two, various political parties have been established. They were mostly affiliated along regional or ethnic lines (Du Bois 1970, 186). In 1946, African leaders, among them Ahmed Sékou Touré, formed the Pan-African African Democratic Rally (*Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*, RDA). One year later, the Democratic Party of Guinea (*Parti Démocratique de Guinée*, PDG), the Guinean branch of the RDA, was created (Camara, O'Toole, and Baker 2014, xxxix). Contrary to the other Guinean parties, the PDG-RDA was based on an inclusive regional, ethnic, class, religion, and gender alliance. On September 28, 1958, Guinea overwhelmingly rejected the constitution offered by Charles de Gaulle in the referendum. "The No vote of the Guineans became the basis of the heroic myth and revolutionary image of Sekou Touré" (Kaba 1977, 25). For the Guinean population, it is still a cause of pride.

Women started engaging in Guinean politics around 1946 (Rivière 1971, 105). In the nationalist movement, they were crucial. This is no Guinean particularity: The support of women at the grassroots level was important for many African political parties engaged in the struggle for independence (Mama 1997, 37–38; Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault 2000; Steady 2011, 58). During the early years of the PDG-RDA, most of the politically active women came from the elite and got involved in politics through their husbands. This changed after the general strikes of 1953 during which women played an important role: Women from all classes protested against economic hardship, due to which they could not fulfil their social duties as mothers and wives. From this point on, the PDG-RDA started mobilising women on a larger scale (Schmidt 2005, 113; Pauthier 2007, 221). The party successfully integrated women's associations, which, after 1940 subsequently crossed ethnic boundaries (Schmidt 2002, 283–285).

Unlike other Guinean political parties at the time, the PDG-RDA took 'women's concerns' such as health, sanitation, and education seriously. Not least because "Sékou Touré in particular made much of women's power, using images, anecdotes, and parables that appealed to the largely nonliterate population" (Schmidt 2005, 125), the party could attract female supporters in large numbers. In 1954, local PDG-RDA women committees were established throughout the country enabling the party to attract female supporters in grand masses (Schmidt 2005, 126). Altogether, women fundamentally transformed the PDG-RDA's mobilisation tactics, communication methods, programmes, and objectives (Schmidt 2005, 114). They created songs and slogans, which they sang to transmit their nationalist message, to embarrass political opponents and men who did not join their party. The female market chiefs in Conakry, for example, transmitted their political messages to the female vendors and customers. Generally, the PDG addressed women in their roles as mothers and wives, but at the same time, some changes regarding local gendered norms occurred: Women went to political meetings, spoke

publicly, and mobilised for the party (Schmidt 2002, 287–295). Some women also explicitly violated gendered norms, as the example of the so-called female “shock troops” illustrates – these were security guards who punished political opponents (Schmidt 2002, 291–292). In 1955, during a meeting in Kankan, a woman said: “No woman of Kankan has yet spoken here in this public meeting. Before the arrival of the RDA, women did not have the right to speak in an assembly of men! Today, thanks God, thanks to the RDA, I will speak to this tribunal like the men. The woman has become the equal of the man” (cited in Schmidt 2005, 124).

Gender in the Postcolonial Era

Women’s Ostensible Empowerment during the Touré-Era (1958–1984)

Ahmed Sékou Touré, Guinea’s first President, marked its country remarkably. A bulk of literature engages with Touré, his reign, and his contested legacy.³ Until today he is vividly remembered, especially among the elderly who lived during those times. Alpha Condé, too, refers to Guinea’s first President in his speeches and actions. The legacy of Touré does not only live on in memories, it still strongly shapes the country and is, for example, detectable in present administrative practices as various authors demonstrate again and again (McGovern 2007, 2012, 2017; Straker 2007a, 2008, 2009; Engeler 2019; Schroven 2019).

Sékou Touré’s main preoccupations were state and nation-building. He wanted to lead his country to a unified, independent, ‘modern’, and ‘developed’ nation in which ethnic differences should dissolve (Johnson 1970, 354–355). Along the official doctrine, Guinea became a socialist popular democracy where the people were in power. Consequently, every citizen had to be a member of the PDG mass party and thus merge into ‘a People’ (Camara 2014, 109–113). The party was highly centralised and hierarchically structured. As my data shows, this idea of respecting the hierarchical state structure is still very present in Guinea today. The research participants remember the Touré era as a secure time when almost no crimes were committed; one could walk on the streets at any time without being afraid. They contrasted this to the situation nowadays as people long for a strong state that can deliver security and basic services.

Charismatic Touré, a gifted orator and writer, veiled absolute political power and appointed all key positions within the party and the government. Furthermore, he was the leading articulator of the party’s ideology. As Lansiné Kaba (1976a, 211) puts it, he “exert[ed] all powers simultaneously, thus becoming the living hero, the embodiment of the nation, and the ultimate interpreter of national reality.” Through his speeches and his manners, Sékou Touré displayed the image of himself not only as Guinea’s President, but as the country’s father.

Women played an active role in the PDG from the very start, also because Touré made them his key followers. They were, for example, to convince their husbands to join the party (Doumbouya 2008, 172). After independence, many women still backed the PDG and the party enforced female emancipation (Pauthier 2007, 225). Women's emancipation and youth's empowerment went hand in hand with the PDG's ideology of people's enlightening. Both groups became the party's most important pillars. Touré repeatedly explained that women (and youth) had been the number one victims of colonisation which had degraded them to second-class citizens. In his view, a society could only be judged as 'modern' if its female population was free and actively took part in political life. By liberating women, Touré wanted to free the whole society "from its insufficiencies" (cited in Lewin 2010, 45, author's translation). In an interview, the President claimed: "[...] we think women are the country's future, even before youth, and, consequently, favours the social, intellectual, and moral advancement of a people" (cited in Rivière 1968, 409, author's translation). Thus, by (ostensibly) caring for women and youth, the party gained their support.

Sékou Touré's and the general population's respect for women, on the one hand, and the latter's support for Touré, on the other hand, are remembered to this day. Various research participants explained how the President wanted Guinea to be a country for women and children. If someone mistreated a woman 'he had a real problem' an elderly man sitting in a café explained (informal conversation, 15.01.2013). 'At the time, women were really respected' Amara Kamano, a highly educated woman in her forties, recalled (informal conversation, 15.12.2012).

Women were organised in the Revolutionary Union of Guinean Women (*Union Révolutionnaire des Femmes de Guinée*, URFG) at the local, district, regional, and national levels (Camara 2014, 131). The major claims of the URFG were the state's control of marriage, the enhancement of girl's school enrolments, the improvement of women's knowledge on sanitation issues, and the increase of women's contribution to the economic and political sphere (Rivière 1968, 409). Further, professional female associations of tailors, dyers, fish smokers, and others were united in Centres for Female Promotion (*Centre de Promotion Féminin*, CPF). Thus, the ruling party incorporated existing female associations of mutual help into its economic programme of collectivisation (Camara 2014, 166). In 1964, the party revised its politics and structure to make the PDG a party of the elite and not of the masses. Consequently, the state dissolved the party's women's branches at the neighbourhood and village levels (Rivière 1968, 422).

For Céline Pauthier (2007, 230), the embedment of women into these associations created an important social space where they were protected against male interferences. However, there have also been voices who criticised women's involvement within the PDG. They claimed that women thereupon neglected their conjugal and family duties. Yet, many former female activists with whom Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 167) spoke, rejected such accusations. On the contrary, they stressed that their involvement (or that of their female family members) in party politics had a positive impact on their families.

For some well-known female politicians, the URFG served as a launch pad for their careers, including Jeanne Martin Cissé (1926–2017), the first woman to head the United Nations (UN) Security Council; Mafory Bangoura (1910–1976), who became minister of social affairs (1970–1976) and a national hero just after her death; and Rabiadou Sèrah Diallo (b. 1950), who became the leader of a trade union and then the president of the Legislative National Transitional Council (*Conseil National de Transition*, CNT) (2010–2014) (Pauthier 2018). Two of the elderly female research participants who are still engaged in politics started their political activity during the Touré era: One of them is Mariama Keita, a stenographer born in the early 1940s. Generally, Mariama Keita remembered the time of the First Republic as a positive one: She had been young and a member of a local dance and theatre group. She recalled how she, carrying her baby on her back, and her group had welcomed Sékou Touré in Kankan. “When the President came, we danced and served him” (interview, 01.02.2012). As Mariama Keita held a post within the local party’s organisation, she had written the visit’s minutes. The party’s committee met once a week, she remembered. At that time, women were not afraid of politics; there was a certain emancipation, she explained. During the Conté period, Keita refused to join the Unity and Progress Party (*Parti de l’Unité de du Progrès*, PUP). Instead, she supported Alpha Condé’s RPG although she suffered from repressions. The example of Mariama Keita illustrates how the URFG and the cultural promotion under Touré enhanced women’s engagement in (local) politics. Some of these women remained active within institutional politics throughout their lives.

Some measures impacted on women and girls’ conditions negatively while supposedly intending to improve the situation. Schoolgirls had to prove their virginity through an examination that was known as ‘the visit’. If a schoolgirl was found to have lost her virginity, she and the responsible boy or man were publicly shamed. If the girl was pregnant, she was expelled from school for one year. This supposedly encouraged education and decreased teenage pregnancy. In addition, prostitution was severely punished (Doumbouya 2008, 174; McGovern 2012, 147–148). Another issue that affected women during the First Republic was polygyny, which was practiced both in poor and in better-off families (Hanry 1970, 57). Already in 1962, a law enabled a wife to oppose her husband’s taking a second wife if he could not economically sustain both (Rivière 1968, 410). Four years later, the Guinean government officially prohibited polygyny (Steady 2011, 63); this ban, however, was never implemented (Camara 2014, 164). From the instauration of these different laws mentioned above, the prohibition of polygyny is the one most remembered by the female research participants. Amara Kamano narrated:

During the Touré era, there was no polygyny. If you were polygamous, you hid it. If you said, you wanted a second wife, the first wife would try to meet Sékou Touré and say to him: ‘My husband does not care for me. He says he wants to take a second wife.’ Touré immediately delegates people to fetch your husband and to send him to prison.

(Informal conversation, 09.02.2012)

Several points are of interest in this account: Firstly, Amara Kamano adopted the idea of Touré as a caring father who looked after and solved the problems of his children. Secondly, her narrations pretended the existence of a personal relationship between an individual, in this case a worried wife, and the President. Thirdly, it illustrates how Guinea's population considered Touré to be omnipotent; his will could be executed everywhere within the Guinean territory. Fourthly, Touré's power did extend into the intimate sphere; the account is an example of how the ruling party tried to control every aspect of a person's life. Lastly, it demonstrates how Touré – according to Kamano – cared for women's preoccupations.

Women were also promoted to higher posts in the state administration (Godard 2010, 63–64). Several of the elderly female research participants recounted how they, as state employees, gained a regular income: Aisha Bah, a woman born in the 1930s, proudly told me that she had worked as a secret agent. Her task was to find out who imported forbidden commodities to Kankan, and then, to report this to the state authorities. Ninety other women doing the same job and herself had travelled all over the country for training, Bah narrated. She remembered the Touré era as an easy one: She had a job and could live with little money – not like today (informal conversation 09.12.2012).

When the government turned more and more oppressive, particularly between 1964 and 1977 – due to real or imagined plots – women were some of the rare voices opposing the regime. This was especially the case whenever essential commodities such as rice, oil, and sugar were hardly available (Hanry 1970, 61; Rivière 1968, 424). As the prices were fixed at such a low level, many merchants could hardly make a living (McGovern 2007, 137). The tight control of the private commerce by the economic police was a huge burden for women who sustained their families by petty trade (Doumbouya 2008, 174). Women's political mobilisation culminated in the manifestation against Touré at the end of August 1977 (Pauthier 2007, 225). That year, the alimentary situation was extremely harsh because Touré had announced that all direct imports were suppressed (Lewin 2010, 41). According to Ibrahima Baba Kaké (1987, 180), the protests were directed against the economic and social hardship rather than a movement with a political cause.

Already in June 1977, incidents between the economic police and market women caused major demonstrations in N'Zérékoré and Kankan (Pauthier 2007, 231). In Conakry, an incident at the M'Balía market between a female vendor and a member of the economic police led to a collective reaction by the market women. They refused to continue to accept the insults and harassments of the economic police. Joint by vendors of other markets as well as young and unemployed men, the women marched to the President's seat, the *Palais de la Présidence*, where several thousand protesters gathered. Sékou Touré addressed the women directly and made the economic police responsible for the vendor's troubles. Thus, women were not presented as enemies of the revolution. Nevertheless, the situation did not appease, on the contrary. The following day, the party organised a meeting at the *Palais du Peuple*.

Many women arrived with a red handkerchief, rejecting Touré's order to dress in white, and thus symbolically refusing to submit to his reign (Doumbouya 2008, 174–176). The final clash between the army and the women caused more than 60 deaths and 300 injured women. In some smaller cities of the interior, similar incidents took place; they lasted until September 7, 1977 (Pauthier 2007, 232). Many contemporary witnesses consider this event as the beginning of a less repressive period of Touré's regime: "The protests of 1977 constituted a symbolic turn for Sékou Touré and his regime. After this event, he resumed his foreign diplomacy and appeased his interior policy. In collective memory, these protests seem to be the only popular response to the dictatorship. This makes women the most effective actors regarding social mobilisation" (Pauthier 2007, 232, author's translation).

The research participants named the protests of 1977 'women's revolt'. Some of them told me vividly how women insulted the President and how they were making such a noise that Touré could not speak. Further, they explained how women nearly assaulted the stage in the *Palais du Peuple*, which made the President flee. In these accounts, women were depicted as very brave and persuaded by their own claims; even the police could not intimidate them. The research participants considered women to be legitimate actors to oppose the President.

Reorientation of Women's Role in Politics during the Conté Period (1984–2008)

After Touré's death on March 26, 1984, an interim President was assigned. But on April 3, the military under General Lansana Conté took power through a coup d'état. Conté identified as a Susu and was born near Dubréka in 1934 (Camara 2014, 273). Under Conté's reign, fundamental changes in Guinea's economy took place: Trade was not restricted anymore and foreign investments were welcomed. The adoption of the Adjustment Program brought neo-liberal reforms along the will of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), like in numerous other African countries. Consequently, the public sector was drastically reduced and former state companies were privatised. The rupture between the strict socialist economic policies of the First Republic and the economic liberalisation during the Second Republic had far-reaching consequences for the whole population as the gap between those who have and those who have-not was widening (Camara 2014, 290–314; McGovern 2015). "Women played a pivotal economic role within this context of insecurity as their involvement in food production and small business became increasingly indispensable to household survival" (Dessertine 2019, 6).

While especially the merchants profited, the majority of the population experienced harsh times. This contrariness is reflected in how people remember the Conté period. A research participant recalls how having money suddenly became a crucial factor; without it, no one could go to court, for example. Others long for the Conté period, because commerce was not

restricted. ‘I even feel nostalgic about Conté’s time. Then, it was easy to make money’, a male student said to his friend (naturally occurring talk, 23.11.2012). Others such as Fode Sow, an elderly, blind man, judged Conté’s economic policy more critically: “When Lansana Conté came, he said: ‘liberty; everything you earn is for you.’ Merchants but also thieves and liars came and they all profited a lot. At that moment, this was not liberty any more but debauchery” (interview, 17.10.2011). Many of the research participants remember how, at the beginning of Conté’s regime, the few factories in Kankan closed because the President had sold them to foreigners. This resulted in the workers’ suspension. Until today, Kankan’s population hopes that these factories would reopen one day and thus creating job opportunities for the unemployed youth.

In the 1990s, Conté slowly opened up Guinea’s political landscape – similar to many other African countries. The military regime was dissolved and in 1992, political parties were officially recognised (Arieff and McGovern 2013). Many of the newly established youth, women, and student’s organisations got integrated in one of the many political parties. Thus, in Mohamed Saliou Camara’s (2014, 328) view, they “became subsume[d] by party politics and often ill-defined ideological propaganda.” Nevertheless, many different NGOs and associations engaged in the promotion of human rights and generally tried to improve people’s living conditions.

During the campaigns for the subsequent elections, the administrative apparatus and the powerful military supported the sitting President and his PUP. In 1993, Lansana Conté officially won the presidential elections with 51.7 percent of the votes; Alpha Condé became second with 19.6 percent of the ballots (Camara, O’Toole, and Baker 2014, 91). Thereafter, the executive and legislative were firmly in the hands of the head of state, and the regime transformed into a one-party rule. In 1998, Conté won the presidential elections again. The government arrested Alpha Condé and imprisoned him for two years (Chambers 2004, 129–130). In 2003, Lansana Conté was declared winner with 95 percent of the votes; however, the opposition had mostly boycotted the manipulated presidential election (Chambers 2004, 130). During my research, I heard several accounts of people who had worked for the public administration at the time. They told me how state employees were harassed or even fired if they did not join the PUP.

Unlike his predecessor, Lansana Conté and his PUP did not adopt an official discourse of women’s promotion. In general, gender was not an important issue, neither for the President nor for the government or the political parties. This partly explains why there is little scholarly work on the topic. Even though Céline Pauthier (2007), in her analysis on Guinean women’s social and political mobilisation, focuses on the period between 1945 and 2006, the Conté period – except for the general strikes – does not figure in her article. The political opening of many African countries in the 1990s presented a possibility for women to reinforce their claims, and a multitude of new women’s organisations emerged. Further, throughout the continent donors increasingly funded women’s associations, therefore making them less dependent from the male dominated patronage networks (Tripp 2003, 234–236).

Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 314) sees in the opening of the Guinean political landscape the beginning of “politics and policies of women’s liberation.” Elizabeth Schmidt (2005, 13) has a different standpoint. According to her, “in the early 1990s, Guinea was in the midst of a reactionary backlash against women and the political, economic, and social gains they had made during the first two and one-half decades of independence. The military regime criticized the way in which Sékou Touré and the RDA allegedly had destroyed the family, broken homes, and violated African culture and Muslim traditions by emancipating women.”

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG)⁴ and the Dakar (1994) and Beijing (1995) UN Platforms for Action⁵ influenced Conté’s policy for women: Following these initiatives, the Guinean Ministry for Women’s and Children’s Affairs started a women’s promotion policy in 1997. Its purposes were “improving the legal framework for the promotion and protection of women; institutionally strengthening the empowerment of women; facilitating the economic self-reliance of women; and strengthening the familial, social, and cultural role of women along with their societal status” (Camara 2014, 316). The government also adopted some legal reforms to stop women’s discrimination, for example in the domain of inheritance and land ownership. Additionally, the government promoted women’s education and health care. Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 314–321) is convinced that, consequently, women’s awareness of their own rights increased.

Women’s Involvement in the General Strikes of 2006 and 2007

As the President’s health deteriorated in the 2000s, power struggles among the political and military elite intensified and the gap between the elite and the suffering population widened. Especially towards the end of Conté’s regime, impunity and insecurity were notorious, and the drug trade and criminality generally increased (Camara 2014, 400–402). For the research participants, the years between 2000 and 2008 have been marked by legal uncertainty, corruption, and crime. Everything was for the political class and nothing for the population, they lamented. Thierno recounted that ministers distributed millions at concerts to show how wealthy they were. The signs of these embezzlements were everywhere: Low-ranking civil servants sent their children overseas for study, constructed villas, and drove expensive cars. A male student said to his friend in this regard: ‘Everybody ate too much. Even the chicken and the insects ate’ (naturally occurring talk, 23.11.2012). Here like in other West African countries, eating is a synonym for the misappropriation of public funds, a figuratively filling of one’s stomachs. At the time, no one was afraid of negative consequences, an elderly man in a café explained: ‘Everybody became a permitted thief’ (informal conversation, 27.2.2012). According to Mister Koivogui, who teaches at Kankan’s university, this behaviour was triggered by the President who had once said: “If you take something, leave a little bit” (interview, 14.01.2013).

Living conditions were already difficult at the beginning of the 2000s. They became even more so when the state abolished subvention for gasoline, causing a rise in the prices of basic commodities, especially rice. At the same time, the unemployment rate increased and the Guinean franc was devaluated. The political opposition was weak, fragmented, and disorganised. The people, initially apathetic, retreated into the intimate sphere. But the suffering of the population eventually led to a national crisis, and social unrest culminated in the general strikes of 2006 and 2007 (International Crisis Group 2005; McGovern 2007, 126–128).

There had already been calls for strikes by trade unions before 2006, but the people did not follow them on a large scale. Then, at the end of February 2006, days of *ville morte* (dead city) paralysed the capital city (McGovern 2007, 126–128). On June 8, 2006, the trade unions launched the next general strike. It spread throughout the country and resulted in violent confrontations between the strikers and the security forces. In January and February 2007, yet another general strike tied up the country (Gerdes 2009, 5).⁶ The trade unions' major demands were the creation of an inclusive government under a prime minister, the separation of powers, the fight against corruption and bad governance, and, most importantly, the general improvement of the population's living conditions (Camara 2014, 388–392). The government brutally reacted to the protests (International Crisis Group 2007a, 2007b; Human Rights Watch 2007a, 2007b). In February 2007, the trade unions and the government signed an accord. Subsequently, Lansana Conté installed Lansana Kouyaté as new Prime Minister, but this did not change anything regarding the fact that political power was still in the President's hands (Schroven 2010b, 668). Michelle Engeler (2008), accordingly, talks about an "unfinished revolution."

These general strikes incorporated all sectors of the Guinean society; they were especially marked by the massive participation of young people and women across ethnic boundaries. Sory N'Nay Béréké, a young male graduate, said: "Because this movement was supported by the whole Guinean population, it made a huge impression on me. Everybody dashed forward in this battle" (interview, 24.12.2012). According to Céline Pauthier (2007, 232–237), the Guinean population regarded women who protested as legitimate actors to express their grievances. She illustrates this with the following example she witnessed: In February and March 2006, a rumour circulated announcing a women's protest, which in the end proved untrue. Nevertheless, when the author asked the research participants, "every person interrogated on the subject agreed upon the idea that a mobilization by women would enjoy total legitimacy and would prove to be more efficient than one organized by other political or social actors. [...] In a diffuse manner, women were considered best positioned to launch the mobilization: after them, every category of the population would follow" (Pauthier 2007, 220, author's translation).

The women protesting emphasised that their protests were not political; they just wanted to fight against difficult living conditions. There are several reasons for this behaviour: The political parties did not enjoy a good reputation and

were largely discredited. They usually belonged to so-called Big Men who pursued their own political, social, and economic goals. Furthermore, women were afraid of repressions by the security forces. This example once again demonstrates that throughout Guinea's history, women mobilised whenever the social and economic situation prevented them from fulfilling their social duties as mothers and wives.

Female Victims during the 'Transitional Period' (2008–2010)

When Lansana Conté died in December 2008, the country had “reached a point of socio-political exhaustion comparable to where it was at President Touré's death 24 years earlier” (Camara 2014, 392). Immediately after his death, a group of military men calling themselves National Council for Democracy and Development (*Conseil National pour la Démocratie et le Développement*, CNDD) seized power in a bloodless coup d'état. They declared Captain Moussa Dadis Camara as the country's President. Dadis Camara, born in 1964 and originating from the Forest Region, promised to organise democratic and free elections and initially said he would not stand for office (Engeler 2008, 97–98). Throughout the country, the coup by the CNDD was welcomed. The population expected that the military regime would bring stability, enforce the rule of law, fight corruption, and finally lead to the democratisation of the country (McGovern 2015, 247). Due to Dadis Camara's relatively young age, the youth were especially enthusiastic about the new President, hoping, amongst other things, that he would effectively tackle youth unemployment (Camara 2014, 415–419).

When the CNDD postponed the presidential and legislative elections again and again, the population resumed protesting (Arieff 2010, 1). On September 28, 2009, the anniversary of Guinea's rejection of de Gaulle's constitution, Guinean security forces opened fire on opposition members. The latter were protesting peacefully in the Conakry stadium against the President's intention to stand for presidency – against his initial declaration. Altogether, over 150 people died and many more were injured. Many of the protesting oppositional women and girls were subjected to extremely brutal sexual violence. According to Human Rights Watch (2009, 61–62), the high level of sexual violence suggests that it had been organised by high-ranking officers and was not the result of individual acts. In the context of Guinea's mostly Muslim society, these events traumatised the girls and women, not least because they feared being rejected by their families due to the stigma attached to victims of sexual violence (Human Rights Watch 2009; International Crisis Group 2009). Subsequently, the security forces covered up the bloody event. To date, the Guinean government has not fully investigated this massacre and the sexual violence involved; thus, it has not delivered justice to the victims and their families (Human Rights Watch 2017, 2019). Then, on December 3, 2009, Aboubakar 'Toumba' Diakite, a member of his guard, shot Dadis Camara in the head. Soon after, the injured junta leader was flown to Morocco for medical treatment from where he went to exile in Burkina Faso.

Interestingly, almost all research participants appreciated the short reign of Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, mainly because of his achievement to reinstall law and order. He was, for example, able to reduce crimes such as thievery and drug trafficking. A farmer, born in the 1960s, stated that the theft of cows had almost stopped. ‘He brought back the order in this country’ a man in a café stated (informal conversation, 15.01.2013). Moreover, corrupt practices were reduced and the economic downfall stopped. According to the research participants, Dadis Camara immediately ‘started to work’ after the coup d’état; its results could be seen at once. A typical statement was that Dadis Camara was appreciated by everyone in Guinea, regardless of their ethnic background. The shooting on September 28, 2009, did not lessen the positive judgment of his reign. Djénabou, for example, agreed with the following statement by an eighty-year-old Manding woman: ‘September 28 was the opposition’s fault. Dadis [Camara] told them not to go on the streets that day. They should have chosen another date. Now September 28 has a negative connotation, which is sad’ (informal conversation, 09.02.2013).

Nevertheless, I also heard voices which said that the Guinean population had enough of being governed by a military; that the latter generally ‘ate too much money’. Typically, the research participants considered Dadis Camara’s moodiness as problematic and criticised his behaviour when dealing with elderly people: ‘He did not know how to talk to the people, he really insulted them’ (informal discussion, 20.11.2012). I was told that the positive attitude towards Dadis Camara changed when he considered to run for the presidency. But overall, the research participants would welcome his return from Burkina Faso where he has been living since 2010.

On January 15, 2010, along the Ouagadougou Declaration, a ‘government of national unity’ headed by the former Vice-President of the CNDD-government, General Sékouba Konaté, was formed. Long-time opposition leader Jean-Marie Doré became Prime Minister and the trade unionist Hadja Rabiou Sèrah Diallo headed the CNT (Arieff 2010, 1–2). Although the ‘Government of National Unity’ was challenged from many sides, it finally succeeded in organising presidential elections in June 2010, not least because of massive international pressure (Camara 2016).

Conclusions: Guinea’s Historical Trajectory and Gender

Women and the Guinean State up to the Mid-1980s

In this chapter, I was looking at the research participants’ subjective experiences and their memories of Guinea’s past and especially at women’s contribution to Guinea’s state formation. I was researching how Guinea’s heads of state and their governments have imagined women’s place in society. During the pre-colonial era, the processes of setting up a household, in the Milo River Valley were strongly linked to state-building. Some (postmenopausal) women, who were well connected and respected because of their Islamic

knowledge and the adhesiveness of their households, could exert indirect political influence. Their influence, however, decreased during the colonial era. The French administrators did not use the domestic sphere to articulate and enlarge their political power. Informed by French republicanism's ideas of gender relation of the nineteenth century (Creevey 1991, 356), the colonisers wanted to improve African women's status. By 1930, some young women living in the Kankan area could benefit from formal education (Rivière 1971, 104). Further, the French gave women the right to divorce in colonial courts (Goerg 2007). All in all, however, the French colonisers created a masculinist system of rule that "opened some opportunities for women, but [...] also funnelled them to particular roles and subjected them to new constraints and restrictions" (Osborn 2011, 9).

Women were, then again, very present in the nationalist movement that fought for independence. Did this mobilisation have a lasting impact on gender relations in the country? For Elizabeth Schmidt (2002, 115) "[w]omen's emancipation in Guinea was but a brief interlude." She notes that, generally women accepted their undervaluation and subordination, "they violated gender roles to create conditions in which they once again could fulfil those same gender roles" (Schmidt 2005, 142). Drawing on general patterns in the history of women's mobilisation on the African continent, Aili Mari Tripp (2003, 235) reminds us that women's organisations primarily focused "around religious, welfare and domestic" issues and not on political concerns. Filomina Chioma Steady (2011, 62) on the contrary, claims that Guinean women did not limit themselves to the domestic sphere. She argues that the nationalists' struggle against "multiple layers of inequality" generated "a type of African feminism." Claude Rivière (1968, 407) agrees that Guinean women's political consciousness was raised in the decade before independence. The research participants, too, praised women for their involvement in the nationalist movement.

This chapter has illustrated that the socialist period of the First Republic was full of contradictions. Therefore, the memories of Sékou Touré's reign are controversially and emotionally discussed amongst the research participants. Only two issues are mostly incontestably seen as Touré's accomplishments, namely the achievement of independence and the feeling of national unity he invoked. The most negative aspects of his reign are the committed human rights abuses, the subsequent exodus of Guineans, and the poor records in economic development (Arieff and McGovern 2013, 201; Camara 2014, 228–236). Interestingly, I could often sense a certain nostalgia for the Touré period, similar to what Mike McGovern (2007, 2017) describes. He argues that Guinea's first regime outlived its period in power through its symbolisms and its socialist solidarity.

How effective were Sékou Touré's measures to foster female emancipation? For Pierre Hanry (1970, 74–75) women's emancipation was encouraged mostly through Touré's speeches but did not change the daily lives of ordinary women. Lansiné Kaba (1977, 30) reminds us of women's substantial contribution in the country's struggles for independence. After 1958, women were

present at all levels of the party and the administration. However, women's poor literacy rate had a negative effect on women's advancement. Céline Pauthier (2007, 225–229) emphasises that even if Touré wanted to make women active agents of the proclaimed Revolution, he still addressed them in their roles as wives, sisters, or mothers. Women actively took part in party politics, but their function was not to take decisions. Their role was to dance, chant, and spread the party's message. Women were, under the dictatorship of the ruling party, only allowed to disperse the regime's ideology. This, however, is not a Guinean peculiarity but a typical feature of African one-party regimes (Tripp 2003, 235–236). Nevertheless, the URFG was a social space where women could make new experiences of organisation and speaking publicly. Anna Dessertine (2019, 5) argues that “despite a progressive political investment in women, measures in favor of gender equality were not effectively enforced and Sékou Touré's regime paradoxically helped confirm women's affiliation with the domestic sphere.” Hence, Céline Pauthier (2007, 229, author's translation) concludes: “The discourse on female emancipation is marked by a fundamental ambiguity: if women are really put in front of the social actors, their role is defined in an authoritarian manner by serving the revolution, where their domestic and family talents are somehow transferred from the private to the public sphere.”

Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 164–166) on the contrary, is convinced that the PDG's women policies were successful in the domains of education, employment, and political participation. Gender equality was the party's goal not only rhetorically, but it was also put into practice. He stresses that not the party but her own family hindered a woman's advancement during the Touré era. Mike McGovern (2007, 137, author's translation), too, sees the lasting effects of Touré's gender policy: Sékou Touré “was sincerely engaged in favour of a mobilisation which distinctive features were multi-ethnic, multi-generational without sexual discrimination. He achieved effective and lasting effects. Nobody did more for the promotion of women's status in his country than Touré.”

One might conclude that women's engagement in institutional politics during the Touré era was contradictory: On the one hand, the Guinean state looked at women as one category. This went hand in hand with the proclaimed view of the single party: There were ‘the Guinean people’ who were not separated along generational, ethnical, class, or gender lines. Women actively took part in the various entities of the PDA. This engagement gave them a feeling of being integrated into the nation-building process, and therefore an important element of Revolutionary Guinea. At that time, women's political engagement was widely accepted. On the other hand, this did not mean that the regime invited women to look for solutions to their problems or those of their society. On the contrary, the party was setting the agenda, women had to follow. Moreover, the different women committees were an effective means to control the female population. Nevertheless, as the example of the 1977 women's protests illustrates, women sometimes left the predetermined path and publicly showed their malcontent with the government's policies. Touré's speeches,

women's mobilisation within the URFG, and especially the respect they earned through the manifestations of 1977 have a lasting effect to this day: Women protesting publicly have a special legitimacy.

Women and the Guinean State since the Mid-1980s

After twenty-six years of rule by charismatic Sékou Touré and his socialist one-party state, the Guinean population again experienced a period of twenty-four years marked by just one authoritarian President, Lansana Conté. During both regimes, the head of state symbolised the embodiment of power. Both periods were characterised by violence, the oppression of (imagined) political opponents, and general difficult living conditions for the majority of the population. While the economy was highly regulated during the Touré era, the Conté government moved over to neoliberal economic promoted by the World Bank and the IMF.

The judgments of the Conté period differ. As Ramata Bangoura, an elderly woman, accurately put it: "It was both, like paradise and hell at the same time" (interview, 09.02.2013), depending on whether or not you profited from Conté's policies. The President's creation of the multiparty system was seen as a big accomplishment. Elderly people who still remembered the permanent fear of the Touré era also praised Conté for the increase in freedom of speech. Then again, research participants criticised Conté for neglecting the educational sector. Especially the last years of Lansana Conté's reign were difficult. Madame Kouyaté, a local female leader, recalled: "He was not even the nation's father, but its grandfather. A grandfather in a way that Guinea went beyond liberty" (interview, 21.11.2011). Here, the idealised image of the head of state as the nation's father comes up again. According to Madame Kouyaté, Conté did not care for his population, as he did not provide them food. Additionally, he did not punish his children if they disregarded the laws. Thus, he was not regarded as the nation's father. On the contrary, Lansana Conté was their too lenient grandfather. As already mentioned, the mismanagement and the corrupt practices under his regime annoyed the people: A female vendor concluded that "he did nothing at all for the population" (interview, 15.11.2011).

The research participants in Kankan see in the First Republic a time of national unity where ethnic belonging was of minor relevance. With the political opening during the Second Republic, however, ethnicity became a central factor. While Touré integrated women into his state-building project, and put much emphasis on female emancipation, women were not put on the front stage during the Conté period. Since 1965, February 9 was a national holiday when the death of the heroic figure M'Balia Camara, who had died in the struggles against colonialism in 1955, was commemorated (Pauthier 2007, 227–228). Lansana Conté showed the rupture with the PDG ideology also symbolically when he decided to reschedule the National Women's Day from February 9 to August 27, as a memory of the women's protests in 1977 (Camara 2014, 315). In 2005, the National Women's Day was again changed to February (McGovern 2007, 137).

The Conté government signed international treaties and thus officially adopted regulations to enforce women's rights (Touré 2013, 93), but he did so mostly to please the 'International Community'. Since 2000, the female population suffered alongside men as their buying power diminished. From what I learned, Conté did not put an emphasis on women, neither on the political nor on the social level. He was not interested in the people – be it woman or man – Sidiki Kaba, a man working at the university, stated. Conté did not change anything in favour of the female population; he was only interested in his power, Kaba explained (interview, 06.12.2012). During Conté's last years in power, the Guinean population feared their country would collapse into civil war like neighbouring countries had. At that time, attacks on cars on rural streets but also in the middle of cities occurred daily, some research participants remembered. They saw the general strikes of 2006 and 2007 and the tense situation during the presidential election in 2010 in a stark contrast to the stable Touré regime.

The general strikes of 2006 and 2007 were marked by women's massive mobilisation. Even though women's claims were ostensibly economical in nature, women's demands were highly political. Many of the research participants stressed that these general strikes were crucial for women's self-conception and their engagement in the political arena. Interestingly, no woman told me that she actively took part. This, however, does not mean that women in Kankan did not engage in the protests. It could rather hint at a characteristic of Kankan's female population: Kankan's women typically do not like being associated with anything that is regarded as political. When women make economic claims, for example, that the general living conditions of ordinary people must improve, they mostly do not consider these actions as political. Women rather choose to frame these claims within their social roles as mothers, wives, or sisters. They say, for example, that they are unable to fulfil their obligations as mothers to nourish their children. Summing up, Anna Dessertine (2019, 1) aptly notes that throughout the Guinean history, "female political mobilizations appear as an indispensable advantage for state power when they are deployed in support of it, but these mobilizations can likewise disrupt and generate major problems for the state when they are directed against it."

Notes

- 1 Minor parts and earlier versions of this chapter have been published in the following article: Ammann, Carole. 2018. "Political Parties and Participation: Guinea." In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*, edited by Suad Joseph. Leiden: Brill Online. Reprinted with the publisher's permission.
- 2 According to Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho, the Upper Guinean Coast covers (parts of) the following countries: Gambia, (southern) Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia (Knörr and Filho 2010, 2).
- 3 See, for example, Claude Rivière (1971), Adamoleku Ladipo (1976), Lansiné Kaba (1976a, 1976b, 1977), Ibrahima Baba Kaké (1987), Alpha Ousmane Barry (2002), Mike McGovern (2002, 2007, 2017), Mohamed Saliou Camara (2005, 2014), Jay Straker (2007a, 2007b, 2009), Christian Højbjerg (2010), André Lewin (2010),

- Alexis Arieff and Mike McGovern (2013), Céline Pauthier (2013), Michelle Engeler (2019), and Anita Schroven (2019).
- 4 One of the MDG's eight primary goals was to promote gender equality and empower women, cf. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml> (accessed 23.08.2019).
 - 5 <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about> (accessed 23.08.2019).
 - 6 This strike was triggered amongst others by the President's interference in an ongoing judicial investigation (Camara 2014, 382–388). For more details on the general strikes and the Guinean trade unions and their main demands, see the reports and articles by the International Crisis Group (2007a, 2007b), Mike McGovern (2007), and Anita Schroven (2010a, 178–190; 2019, 160–171). For the turbulent months until the President's death in 2008, see Michelle Engeler (2008).

Bibliography

- Ammann, Carole. 2018. "Political Parties and Participation: Guinea." In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*, edited by Suad Joseph. Leiden: Brill Online.
- Ampofo, Akosua Adomako, Josephine Beoku-Betts, and Mary Johnson Osirim. 2008. "Researching African Women and Gender Studies. New Social Science Perspectives." *African and Asian Studies* 7:327–341.
- Arieff, Alexis. 2010. "Guinea's New Transitional Government. Emerging Issues for U.S. Policy." Accessed 27. 08. 2019. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41200.pdf>.
- Arieff, Alexis, and Mike McGovern. 2013. "'History is Stubborn'. Talk About Truth, Justice, and National Reconciliation in the Republic of Guinea." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55:198–225.
- Barry, Alpha Ousmane. 2002. *Pouvoir du discours et discours du pouvoir. L'art oratoire chez Sékou Touré de 1958 à 1984*. Paris: Harmattan.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2005. *His Master's Voice. Mass Communication and Single-Party Politics in Guinea under Sékou Touré*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2014. *Political History of Guinea Since World War Two*. Vol. 23. New York: Peter Lang.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2016. "Political Crisis and ECOWAS-Mediated Transition in Guinea." *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 16(30):9–35.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou, Thomas O'Toole, and Janice E. Baker. 2014. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*. 5 ed. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press.
- Chambers, Paul 2004. "Guinée. Le prix d'une stabilité à court terme." *Politique Africaine* 94:128–148.
- Connerton, Paul. 1989. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creevey, Lucy E. 1991. "The Impact of Islam on Women in Senegal." *The Journal of Developing Areas* 25(3):347–368.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2019. "Women, Power, and the State in Guinea." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, edited by Thomas Spear. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.538.
- Doumbouya, Oumar Sivory. 2008. *La situation sociale des femmes en Guinée. De la période précoloniale jusqu'à nos jours*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Du Bois, Victor D. 1970. "Guinea." In *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, edited by James S. Coleman, and Carl G. Rosberg, 186–215. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Engeler, Michelle. 2008. "Guinea in 2008. The Unfinished Revolution." *Politique Africaine* (122):87–98.
- Engeler, Michelle. 2019. *Youth and the State in Guinea: Meandering Lives*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Gerdes, Felix. 2009. "Militärputsch in Guinea. Hintergründe der aktuellen Entwicklung." *AKUF Analysen* (3).
- Godard, Aurélie. 2010. *Le travail des femmes en Guinée maritime. De l'organisation sociale à l'organisation économique*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Goerg, Odile. 1986. *Commerce et Colonisation en Guinée (1850–1913)*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Goerg, Odile. 2007. "Femme adultères, hommes voleurs? La 'justice indigène' en Guinée." *Cahier d'études africaines* 47:495–522.
- Hanry, Pierre. 1970. *Érotisme africain. Le comportement sexuel des adolescents Guinéens*. Paris: Payot.
- Højbjerg, Christian. 2010. "Victims and Heroes. Mending Historical Imagination in a Conflict-Ridden Border Region." In *The Powerful Presence of the Past. Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast*, edited by Jaqueline Knörr, and Wilson Trajano Filho, 273–293. Leiden: Brill.
- Human Rights Watch. 2007a. "Guinea. Bottom of the Ladder. Exploitation and Abuse of Girl Domestic Workers in Guinea." Accessed 31. 03. 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/guinea0607/>.
- Human Rights Watch. 2007b. "Guinea. Dying for Change. Brutality and Repression by Guinean Security Forces in Response to a Nationwide Strike." Accessed 31. 03. 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/guinea0407/>.
- Human Rights Watch. 2009. "Bloody Monday. The September 28 Massacre and Rapes by Security Forces in Guinea." Accessed 31. 03. 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/12/17/bloody-monday/september-28-massacre-and-rapes-security-forces-guinea>.
- Human Rights Watch. 2017. "Guinea: 8 Years Later, Justice for Massacre Needed. Victims of Stadium Crimes Awaiting Trial." Accessed 24. 01. 2018. <https://www.hrw.org/print/309351>.
- Human Rights Watch. 2019. "Resignation Confirms Fears of Delay in Guinea Stadium Massacre Trial." Accessed 27. 08. 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/31/resignation-confirms-fears-delay-guinea-stadium-massacre-trial>.
- International Crisis Group. 2005. "Stopping Guinea's Slide." In *Africa Report N°94*. Dakar/Bruxelles.
- International Crisis Group. 2007a. "Guinea. Change or Chaos." In *Africa Report N° 121*. Dakar/Bruxelles.
- International Crisis Group. 2007b. *Guinée. Le changement en sursis*, edited by International Crisis Group. Dakar/Bruxelles.
- International Crisis Group. 2009. "Guinée. Pour en finir avec le pouvoir militaire." In *Africa Briefing N°66*, edited by International Crisis Group. Dakar/Brussels.
- Johnson, R. W. 1970. "Sekou Touré and the Guinean Revolution." *African Affairs* 69 (277):350–365.
- Kaba, Lansiné. 1976a. "The Cultural Revolution, Artistic Creativity, and Freedom of Expression in Guinea." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14(2):201–218.
- Kaba, Lansiné. 1976b. "The Politics of Quranic Education among Muslim Traders in the Western Sudan. The Subbanu Experience." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/ La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 10(3):409–421.

- Kaba, Lansiné. 1977. "Guinean Politics. A Critical Historical Overview." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 15(1):25–45.
- Kaké, Ibrahima Baba. 1987. *Sékou Touré, le héros et le tyran*. Paris: Jeune Afrique Livres.
- Knörr, Jaqueline, and Wilson Trajano Filho. 2010. "Introduction." In *The Powerful Presence of the Past. Integration and Conflict along the Upper Guinea Coast*, edited by Jaqueline Knörr, and Wilson Trajano Filho, 1–23. Leiden: Brill.
- Ladipo, Adamoleku. 1976. *Sékou Touré's Guinea. An Experiment in Nation Building*. London: Methuen.
- Lewin, André. 2010. *Ahmed Sékou Touré, 1922–1984. Président de la Guinée de 1958 à 1984*. 8 vols. Vol. 7. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Mama, Amina. 1997. "Feminism or Femocracy? State Feminism and Democratisation in Nigeria." In *The Expansion of Democratic Space in Nigeria*, edited by Jibrin Ibrahim, 37–58. Dakar: CODESIRA.
- McGovern, Mike. 2002. "Conflit régional et rhétorique de la contre-insurrection. Guinéens et réfugiées en Septembre 2000." *Politique Africaine* (88):84–102.
- McGovern, Mike. 2007. "Janvier 2007 – Sékou Touré est mort." *Politique Africaine* (107):125–146.
- McGovern, Mike. 2012. *Unmasking the State. Making Guinea Modern*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- McGovern, Mike. 2015. "Liberty and Moral Ambivalence. Postsocialist Transitions, Refugee Hosting, and Bodily Comportment in the Republic of Guinea." *American Ethnologist* 42(2):247–261.
- McGovern, Mike. 2017. *A Socialist Peace? Explaining the Absence of War in an African Country*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Miescher, Stephan F., and Lisa A. Lindsay. 2003. "Introduction. Men and Masculinities in Modern African History." In *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, edited by Stephan F. Miescher, and Lisa A. Lindsay, 1–29. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Osborn, Emily Lynn. 2011. *Our New Husbands Are Here. Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State From the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Pankhurst, Donna. 2002. "Women and Politics in Africa. The Case of Uganda." *Parliamentary Affairs* (55):119–128.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2007. "Tous derrière, les femmes devant! Femmes, représentations sociales et mobilisation politique en Guinée (1945–2006)." In *Perspectives historiques sur le genre en Afrique*, edited by Odile Goerg, 221–237. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2013. "L'héritage controversé de Sékou Touré, 'héros' de l'indépendance." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 118(2):31–44. doi:10.3917/ving.118.0031.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2018. "'La femme au pouvoir, ce n'est pas le monde à l'envers.' Le militantisme au féminin en Guinée, des années 1950 à 1984." In *Femmes d'Afrique et émancipation: entre normes sociales contraignantes et nouveaux possibles*, edited by Muriel Gomez-Perez, 73–111. Paris: Karthala.
- Ranchod-Nilsson, Sita, and Mary Ann Tétreault. 2000. "Gender and Nationalism. Moving Beyond Fragmented Conversations." In *Women, States, and Nationalism. At Home in the Nation?*, edited by Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, and Mary Ann Tétreault, 1–17. London/New York: Routledge.
- Rivière, Claude. 1968. "La promotion de la femme guinéenne." *Cahiers d'études africaines* 8(31):406–427.

- Rivière, Claude. 1971. *Mutations sociales en Guinée*. Paris: M. Rivière et Cie.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2002. "'Emancipate Your Husbands!' Women and Nationalism in Guinea 1953–1958." In *Women in African Colonial Histories*, edited by Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi, 282–304. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2005. *Mobilizing the Masses. Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939–1958*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Schroven, Anita. 2010a. "Integration through Marginality. Local Politics and Oral Tradition in Guinea." PhD Thesis, Martin-Luther-Universität.
- Schroven, Anita. 2010b. "The People, the Power and the Public Service. Political Identification During Guinea's General Strikes in 2007." *Development and Change* 41(4):659–677.
- Schroven, Anita. 2019. *Playing the Marginality Game: Identity Politics in West Africa*. Vol. 19. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Steady, Filomina Chioma. 2011. *Women and Leadership in West Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Straker, Jay. 2007a. "Stories of 'Militant Theatre' in the Guinean Forest. 'Demystifying' the Motives and Moralities of a Revolutionary Nation-State." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 19(2):207–233.
- Straker, Jay. 2007b. "Youth, Globalisation and Millennial Reflection in a Guinean Forest Town." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 45(2):299–319.
- Straker, Jay. 2008. "The State of the Subject: A Guinean Educator's Odyssey in the Postcolonial Forest, 1960–2001." *The Journal of African History* 49(1):93–109. doi:10.1017/s002185370800340x.
- Straker, Jay. 2009. *Youth, Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Touré, Mabetty. 2013. "Les rapports de genre et la filière néré en Haute Guinée." PhD Thesis, Université Toulouse.
- Tripp, Aili Mari. 2003. "Women in Movement Transformations in African Political Landscapes." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5(2):233–255.

2 Contested Presidential Elections in 2010

Introduction – Between Everyday Interactions and Scapegoating¹

Ethnicity was an important issue of contestation during the time of my field research: It kept popping up in online news, on the radio, in everyday conversations at the market or in cafés, and during interviews, informal conversations, and naturally occurring talks. From time to time, harsh discussions about ethnic identity also occurred in the courtyard I was living in. One day at the end of January 2012, I was coming home for lunch. Diaka was sitting on a footstool cooking. Madame Fofana, Mariam Bah, Diaka's friend and our neighbour, and Abdoulaye Traoré, another friend of Diaka's, were sitting around her and hotly debating the issue of ethnicity. Their conversation intrigued me, if only because I had never witnessed such a heated debate in the yard before. Mariam claimed that she had left Kankan the day after the presidential elections because, as a Fulani, she feared for her safety:

Some Manding extremists even threw stones over the wall into our courtyard. My name, along with those of two other Fulani persons, had been placed on a hit list. I was extremely afraid! I did not go out on the streets wearing my UFDG-shirt anymore!

(Field notes, 28.01.2012)

According to Mariam, after Cellou Dally Diallo and his Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (*Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée*, UFDG) had received 52 percent of the votes in the first round, Alpha Condé manipulated the system and, as a result, was eventually declared the winner of the elections. Abdoulaye, who supported former Prime Minister Lansana Kouyaté (who happens to be a Manding) of the Party of Hope for National Development (*Parti de l'Espoir pour le Développement National*, PEDN), Madame Fofana, and Diaka contradicted Mariam. During this debate, all four resorted to generalisations that exemplified the ethnic stereotypes about the Manding and the Fulani that were so widespread in those days. Mariam, for example made a statement the like of which one would hear in Fulani

circles across the country: ‘We [Fulani], have everything, money, education, everything. We only lack political power. One day, we will get that too!’ (field notes, 28.01.2012).

In Kankan, interethnic cohabitation is nothing new and ethnic fraction does not always become apparent in daily life. When the conversations turned to ethnicity, many of the research participants stressed that interactions between the different ethnic groups have a long history and that inter-ethnic marriages are a common occurrences. Mister Nabé, the vice-mayor and a Manding, explained, for example, that he could not criticise the Fulani as one of his wives is half Manding, half Fulani. He added that insulting one’s own family is not appropriate (informal conversation, 03.02.2012). This reference to the long history of inter-ethnic marriages is used nationwide to alleviate tensions (Schroven 2019, 13). In Kankan, people also hinted at the fact that many Fulani were born in the city and have lived there ever since. The same holds true for Manding living in the Fouta Djallon. Not all Fulani living in Kankan speak Maninkakan, but most of them can understand the language after having spent some time in the city. I also got to know many Fulani who are fluent in the newly learned language. Even though Maninkakan is the main language on the local radio stations, regular programmes are broadcast in Pulaar as well. The same holds true for the Islamic prayers.

At the local level, some associative organisations are ethnically exclusive, including student organisations at the University of Kankan. Nevertheless, most associations in Kankan are inclusive. That is often the case of the *sèrè*, which are age-set associations found across Guinea, particularly in large urban communities. During social events, where different cultural symbols are displayed, usually people of Manding and Fulani ethnicity interact with one another in harmony. Sometimes I heard people expressing their astonishment about the different cultural practices. I also witnessed a marriage of a Manding couple where the Fulani have been praised in songs. As far as some of the research participants are concerned, national identity is more important than ethnicity. One such research participant is Saa Daffé, born in the mid-1980s of a family from the Forest Region. He stated: “If you tell me I am Kissi, I will emphatically retort that I am Guinean. I need not tell you I am Kissi, I am Forestier. That is because I am Guinean, and I can live anywhere in Guinea” (interview, 14.12.2011). This discourse related to the promotion of the Guinean nationality goes back to Sékou Touré. Like Saa Daffé in the citation above, the political elite and ordinary citizens alike regularly refer to the notion of the Guinean family. As Nomi Dave (2017, 116) convincingly demonstrates, these “calls for unity around the Guinean family are in effect calls for political loyalty and against dissident.”

Considerations about Ethnic Politics

Gender research has extensively demonstrated that we all have multiple, shifting identities, which are constantly invented, negotiated, contested, and combined according to specific situations. The importance of specific

identities changes through time and space. Ethnicity is one component of a person's identity, very much like other social categories such as age, gender, race, class, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, or educational and working background. Ethnicity is always a relational concept as ethnic groups draw boundaries that create insiders and outsiders. However, these boundaries are blurred, flexible, and can change over time and from place to place. Ethnic groups usually refer to a common history, belonging, and language; they ascribe to themselves certain cultural characteristics and, sometimes, specific physical traits as well (Beer 2012, 63–65).

Scholars argue that identities in pre-colonial Africa were “relatively fluid, permeable, overlapping and complex” (Lynch 2013, 96). This changed to some extent during colonialism and state formation after independence (Berman, Eyoh, and Kymlicka 2004). One important discussion among academics regarding ethnicity is the question of whether ethnicity is completely constructed or whether there is an essential, non-changing core to it. While for situationalists or constructivists ethnicity is constructed, it has, according to essentialists or premordialists, an immovable core (Lynch 2013). In my understanding, ethnicity is highlighted in certain moments – or concealed, for that matter – for example to legitimise one's share of the cake, whereas in others, ethnicity does not play a role: Intermarriages are normal and an everyday life is shared. Thus, ethnicity is relational and situational. It is an “open-ended and dynamic processes of social and political creation” (Berman 2010, 3).

Identity politics is not a new phenomenon; human history is full of it. Various authors have observed that ethnicity can become a highly politicised issue, especially in times of economic scarcity and political competition (Eriksen 2001 [1995]; Dorman, Hammett, and Nugent 2007; Berman 2010). Empirical research generally blames political elites for acting like entrepreneurs that politicise ethnicity to mobilise their supporters. Numerous studies warn against the excesses of identity politics as it may cause social division and conflict. However, it is more fruitful to closely investigate how the state, its institutions, electoral systems, and laws influence issues of identity than to generally condemn identity politics, as Avigail Eisenberg and Will Kymlicka (2011, 7–8) remind us.

Politics, political participation, and access to state resources are often linked to the proverbial Big Men – and to a less extent to Big Women – and the moral economy in which they are embedded, as it was observed in different West African countries. People think their leader, once in power, would reward his or her clients for their support and, thus, they would be able to have their share of the state's resources. When addressing this amalgamation between public and private property, authors usually use the concept of neopatrimonialism. Another related concept is that of clientelism, which refers to the “existence of personal ties of dependence based on mutual, albeit highly unequal, ‘services’ and forms of patron-client redistribution” (Olivier de Sardan 2008, 5–6).

In Guinea, like in many other West African states, single-party systems dominated politics until the late 1980s. At the same time, the states' capabilities shrank as they were struggling with the adverse effects of the World Bank and IMF-devised reforms known as Structural Adjustment Programs due to which an increased struggle over state resources ensued. The new situation increased ethnically based patronage (Young 2007, 251; Berman 2010, 15–18). The (partial) opening of the political landscape and the introduction of a multi-party system in 1992 intensified the political competition in Guinea. Thereafter, tendencies towards a voting behaviour according to ethnic identities could be observed (Groelsema 1998).

Democratisation allowed ethnic affiliations to reach new heights as newly elected politicians sought 'our turn to eat,' and the politics of the belly revealed the personal, materialistic, and opportunistic character of politics and the relative unimportance of ideology, principal, or policy in the circumscribed political sphere. This contestation is especially fierce during presidential elections as the system of winner-takes-all "increase[...] smaller communities' fear of domination by larger groups, the increasingly inequitable distribution of wealth, and their ultimate exclusion from access to the state" (Berman 2010, 26). Consequently, election periods are often marked by tensions and violent outbreaks, especially if polls follow conflict or a transition period and when the electoral process and its outcome are highly contested (Mehler 2007).

Personal relationships and trust within ethnic communities can provide access to, as well as protection against, an unpredictable state or specific groups. As the state is the most powerful actor offering jobs and contacts, patrimonial practices within the state can be used as means to promote ethnic favouritism, as it has been the case under Touré and Conté. Self-ascribed voter identity is influenced by the "hope of future assistance and the fear of losing out if ethnic 'others' gain power" (Lynch 2013, 103). As we shall see, this argument is frequently used in Guinea to unite against the Fulani. Gabrielle Lynch (2013, 104) argues that research should therefore not only focus on elites that manipulate ethnicity but also look at the "highly personalized and localized nature" of politics and at ordinary people's agency who pressure their leader(s) to redistribute state resources. Such everyday politics take place during gatherings of political parties, in markets, cafés, or through the community radio.

Imagining an Ethicised Past

The history of ethnic and regional competitions in Guinea is long. The government and the population consider their own country as being divided into four geographical regions and four major ethnic groups. The image of a geographically and ethnically quartered country goes back to colonial roots, as Odile Goerg (2011) convincingly explains; it remains a practice in popular and administrative discourse today. As soon as political parties were authorised in 1946, the affiliation along ethnic lines began. At that time, most of the women's associations for example, represented just one ethnic group (Schmidt 2002,

2007). At the referendum of 1958, the percentage of no-voters was lower in the Fouta Djallon than in the rest of the country (Goerg, Pauthier, and Diallo 2010, 6) – a fact that was still mentioned by some research participants.

After independence, Sékou Touré, a Manding, was strongly influenced by Pan-Africanist ideologies of unity. His unification policies were aimed, as in other African countries, at nationalisation processes against ethnicity. One element of the nation-building process was to do away with ethnic and regional differences and consequently, Touré abolished ethnic based parties to foster national unity (Højbjerg 2007; McGovern 2012). However, his “politics of ethnicity was double-voiced”, as McGovern (2017, 56) states. Many Manding obtained positions in the military and the administration. Especially after the Portuguese invasion of Conakry in 1970, prominent Fulani – but also individuals of other ethnic groups – suffered persecution and fled the country (Smith 2006; Arieff and McGovern 2013). Which ethnic group has been the one most oppressed under Touré’s autocracy remains a hotly debated issue. Nonetheless, the Fulani are known to predominantly use the image of their victimisation by the Touré regime to take particular stances in the new political environment (Schoven 2016). Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 271) is convinced that even though ethnicity was ostensibly of minor relevance during the Touré-period, it played an important role inside the PDG.

During the Touré-era, the (Manding) business class became a scapegoat whereby merchants, in particular, were accused of undermining the national economy for personal gain. The trend continued during the reign of Lansana Conté and is still in use under the current regime. “We find a heritage of this period [...] [in] the omnipresent rhetoric (of the government as well as of ordinary people) that considers merchants to be greedy saboteurs and not as entrepreneurs who ‘naturally’ want to keep their profit margins” (McGovern 2007, 134–135, author’s translation).

When General Lansana Conté came to power, a number of key administrative and military positions came under individuals of his Susu ethnic group.² The coup attempt by the Manding Diarra Traoré in July 1984 had lasting consequences for inter-ethnic relations in Guinea: In Conakry, in particular, on the night of the coup attempt, crowds of Conté supporters enacted revenge by looting and destroying Manding homes and businesses. The following day, Conté attempted to legitimise the riots in an address to his supporters, saying: “wo fataara!” which, in the Susu language means: “Their actions [destruction of Manding property] were justified” (Camara 2014, 273–283). According to Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 283), the “massive persecution of the Mandenka elite gave rise to yet another pattern of ethnic victimization in Guinea’s political culture.”

Here, Camara hints at a crucial point. The Manding research participants vividly recalled the events surrounding the coup attempt. I heard stories of how some victims of the riots fled the capital city and arrived in Kankan having lost all their belongings. Kankan’s Manding populations see in this event the beginning of the ethnicisation of the administration and the

politicisation of ethnicity in Guinea. They allege that following the failed coup (known in popular parlance as ‘Coup Diarra’), government positions were increasingly staffed with members of the Susu and Fulani groups while Manding technocrats were associated with the defunct Touré regime and the ‘Diarra group’ and expelled from such positions.

Historically, the Manding dominated trade in Guinea, particularly long-distance trade. A locally well-known comedian explained that in Kankan during the Touré regime, trade was in the hands of the Manding; The Fulani raised cattle, worked as bakers, or did other smaller work (informal conversation, 18.01.2013). When Conté reformed the economic sector, many nationally and internationally well-connected Fulani businessmen entered commerce. The permanent establishment of Fulani traders led to increased competition between Manding and Fulani merchants (International Crisis Group 2011; Bah 2016, 11). In 2003, Conté accused the businessmen of speculating with staple food (International Crisis Group 2003). This has not been the only time he publicly blamed merchants of being saboteurs (McGovern 2007). By doing this, Conté indirectly accused the Fulani of illegally benefitting. As Paul Chambers (2004, 142, author’s translation) put it, he “dangerously played with the inter-communitarian cleavage to exculpate from his own responsibilities. Thus, other ethnic groups accused the Fulani, who controlled the large majority of the petty trade in Conakry, of enriching themselves on the expense of other communities.”

Many of the research participants, both Fulani and Manding, agree that the Fulani have increasingly dominated trade and commerce from the Conté era onwards. Fulani merchants typically remember the time of the Second Republic positively: They benefited from economic liberties and profited therefore. A man in a café, like others, ascribes to the Fulani a business sense, which he admires: ‘The Fulani are shrewd businesspersons and clever people’ (field notes, 13.02.2013). The following statement by a thirty-year old woman is typical of the Fulani self-image: ‘Without us Fulani, nothing works in this country’ (field notes, 21.02.2012). However, many of the Manding research participants blamed the Fulani merchants for the ever-rising food prices using terms similar to those that Lansana Conté did in 2003. Mohamed Saliou Camara’s (2014, 271) verdict of who is to blame for the increase of ethnic politics in Guinea is clear: “Indeed, although ethnicity has long played a role in Guinean politics, thus causing most of Guinea’s current major political parties to evolve along ethno-regionalist lines, there is ample evidence to support the view that ethnicity degenerated into systemic ethnocentricity in Guinea during the rule of General Lansana Conté’s regime.”

Aminata Camara, a female market official and member of the RPG, concurs with Camara. She lamented: “Conté abused power while dividing the Guinean people. He said: You the Susu, do not allow the Manding to rule you; you the Fulani, do not allow the Susu to rule you; you the people from the Forest Region, do not allow the Fulani to rule you. In this way, he pitted Guineans against one another” (interview, 31.01.2012). Mamadou Diouma

Bah (2016, 13) has another point of view: “President Conté’s instrumental approach to ethnicity produced a degree of ethnic balancing. Being from a minority group, President Conté’s ethnic group’s ability to dominate and exclude the larger groups – the Malinkés and the Fulanis – was minimal, thereby less threatening to their long-term group interest.”

From what I learned, ethnicity was a decisive factor in everyday life and institutional politics, even if it did not turn into (large scale) violence. It must be noted, however, that there have been momentous instances of public actions when ethnicity was relegated to the backburner. The general strikes of 2006 and 2007 were one such instance during which people of all ethnic backgrounds rallied behind the trade unions and demanded change. Thierno argues that the Fulani played an active role in the strikes, an argument that the International Crisis Group (2007) shares.

To recapitulate, in Guinea, ethnic and regional cleavages go hand in hand. As the International Crisis Group (2011, 4) has noted, ethnic politics has been an issue throughout the country’s history: “Ethnicity’s role in Guinean political history is itself a strategic issue. In every community, you can find people who will tell you they have been discriminated against and who look for and find evidence of this throughout their country’s history.” While ethnicity was, at times, not an important issue of contestation, such as during the general strikes at the end of Conté’s reign, the politicisation of ethnicity increased at times such as before, during, and after the presidential elections of 2010.

Contested Presidential Elections: Cellou Dalein Diallo against Alpha Condé

Alpha Condé, Guinea’s president since 2010, was born in Boké in 1938. When he was fifteen years old, he emigrated to France where he studied economics and law. After his doctorate in public law at the University of Sorbonne, he taught there as a professor for more than ten years. Due to Alpha Condé’s engagement against the PDG during his exile in France, Sékou Touré sentenced him to death in 1970 in absentia. Condé returned to Guinea from his exile in 1990 and stood for the presidency in 1993 and again in 1998. After the presidential elections in 1998, Lansana Conté condemned Condé to five years in prison, because he was accused of having left Guinea illegally and of having planned a coup d’état to overthrow the president. In 2001, he was prematurely set free (Camara, O’Toole, and Baker 2014, 91). Alpha Condé promoted an image of him as the eternal fighter for democracy who had also accepted to suffer personally for his convictions. Since 2010, he has been married to Djènè Kaba Condé.

The First Round

Being Guinea’s first officially ‘democratic’ presidential elections, the competition over who would preside over the country was fierce. One reason for this is the prevailing the-winner-takes-all policy that enables the president’s party

to staff the posts in the administration with their own people. Another cause is, as Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 431) writes, that:

experience has proven that if presidential elections precede legislative elections, the political party or coalition that gets its candidate elected is more likely to win the legislative majority. To many opposition leaders, this implied that, unless they find ways in which to influence the presidential election and position their respective parties and coalitions for cabinet and legislative positions, they run the risk of becoming hardly relevant in the immediate post-transition period, at best, and in decades to come, at worst.³

According to Alexis Arieff and Mike McGovern, the first round in June was “widely judged to have been flawed but credible” (Arieff and McGovern 2013, 217). The Supreme Court readjusted the results published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (*Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante*, CENI) after most candidates had contested them. This, however, did not change anything for the fact that Cellou Dalein Diallo (UFDG) with 43.7 percent and Alpha Condé (RPG) with 18.3 percent of the votes qualified for the second round, which was then rescheduled many times, mostly because of disputes over the neutrality of the CENI. Only when Sékouba Konaté finally appointed the Malian Siaka Toumani Sangaré as the CENI’s president could the second round take place on November 7, 2010 (Camara 2014, 435–438). I was once sitting in a café and overheard a discussion among young men. They all agreed that the appointment of a foreigner as the CENI’s head has been crucial for the execution of the second round. Exactly because Sangaré was Malian, the Guinean population considered him as neutral and could thus accept his decisions, the young men stressed (field notes, 10.10.2011).

Already during the first round, both leading candidates were principally supported in their places of origin: While the Fulani Diallo gained more than 80 percent of the votes in some prefectures of the Fouta Djallon, the Manding Condé received around 72 percent in the region of Kankan (Union Européenne 2011, 52–54). Mister Koivogui, a lecturer at the Julius Nyeréré University in Kankan who was born in the 1960s, explained:

Your first base is your ethnicity. This is a situation people have accepted like this and it was demonstrated during the last elections where the Upper Guinea Region voted for the Manding, the Forest Region for the Forestier, the Lower Guinea Region for the Susu and the Fouta Djallon for the Fulani. This is just an old traditional reflex that is still here. With the multi-party system, we unfortunately created an ‘ethnisation’ instead of a nation.

(Interview, 14.01.2013)



Figure 2.1 Election Board in the Fouta Djallon

According to the research participants in Kankan, issues besides the two candidates' ethnic belonging such as their different life trajectories, their reputation regarding corruption, and their bonds to the Conté regime were also important for voters' decisions. The International Crisis Group (2011, 6) added that "the results obtained by candidates in government, [...] their level of education, technical competence, international contacts and personal wealth" played a role too. However, it also emphasised that "there is no doubt that ethnicity is one of the most important of all these factors."

Especially Diallo was identified as a Fulani and consequently politically isolated whereas not only Manding but also a large part of the Susu and Forestier supported Condé. One reason for that was the claim of Diallo's supporters that it was now their – the Fulani's – turn to provide the head of state as the Manding had their President with Touré, the Susu theirs with Conté and the Forestier theirs with Dadis Camara (Arieff and McGovern

2013, 217). This image promoted by the Fulani produced a counter image I often came across during fieldwork: It claimed ‘everything else but the Fulani’, as people of other ethnic groups were afraid of being ruled by Guinea’s largest ethnic group, even more so since the Fulani are economically powerful and people considered the Fulani-dominated Fouta Djallon as a place where the population has better living conditions than in other parts of the country. People told me that Diallo personally claimed it was now the Fulani’s turn to provide the country’s President. Amara Kamano, a highly educated woman who was born at the beginning of the 1970s, for example, stated:

[Cellou] Dallein [Diallo] also said that Touré has been a Manding, Conté has been a Susu and now it is his turn. He said to the Fulani not to accept this and to demonstrate. All the Fulani went at his side to say that what Dallein had said is right, we are behind you.

(Informal conversation, 10.01.2013)

Mohamed Saliou Camara (personal communication, 03.02.2017) notes that another factor might have played a role: Large parts of Guinea’s society perceive the Fulani, in particular the elite, ‘as whiners and traitors’. The latter promote an image of self-victimisation under the First Republic even though some people from the Fulani elite have actively taken part in the conspiratory actions to overrule Sékou Touré.

The Second Round

The four months in between the two polls were marked, in Camara’s words, by “empty partisan rhetoric punctuated by personal attacks and ethnic self-promotion” (Camara 2014, 439). Both camps tried to change the rules of the on-going electoral process. Issues of historic culpability and patrimonialism were manipulated and politicised also due to the lack of political programs. Thus, Odile Goerg (2006, 4) is right in saying that “[i]n the jostle for election, political actors constantly rework the past, placing it in the service of the present.” In addition, rumours circulated on a daily basis. After an incident in Conakry, for example, it was said that people of Fulani ethnicity had poisoned several of Condé’s supporters (International Crisis Group 2011, 7; group discussion, Manding women, 14.10.2011). In the capital city, demonstrations of (young) party supporters, vandalism of Fulani shops, and other violent outbreaks and human rights abuses further increased the tensions. Neither the political opponents nor the security forces reacted in a way to appease the situation. Consequently, the popular perception of politics as “the battle between ethnic groups” gained further weight (International Crisis Group 2011, 5).

Violence did not stop at the border of the capital: Manding living in the Fouta Djallon and Fulani dwelling in the Upper Guinea Region have been cast out. Several of the Fulani research participants fled Kankan and went to their village of origin before the second round. This was especially the case for

people who had come to Kankan rather recently. Some families just sent their women and children away. Others stayed deliberately to show that they have been living in Kankan for years and felt that they belonged to the local community. One Fulani woman told me that she did not receive a polling card before the second round. For her, this was a deliberate act against the Fulani as the local RPG government tried to influence the elections. Finally, the situation in Kankan became too dangerous for her and she left the city.

Djénabou was born in Kankan and lived there ever since. She felt safe and did not leave the city. However, she told me how tense the atmosphere had been during the election day, especially in the queues in front of the polling stations: Usually, people let the elderly pass, but this time they had to line up like everyone else. Djénabou added that some Manding provoked the Fulani who were queueing up, but the latter did not withdraw. They said they had to represent also those Fulani who had fled Kankan. Thierno was not scared either: 'I am from here' he emphasised (field notes 11.02.2012). This illustrates that while some Fulani felt insecure in Kankan during the election period of 2010, others were not afraid. Djénabou and Thierno both identify with the Fulani, but they have lived all their lives in the city, they fluently speak the local language, they are familiar with the Manding's cultural particularities, and they are involved in local, social networks. They considered themselves to belong to Kankan's inhabitants and were therefore not afraid of the danger.

Thierno told me that Bangaly, a Manding, did a lot to appease the situation in between the two polls. Bangaly was born in the mid-1970s. He became well known among the city's (male) youth, as he possesses a small studio where young local musicians can record their songs. Initially, Bangaly was apolitical as he states himself. But then, the RPG government convinced him to take on the post as the local government's youth representative and thus, he entered the political scene. According to Thierno, Bangaly could successfully prevent that young men destroyed Fulani shops in Kankan. After the elections, he also sent a delegation to the village of a Fulani man who had fled Kankan with his family. This delegation finally convinced the man to return to the city. Thierno stressed that this example is not an isolated case (field notes 15.03.2012). Bangaly explained that thanks to his committee's intervention, there have been fewer clashes in Kankan than in other Guinean cities. Firstly, they had organised meetings with the various ethnic groups' elderly, male representatives during which they discussed the problems at hand. Secondly, they intervened when the tensions threatened to turn into violence. Bangaly recounted:

One day, young Manding [men] mobilised. They said that they would destroy all the Fulani's spots. As soon as the prefect got to know this, he called us. He said: 'Bangaly, you must come, because the youth wants to protest.' That day, I was afraid! But because we are respected, once we

arrived on the spot, we could appease the tensions. The young people had stones, and iron, and wooden sticks with them. Luckily God gave us the chance to appease the situation.

(Interview, 23.02.2012)

The example of Bangaly hints towards the fact that we cannot look at the state as a monolithic block. While it is true that for the second round new election offices have facilitated the victory of Condé in the region of Kankan and rumours of Fulani who had been denied access to voting cards were widespread (Union Européenne 2011, 56), there were also people working for the administration that helped calming the tense situation between Fulani and Manding.

Several of the research participants confirm that ethnic identity has been politicised and turned into a decisive factor during the presidential elections. Madame Bah, a local female leader, for example, stressed: “Since a long time, there has been union between ethnic groups. It is now with politics that this attitude has been disrupted” (interview, 13.01.2012). Djénabou, on the other hand, is convinced that ethnic tensions have always been there, but not at the surface. According to her, it was politics that made them visible and aggravated the situation. Nowadays, ethnocentrism is mostly a problem between the Manding and the Fulani. ‘Before’, she emphasised, ‘people supported someone because he was an oppositional. Now they say: “I don’t like the Susu, I don’t like Conté.” Formerly, people were not interested in politics, now even children reduce a person to his or her ethnicity’ (field notes, 27.11.2012). However, as (historical) accounts from other parts of the country illustrate, ethnicity and marginality have strategically been used since Guinea’s independence (McGovern 2017; Schroven 2019).

Condé’s surprising victory in the second round – considering the results of the first poll (18.3 percent) – with 52.5 percent of the votes triggered more violence. Furthermore, it gave way to conspiracy theories that showed up in popular discourse especially among the Fulani community as I witnessed on several occasions. Many Fulani think that the elections had been flawed, or in the words of a young Fulani man ‘the elections were democratically manipulated’ (field notes, 17.11.2011). In mid-2013, such thinking still persisted: “Many Peulh to this day do not accept Condé’s victory” (IRIN 2013). During our interview, Fodé Sow, a blind Fulani and a former craftsman born in the early 1960s, explained at length how in Guinea – like in all former French colonies – the French were indirectly still in power:

FODÉ SOW: France installed the current President, we know that. The one who has won the elections is not President. We know who has won ...

CAROLE: So, you say that the French manipulated the elections after the first round?

FODÉ SOW: Yes, of course, everybody knows this. For those who know the truth, this wound is still there. (Interview, 17.10.2011)

That the so-called 'International Community', especially France, supported Alpha Condé is a widespread belief among the Fulani (Kohl and Schroven 2014, 10). Others, mostly Manding, claim that the first poll has been manipulated, but this has not been the case during the second round. Oumou Diallo, a female Fulani vendor at Dibida market, told me of the rumours she had heard, namely that the Manding of Siguiri, Kouroussa, and Kankan mobilized the *dozo*, a hunter's association, and together they went to Conakry to see Sékouba Konaté. They told him that if Alpha Condé would not win the elections, there would be violence throughout the country. According to Diallo, that is why Konaté made Condé President instead of Diallo who had more votes than the former (interview, 08.11.2011).

The Association of Female Leaders

As we have already seen in the case of Bangaly, only parts of the administration engaged in the politicisation of ethnicity. At the same time, different religious, political, and social actors helped to appease the tense situation at the individual and collective levels. In Kankan, especially the religious and 'traditional' leaders and the *chefs de quartier* have been involved in – to use the emic notion – sensitising the population. The local government had asked these male leaders to tell the population in their sermons and during meetings not to react violently to tensions within the community. Djénabou recounted that these authorities first sensitised the city's youth. When this did not bear fruit, they started talking to their parents, especially the mothers, because it is they who know their children best, Djénabou emphasised. Thierno also mentioned women's role during conflict: 'When enough is enough, when the situation gets too tense, people deploy women for the sensitisation' (field notes, 30.11.2012). Additionally, well-known people and journalists talked about the issue of ethnic cohabitation and reconciliation on the radio.

National and international NGOs also trained men and women as mediators during the electoral period. One organisation that profited from such a training was the Association of Female Leaders. The Association of Female Leaders was established after a workshop on female leadership at the end of Conté's reign. Its members are all middle-aged or elderly, well-educated women of different ethnic background and various political affiliations. At the time of research, subgroups of the Association of Female Leaders are present in all major Guinean cities and are officially organised along the same lines as any sort of formally acknowledged associations: They have a president, a vice-president, a treasurer, one person who oversees the communication, one for social affairs, one for the external and one for the internal relations.

Madame Bah, one of the members of the Association of Female Leaders, told me that their first intervention was during Lansana Conté's reign when a conflict between Kankan's local government and the 'traditional' authorities caused by cattle thieves. Madame Bah stressed that the successful resolution of this disagreement brought her organisation recognition and momentum

and, as a result, they were often consulted when conflicts of minor or larger scale emerged. The members of the association applied different methods to resolve these disputed, she explained. Sometimes they used sweet words, sometimes they sang, sometimes they cried, or they used ‘traditional’ methods of conflict resolution.

At the time of the presidential elections, the Association of Female Leaders played their role as mediators at different levels: After a consultation with the Office of Women’s and Children’s Affairs, they talked to other key persons of the local government, and they went to see the senior members (*doyens*) of each ethnic group. Madame Bah stressed that this had not been an easy task because usually women in Guinea do not get involved too much in politics. But when they arrived, they presented ten kola nuts as the local customs demand, they explained the reason for their coming, and, finally, their presence was appreciated. According to Madame Bah, the *doyens* of each ethnic group then helped to stop the circulation of false rumours. In addition to these visits, the members of the Association of Female Leaders spread their words of peace in all of Kankan’s neighbourhoods, they sensitised the women in the markets and went to other major Guinean cities where they held peace fora. Lastly, they organised a peaceful march where they spread their main message: Do not kill our children! The organisation’s two members I could speak to, Madame Kouyaté and Madame Bah, were both very happy with what their association had achieved during the tumultuous election period. When I asked about their role as women with regard to conflict resolution, Madame Bah and Madame Kouyaté answered similarly. The latter stated:

If there is anything irregular, we are here to put out the fire. It is our duty as spouses, as mothers, because we are stabbed one way or the other. If it is not our husband who is involved in troubles, it is our children, our brothers. We women are more involved than those men. If you say to your husband: ‘Do not go out, stay at home!’ If you say to your son: ‘I do not want to see you outside the yard, you are not to make this or that thing.’ If people listen to you, they will stay at home.

(Interview, 21.11.2011)

According to the prevailing image in Kankan – as in the whole country – women only protest in case of emergency; if the situation becomes really critical, women start engaging. In quiet and peaceful times, many women do not see any necessity to engage in what they name as politics (Dessertine 2019). When I asked for more information on that issue, Djénabou explained:

We [women] are somehow indifferent, because if there is a political problem, we do not get involved. Our concern is to find something to eat. It is only when it becomes hot, women say: ‘If this continues that way, it is my child, my husband, and myself who are in danger, thus we must intervene’.

(Informal conversation, 30.11.2012)

Throughout Guinea's history ordinary women who get involved in institutional politics or protest publicly argue that they do so, due to the prevailing emergency. They see it as their duty as wives, mothers, and sisters to help by appeasing tensions or to do something about the harsh economic situations. This has been the case during the general strikes of 1953 (Schmidt 2002, 2005). The same argument can be found in Rabiadou Sèrah Diallo's statement regarding the general strikes of 2006 and 2007 (Pauthier 2007; Jeune Afrique 25.02.2010). And as the example of the Association of Female Leaders and Djénabou's commentary illustrate, women still allude to their roles as mothers or wives to legitimate their political involvement during moments of political, social, or economic crisis. Moreover, the Association of Female Leaders, an organisation that deliberately cuts across ethnic boundaries, nicely illustrates that there are specific circumstances where women try to counter the predominant atmosphere, here by stressing gender identity to overcome ethnic tensions.

Of Allegations and Reconciliation

Alpha Condé Talking about Ethnicity

Once elected, the issue of what the President labelled as 'reconciliation' was immediately on Alpha Condé's agenda. In an interview with France 24 (18.11.2010), he declared that his main goal was to reunite the Guinean nation: "What interests me today is to speak of national reconciliation, to call Guineans to unite so that we bring our forces together." Condé liked to stress that his party has gained votes from all ethnic groups, not only the Manding. Already during the electoral campaign, he had emphasised – especially in the Guinean Coast Region – that his mother is a Susu and he therefore speaks the language fluently (International Crisis Group 2011, 6). Furthermore, the newly elected President accused the international media of wrongly depicting the electoral competition as a battle between the two main ethnic groups: "I do not know why you want to reduce the elections [to an opposition between the] Manding and [the] Fulani. You must stop demonising Guinea by opposing these two communities [...]. That is extremely dangerous" (France 24 18.11.2010). In his inauguration speech in December 2010, Alpha Condé stressed: "The change that we praise is not directed against a political party or an ethnic group, nor against any social or professional category. [...] I will try [...], at my modest level, to become Guinea's Nelson Mandela who will unify his country's sons" (Guinée Info 22.12.2010).

With these words, Condé wanted to show that everybody was welcome in his country, regardless of social, political, or ethnic background. The president was aware that governing a divided population would be a very difficult task, especially as the legislative elections were pending. However, by using the word 'sons', he only addressed the male population. Alpha Condé compared himself with Nelson Mandela, one of the most respected African politicians and presented himself as the saviour of the nation. In a written interview with Radio France International, the President used an image that emphasises national unity:

I say that Guinea belongs to all Guineans. I like to say that Guinea is like a car. A car has four wheels. If you take one wheel away, the car cannot drive any more. Guinea has its four regions and these four regions must go hand in hand. At the moment, the population is instrumentalised by businessmen who know that they are more bootleggers than businessmen.
(Radio France International 06.20.2010)

This image of Guinea as a car, whereby every wheel represents one region and one ethnic group, came up during fieldwork again and again. Condé, thus, used an analogy most Guineans are familiar with. In this interview, the President did not specifically mention the Fulani. By accusing the businessmen of being criminals, he chose to interpret the actual fault line as one of class and not of ethnicity. To the Fulani businessmen, though, the president's reference was clear. It is not surprising that they felt targeted by the government not due to their economic activities, but because of their ethnicity. The image of the Fulani businessmen as 'bootleggers' is especially problematic as these retailers generally supported Cellou Dalein Diallo. International observers also assert Condé's deviousness: The International Crisis Group (2011, 17–18) condemns Alpha Condé's regular accusations of rice importers, the majority of whom are Fulani, of speculating and thus keeping the population hungry. And this argumentation is not new in Guinea: Sékou Touré and Lansana Conté used similar "populist-socialist rhetoric" (International Crisis Group 2011, 17).

Rumours reinforce such stereotypes. Similar to international observers (IRIN 2011a, 2011b), I was told that the Fulani are setting lower prices at the market for people of their own ethnic group. The statement of Néné Sagno, an elderly Manding woman, is exemplary:

The Fulani are like chameleons. What they have in their hearts is bad, it is bad! The Fulani are criminals. If we talk about criminals, we talk about the Fulani. They do not like others, they just pursue their own interests.
(Interview, 15.11.2011)

When Thierno and I were sitting in a café in February 2012, we heard a Manding man recounting that there had been a power blackout during a soccer match of the Guinean national team in Conakry. The following day a colonel, who was being made responsible for the incident, had been attacked with stones on his way to work. Finally, the injuries caused his death. Another Manding man in the café responded that he was sure the attackers were Fulani: 'It is them who make thinks like that,' he said (field notes, 03.02.2012).

Through such stories, the population in Kankan reproduces the negative stereotype of the economically powerful and egoistic Fulani, not mentioning that the majority of them suffer from poverty just like the rest of the population. Rumours spread rapidly and add to the increased mistrust between the Fulani, on the one hand, the government and the rest of the population, on

the other hand. Thus, the politicisation of ethnicity has, at least partially, led to an “ethnicisation of everyday life” (Förster 2004, 26, author’s translation).

Governmental Reconciliation Events

During the first anniversary speech of his inauguration, Alpha Condé named two of his political goals: unifying the nation but at the same time changing it. He informed Guinea’s population about the establishment of a Provisional National Commission on Reconciliation (*Commission Provisoire de Réflexion sur la Réconciliation Nationale*, CPRN), co-presided by the Imam of Conakry’s Big Mosque and the archbishop. The CPRN’s first step was to set up dialogue groups in all prefectures in collaboration with national and international reconciliation experts. According to the two religious leaders, national reconciliation was already on the way (Guinée 24 20.12.2011).⁴

During the time of fieldwork, reconciliation was a major issue for the Condé government. In the first months of 2012, Kankan’s local government initiated several reconciliation events, for example a reconciliation soccer-tournament and a reconciliation race. The mayor also summoned various meetings with the *chefs de quartier*. The latter then had to identify different groups, which would be able to communicate the issue of ethnic divisions and reconciliation to the neighbourhood population. The research participants responded positively to these efforts.

At the national level, the minister of sports used the national soccer team, the *Syli National*, which played at the African Cup of Nations (*Coupe Afrique des Nations*, CAN) in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to represent the image of a unified Guinea. He stressed: “You know, if you love your country, if it is for a common cause; it is the *Syli National*, it is red, yellow, and green [the colours of the Guinean flag]. It is not one political party or one ethnic group” (Guinée News 15.01.2012). Similarly, Mister Nabé, the vice-mayor stressed: ‘The *Syli National* will be a determinant factor for reconciliation’ (informal conversation, 31.01.2012).

The image of a sports team as the nation’s representative is not a Guinean particularity; on the contrary, worldwide, politicians instrumentalise sports, as sports and politics become more and more intermingled. One of the most prominent examples in this regard is Nelson Mandela who used the (mostly white) South African rugby team during the World Cup in 1995 for that purpose, and in doing so demonstrated reconciliation (Nauright 1997). Discourse surrounding sports reflect political or social issues in a particular society, as Andreas Mehler (2006) illustrates with the examples of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. Soccer creates a “feeling of belonging” and special events can influence a nation’s (self)image (Schwier 2006, 44, author’s translation). This sense of belonging is fostered through the display of national symbols such as flags, the singing of the national anthem, and the wearing of the national soccer shirt. Crawford Young (2012, 43) accurately notes that “[t]he national football team, through ritual combat in international matches, performs the state.”



Figure 2.2 Supporting Banner for the *Syli National* in Kankan

In Kankan, large parts of the population – the youth and the elderly, men and women, Fulani and Manding alike – cheered for the Guinean soccer team. Thierno, who followed the call-in broadcasts on the local radio stations on this issue, noticed that more women were interested in the performance of the national team than ever before. To see young women on the streets wearing a football dress was also common. Even elderly women addressed the topic of the CAN during interviews: They mentioned that they prayed for the national team. For a short time, the whole city felt united in their support of the national team. The general atmosphere before and during the CAN's group stage was, indeed, very special. In the evenings, everybody sat in front of their TVs or listened to the radio; I noted that the acoustic level was much higher than usual. After the high victory against Botswana (6–1), Kankan's streets were full of honking motorbikes and cars. Even though men and women shared their enthusiasm for the Guinean national team, their practices were quite different: While young

men liked to watch the match together with their friends in one of the numerous 'video clubs', these places were not frequented by young women. The latter stayed at home or went to neighbours to watch the game.

In January and February 2012, a reconciliation-tour of different national artists and of elders took place throughout the country. In Kankan, different activities such as workshops and fora were held. These events took place in the RPG main office and were of a minor scale, though; people outside the ruling party were not informed about them. Furthermore, the issue of reconciliation was discussed at the local radio stations during interactive broadcasts or when moderators and invited personalities urged the population to forgive, to reconcile, and to look ahead. The image promoted was a country where all ethnic groups would peacefully cohabit. In public spaces such as cafés or markets, the people also discussed these issues. I heard many examples of peaceful coexistence and collaboration between Manding and Fulani. Time and again people stated: 'Everybody enters and leaves the world through the same door.' But I also had to listen to prejudices: People, for example, claimed that Fulani are egoistic, violent, and dishonest.

On the last day of the reconciliation-week, a *Mamaya*⁵ took place and the city's market and boutiques had to close. Being organised by the governing party, the event was not politically neutral. Nevertheless, it attracted especially the city's youth from different political backgrounds. Furthermore, many people were dressed in yellow, the colour of the RPG. Overall, people within and outside the governing bodies talked much about unity, reconciliation, and forgiveness during that week, but they did not approach the issue of what exactly had caused the ethnic tensions during the election period. Furthermore, they also made no propositions regarding how to overcome existing cleavages.

People such as Bangaly and Mister Nabé praised Alpha Condé's reconciliation efforts in general and the *Mamaya* in particular. Mister Nabe stressed that 'the fish rots at the head first', meaning that if the head, in this case the head of state, does not set a good example, the rest, the population, does not follow. He added: 'Alpha Condé is not the Manding's President. He is the President of all Guineans' (informal conversation, 03.02.2012). Sarata Cherif, the head of Sogbè's market office and a member of the RPG, explained that the *Mamaya's* goal was as follows: "The aim of the event was to show the whole world that today, Guinea is free. The aim of the organisation of this manifestation was national reconciliation" (interview, 31.01.2012).

The event, however, could not convince people who were not affiliated to the RPG. A Fulani woman selling on Sogbè market lamented that the instruments for this *Mamaya* were expensive. She invited the government to build factories and, thus, create employment for the youth instead of wasting their money on happenings like that (informal conversation, 29.01.2012). I also heard an elderly man uttering quietly to his neighbour in a café opposite the stage: 'All intellectuals are aware that this is just propaganda, nothing else' (field notes, 28.01.2012). Amara Kamano, an intellectual woman who does not support any political party, was even angry: "People say they organised a day of

reconciliation. But reconciliation between whom and whom? In one word, this is a campaign for the RPG, for the President” (interview, 15.12.2012).

At the time, political campaigning was officially forbidden. For that reason, a *Mamaya* of the PEDN in Kankan more than a month earlier had been dissolved with the use of teargas (Guinée Actu 12.12.2011). Masked by a discourse about reconciliation and forgiveness, the *Mamaya* could draw attention to the governing party. Above all, young people of all ethnic backgrounds and with various political interests enjoyed the offered distraction. Political tensions, however, were fostered because of the organisers’ obvious political goal.

Conclusions: The Situational Politicisation of Ethnicity

In Kankan, social actors interact habitually with one another and therefore, in everyday life ethnic identity does not play a pivotal role. At the same time, I witnessed many occasions of scapegoating. For the local population, these differences did not stand in opposition to each other; people actively take part in and shape ethnic division at one moment and reconciliation at the next. Nevertheless, since the 2010 presidential elections, ethnic belonging figures centrally in the discourse of Kankan’s population – like elsewhere in Guinea. The ‘other’ is discursively constructed as being a hindrance to reconciliation, transformation, and construction of the country.

Politicians and ordinary people from different ethnic belonging politicise the past. Especially the Fulani imagine themselves to be historical victims. As they could never provide a head of state, they share a sentiment of being politically marginalised. Consequently, the Fulani claim that it was now their turn to provide a President, because the Manding, the Susu, and the people from the Forest Region already had ‘their’ President. While the Manding are politically quite powerful, at the economic level they are very much challenged by the Fulani who seek more representation and participation within the government and the public administration.

The composition of Alpha Condé’s first government hints to the President’s efforts to overcome ethnic division and to consolidate his coalition by appointing members of all ethnic groups (International Crisis Group 2011, 8). Nevertheless, Human Rights Watch (2011) accuses the President of favouring Manding when appointing new members to his administration. This is a lamentation I repeatedly heard in interviews and informal conversations with Fulani research participants. Aissata Silla, a young Fulani woman, deplored for example:

Today, the President’s ethnic group commits acts of ethnocentrism, even racism. This is not good. The President should work with everybody. We must stand together to ease things, because one person or one ethnic group alone cannot develop the country. But if people say: This specific ethnic group is in power and only members of this group benefit from it instead of the whole population ... In this case, can it work? No, it cannot.

(Interview, 02.11.2011)

Political parties, on the one hand emphasised that they represented all ethnic groups. Local party boards in Kankan appointed for example, members of different ethnical groups and stressed that their party welcomed members of all ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, Guinea's population imagined political parties to represent just one major ethnic group (Bah 2016, 10) Furthermore, "Guinean politicians and intellectuals [...] are eager to privately manipulate ethnic difference for selfish reasons" (Camara 2014, 451). Some research participants were very much aware of the manipulative role politicians and their parties played in the whole matter and therefore were not interested in their speeches and practices of reconciliation. A male Fulani, who had recently retired from the military, spoke exemplarily for those: "Reconciliation is only between the leaders, not between us. We among the people from the military, we are fine, there is nothing between us" (interview, 22.02.2012). Worldwide, such manipulations of ethnicity are typical when the political and economic competitions are fierce, such as during Guinea's first 'democratic' presidential elections of 2010.

Asked what they understand by the term, many research participants said that reconciliation will come 'naturally' because of inter-ethnic marriages that are common in Kankan and elsewhere. In Kankan, myriad associations exist, such as youth-, community-, work- or faith based groups, age-set groups, NGOs, or women's organisations. With the exception of groups formed on the basis of origin that are popular among students, none of them is founded on ethnic or regional criteria. Lived realities thus demonstrate that political manipulation of ethnicity does not always bear fruit. Still, many people talked negatively, sometimes even aggressively about the 'other'.

Due to its reconciliation attempts, the local government could make the population think and talk about these issues. At the same time, people were angry with the RPG for misusing the reconciliation event as a platform for campaigning. The launch of the government's reconciliation and unity efforts was not a coincidence. As legislative elections were scheduled for December 2011, then delayed until June 2012, and finally took place in September 2013, the President tried to rally the population behind him. At this time, it was politically not wise to stress ethnic difference; as, for example, the Manding Lansana Kouyaté's PEDN had left Condé's coalition and joined the opposition (Open Society Initiative for West Africa 2012). We have thus seen that Alpha Condé uses both ethnic divisions and reconciliation to achieve his political goals. If Condé follows Alpha Amadou Bano Barry's words (25.12.2013), he would make the peaceful cohabitation of the Guinean population one of his main priorities, not only rhetorically, but also practically. Bano Barry warns emphatically: "We live in a paradoxical country: Our political elites make everything to cause civil war and the population refuses that, until when?"

Lastly, some remarks on how gender and ethnic identity are interlinked in Kankan. In everyday discourse and practices, I did not notice any difference between men and women when it comes to the issue of ethnicity: Both interact habitually with people of different ethnic backgrounds and claim that the elite

politicises ethnicity; it is not an issue of contestation in everyday life. At the same time, men as well as women of all ages and educational backgrounds produce and reproduce prejudices of the imagined ‘other’. However, when the social and political atmosphere becomes very tense, Guinean women have the image of mediators; they are regarded as well suited to appease conflicts due to their experience as household diplomats who hold their families together. The government and female politicians, too, promote this image of women as guardians of peace (e.g. République de Guinée 2014, 14). In the words of Ibrahima Kourouma, an elderly male griot: “To live in harmony, we need three persons: An Imam, a griot, and a female leader” (interview, 24.11.2011). The Association of Female Leaders is a case in point. These well-educated women deliberately used their femaleness, especially their roles as mothers, to be able to enter the ‘traditional’ male political sphere where they negotiated with ‘traditional’ authorities. Furthermore, they emphasised their common identities with non-formally educated women, namely in also being mothers, to co-opt them in their struggle for peace.

To sum up, several of the characteristics of identity politics mentioned by Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2010, 194–197) are relevant in the Guinean case: Firstly, Guineans compete over scarce resources such as access to secure and well-paying jobs. While the Fulani have the image of being economically better off than the rest of the population, they feel excluded from the administration. As Eriksen (2010, 194–197) stresses, ethnicity typically comes into play when people consider wealth and resources to be distributed unequally. Secondly, identity politics leads ethnic groups to consider themselves as a homogenous category where cultural similarity overrules any other social identities. This factor was clearly visible in Guinea. While some of the research participants, especially those who have some degree of formal education, explained in detail the different subgroups among the Manding, this was never an issue when ethnic politics came into play.

Thirdly, the imagined ‘others’ are branded through stereotypes. In this context, they are used to “justify privileges and differences in access to a society’s resources” (Eriksen 2010, 30) and in doing so, help bring and bind together one’s own group. We have clearly seen how people of the Manding ethnicity denigrate the Fulani in general as rich traders that are dishonest and egoistic. The government also upholds some stereotypes, for example, when it creates statistics and documents, thereby using categories such as ethnicity, territorial, or economic characteristics. Moreover, the Fulani are frequently accused of violent acts and they often portray themselves as being the victims of state power. Since the presidential elections, every decision by the government – be it political, social, or economic – is seen by the Fulani to go against their ethnic group, which can be detected in local newspapers, comments in blogs, and in popular debates.

Fourthly, memories of past suffering and injustice are activated through myths and cultural symbols for one’s own group for political purposes. In Guinea, the past is constantly reworked, especially the Touré era. The Fulani,

on the one hand, stress that they have been the main target during that time and suffered most from the autocratic President. The Manding in Kankan, on the other hand, emphasise that they were chased out of the administration after the ‘Coup Diarra’ and that the Fulani economically profited during the reign of Lansana Conté. I could not put it better than the International Crisis Group, which states that the presidential elections:

gave new impetus to the idea that Guinea’s history is a struggle between its four major ethno-regional blocs. In the first round, most politicians started by organising their own communities. The second round – during which ethnic rhetoric built steadily on all sides – was a scarcely disguised debate on supposed Peul domination, with [Alpha] Condé, a Malinké, attributing hegemonic ambitions to that community from which his opponent and the main opposition party leader, Cellou Dalein Diallo, comes. Although the security forces were responsible for the worst violence, political mobilisation along ethnic lines sparked clashes and claimed victims.

(International Crisis Group 2011, 1)

Notes

- 1 Minor parts and earlier versions of this chapter have been published in a joint article with Andrea Kaufmann: Ammann, Carole, and Andrea A. Kaufmann. 2014. “Politics of Ethnicity in Monrovia, Liberia and Kankan, Guinea – A Comparative Analysis.” *Mande Studies* (14):57–97. Printed with the permission of *Mande Studies*.
- 2 Bernard Charles (2010, 147–150) confirms the above-mentioned ethnic favouritism under Touré and Conté through an analysis of the ethnic background of the ministers, governors, and prefect between 1958 and 2008. According to Charles, the Fulani were politically underrepresented during that time.
- 3 Camara’s statement turned out to be right once again: Alpha Condé and his RPG won the legislative elections in September 2013. For a detailed account of the credibility and transparency of these elections, as well as their outcome, see the final report by the observation mission of the EU (Union Européenne 2013).
- 4 The CPRN was formed in August 2011. Five years later, it submitted its final report to the President Alpha Condé (CPRN 27.06.2016). The long report addresses human right violations since the country’s independence up to 2015. According to one of the main findings, the Guinean population welcomes reconciliation that is based on what is locally considered as ‘traditional’ coping mechanisms. The report makes twenty-two recommendations which should be implemented by an institutionalised Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission.
- 5 “The regional and colonial-era metropolis Kankan has since the 1930s enjoyed a reputation for being the birthplace of a musical movement that has touched all corners of the Mande diaspora. Known as *Mamaya*, this movement represents the innovations of Maninka youth working within the confines of their centuries-old cultural traditions” (Kaba and Charry 2000, 187). Colloquially, the notion of *Mamaya* is used when referring to a musical event in line with this cultural tradition.

Bibliography

- Ammann, Carole, and Andrea A. Kaufmann. 2014. "Politics of Ethnicity in Monrovia, Liberia and Kankan, Guinea – A Comparative Analysis." *Mande Studies* (14):57–97.
- Arieff, Alexis, and Mike McGovern. 2013. "'History is Stubborn'. Talk About Truth, Justice, and National Reconciliation in the Republic of Guinea." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55:198–225.
- Bah, Mamadou Diouma. 2016. "Stability in Deeply Divided Societies. Escaping Ethnic-Based Armed Conflict in Guinea." *African Identities*:1–17.
- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou. 25. 12. 2013. "Comment changer la Guinée? Dr. Bano Barry, sociologue, répond à la question à travers une analyse pertinente!" Accessed 05. 08. 2019. <http://guineedirect.org/index.php/a-la-une/739-comment-changer-la...sociologue-repond-a-la-question-a-travers-une-analyse-pertinente>.
- Beer, Bettina. 2012. "Kultur und Ethnizität." In *Ethnologie. Einführung und Überblick*, edited by Bettina Beer, and Hans Fischer, 53–74. Berlin: Reimer.
- Berman, Bruce J. 2010. "Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa." *JICA Working Paper* (22):1–38.
- Berman, Bruce, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka, eds. 2004. *Ethnicity & Democracy in Africa*. Oxford/Athens: James Currey Publishers.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2014. *Political History of Guinea Since World War Two*. Vol. 23. New York: Peter Lang.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou, Thomas O'Toole, and Janice E. Baker. 2014. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*. 5 ed. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press.
- Chambers, Paul 2004. "Guinée. Le prix d'une stabilité à court terme." *Politique Africaine* 94:128–148.
- Charles, Bernard. 2010. "Une désespérance de l'indépendance. L'unité nationale." In *Le NON de la Guinée (1958). Entre mythe, relecture historique et résonance contemporaine*, edited by Odile Goerg, Céline Pauthier, and Abdoulaye Diallo, 133–157. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- CPRN. 27. 06. 2016. "Commission provisoire de réflexion sur la réconciliation nationale: Objet: Remise du rapport des consultations nationales en appui au processus de réconciliation nationale." Accessed 20. 05. 2019. mptf.undp.org/document/download/17663.
- Dave, Nomi. 2017. "Music, Multipartyism and the 'Guinean Family'." *The World of Music* 6(2):115–130.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2019. "Women, Power, and the State in Guinea." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, edited by Thomas Spear. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.538.
- Dorman, Sara R., Daniel P. Hammett, and Paul Nugent. 2007. "Introduction. Citizenship and its Casualties in Africa." In *Making Nations, Creating Strangers. State and Citizenship in Africa*, edited by Sara R. Dorman, Daniel P. Hammett, and Paul Nugent, 3–26. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Eisenberg, Avigail, and Will Kymlicka. 2011. "Bringing Institutions Back In. How Public Institutions Assess Identity." In *Identity Politics in the Public Realm. Bringing Institutions Back In*, edited by Avigail Eisenberg, and Will Kymlicka, 1–30. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2001 [1995]. *Small Places, Large Issues. An Introduction to Special and Cultural Anthropology*. 2 ed. London: Pluto.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2010. *Ethnicity and Nationalism*. New York: Pluto Press.

- Förster, Till. 2004. "Am Rande des Staates." In *Blick nach vorn*, edited by Kurt Beck, Till Förster, and Hans Peter Hahn, 14–27. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.
- France 24. 18. 11. 2010. "Alpha Condé, vainqueur de l'élection." Accessed 17. 12. 2019. <http://www.france24.com/fr/20101118-alpha-conde-vainqueur-election-presidentielle-guinee-malinke-peul-interview-entretien/>.
- Goerg, Odile. 2006. "Chieftainships Between Past and Present. From City to Suburb and Back in Colonial Conakry, 1890s–1950s." *Africa Today* 52(4):3–27.
- Goerg, Odile. 2011. "Couper la Guinée en quatre ou comment la colonisation a imaginé l'Afrique." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 3(111):73–88.
- Goerg, Odile, Céline Pauthier, and Abdoulaye Diallo. 2010. "Introduction." In *Le NON de la Guinée (1958). Entre mythe, relecture historique et résonance contemporaine*, edited by Odile Goerg, Céline Pauthier, and Abdoulaye Diallo, 5–14. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Groelsema, Robert J. 1998. "The Dialectics of Citizenship and Ethnicity in Guinea." *Africa Today*:411–421.
- Guinée 24. 20. 12. 2011. "Discours de l'an 1 de l'investiture du Pr. Alpha Condé à la magistrature suprême." Accessed 17. 12. 2019. <http://www.guinee24.com/lire/detail/discours-de-lan-1-de-linvestiture-du-pr-alpha-conde-a-la-magistrature-supreme/>.
- Guinée 24. 11. 12. 2011. "Le PEDN à Kankan. Lansana Kouyaté auréolé par ses militants et sympathisants." Accessed 17. 12. 2019. <http://www.guinee24.com/lire/detail/le-pedn-a-kankan-lansana-kouyate-aureole-par-ses-militants-et-sympathisants/>.
- Guinée Info. 22. 12. 2010. "Investiture. 'La Guinée Is Back...', déclare Alpha Condé." Accessed 03. 07. 2019. <http://guineeinfo.over-blog.com/article-investiture-la-guinee-is-back-declare-alpha-conde-63530178.html>.
- Guinée News. 15. 01. 2012. "Aboubacar Titi Camara, ministre des sports: 'L'objectif du gouvernement est d'atteindre les demi-finales à la CAN'." Accessed 01. 02. 2012. <http://www.guineenews.org/common/forms/frmImprimer.asp?artNum=201211543748&artType=1>.
- Højbjerg, Christian. 2007. *Resisting State Iconoclasm among the Loma of Guinea*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.
- Human Rights Watch. 2011. "Guinea. Intensify Attention to Human Rights Challenges." Accessed 31. 03. 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/21/guinea-intensify-attention-human-rights-challenges>.
- International Crisis Group. 2003. "Guinée. Incertitude autour d'une fin de règne." In *Rapport d'Afrique N° 74*. Dakar/Bruxelles.
- International Crisis Group. 2007. "Guinea. Change or Chaos." In *Africa Report N° 121*. Dakar/Bruxelles.
- International Crisis Group. 2011. "Guinea. Putting the Transition Back on Track." In *Africa Report N°178*. Dakar/Bruxelles.
- IRIN. 2011a. "Guinea. Obstacles, Omens and Opportunities." Accessed 21. 06. 11. <http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=92253>.
- IRIN. 2011b. "Guinea. Avoiding ethnically-driven elections." Accessed 31. 03. 2014. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/94405/guinea-avoiding-ethnically-driven-elections>.
- IRIN. 2013. "Guineans Flee Conakry Unrest, Ethnic Tension." Accessed 09. 07. 2013. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/98189/guineans-flee-conakry-unrest-ethnic-tension>.
- Jeune Afrique. 25. 02. 2010. "Rabiadou Serah Diallo, une passionaria à Conakry." Accessed 18. 06. 2014. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articleimp_ARTJAWEB20100225113318_rabiadou-serah-diallo-une-pasionaria-a-conakry.html.

- Kaba, Lansiné, and Eric Charry. 2000. "Mamaya. Renewal and Tradition in Maninka Music of Kankan, Guinea (1935–1945)." In *The African Diaspora. A Musical Perspective*, edited by Ingrid Monson, 187–206. New York: Routledge.
- Kohl, Christoph, and Anita Schroven. 2014. "Suffering for the Nation. Bottom-Up and Top-Down Conceptualisations of the Nation in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau." *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* (152). Accessed 06. 07. 2015. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275032822_Suffering_for_the_Nation_bottom-up_and_top-down_conceptualisations_of_the_nation_in_Guinea_and_Guinea-Bissau.
- Lynch, Gabrielle. 2013. "The Politics of Ethnicity." In *Routledge Handbook of African Politics*, edited by Nic Cheeseman, David B. Anderson, and Andrea Scheibler, 95–107. London/New York: Routledge.
- McGovern, Mike. 2007. "Janvier 2007 – Sékou Touré est mort." *Politique Africaine* (107):125–146.
- McGovern, Mike. 2012. *Unmasking the State. Making Guinea Modern*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- McGovern, Mike. 2017. *A Socialist Peace? Explaining the Absence of War in an African Country*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Mehler, Andreas. 2006. "Political Discourse in Football Coverage – The Cases of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana." *GIGA Working Papers* (27):1–25.
- Mehler, Andreas. 2007. "Political Parties and Violence in Africa." In *Votes, Money and Violence. Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Gero Erdmann, Matthias Baseau, and Andreas Mehler, 194–221. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
- Nauright, John. 1997. *Sport, Cultures, and Identities in South Africa*. London: Leicester University Press.
- Olivier de Sardan, Jean Pierre. 2008. "Researching the Practical Norms of Real Governance in Africa. Discussion Paper." In *Africa Power and Politics Programme*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Open Society Initiative for West Africa. 2012. "Guinea Country Report." Accessed 30. 8. 2012. <http://osiwa.org/en/portal/newsroom/268/Guinea-Country-Report-2012.htm?w=cn&t=5>.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2007. "Tous derrière, les femmes devant! Femmes, représentations sociales et mobilisation politique en Guinée (1945–2006)." In *Perspectives historiques sur le genre en Afrique*, edited by Odile Goerg, 221–237. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Radio France International. 06. 12. 2010. "Alpha Condé, nouveau président de Guinée, parle sur RFI." Accessed 17. 12. 2019. <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20101206-alpha-conde-nouveau-president-guinee-parle-rfi>.
- République de Guinée. 2014. "Rapport de la République de Guinée sur l'Evaluation de la Mise en Oeuvre du Programme d'Action de Beijing+20." Conakry: Ministre de l'Action Sociale, de la Promotion Féminine et de l'Enfance.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2002. "'Emancipate Your Husbands!' Women and Nationalism in Guinea 1953–1958." In *Women in African Colonial Histories*, edited by Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi, 282–304. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2005. *Mobilizing the Masses. Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939–1958*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2007. *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–1958*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

- Schoven, Anita. 2016. "Contested Transnational Spaces Debating Emigrants' Citizenship and the Role in Guinean Politics." In *The Upper Guinea Coast in Global Perspective*, edited by Jacqueline Knörr, and Christoph Kohl, 77–94. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Schroven, Anita. 2019. *Playing the Marginality Game: Identity Politics in West Africa*. Vol. 19. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Schwier, Jürgen. 2006. "Globaler Fussball und nationale Identität." *Spectrum* 18 (1):40–53.
- Smith, Dane. 2006. "US-Guinea Relations during the Rise and Fall of Charles Taylor." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44(3):415–439.
- Union Européenne. 2011. "Rapport Final. Mission d'observation électorale en République de Guinée. Élection présidentielle de 2010." Conakry: Union Européenne.
- Union Européenne. 2013. "Guinée. Rapport final. Élections législatives 28 septembre 2013." Conakry: Union Européenne.
- Young, Crawford. 2007. "Nation, Ethnicity and Citizenship. Dilemmas of Democracy and Civil Order in Africa." In *Making Nations, Creating Strangers. States and Citizenship in Africa*, edited by Sara R. Dorman, Daniel P. Hammett, and Paul Nugent, 241–264. Leiden: Brill.
- Young, Crawford. 2012. *The Postcolonial State in Africa. Fifty Years of Independence (1960–2010)*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

3 Expectations of the New President

Introduction

Guinea did not move forward. Then Alpha [Condé] came. He said: ‘Change!’
But it is not easy to change the Guinean mentality.

(Field notes, young man in a café, 19.01.2012)

Kankan’s population has many expectations of the state: It should build up infrastructure; deliver basic services, such as education, health, water, and electricity; provide micro credits; and create jobs. For the female research participants, affordable food was the most important issue the state should ensure. People see the state as omnipotent and expect it to redistribute wealth among its citizens just as a parent should do among family members. Or to put it in Michael Jackson’s (2007, 44) words “the state is imagined [...] as a protoparent.” Jean-François Bayart (1993, 261) describes the functioning of African states “as a rhizome of personal networks [...]. [The state] assures the centralisation of power through the agencies of family, alliance and friendship [...].” This attitude, however, is not an African particularity but can be found on other continents as well.

When referring to the state, Kankan’s population in fact often means Alpha Condé. In Guinea – like in other African countries – the head of the executive has extensive powers, compared to the legislative and judiciary. The President is imagined as the nation’s father (Schatzberg 2001) who is considered personally responsible for the well-being of its citizens. The hero of independence, Sékou Touré, also fostered the image of himself as the embodiment of the nation. However, the phenomenon can be observed in other African countries and beyond. In Bruce J. Berman’s (2010, 14) words: “[...] in state after state, the political and cultural construction of the ‘nation’ turned into a cult of personality around the president or leader as the embodiment of the nation and the father of his people.”

Alpha Condé is a controversial figure. His supporters praise his educational background and the fact that he has never been in a Guinean government and, therefore, was not part of the undemocratic First and Second Republics. They call Alpha Condé the ‘historical opposition leader’ or simply ‘*le prof*’ or

'*le professeur*' (the prof(essor)) (Camara 2014, 440). The President's opponents, however, blame Condé for his policy of 'divide and rule' – not least regarding ethnicity, as Chapter 1 has illustrated. Besides, they accuse him of misusing public funds, profiting personally from the mining sector, and of not consulting the opposition concerning the electoral process (Camara 2012, 2014, 441–451).

Alpha Condé's main stronghold is the Upper Guinea Region. In the region of Kankan, he gained 71.8 percent of the votes during the first poll and 92 percent during the second poll of the presidential elections in 2010. When I first arrived in Kankan at the end of August 2011, people were very enthusiastic about Guinea's future. They saw in the election of Alpha Condé a major break with the dictatorial periods of the past. According to the EU (Union Européenne 2011, 5, author's translation), the ballots of 2010 have "taken place under generally satisfactory conditions" and the research participants who are in favour of Alpha Condé referred to them as Guinea's first democratic elections. Mohamed Silla, a young teacher remembered: "I went voting and it was good, because I was proud to see a democratically elected President. Guinea had never known democracy before" (interview, 17.10.2011). Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 440) writes that "the swearing in of Alpha Condé on December 21, 2010, marked a turning point in the political history of Guinea. In addition to bringing to a relatively peaceful end the dangerous crisis inherited from the Conté-era and exacerbated under the CNDD junta, it enabled the Guinean state to regain some of the national and international legitimacy that it lost as a result of the chronic instability and malgovernance [...]."

Kankan's population expected that the coming into power of 'their' leader would facilitate their access to state resources, enhance the building of the city's infrastructure, and provide job opportunities, especially for the youth. Representative of the general atmosphere is the statement of Mister Cissé, a local state employee, who explained: "For the moment we have hope. I have hope. We can say: God helps us. We will do everything for this President. In the past, we have already suffered a lot" (interview, 08.02.2012).

Once elected, Alpha Condé proclaimed to appease the situation in Guinea after tumultuous years and to change its political, social, and economic landscape for the better. One of his preferred catchwords was 'change'. With this notion, Alpha Condé built on the most used slogans during the general strikes of 2006 and 2007: *changement* (change) and *nous voulons le changement* (we want change) (Human Rights Watch 2007). However, the postulation of change is not a Guinean particularity; on the contrary: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (2009, 398), for example, in her inaugural speech welcomed the change Liberia's citizens had summoned with her election as the country's new President. Most prominent and successful in this regard was obviously Barack Obama's election campaign in 2008 with its famous slogan 'yes we c(h)an(ge)'. Furthermore, Alpha Condé's discourse of change is in line with postulation of development and modernity put forward by NGOs and international institutions such as the UN or the IMF.

In the following sections, I illustrate how the President, his party members, and ordinary Guineans fostered the notion of change. In his addresses, the President repeatedly mentioned women and youth. Thus, I analyse how Alpha Condé refers to these two segments of society. Further, I investigate the issues of government practices women talk about and what kind of normative assumptions about the state they have. Throughout this chapter, I am wondering why Kankan's population continues to hope for the state's assistance, even if these expectations have not been met in the past.

The President Proclaiming Change

Guinea has experienced major political transformations in the 2000s, in particular since the general strikes of 2006 and 2007 and President Lansana Conté's death in 2008. When Alpha Condé came to power, he had to tackle many problems if he wanted to meet the expectations of a population plagued by poverty, which was also caused by decades of political mismanagement. Condé had to stabilise and enhance Guinea's social, political, and economic situation. In addition, the President needed a broad coalition to win the upcoming legislative elections. By addressing the 'International Community' and the Guinean population, Alpha Condé explained his vision for Guinea in his speeches and interviews with international news agencies. Usually, local media took both up and reproduced them in French and in various national languages. A great deal of Condé's communication followed a similar pattern: Firstly, he mentioned the many difficulties he had taken over from his predecessors, for example by saying that he has "inherited a country without a state" (*Jeune Afrique* 16.07.2012). Secondly, he illustrated his intentions to bring change about, namely by listing the many programmes his governments had initiated in the last couple of months. Thirdly, the head of state envisioned a prosperous Guinea with a bright future.

At the beginning of 2013, the President accused his ministers of not working properly and being corrupt (*Guinée News* 06.01.2013). In Kankan, this speech has been widely discussed and even people supporting the opposition have welcomed its content. However, habitual bureaucratic practices do not change swiftly. Local bureaucrats often remain in office for many years; they outlast different presidents and swiftly adapt to new forms of rule as Michelle Engeler (2015, 90–91) describes when she illustrates how Guéckédou's prefect, by adjusting to the current political situation, repeatedly changed uniforms between 2008 and 2012. Similarly, Gerhard Anders (2009) compares Malawian state employees' behaviour to chameleons who adopt their environment's colour. During my research, I met some local state officials who had already started their professional career during the First Republic, and who have been highly successful in adapting to the specific political situation.

In his inauguration address, Alpha Condé emphasised his goal to put Guinea back on track, namely to lead the country out of international isolation, to leave poverty behind and, finally, to become one of this planet's

emerging countries (Guinée Info 22.12.2010). On the occasion of the independence celebration in October 2011, the President precisely enumerated the launched projects, specifically in the field of mining, agriculture, education, sanitation, health, road-building, energy, judiciary, and security (Blog de Sylvie K. 02.10.2011). Thus, the President “evidently nourish[ed] big ambitions for his country,” as the International Crisis Group (2011, author’s translation) states. In a speech addressing the nation after his first year in office, Alpha Condé said:

I promised you change. With your help, I will create conditions for a decent life for everyone without discrimination. And I will particularly give hope to our sons and daughters to live better than we have done, in a reconciled Guinea – reconciled with itself, its history, a prosperous and solitary Guinea. [...] I profoundly believe that the long-awaited change, to be concrete, must manifest and be settled in the everyday life of Guineans. [...] For a long time, I have fought for change, liberty, and prosperity of our country.

(Guinée 24 20.12.2011)

In an interview with *Jeune Afrique* (16.07.2012), the head of state acknowledged the Guinean population’s difficult living conditions. The population had to tighten its belt for two years, Condé explained. Furthermore, he pleaded the people to be patient and promised that they would soon reap the benefits of their deprivations. Here, a connection to the early Touré-period can be drawn when “the government’s economic and political policies demanded many sacrifices from the population” (Kohl and Schroven 2014, 17). In October 2011, the Condé government took a drastic measure to fill the empty treasury: It raised the petrol price from 7,500 to 9,500 Guinean francs per litre (from about 0.75 euro to 0.95 euro). It argued that this was a necessity to attain the goal of a debt release by the IMF (Guinée Press 23.10.2011).

The rise of the petrol price had far-reaching consequences as it led to a general price increase of basic commodities. Unsurprisingly, the issue of the petrol price was controversial, and was debated throughout Kankan for a couple of weeks. Mister Cissé, a man born in the 1960s and working for the prefecture, supported the governmental decision to raise the petrol price even though he was aware of its negative consequences for ordinary citizens. However, the positive result, namely the partial debt release, was more important for him (interview, 08.02.2012). On October 26, 2012, Alpha Condé reached this major milestone: The IMF relieved Guinea of two-thirds of its foreign debt (IMF 28.09.2012). Some hours after the IMF’s announcement, the President visited a centre for women’s promotion in Conakry. There, he thanked Guinea’s female population for its support in achieving this envisaged debt release by tightening their belts (*L’express Guinée* 26.09.2012).

There is a further indication that Guinea has been successful in regaining international credibility. The EU had suspended all development cooperation

with Guinea when the CNDD had seized power in 2008. In December 2012, Guinea and the EU finally signed a treaty to re-launch their cooperation (Commission Européenne 21.12.2012). Referring to the above-described achievements on the international arena, Condé's New Year's Address for 2013 was quite enthusiastic:

The striking successes of the year 2012 are intimately tied to the deep-rootedness of democratisation in our country. [...] Change is on the way. Our country has already successfully crossed an important stage of transformation. Step by step, we catch up. I welcome your patriotism as well as your efforts and sacrifices to put our country on the track of change. Your courage bore fruit. With the work and the determination of the government, we have been successful in bringing about large progresses on the social, economic, and political level.

(Guinée Juristes 2013)

The image that Guinea has – for all too long – been standing apart from the international arena is widespread and therefore, Alpha Condé's slogan 'Guinée is back' (Ammann and Engeler 2013) fell on fertile ground among Kankan's ordinary people, but also among intellectuals such as Paul Kamano (2015), who wrote a book called *Guinea. A portrait of change under Alpha Condé*. Others are much more critical about whether Guinea is indeed this "spearhead of change" (Knierzinger, Engeler, and Ammann 2016). Not so Madame Sakho and Mister Nabé, the two vice-mayors. They reproduced the President's notion of change:

Actually, Guinea has changed on the national and international level. During the military regime, the governments did not go outside Guinea to participate in big meetings. Therefore, Guinea was negligible. If you have debt at this level, then you are not allowed to speak and not allowed to vote. Thus, it is useless to come to the meeting. That is why, in the past, Guinea has been forgotten. With the arrival of the President Alpha Condé there is a change. As he said: 'Guinea is back'.

(Interview, 22.11.2011)

Guinea: A Love and Hate Relationship

During fieldwork in Kankan, the general atmosphere amongst the research participants was somehow contradictory: On the one hand, Condé's supporters were enthusiastic about 'their' President's election. They were convinced that Guinea's ongoing democratisation would have beneficial effects. These research participants praised the new possibility to express themselves freely without fearing negative consequences, such as beatings or confinement. Interestingly, supporters of the RPG simultaneously complained about the misuse of democratic achievements: They blamed the opposition for 'saying whatever they wanted.' Especially intellectuals and young people anticipated

positive changes for their country once international sanctions would have fallen, that is, after peaceful and transparent legislative elections. According to their ideas, NGOs – together with the government – would set up projects that would help develop the country and create job opportunities for the (educated) youth. Altogether, they hoped that these political changes would lead to an improvement of their own everyday life. Christoph Kohl and Anita Schroven noticed a similar atmosphere: “While the development industry has not reached the intensity known in other African countries of similar social-economic conditions, there is a prevalent attitude that these organisations are in Guinea to deliver services the population is entitled to” (Kohl and Schroven 2014, 13).

At the time of fieldwork, the government and the opposition were struggling over the execution of the pending legislative elections. As the transitional period had not yet ended, the international partners did not completely resume their collaboration. According to the research participants, this explained why the country’s development was put on hold. I have also perceived some suspicion whether Guinea’s democratization process would, indeed, move forward. This is not surprising considering the population’s experience with the country’s last Presidents regarding the gap between their democratic discourse and their undemocratic practices.

The idea of Guinea ‘being back’ as a player in the international arena fuelled hope among Kankan’s inhabitants. They had a precise idea of the outcome of Guinea’s development whereby other West African countries, the United States, Europe, but also China served as role models. In the emic perspective, it was just a matter of time until Guinea would make major steps and catch up with its neighbouring countries. At the same time, (young) men usually described the current situation in harsh words, especially with regards to infrastructure. Telling is a conversation I witnessed at a café. A man in a suit complained: ‘Guinea is not even a construction site; it is a dustbin! Compared to Burkina Faso we have no hygiene here. Côte d’Ivoire is also better developed than Guinea.’ Another man agreed. He talked about Abuja, Nigeria’s capital city, where every building was made of concrete and no corrugated iron – contrary to Guinea. ‘Guinea is backwards,’ he lamented (field notes, 18.01.2012).

Neither the economic decay nor the civil war has changed Côte d’Ivoire’s image as the sub-region’s Eldorado, where every aspect of life was imagined to be better than in Guinea. Interestingly, the images for war-torn Liberia and Sierra Leone were similar. People who had lived there for some time told me enthusiastically about these countries’ educational system, people’s way of looking after their children, the ease of gaining money, and women’s position in society. In Kankan, people often compared their country to neighbouring Mali whose border is only some 260 kilometres away. In this regard, the research participants were astonished that a country, where it does not rain as much as in Guinea, still manages to export agricultural products. Furthermore, the Malian government was praised for the construction of major dams that allowed the production of electricity. Finally, Mali was particularly applauded for its democratic structures. Obviously, this image crumbled after the coup d’état of March 2012.

One day in November 2012 – Alpha Condé’s second year in office was coming to an end – Thierno and I sat on a bench beside a café. There, one of the female research participants sold food. Three students, whose names hint at their Manding origin, discussed the state of their nation. One of the young men ironically proposed to sell the country and thereby earning money if the situation did not improve. They could then settle in Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, or Ghana. He stressed that everywhere was better than Guinea, especially Ghana. And he continued: ‘There is no democracy here; it is a “mafiaocracy”. The President and the opposition do not want the country to move forward.’ An elderly man, who had listened to the debate, echoed the student’s words; he wanted to sell the country, as well. The female food vendor, however, did not like the negative way those men talked about their country. Playfully, she threw a pebble after the elderly man. Unperturbed, one of the young students resumed the talk: ‘The majority wants to sell the country, especially the youth; we have been unemployed for all too long. We are losing the hope we have had with Alpha [Condé]. Without a national assembly, nothing moves forward’ (naturally occurring talk, 23.11.2012).

Alpha Condé Putting an Emphasis on Women and Youth

In his speeches during the electoral campaign and the first years in office, Alpha Condé put a special emphasis on women and youth. The President was aware that these two segments of the population were an important voter base for him and his political party. Repeatedly, Alpha Condé promised to create job opportunities for the young people and to provide affordable and stable food prices on the local market. He stressed that these two segments were at the core of his preoccupations; thus, youth and women would profit from the envisaged change. Alpha Condé’s declaration of June 2013 in Conakry stands symbolically for this: “Our problem is how to bring change for the young and the women in our country and in Africa” (Africa Guinée 30.06.2013).

On several occasions, the President stated that women and youth would lay the foundation for Guinea’s change. At the beginning of his presidency, Condé said in front of his partisans: “I have told everybody: Guinea became Guinea. That means everything that will be done in Guinea is due to women’s and youth’s initiatives” (AfricaLog 26.01.2011). In the speech on the occasion of his first year in office, the head of state’s words sounded similarly: “Guinea has experienced fifty difficult years. In these moments of test, together with the young people and the women, we have struggled to transform our present into a prosperous and free future” (Kamano 2015, 89). In the same speech, Alpha Condé explained what kind of specific initiatives his government has taken to help women and youth:

In our country, where 70 percent of the population is below thirty, the young people are the first architects of development. Then again, women, who traditionally are the household’s pillars, have proofed their entrepreneurial capacity and their capacity to redistribute their income for the

well-being of the community. That is why I have set up the Women's Solidarity Fund and the Youth's Solidarity Fund. [...] and very soon, the first part of these funds will be defrosted to encourage female entrepreneurship and to favour youth's employment.

(Kamano 2015, 99)

When I asked the research participants how they had experienced Alpha Condé's first months and years in office, the President's supporters praised his initiatives. They were confident that their daily life would soon change for the better. Many women hoped that the President would personally improve their living conditions. In an interview, Madame Sakho and Mister Nabé, the two vice-mayors, underlined the head of state's engagement for women: "Alpha Condé even said once: 'When I will be in power, I will help the women'" (interview, 22.11.2011). Sarata Cherif, responsible for Sogbé's market office and the RPG vice-president of her neighbourhood, explained:

President Alpha Condé will succeed in helping the people. But for this, I ask the almighty God to give him a long life, that he can assure the state's survival. Because one of the President's fundamental worries is to help women. The President of the Republic wants to help women because women suffer a lot.

(Interview, 31.01.2012)

These quotations illustrate that, at the time of research women took the President at his word and were convinced that he was serious about his engagement for the female population. Simultaneously, they were closely watching every measure he was taking, especially with regards to food prices. Further, Sarata Cherif's statement illustrates how closely people in Guinea connect the state's well-being with that of the President.

In Kankan, the notion of change goes hand in hand with three factories that have not operated since the time of Lansana Conté. Throughout fieldwork, I heard people expressing their hope and sometimes even their conviction that these factories – a cotton, a fruit, and a brick factory – or at least one of them, would resume its or their work soon. The female minister of industry at the time, Ramatoulaye Bah, fuelled the population's expectations during a Development Forum in November 2011, a one-day workshop during which the performance of the Kankan's prefecture was evaluated. Asked whether the factories would restart shortly, she answered positively. The minister of industries also informed the population that a firm was interested to relaunch the cotton factory and that there were prospective buyers for the other two factories. She added: "We will make a public tender for all the factories in the country soon. During the campaign, the President promised to create work, therefore we are working on it. And we also want to create new factories" (recording, Development Forum, 13.11.2011). Sidiki Doumbouya, a graduate in his early thirties, was convinced that once the problem

of electricity will be solved, the three factories would create many jobs. Juliette Traoré, an elderly woman, said in an equally convinced manner:

Alpha [Condé] has also said that he will renew the cotton factory and the brick factory. He says to all the youth to wait until the deputies' election. Once the deputies' election is over, they will renew those two. That is why Kankan's young people are very happy now.

(Interview, 18.01.2012)

Alpha Condé's discourse illustrates that the President constituted Guinea's population into broad categories, in this example women and youth. He considered women as being a homogenous group that has similar experiences, habits, and dreams for their future. For Condé, these two segments of society faced just two problems: unemployment and high food prices. Such a simplification is exactly what James Scott (1998, 3) describes: According to him, state representatives do not even aim at giving an overall, representative picture. They only depict that part of society they are interested in. Condé's images of women and youth are taken up and reproduced by local authorities. Mister Nabé, the vice-mayor, for example, said during a conference in which the municipality's performance has been evaluated: "We have to listen to the population, especially to the women and youth" (recording, 20.12.2012).

Generally, the research participants were torn between hope for a better future and everyday life's hardship. Contrary to Kankan's women, male youths were not always patient, but expected immediate changes. Whenever people were marching on the streets protesting publicly, young men, especially pupils and students, have been at the forefront. At his first visit to Kankan as President in August 2013, Alpha Condé was strongly criticised by young men – also by those who had voted for him. The President was not prepared for such a verbal attack in his stronghold Kankan and reacted by heavily accusing these young men. The journal *Guinée Libre* (16.08.2013) wrote about the incident: "Almost three years in charge of Guinea, confronted with weak results and facing a population that does not seem to keep quiet anymore given the accentuated misery in the country, the disinterest of donors and international and national investor, the President Alpha Condé always clumsily walls up behind his past as 'the historical opponent against the former governments that destroyed Guinea's economy'."

The 'Train of Change'

In December 2012, the Guinean government initiated a soccer tournament in the honour of the President's second year in office. The government diffused the notion of change on huge posters announcing the tournament's final. These posters were hung at popular places in central Kankan. The picture of Alpha Condé, properly dressed in a suit, was prominently placed on the poster. Besides him were pictures of two other powerful personalities: Nantou

Cherif, the coordinator of the RPG coalition and the party's first woman, and Mohamed Lamine Fofana, the mining minister. Central to the whole composition was a train on whose side was written "train of change." A rainbow, the RPG coalition's logo, was placed at the train's front, indicating the source of this change, namely the President's party. This poster also hinted to one of Condé's promises, namely to rebuild the train that once connected Kankan to Conakry. Taking into consideration the extremely bad condition of the road at the time, the idea of a swift connection between Kankan and the capital Conakry was very appealing and symbolic.

When I saw the poster, I decided to observe the people's reaction to it. While some were just passing by, many stopped, looked at it, and made comments. A couple of women started praising their President. One waved to him on the poster and said to her companion: 'That is Alpha and the train. Ah, our President.' And the other women responded: 'This is the picture of

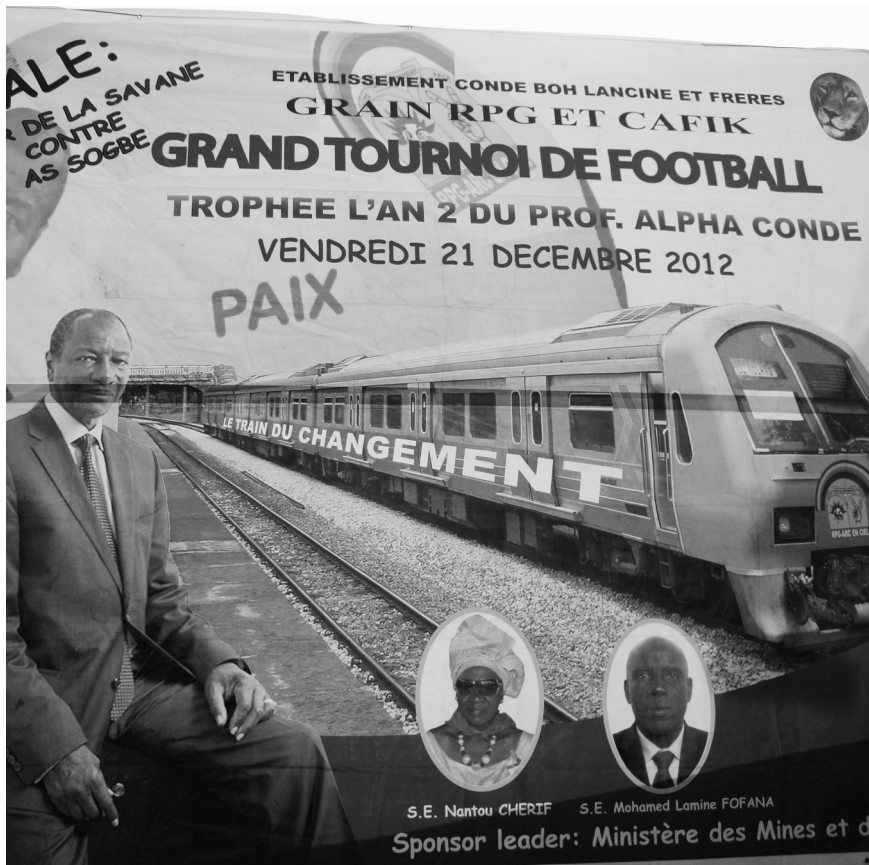


Figure 3.1 Poster of the 'Train of Change'

our President Alpha. It is the train behind him, professor Alpha Condé, our President.’ Another woman clapped her hands, started dancing and singing a praise song for the head of state. And two men commented: ‘The train of change has started. Those who want to jump on it can do so, the others stay behind.’ And his friend added: ‘The train goes, change cannot be stopped anymore. Now we support the soccer tournament.’

Despite the incident that occurred during the President’s visit to Kankan, he has been quite successful in creating the image of a bright future for his country. A future where the President, as the nation’s father, will take care of his population; women will not suffer due to high food prices and young people will find employment. The example of the above-mentioned poster highlights that the President’s message was well received by the population.

Considering the population’s support for the President in Kankan, it is not surprising that Kankan’s women’s expectations in ‘their’ leader were enormous. Sakoba Béréte, an elderly female vegetable vendor, said illustratively: ‘The country has been suffering for fifty years. Now Alpha will rebuild it’ (informal conversation, 08.02.2012). Especially (young) intellectuals expressed their hope that with the help of women and youth, their country’s situation would change for the better. Jeanne Konaté, a historian and lecturer at the university, responded to my question what she would do if she was Guinea’s President:

Me, as a woman, if I had the power, the first think we must face is the problem with positions and embezzlement. As I want change, I will rely on youth and women. For me, these two social strata can change the situation.

(Interview, 12.12.2012)

In a nutshell, people in Kankan shared the hope for change. However, how to achieve a bright future for Guinea and a better life for its inhabitants was strongly contested. Mohamed Saliou Camara (2014, 440) points out that “purposeful change in today’s Guinea means different things to different groups.” Alpha Condé’s supporters for example, praised his efforts to ‘bring Guinea back’ onto the international arena. They called for patience, like Mister Djakité, a bureaucrat working for the prefecture who said: “Change will arrive slowly, not within one day” (interview, 29.11.2011). Ordinary people but also the elite knew, that when Alpha Condé came to power in 2010, “everything [...] [was] a priority” (Camara 2014, 440) in Guinea. When I asked Sakoba Mara, an elderly woman, about what the local government should do for its inhabitants, she reacted jokingly: ‘Do not incite problems, because if you say I should talk about all the things Kankan’s authorities should do, there will be a problem, I have so many things to say in this regard’ (informal conversation, 04.02.2013).

Women Hoping for Change

Acting 'Normally'

The government says: We will help the women. But you know it all too well, that is not how it is. The government favours only a small group, that's nepotism. Only personal interests count, too bad for the others.

(Djénabou, informal conversation, 26.11.2012)

Embezzlement, nepotism, and corruption are topics that preoccupy many of the research participants, regardless of their backgrounds. Alpha Condé too, regularly promotes the fight against corrupt practices within his governments and the administration. It is also a major concern of international donors. People's ideas of how the government should function and how its numerous civil servants should behave are quite precise. When the research participants talk about governmental practices, they often use the term *normalement* (normally) or *dans des conditions normales* (under normal circumstances) indicating their normative understanding of how things ought to work against the background of everyday experiences, what Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2008) calls practical norms. Representative is Safiatou Dramé's statement, a young soon-to-be doctor, who said: "Normally, the government should send an inspection on the ground to check whether things work or not. But as long as this does not exist, things are not easy" (interview, 14.11.2011).

In Kankan, stories and rumours about misappropriations of public funds and other corrupt practices are widespread: They show up amongst others in the local media, in men's everyday discussions in cafés, women's conversations on the markets, and male youth's gatherings around tea. In such conversations, corruption at the local level as well as the national level is addressed: Missing street lamps and unfriendly policemen in Kankan, the misappropriation of public funds for the independence celebrations in Boké 2012, or corruption at Conakry's port. In the following, I illuminate some of these stories and explain what kind of practices are regarded as legitimate or illegitimate, respectively, by whom, and why. I also analyse what the research participants understand by the notion *normalement*, for example by claiming that 'the administration should work normally' (student, naturally occurring talk, 23.11.2012).

Corruption must be considered as "one mode of governance among others," as a part of "real governance" (Blundo and Le Meur 2009, 22–23). It is routinised and notorious in African administrations and every citizen encounters it on a daily basis. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (1999, 27) names all illicit practices through which people enrich themselves illegally 'corruption complex,' which includes "nepotism, abuse of power, embezzlement and various forms of misappropriation, influence-peddling, prevarication, insider trading and abuse of the public purse [...]." In emic terms, people throughout francophone West Africa name corruption *bouffer*, literally eating. These practices of petty corruption, in which practically everybody is involved, are

usually not sanctioned. They are embedded in local habits of bargaining, gift-giving, and solidarity networks. Petty and large-scale corruption are ambivalent: On the one hand, people condemn the embezzlement of public funds for private means, on the other hand, one's own corrupt practices are typically not considered as such, thus "corruption is someone else" (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 34). Christoph Kohl and Anita Schroven note that "Guineans felt ashamed when in 2006 Transparency International ranked the country amongst the most corrupt countries. While this sad news was transmitted on public radio, it was widely commented on as a practice everyone may be implicated in somehow. Having the 'International Community' alerted to the fact was, however, even more shameful" (Kohl and Schroven 2014, 15).

In Kankan, the local police cause a lot of anger. The policemen and (to a lesser extent) policewomen are considered lazy and illiterate, or as this market woman expressed: 'They do nothing but eating our money' (field notes, 16.01.2012). The police's practices are repeatedly a topic during call-in broadcasts of the local, private radio stations. The research participants consider the existence of such a public critique as a sign for the ongoing democratisation process. However, such transmissions are not just about criticising, Bouba Sakho, a locally renowned radio journalist, explained. The call-in broadcasts must be constructive, so that, for example, the traffic regulations will finally improve. At the same time, Bouba Sakho lamented:

The policemen do not give any instructions, they only eat money, but that is not their role. When they whistle, people turn around and this causes accidents. They are especially mean to village people. I made this experience myself when I arrived in Kankan for studying.

(Informal conversation, 12.01.2012)

I had encounters with the traffic police several times and could observe their practices repeatedly. Traffic policemen and policewomen, for example sit in ambush at a crossroad. When a motorcycle drives by, they lose no time to whistle and to bring the driver to a halt by positioning themselves in front of the motorcycle. If they are fast enough, they remove the key from the ignition switch, so as to leave the driver with no other option than to bargain his or her way out. The exact same thing occurred to me when I was driving through the city centre on Diaka's motorcycle with Djénabou behind me at the beginning of my field stay in Kankan. The policeman revealed that I did not possess a valid insurance for Diaka's motorcycle, as was probably the case with most motorcycle owners in Kankan. Either you pay the bargained fine or you are lucky enough to establish a personal connection to the policeman or policewoman in question before he or she lets you go.

Once I noticed how a moped driver gave a policeman 2,000 Guinean francs (approximately 20 euro cents). Thierno explained that the number of policemen responsible for the traffic in Kankan is rather low. Thus, if you give a small amount of money to one of them on a regular basis, they would later let you pass

whenever you commit a major driving error. Thierno confirmed Bouba Sakho's observations concerning the difference in the policemen's practices regarding villagers or townsmen: While the former fear the traffic policemen, the latter make fun of them by calling them *clétamansa*, literally meaning 'head of the key taker,' because as described, once they stop you, they immediately take your key to hinder you from driving on without paying a certain amount of money.

The same day, I saw how two policemen stopped a motorbike taxi with two clients, a practice the government had recently forbidden. Nevertheless, one of the policemen let them continue. Therefore, his boss wanted to know why. The former responded that he knew these people; they were working for a locally well-known person. The policeman's boss, however, became furious and said: 'It is not good to let people go if they have disregarded the rules. You have to follow the law; you should not have let them pass' (field notes, 25.01.2012). This scene is typical of several civil servants' ambivalent feelings: They are torn between how they ought to behave 'normally' according to the law and the reality of everyday corrupt practices. On the one hand, they denounce their own behaviour, but, on the other hand, they justify it with references to pity and personal connections, as Mister Djakitè, working for the prefecture did:

In principle, in the memorandum of the public function, a cadre should not serve five years in a row at the same place. If you exceed this, you become automatically linked to this city. Then, you cannot behave lawfully as you should. Me for example, I lasted here for all too long. If someone comes or I see someone offending the law, I cannot correct him or her because we see each other every day. We are connected, we know each other. If I think of needy people, I cannot act as I ought to act.

(Interview, 29.11.2011)

From the emic perspective, the general condemnation of corrupt practices does not contradict the expectations that state employees should profit from their position if they do not want to become the subject of mockery. This can be illustrated with the story of Mister Bah, a man who occupied a high position at the gendarmerie. In early 2012, he had been retired even though he was, according to Thierno, not old enough to be retired. This issue caused heated debates amongst the men sitting in front of a shop we regularly visited. On the one hand, the men felt sympathetic; they said that Mister Bah had done a good job and claimed that his retirement was due to his ethnic identity: The government wanted to get rid of all Fulani in strong positions. On the other hand, they criticised him for neither having built a house nor having set up any kind of business that would enable him to lead a decent life. 'He hasn't achieved anything!' the men judged. This example reinforces the notion of the "moral economy" (Olivier de Sardan 1999), the expectation that a civil servant, holding a lucrative position, should take advantage of this and redistribute the profits among his or her network, especially among the family.

People in Kankan regularly discuss local and national civil servants' corrupt practices. While women rather complain about missing services, conversations among men in cafés frequently turn to the subject of state employees' big houses or fancy cars. Obviously, none of the low or middle rank civil servants can afford such objects of prestige with their mere salary. The following extract from a debate between two elderly men in a café is illustrative. They were discussing whether a certain minister under Lansana Conté was embezzling public funds or not:

- A: Everybody embezzles money. All Guineans are thieves, even the *chefs de quartier*. In Conakry, they have beautiful cars. With whose money do they pay for them? That is the proof that they all embezzle money. During the time of Conté, everybody was an authorised thief but if you say this in front of the crowd, they will beat you. The whole country is in default and you still defend the government.
- B: Everybody who steals and invests abroad is a thief. If, however, they do the same thing in Guinea, they are no thieves. (Field notes, 27.02.2012)

This conversation shows that while certain practices, such as misusing public funds that are reinvested in Guinea or the small-scale embezzlement of public funds for private means, is appropriate for some, but illicit for others. The way of looking at corrupt practices depends on who commits these acts, the scale of embezzlement, who is harmed, and who profits.

Common to discussions about corruption is a general mistrust vis-à-vis politicians, intellectuals, and people holding public offices. They are considered as 'living on another planet,' as leading a life very detached from the ones of ordinary people in Kankan. The research participants, regardless of their background, regularly lament about politicians who just talk without keeping their promises. Nanténin Nabé, a female petty trader said for example: "What politicians say is not correct. Generally, we say politicians lie. Because they do not succeed in doing what they say" (interview, 08.11.2011). People in Kankan not only complain about corrupt practices, they also mention, whenever someone from the local government '*fait quelque chose de bien*' (does something helpful) for the city's inhabitants. This could be simply listening to the population's daily concerns, not being particularly evil, or settling disputes in a way that is satisfactory for all involved parties. However, local state employees are usually denounced for being selfish. Djénabou once explained this with the help of a metaphor:

If you appoint a person as governor, he will do what the minister does: The personal interest counts. If you appoint him as governor, he will not think of the whole population. Likewise, if the thunder rumbles, everyone covers his or her own head. If it rains, everyone covers his or her own head. Even the two of us, everyone protects just herself. That is to illustrate that the governor does not try to help others, everyone is just looking for his or her own interests.

(Informal conversation, 04.02.2013)

Have Corrupt Practices Changed?

Not only ordinary people in Kankan but also Alpha Condé complained about corruption: On several occasions, he accused Guinean state employees in general and the members of his own government in particular, of being corrupt; a fact he wanted to change. In an interview with *Jeune Afrique* (16.07.2012), the President said: “One of our biggest problem is that certain civil servants only see their own interest and plunder the country. Our chance is that they will soon be retired and we hope that the younger generation will act differently.” Such a discourse against corruption, however, does not say anything about the head of state’s actual practices. As Jean-François Bayart (1993, 226) notes “there is no real paradox in seeing all new presidents start off their terms in office with a severe critique of corruption, only to allow their own factions to help themselves to wealth before even their first term is up.” And indeed, Alpha Condé himself is repeatedly accused of being involved in corruption within the mining sector.

Nevertheless, many of the research participants, especially supporters of the RPG, believed in the declared change and saw first improvements regarding corruption, namely in the educational sector. In former times, people who had enough money could bargain with their children’s teachers for the latter to pass exams or be promoted to the next year. At the time of fieldwork, many research participants – also those who do not support the President – told me that this has strongly diminished. Djénabou noticed revision groups during the evening all around the city, something that had not been so widespread before. And Sala, Madame Fofana’s foster son who still went to school, told me that nowadays they had monthly exams. Further, the parents were to sign every result at the end of term and they had to fetch the school reports personally. Due to this new rigorous policy, the results of the *baccalauréat* (school leaving exams) at the end of term in 2011 were a catastrophe. An elderly man, holding a high position within the governorate, explained that even his own son had failed it – and he, his father, had been happy about it; he was aware that his son did not have the necessary level of skills (interview, 16.11.2011). The research participants made two persons responsible for this change: The President and the minister of education. Mama Kandé, a woman born in the early 1970s and long-distance trader, said:

The studies are normal now and I appreciate that. This change at the educational sector is positive. It came about because a professor is the head of state, this type of professor who lived in the West and studied there. He cannot accept corruption in this sector.

(Interview, 01.10.2011)

However, people do not evaluate changes in every sector as positive; in fact, some persons are quite sceptical. Doussou Sherif, a woman born in the mid-1940s who had actively been fighting for the RPG during the Conté era, saw in Alpha Condé’s entourage the cause for the lack of amelioration. How can

people become honest from one day to the next, she asked me rhetorically. If the President, for example, imports rice for the benefit of the whole population and only intellectuals profit, this is because the President surrounded himself with dishonest people, Doussou Sherif determined (interview, 18.10.2011). According to the research participants, corrupt practices could cease only if the population's spirit in general and that of civil servants in particular changed. Hereby the research participants used similar words to Alpha Condé, who said: "Slowly, we will change things, but changing the Guinean mentality will take time, I do not delude myself" (Jeune Afrique 16.07.2012). Many research participants share the idea that a change at the highest political level does not necessarily lead to changes in everyday practices because the corrupt system remains the same. Therefore, change is difficult to achieve; it does not come overnight. Alpha Amadou Bano Barry (25.12.2013), a Guinean sociologist, approves. According to him, state employees do not work properly but just profit from the work done by others. Bano Barry leads this behaviour back to a lack of honesty and modesty. Asked whether she has seen any change during the last years, Madame Kouyaté, a low civil servant, affirmed:

What is changing now is the Guinean's mentality. I appreciate Alpha Condé's attitude a lot. Change must start with the authorities. They must proof that the abnormal things that have happened do not reoccur. Change starts with behaviour; it is in the heart.

(Interview, 21.11.2011)

As noted, the President as well as ordinary people imagine women and youth as agents of change the President tries to promote, while they consider the elderly generation of (mostly male) civil servants as impeding factors. The research participants noted some positive changes, notably within the educational sector. However, everyday corrupt practices remained a constant issue of contestation at the national and local levels.

Delivering Services

Women's everyday political articulations circle around issues of huge importance to their daily lives: By which means of transport do I reach the market? Do I have enough money to buy the ingredients for today's meal? Is there enough water for our needs in the well or do I have to pay extra money for it at the public pump? These themes are at the core of women's daily conversations. Once, I asked Thierno and Djénabou in which areas, according to them, the state should intervene. Thierno mentioned that the government must build roads and bridges, deliver basic infrastructure such as electricity and water, build football pitches, and provide security. In case of strikes, the government should appease the population peacefully, and not react violently. Further, the police must arrive immediately in case of accidents, and the fire brigades in case of fires (field notes, 26.11.2012).

While I have twice observed members of the police making investigations at accident scenes, Kankan does not have a fire brigade. I became drastically aware of this deficiency the day I was sitting beside Djénabou in front of their house while she was preparing the evening meal. Suddenly we heard screams and, from a distance, we could see smoke rising from a hut. Djénabou rose quickly and rushed to where the shouting was coming from; I followed her. A large crowd had already arrived and organised: People were fetching water from nearby wells. They lined up and handed the buckets filled with water from one person to the next until the burning hut. Like this, the people could prevent the fire from spreading to neighbouring buildings and finally to extinguish it altogether. Even though the fire had destroyed the hut and the furniture in it, nobody was injured. A woman from the affected family wept and thanked the neighbours for their help: ‘I would not know what to do without you, thank you! I do not have any money, but God will compensate you. Thank you and thanks God for our spirit of solidarity!’ (field notes, 18.01.2013). Some days later, Djénabou told me that many persons from the neighbourhood had given clothes, money, or blankets to the affected family. This incident illustrated what people expect from their government, namely its assistance in case of need. The lack of a fire brigade caused displeasure and was deplored after every major incident. However, if such governmental support is paltry or completely absent, people just depend on each other.

As Djénabou argues, the government must assure food security, reduce the high costs of living, create jobs, and provide high quality health care and infrastructure. In addition, governmental support is essential in the field of education, Djénabou stressed. The government must also reinforce peace and assure equal development within all communities. Lastly, it must implement the rule of law and assure human rights, especially those of women (field notes, 26.11.2012). I have heard similar expectations repeatedly. This underlines Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan’s (2014, 400) findings, according to which “public or collective goods and services are first and foremost goods and services that are perceived by the vast majority of users as a social necessity, and, either directly or indirectly, as coming under the state’s duties towards these users.” The (local) government’s achievements in Guinea are always evaluated against these normative expectations of service delivery. However, realities are different, as Djéné Sakho’s statement, a woman in her forties who sells food to the students in a café, accurately stated: “People in Kankan have too many needs” (interview, 15.11.2011).

Kankan’s population is convinced that the city’s infrastructure does not do justice with regards to its size in terms of inhabitants. Thomas O’Toole and Janice E. Baker (2005, 121) echo this feeling that Kankan is “more a large cluster of Maninka villages around an administrative and commercial core than truly urban area” (O’Toole and Baker 2005, 121). Mister Khalil, a high civil servant, agreed. He said on the occasion of the Development Forum:

Kankan has a huge economic potential and important natural and human resources for a prosperous economy, but it is still totally underdeveloped. [...] The deficit is very big. I welcome everyone to invest so that Kankan finds again its real value of this country's second city as the professor Alpha Condé has recently expressed well.

(Recordings, 12.11.2011)

Since Alpha Condé came to power, the population in Kankan hopes that their city will finally profit from different infrastructural projects. One such project, namely the asphaltting of Kankan's main roads, had already been launched at the time of Dadis Camara's rule. The old roads, locally referred to as Sékou Touré's roads, are full of potholes and do not reach the more recently established neighbourhoods. How many kilometres of newly tar-macked roads a city gets and which neighbourhoods profit is a highly political issue. Amadou Condé, a young graduate who has good relations to the local RPG elite, explained why one particular road within a neighbourhood in central Kankan has been asphalted. According to him, two elderly men who are holding high positions within the local RPG reside there. In addition, the Kaba Guiter's secretary, the Guinean company that has overseen the road construction, also lives there. Amadou Condé confirmed my conclusion that it is very helpful to have good networks in a place like Kankan (informal conversation, 19.12.2012).

In Kankan, water supply is a major problem, especially during the dry season. While some families in the city centre have taps, the majority fetch their water from private or public wells. As fetching water is a female task, this issue bothers women more than men. Before mid-2012, electricity depended on private generators. Then, public electricity became available during the night, but its availability was very unreliable and from time to time it stopped working completely. Contestations over Guinea Electricity (*Électricité de Guinée*, EDG), that was responsible for electricity allocation in Kankan, could be heard everywhere. Some said EDG did not pay its employees so the latter sold the connection for an exaggerated price to earn some money; others claimed that people stole the poles' wires. The local EDG director typically responded to the accusations by explaining on the various local radio stations why electricity was not working by hinting at the lack of fuel (Guinée News 07.12.2014). Here, the director rejects all kind of personal responsibility and makes the state accountable for the problem. This kind of argumentation is also used by other individuals such as policemen and policewomen or teachers, who transfer the guilt up the hierarchical ladder and thereby whitewash themselves.

The partial availability of electricity, however, had a major impact on the city centre: While it had usually been quite deserted after sunset in late 2011, it was much more animated in November 2012. People – mostly men – met at illuminated places; they sat in front of shops, in newly established food stands, or in *maquis*, local cook shops. But women, too, greatly welcomed the

electricity as Néné Sagno's statement, a woman born in the early 1950s, indicated: "Everybody talks about change. But what will bring change about? It is electricity. If there is electricity, factories will come" (interview, 15.11.2011).

While people from the local government as well as Kankan's population praised their President for such changes, his supporters seldom made him personally responsible if something did not work properly. A case in point is the issue of the solar-powered street lamps that were said to be financed by the Chinese. When the first of them started operating in the Sogbe neighbourhood, the private radio station spread the news. 'Everybody congratulated the professor,' Thierno and Djenabou, who had been on the spot, reported. According to the emic perception, these solar-powered street lamps implied an image of modernity and security. But soon after their installation, the controversies started: In the cafés, on the markets, and during call-in radio shows, people suspected the local government, especially the prefect, to have taken some of them for their own purposes: Why were there some street lamps at remote places where rich and well-connected people live, such as the First Lady's family? Why were there not enough for all major roads? Who has taken them? One prominent radio journalist was asking these questions publicly until the prefect justified himself and the matter was more or less settled (field notes, 21.11.2012).

Reducing Food Prices

Food prices have been the most frequent and most hotly debated issue amongst the female research participants. This does not come as a surprise considering economic problems and tight family budgets. As women are usually responsible for buying aliments and for cooking, many of their concerns circle around this matter. When I asked about whether they saw any change since the arrival to power of Alpha Condé, most women responded by hinting at the alimentation prices, especially of rice. The female research participants recalled exactly how much one had to pay at the local market for a specific amount of rice, sugar, or oil in comparison to some months or years before. When I asked Nanténin Nabé, a *bonbon* vendor and a mother of five children, about women's main preoccupations, she answered: "Women say: 'Kankan is difficult, Kankan is tough.' That is essentially what women have in their minds: Life is very expensive at the moment" (interview, 08.11.2011).

Throughout the world, food prices are root causes of demonstrations, strikes, and riots. Thus, they easily turn into a highly politicised issue or as Donald M. Nonini (2014, 394) puts it "food and politics are inextricably connected." This particularly holds true for Guinea, where the rice price, the population's staple food, is a very delicate matter as it is highly intermingled with the political sphere: "In Guinea, rice alimentation has become linked to the state performing its care for the public's welfare. As the primary staple food, rice has long played a particular historic and ceremonial role and still does today, when the majority of the country lives on subsidized rice imports" (Schroven 2019: 157).

One such riot caused by the population's dissatisfaction with the high living costs took place in Kankan on March 21, 2011, just a few months after Alpha Condé's inauguration. The demonstrators made demands for the local government to leave, with the slogans, amongst others, '*zéro gouvernement*' (worthless government) and '*zéro changement*' (no change) (Guinée Actu 26.03.2011). Since the rice price rose remarkably compared to the period before the presidential elections (IRIN 2011a), such demonstrations occurred in other Guinean towns too, especially in the capital city. However, the prices for staple food were particularly high in Kankan. "Ironically, as Guinea loses its pariah status and attempts to become a functioning democracy, living costs are increasing and patience is being severely tested" (IRIN 2011a). Problematic in this regard is – as we saw in Chapter 2 – that the population's suffering due to the high living costs easily translated into the accusation towards the Fulani traders. In view of the population's impatience, Alpha Condé called Guinea an "agricultural scandal" (Kamano 2015, 108, author's translation) and announced he would make food self-sufficiency one of his key priorities. Interestingly, the President here uses the same discourse as Sékou Touré during the socialist era. In a speech one month after his inauguration, Condé declared: "We will give them [the women] rice to sell. If there is some benefit in there, it will be the women who profit" (AfricaLog 26.01.2011). By this promise, the head of state addressed the core of women's daily concerns.

People in Guinea generally judge past and current Presidents by the food situation they faced at the time. Néné Sagno, an elderly woman, explained her support of Lansana Kouyaté's PEDN by referring to the period he had acted as prime minister. According to Sagno, Kouyaté had helped the poor, especially the women, by reducing food prices (interview, 15.11.2011). Interestingly, I heard very contradictory statements of whether the food prices increased or whether they rose since Alpha Condé became Guinea's President, perhaps because Kankan's population's expectations in 'their' President have been tremendous. Condé's supporters, on the one hand, applauded the government's efforts to make the country food self-sufficient and, on the other hand, laudably mentioned how the imported rice helped in reducing the prices. Doussou Sherif, an elderly woman who has actively supported the RPG from its beginning, was full of hope: "With Alpha [Condé] we have noticed a massif arrival of rice. Does this not make us dream of a change? With Alpha there is hope that things will change" (interview, 18.10.2011). Opposed to this supportive voice of Condé's policies are statements such as the following by Oumou Diallo, a Fulani vendor and the mother of six children who lives in a polygamous household:

OUMOU DIALLO: I did not see any positive change and I do not think change will come; it is extremely tough. I do not think Guinea will move forward because things are too expensive and the prices rise ceaselessly.

CAROLE: Whose mistake is this?

OUMOU DIALLO: Since Alpha [Condé] is in power, the prices rise all the time, they do not come down. Alpha has sought power for twenty years. He should start working as soon as he becomes President: The prices of the ingredients, the rice, the food in general must cost less. But he was seeking power for twenty years, then he became head of state and he still increased the prices. It cannot work like this. (Interview, 8.11.2011)

Whether one judges the changes regarding food prices that occurred under Alpha Condé as positive or negative, both sides make the President and his government responsible for the current situation. Thus, the conviction that Guinea's President is responsible for the rice price is widespread. As mentioned above, the research participants presented the head of state as an omnipotent person who should care for its people. Mike McGovern (2007, 134) sees in this attitude a legacy of the Guinean socialist period when the population expected the state to solve their (personal) problems. Furthermore, ordinary people are depicted as innocent victims without any possibility to influence their situations. Women, especially, did not mention the times when their actions visibly influenced the government's practices, even though they told me about women bargaining with the local government regarding food circulation or public protests against harsh living condition. Thus, Kankan's citizens see the state as "the [reciprocal] morality of the family" (Jackson 2007, 45). Similarly, Andrea A. Kaufmann (2016, 131) writes regarding Liberia: "Many see the president as the decisive authority holding ultimate responsibility of what happens or does not happen [...]."

To sum up, the research participants, especially the female ones, consider the food prices in general and the rice price in particular, to be an indicator of whether or not the proclaimed change has taken place. This judgment, then again, depends on a person's attitude towards the President, thus whether she or he supports him. Typically, this support is linked to ethnic identity: While Manding people in Kankan by and large voted for Alpha Condé, the Fulani generally supported his counterpart Cellou Dallein Diallo. Both sides made the head of state ultimately responsible for the food prices. If they do not decrease, this is taken as a sign that Alpha Condé does not have "the people at heart" (Kaufmann 2016, 134).

Women do not consider their complaining about high food prices as a political act. Even though they see it as the President's responsibility to take their daily concerns seriously and, finally, to do something about it, these forms of political articulations are thought of as being outside the political sphere. Thus, they are perfect examples of everyday politics. The concluding statement by Amine Kouyaté, a young mother of three children who completely covers her body when leaving the house, nicely illustrates how Kankan's women typically depict their sphere of influence:

If women have problems, they must talk about it on the radio, at the TV, in public places more generally. They must mobilise and go there to say what they have to say. At the same time, they can talk about it to men.

Because if women suffer, men also suffer. It is vice versa. Women must say a little bit everywhere that they suffer and that things do not go well.
(Interview, 25.11.2011)

Conclusions: Between High Hopes and Disillusions

When Alpha Condé came to power, he was in a similar situation as many other (African) Presidents: He had taken over a country that was facing many political, social, and economic problems. His main strategy for calming the population in this tumultuous transitional period was by promoting the idea of change. However, the expectations of the President's supporters were high; they wanted to see immediate changes. The image of Guinea as a dustbin shows that the population was aware of the difficult situation it faced – also compared to neighbouring countries. Jokingly, some students even wanted to sell their homeland to lead a better life elsewhere funded by the proceeds of the sale. The President tried to foster confidence and disseminated the notion of change among a population he wanted to win over, for his projects and as voters for the upcoming legislative elections.

Alpha Condé promoted change mainly through his speeches, which were aimed at two groups of addressees, namely the Guinean population and the 'International Community'. By underlining the positive changes his country had undergone since his empowerment, especially regarding democratisation and good governance, the head of state addressed an international audience: the ambassadors and the government they represent, NGOs, private investors (mainly in the mining sector), and international organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the EU, and the UN. As his numerous visits in foreign countries further point out, Alpha Condé made an enormous effort to 'bring Guinea back' onto the international political arena. Thereby, he mainly wanted to attract foreign investment.

The President's emphasis on youth and women was, to some extent, also directed at his international audience along similar interests, in line with the international donors and development industry's discourse. Alpha Condé tried to show that he was concerned about the population's well-being and that the NGOs' and international investors' future engagement would fall on fertile ground. The research participants applauded the President's efforts in this regard. They proudly told me about the democratic transformations the country had recently gone through. And they were convinced that the Guinean population would profit once 'Guinea was back' on the international arena. Especially Kankan's students and graduates were persuaded that sanctions would fall after the legislative elections and, therefore, foreign investors would enter the country and help rebuilding its infrastructure.

One important element related to change was corruption, that is, how people ought to behave 'normally'. In his speeches, the President urged the state employees at every administrative level to work properly and not to get involved in corrupt practices. The theme of corruption was also constantly

present in interviews, informal conversations, and naturally occurring talks I listened to. Rumours and stories about misappropriations circulated fast. By and large, the local population did not welcome corruption but nevertheless, taking one's share or *bouffer* (eating) was a widespread practice which was accepted to a certain degree. At the same time, the research participants expected the government and its (local) employees to set a good example. As a local saying goes: 'When the head is well made, the body follows.' Especially after the country's first democratic elections, at least some change should become visible, they stated. After all, a democracy is not a 'mafiaocracy'.

Kankan's population share the idea of how statehood should look like in a positive future to come: The state's representatives, especially the President who embodies the state, should care for its citizens by delivering services, providing basic infrastructure, and reducing the prices for staple food, especially rice. The head of state should act as a good and responsible father who takes care of his children. As Sakoba Mara, an elderly woman, put it: 'Our leaders should do for the whole population the same things they do for their families, without exceptions' (informal conversation, 04.02.2013). If the President or local state employees do not act accordingly, they do not love the country's inhabitants, the research participants claimed. However, I also heard the opposite views. Mostly intellectual voices accused Kankan's inhabitants of expecting too much from the state. Aissatou Diakité, a female graduate, exclaimed: "People remain with folded arms, asking everything from the government" (interview, 08.10.2011). Saa Daffé, a male graduate working for Kaba Guiter, also condemned the local population's passiveness; the government cannot do everything for its citizens, he stressed (interview, 14.12.2011)

Alpha Condé's election was accompanied by high hopes and expectations on the part of Kankan's inhabitants. He should especially care for women, the female research participants claimed. Their expectations were fuelled by the President's discourse according to which he wanted to make women and youth his priorities. For the female research participants, the notion of change was directly linked to food prices – a topic which was one of the most prevalent in all their conversations. The idea that the President can do something about food prices is not made up out of thin air: Sékou Touré and Lansana Condé (at least until the 1990s) set Guinea's rice prices. Now, Alpha Condé should do the same, the female research participants stated. This expectation is shared amongst ordinary and intellectual women of all ages alike. Generally, women made the President personally responsible, if they could hardly afford their evening meals. Especially those who did not support Alpha Condé liked to invent new nicknames for him: They named him the 'power of the yam' or 'Alpha *konkon*' (literally: Alpha hunger). Such nicknames illustrate how closely the economic and the political sphere are interlinked when it comes to female claim-making.

The research participants evaluated the notion of change produced by the head of state against the backdrop of everyday life, which remained difficult and complex; in Kankan, all too many commodities were sparse and basic infrastructure was lacking. Many research participants shared a feeling of

being forgotten by the Guinean state. Regardless of this experience, they still have numerous expectations of statehood. As Begona Aretxaga (2003, 394) writes: “The desire of statehood continues to be intense in many parts of the world, in spite, or perhaps because of, the hollowed-out character of the state.” Why do normative expectations regarding infrastructure and basic service delivery vis-a-vis the (local) government prevail, even if it has been disappointing its population for decades? The expectations of the male, but especially the female, research participants hint at the success of statehood practices in self-staging an image of a strong state, so that its citizens would still believe in its capacities.

Change does not occur rapidly and always goes in multiple directions; hence, change may be contradictory. This can also be detected when superficial change occurs suddenly, for example when a new President is elected: The everyday difficulties of the population’s majority persist. Similarly, governmental practices and institutional routines do not change swiftly. Proclaimed changes in this regard are all too often of rather symbolic value, because significant administrative reforms are difficult to carry out (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 29). Due to the many existing complexities, “change does not generate shifts from one coherent formation to another” (Warren 2002, 378). Therefore, Franz Benda-Beckmann and Keebet Benda-Beckman prompt anthropological research not to focus too much on normality nor on change but rather to look for everything in-between such as uncertainty and insecurity, which “link the present with the past and the future” (Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckman 2000, 7).

Till Förster (2013, 7) notes that “[c]harismatic leaders disseminate their images of an alternative social order among their followers, who would then adopt them and make them their own.” Even though this might hold true for rather apparent and tumultuous transformations, I argue that long-term change can also be brought about by segments of a society that remain hidden and whose actors are rather invisible for outside observers. Women are one such very important segment of society, and long neglected in historical research.

Bibliography

- Africa Guinée. 30. 06. 2013. “Gouvernance: ‘Le peuple de Guinée va connaître la vérité’, promet le président Alpha Conde.” Accessed 05. 03. 2017. <http://www.africa-guinee.com/~archives/index.php?monAction=detailNews&id=18783>.
- AfricaLog. 26. 01. 2011. “Des flèches tous azimuts du Président Alpha Condé!” Accessed 05. 07. 2019. <http://mail.africalog.com/node/5789>.
- Ammann, Carole, and Michelle Engeler. 2013. “‘Guinée is Back’? Ein Land zwischen Wandel und Kontinuität.” *Afrika Bulletin*, 3.
- Anders, Gerhard. 2009. “Like Chameleons. Civil Servants and Corruption in Malawi.” In *The Governance of Daily Life in Africa. Ethnographic Explorations of Public and Collective Services*, edited by Giorgio Blundo, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur, 119–142. Leiden: Brill.
- Aretxaga, Begonia. 2003. “Maddening States.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 (1):393–410.

- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou. 25. 12. 2013. "Comment changer la Guinée? Dr. Bano Barry, sociologue, répond à la question à travers une analyse pertinente!" Accessed 05. 08. 2019. <http://guineedirect.org/index.php/a-la-une/739-comment-changer-la...> sociologue-repond-a-la-question-a-travers-une-analyse-pertinente.
- Bayart, Jean-François. 1993. *State in Africa. The Politics of the Belly*. London: Longman.
- Benda-Beckmann, Franz, and Keebet Benda-Beckmann. 2000. "Coping with Insecurity." In *Coping with Insecurity. An 'Underall' Perspective on Social Security in the Third World*, edited by Franz Benda-Beckmann, Keebet Benda-Beckmann, and Hans Marks, 7–31. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Berman, Bruce J. 2010. "Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa." *JICA Working Paper* (22):1–38.
- Blog de Sylvie K. 02. 10. 2011. "2 Octobre 1958–2 Octobre 2011: Discours à la Nation du Président Alpha Condé." Accessed 03. 07. 2019. <http://blogdesylvie.afrikblog.com/archives/2011/10/02/22214454.html>.
- Blundo, Giorgio, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur. 2009. "Introduction. An Anthropology of Everyday Governance. Collective Service Delivery and Subject-Making." In *The Governance of Daily Life in Africa. Ethnographic Explorations of Public and Collective Services*, edited by Giorgio Blundo, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur, 1–37. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2012. "New Media and Ethno-Politics in the Guinean Diaspora." *Africa Media & Democracy Journal* 1(1):1–20.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2014. *Political History of Guinea Since World War Two*. Vol. 23. New York: Peter Lang.
- Commission Européenne. 21. 12. 2012. "L'Union européenne relance la coopération au développement en Guinée." Accessed 03. 07. 2019. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1401_fr.htm.
- Engeler, Michelle. 2015. "At the Crossroads. Being Young and the State in the Making in Guéckédou, Guinea." PhD Thesis, University of Basel.
- Förster, Till. 2013. "Insurgent Nationalism. Political Imagination and Rupture in Côte d'Ivoire." *Africa Spectrum* 48(3):3–31.
- Guinée 24. 20. 12. 2011. "Discours de l'an 1 de l'investiture du Pr. Alpha Condé à la magistrature suprême." Accessed 17. 12. 2019. <http://www.guinee24.com/lire/detail/discours-de-lan-1-de-linvestiture-du-pr-alpha-conde-a-la-magistrature-supreme/>.
- Guinée Actu. 26. 03. 2011. "Kankan. Une révolte contre la vie chère!" Accessed 28. 03. 2014. <http://guineeactu.info/HTML/kankan-une-revolte-contre-la-vie-chere-.htm>.
- Guinée Info. 22. 12. 2010. "Investiture. 'La Guinée Is Back...', déclare Alpha Condé." Accessed 03. 07. 2019. <http://guineeinfo.over-blog.com/article-investiture-la-guinee-is-back-declare-alpha-conde-63530178.html>.
- Guinée Juristes. 2013. "Nouvel An 2013. Les vœux du Professeur Alpha Condé." Accessed 05. 03. 2017. <http://guineejuriste.e-monsite.com/pages/actualites/nouvel-an-2013-les-vœux-du-professeur-alpha-conde.html>.
- Guinée Libre. 16. 08. 2013. "Le président Alpha Condé humilié à Kankan. 'Qui vous êtes?', s'interroge le président." Accessed 05. 07. 2019. <http://guineelibre.over-blog.com/article-alpha-conde-humilie-a-kankan-qui-vous-etes-vous-s-interroge-le-president-119575660.html>.
- Guinée News. 06. 01. 2013. "Politique – Alpha Condé dit ses vérités aux juges, aux ministres, aux détracteurs et à ses proches." Accessed 01. 07. 2013. http://www.guineenews.org/detail_article.asp?num=201316184543.

- Guinée News. 07. 12. 2014. “Kankan. L'accès à l'électricité toujours un luxe pour les populations.” Accessed 08. 12. 2014. <http://guineenews.org/27064/>.
- Guinée Press. 23. 10. 2011. “Hausse du prix du carburant. Une mesure préjudiciable et inappropriée.” Accessed 03. 07. 2019. <http://guineepresse.info/index.php/archives/105-archdetail?aid=9143&title=Hausse%20du%20prix%20du%20carburant%20:%20Une%20mesure%20préjudiciable%20et%20inappropriée>.
- Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat. 2001. “Introduction. States of Imagination.” In *States of Imagination. Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, edited by Thomas Blom Hansen, and Finn Stepputat, 1–38. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Human Rights Watch. 2007. “Guinea. Dying for Change. Brutality and Repression by Guinean Security Forces in Response to a Nationwide Strike.” Accessed 31. 03. 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/guinea0407/>.
- IMF. 28. 09. 2012. “IMF and World Bank Announce US\$2.1 Billion Debt Relief for Guinea.” Accessed 03. 07. 2019. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2012/pr12363.htm>.
- International Crisis Group. 2011. “Guinea. Putting the Transition Back on Track.” In *Africa Report N°178*. Dakar/Bruxelles.
- IRIN. 2011a. “Guinea. Obstacles, Omens and Opportunities.” Accessed 21. 06. 11. <http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=92253>.
- Jackson, Michael D. 2007. *Excursions*. Durham/New York: Duke University Press.
- Jeune Afrique. 16. 07. 2012. “Guinée – Alpha Condé: ‘J’ai hérité d’un pays sans État’.” Accessed 03. 07. 2019. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articleimp_JA2687p024-030.xml0_.
- Johnson-Sirleaf, Ellen. 2009. *Mein Leben für Liberia. Die erste Präsidentin Afrikas erzählt*. Frankfurt am Main: Krüger Verlag.
- Kamano, Paul. 2015. *Guinée. Le portrait du changement sous Alpha Condé*. Paris: Publibook.
- Kaufmann, Andrea A. 2016. “Spaces of Imagination. Associational Life and the State in Post-War, Urban Liberia.” PhD Thesis, Social Anthropology, University of Basel.
- Knierzinger, Johannes, Michelle Engeler, and Carole Ammann. 2016. “Guinea. Spearhead of Change or Eternal Maverick?” *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 16(30):1–8.
- Kohl, Christoph, and Anita Schroven. 2014. “Suffering for the Nation. Bottom-Up and Top-Down Conceptualisations of the Nation in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.” *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* (152). Accessed 06. 07. 2015. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275032822_Suffering_for_the_Nation_bottom-up_and_top-down_conceptualisations_of_the_nation_in_Guinea_and_Guinea-Bissau.
- L'express Guinée. 26. 09. 2012. “Pr. Alpha Condé au CAF de Kaloum: Remercier les femmes pour leur soutien à l'atteinte du PPTE.” Accessed 03. 07. 2019. <http://www.lexpressguinee.com/fichiers/blog16-999.php?type=rub2&langue=fr&code=calb1157>.
- McGovern, Mike. 2007. “Janvier 2007 – Sékou Touré est mort.” *Politique Africaine* (107):125–146.
- Nonini, Donald M. 2014. “Food and Farming.” In *A Companion to Urban Anthropology*, edited by Donald M. Nonini, 394–413. Chichester: John Wiley.
- O'Toole, Thomas, and Janice E. Baker. 2005. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*. Lanham/Toronto/Oxford: The Scarecrow Press.
- Olivier de Sardan, Jean Pierre. 1999. “A Moral Economy of Corruption in Africa?” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 37(01):25–52.

- Olivier de Sardan, Jean Pierre. 2008. "Researching the Practical Norms of Real Governance in Africa. Discussion Paper." In *Africa Power and Politics Programme*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Olivier de Sardan, Jean Pierre. 2014. "The Delivery State in Africa. Interface Bureaucrats, Professional Cultures and the Bureaucratic Mode of Governance." In *States at Work. Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, edited by Thomas Bierschenk, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 399–429. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Schatzberg, Michael G. 2001. *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa. Father, Family, Food*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Schroven, Anita. 2019. *Playing the Marginality Game: Identity Politics in West Africa*. Vol. 19. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Union Européenne. 2011. "Rapport Final. Mission d'observation électorale en République de Guinée. Élection présidentielle de 2010." Conakry: Union Européenne.
- Warren, Kay B. 2002. "Toward an Anthropology of Fragments, Instabilities, and Incomplete Transitions." In *Ethnography in Unstable Places. Everyday Lives in Contexts of Dynamic Political Change*, edited by Carol J. Greenhouse, Elizabeth Mertz, and Kay B. Warren, 379–392. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

4 The Guinean State Doing Gender

Introduction

Gender relations are also bargained over within state institutions, which not only produce and reproduce relations between men and women, but also those between other groups within a society, based for example on ethnicity or age. In this chapter, I aim to analyse the official state discourse regarding women. Questions are raised dealing with such issues as: How is the gender discourse expressed in officials' speeches? What do official practices in relation to gender look like? What policies are directly aimed at women? Why does the President want women to form associations and what are ordinary women's reactions in this respect? I answer these questions on the one hand, by analysing the local and the regional Office of Women's and Children's Affairs, and on the other hand, by paying close attention to how the President's wife, Djènè Kaba Condé, interprets her role as First Lady.

In 1982, Guinea ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2012, the country also ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.¹ The Guinean government has revised the constitution in order to eliminate all discrimination based on gender in 2001 (OECD 2015, 1). Still, the Guinean Civil Code, that was valid at the time of research, contained discriminatory articles: Article 284 for example, declared that people under the age of twenty-one needed the consent of their fathers before marrying. Furthermore, the husband was the head of household (article 324) and had parental authority (article 396). Women were obliged to live in their husband's house (article 331). Regarding divorce, women did not have equal rights compared to men either (articles 341 and 342). In 2016, the Civil Code was revised to eradicate those discriminatory articles and to be in line with the CEDAW. Both parents now have parental authority (article 475). While polygyny was officially forbidden (but was a widespread practice) by the former civil code (article 315), the current one officially gives the husband the choice between monogamy and polygyny (article 282) (République de Guinée 2015, 2016).

In 2014, the Guinean government published a report to provide an overview on its objectives regarding gender equality and the obstacles concerning

its implementation. Generally, these goals are in line with the MDG launched by the UN, especially number three, the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The report lists many issues the Guinean government wants to tackle: The fight against gender inequalities, the fostering of women's (economic) independence, the promotion of girls' school enrolment, the reduction of women's poverty, the increase in their access to high-quality health infrastructure, and, lastly, the elimination of violence against women; and there, especially, the eradication of female genital mutilation (République de Guinée 2014). According to this report, the promotion of women's associations and NGOs is an important tool of increasing gender equality in Guinea. Additionally, "fora, workshops, public holidays [and] international meetings" are considered as means to sensitise the population in this regard (République de Guinée 2014, 6, author's translation). Yet, the report names socio-cultural factors that hamper the implementation of the government's objectives. Besides, the legal texts that protect women are not applied due to the lack of financial resources and general poverty (République de Guinée 2014, 36).

In Guinea, gender equality is locally understood as the promotion of women. The Guinean government and its employees frame the female population especially the not 'formally' educated women as the needy, immature, and vulnerable part of society, who are devoid of agency. There are various official policies aimed at women, but not at men. Such state activities in relation to gender have been categorised by scholars through the concept of state feminism (Mazur and McBride 2007). One way in which state feminism is implemented is by concentrating the different efforts concerning gender and women within one ministry. The goal of these women's ministries, which are stereotypically headed by a woman, is to coordinate and implement the state's policies concerning the female population. The discourse and practices of women's ministries often fall in line with the perception of the 'International Community' of gender (in)equality. They do not necessarily change the status quo, but they can also reinforce the male domination of the state. Therefore, their utility is contested: "It is argued that women's ministries are often 'ghettoized', as they are often conceptualised as essentially welfare structures, incorporating concerns of children and disabled persons. Further, that the existence of such a ministry discourages the integration of gender into broader national policies because women's concerns are relegated to the ministry of women's affairs" (Mabandla 1994, 25; see also Tripp 2003, 252).

In view of such critics, South Africa, for example, did not opt for a women's ministry but created a "national machinery for gender equality that encompasses all levels and spheres of government" (Britton 2006, 70). In Guinea, on the contrary, there exists a Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs (concretely named: *Ministère de l'Action Sociale, de la Promotion Féminine et de l'Enfance*), a fact that Filomina Chioma Steady (2011, 62) considers as part of "some progress toward greater equality." The ministry has its branches at every administrative level, namely the national, the prefectural, and the mayoral levels. The interactions between the (female) population and state

employees at a local Office of Women's and Children's Affairs will be discussed in the first section of this chapter. Overall, I argue that the government's official way of handling women complies with the international discourse on gender equality and women's promotion. In reality, however, ordinary women have difficulties accessing the different administrative units – also those of the Women's and Children's Affairs – which further enhances gender inequalities.

I then look at the First Lady Syndrome, that is, how the wives of (African) Presidents, thanks to their position, campaign for gender equality and women's rights (Ibrahim 2004, 1). First Ladies typically represent the government's human and 'soft' side by officially taking care of matters regarding healthcare, education, and women's economic empowerment, while their husbands' duty is to deal with the daily challenges of 'hard' politics, that is, with economic and political issues. Through their discourse and actions, the First Ladies try to illustrate how much the Presidents care for their populations, especially the women and children. By creating NGOs for the benefit of ordinary women and participating in congresses that deal with subjects such as human rights, women's political and economic participation, and health issues, First Ladies tune into the international development and gender discourse. However, the commitments and actions of Presidents' wives mostly serve their cliques' own interests and not the broader female population (Mama 1997, 41).

Djènè Kaba Condé, Alpha Condé's wife, is no exception. As soon as she became Alpha Condé's wife, she started campaigning for her husband and promoted gender equality and women's rights. Djènè Kaba Condé presents herself as a representative of the country's female population, even though she has little in common with an ordinary Guinean woman who is not highly educated and does not have a permanent and well-paid position. In this chapter, I will analyse how Djènè Kaba Condé interprets her role as First Lady. What do her actions tell us about the gendered Guinean state and how it imagines the female population? Then, I describe the controversial staging of Djènè Kaba Condé's arrival in Kankan and her stay in the city.

The Office of Women's and Children's Affairs

As mentioned above, in Guinea, all issues concerning women are bundled in the Office of Women's and Children's Affairs. At the time of the research, Hadja Nantènin Cherif, who later acted as the coordinator of the party-coalition *RPG-arc-en-ciel* and was one of the most influential women in Guinea, headed the women's ministry. Hadja Nantènin Cherif had nominated the regional director of the Office of Women's and Children's Affairs in Kankan. The regional director, a woman, did not want to participate in this research, thus I here focus on the Local and Prefectural Office of Women's and Children's Affairs. The position at the prefectural level had been vacant for three years until Madame Konaté was appointed and took office in 2012 (informal conversation, 22.01.2013). She is an impressive lady, not only in terms of her weight, but also in terms of her

dresses and jewellery.² Madame Konaté was quite sceptical about me asking questions and she did not want to give an interview. But whenever Thierno and I visited her office, we were asked to sit down and we had a short, casual conversation. During these visits, we got a glimpse of who came and what kinds of interaction took place in her office. Madame Kanté, the director of the Local Office of Women's and Children's Affairs who agreed to participate in this research, in contrast, does not have an office at the municipality.

In terms of their fields of duties, there are not many differences between Madame Konaté and Madame Kanté. Obviously, the former has more responsibility and decision-making power than the latter as she is placed higher up on the hierarchical structure. One of their scopes of functions is to organise special events such as the International Women's Day or the International Girls' Day. There, the procedure resembles other state orchestrated events such as the independence celebrations: Various women and girls' associations' parade. Its members typically wear shirts with slogans or a uniform dress, called *sobi*. In 2012, the slogan on these *sobi* read: 'Women at the heart of change; 8 of March International Women's Day in Kankan, Ministry of Social Affairs, of the Promotion of Women and Children' (field notes, 12.03.2012). This resonated the national motto: 'The Guinean woman in the dynamic for change and national reconciliation.' Here, once again, Alpha Condé's emphasis on change and reconciliation are reproduced. At these Women's Days, middle ranking and high state employees enumerate the government's actions regarding gender equality and especially women's economic promotion. The content of these talks goes hand in hand with the international gender discourse. According to two female state officials, the goal of such events is to unite women and to make it a joyful day, as a recompense for women's daily struggles (informal conversations, 19.01.2012 and 12.03.2012). Additionally, fora are organised where issues such as violence against girls and women, their legal situation, or the problem of female employment are addressed. Additionally, the local and national media interview (local) Big Women about these topics.

Madame Konaté and Madame Kanté are also implied whenever major problems with women emerge in Kankan, as it has been the case when the market women had to unblock a road besides Dibida market in February 2012. Another duty is to stay in contact with women's associations and to accredit them. According to Madame Konaté, there are three types of women's associations: Those who are officially accredited and active; those who are officially accredited but inactive; and, lastly, those who are active but not officially accredited. The regional director told me that she tries to get in contact with the presidents of all those associations. Then, she asks what kind of activities they have been doing in the past, what kind of problems they are currently facing, and lastly, she motivates those who are not accredited to do so (informal conversation, 23.02.2012). Madame Konaté complained that all too many women's associations have lost confidence in her office, as her post has been vacant for three years. Now, she 'sensitises' them to regain their trust, Madame Konaté explained (informal conversation, 22.01.2013). She

furthermore lamented that many of her intended projects could not be executed due to the lack of a budget. Madame Konaté hoped to get more money the following year ‘to realise my dreams’, as she stated (informal conversation, 18.01.2013).

Madame Konaté’s official discourse and her actual practices are not necessarily congruent. All the associations’ members I spoke to explained that it was their duty to approach the prefectural director of the Office of Women’s and Children’s Affairs if they want to collaborate with her. The persons coming to Madame Konaté’s office are usually the women’s associations’ presidents. They strive to accredit their organisation, they ask for financial aid, they want to take part in the festivities of the International Women’s Day and buy the *sobi*, or their goal is simply to get in contact with Madame Konaté – a Big Woman – and inform her about the existence of their association. The presidents of such organisations are women and men, typically over forty years of age. They have gained their posts due to their educational, religious, or family background, or due to their personal behaviour that makes them trustworthy. At first, I was puzzled by the fact that so many men head women’s organisations. But considering the low level of women’s ‘formal’ education in Kankan and its patriarchal society, such paternalistic behaviour does not come as a surprise.

Ordinary association members, however, do not visit Madame Konaté on their own accord. If they have something to discuss with her, they arrive as a group; an ordinary woman would not go to her office on her own if she has no connection to the prefectural director. For the people, their action has nothing to do with politics but rather with social and economic issues. Nevertheless, they chose to talk to the prefectural director of the Office of Women’s and Children’s Affairs and confront her with their claims.

There are several factors which negatively affect the relation between Madame Konaté and ordinary women. Firstly, her post has been vacant for some time. Therefore, the prefectural director had to start building up a good rapport with them. Secondly, Madame Konaté does not stem from Kankan. Consequently, she is only partially familiar with local (gendered) norms and, upon arrival, did not have a large local network. Thirdly, due to Madame Konaté’s physical appearance and her fluency in French, ordinary women might feel intimidated. Lastly, it is unclear to ordinary women what the exact aims of the Office of Women’s and Children’s Affairs are.

Promoting Women’s Associations

The government and its employees stressed that the population, especially women and youth, should form associations if they wanted to profit from the state’s or international donor’s financial aid, for example in the form of micro-credits. Some months into his presidency, Alpha Condé announced that he had allocated a fund over 100 billion Guinean francs (approximately 12 million euros) reserved for women.³ Many of Kankan’s women, who are organised in one or several associations, have heard of this but they had no

precise idea how to get access to this money. When Hadja Nantènin Cherif, the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs, stayed in Kankan for a Development Forum in November 2011, she had to answer various questions in this regard. One woman wanted to know how much of these 100 billion Guinean francs were available to women in Kankan. The minister could not respond to this question but stressed that the female population in the rural area would especially profit. Moreover, she informed them that the women must constitute an officially acknowledged group. The minister specified:

We will not give the money like this, we will organise management trainings. We cannot give these groups the money anyhow. It is necessary that they show their records. Afterwards, we will control what they have done with the money.

(Recording, Development Forum, 13.11.2011)

Madame Cherif further alluded that the goal of these microcredits was to increase the women's capacities in the techniques of their domains and regarding administrative tasks. Lastly, she emphasised that every group that would profit from the fund must, in the end, pay the money back – a fact that the women did not understand and tended to forget. In an interview, Hadja Aissata Daffé, the president of the national women's wing of her party, the Union of Republican Forces (*Union des Forces Républicaines*, UFR), requested that the government send inspectors into the field to control these associations, "otherwise, some of them can raise false projects. You will see, we will never be able to pursue them, especially because they are women" (Ramatoulaye 31.03.2013). More than a year after the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs had visited Kankan, Madame Konaté was still telling the women to form associations and to hand in their projects (informal conversation, 18.01.2013). For example, she advised the female president of an association to discuss with her group, firstly, how to use the money, and secondly, how the process of reimbursement would take place. In this way, quarrels around money issues could best be avoided, Madame Konaté added (field notes, 22.01.2013).

To understand this kind of discourse is easier for a woman such as Madame Diallo, an elderly well-educated woman who is the president of the local UFDG women's wing. She explained to the members of her women's NGO that the governmental fund is not a gift but a kind of microcredit that must be reimbursed. At the time of the research, Madame Diallo was hopeful that her group would get financial assistance because the prefect's wife was the NGO's president. Simultaneously, she stressed that no association had received any money so far (informal conversation, 25.01.2013). Neither did I hear of any group that had received money from the fund. In May 2014, this fact evoked women from Boké to claim their share of the fund reserved for women, during a visit of the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs (GuinéeNews 01.05.2014). Others, too, complained about the tardiness of the procedure (cf. Kaloum Press 10.03.2014).

Interestingly, all the associations I spoke to were striving for an official accreditation even though most of them very rarely profited from the government or a donor in form of money, expertise, or training – if at all. To get an accreditation one needs time, endurance, money, and a lot of knowledge. For the associations, it is obligatory to have statutes and persons who occupy the positions of president, vice-president, administrative secretary, treasurer, secretary for external relations, secretary for information, organisational secretary, secretary for social affairs, secretary for sports, and, lastly, secretary for arts and culture. The members of these associations typically have no idea about the meaning of such posts – apart from the role and function of a president and the vice-president – and therefore they are ‘just for the paper’ as the local population used to say. The importance of an association’s status and posts can be analysed as a continuation of state structures outside the state’s sphere. Djénabou more than once lamented:

The government should facilitate the administrative tasks. We pay for it and then we must walk and walk before getting an accreditation. It is especially difficult at the national level: If you have no relatives at the concerned ministry, you are lost. Without connections, nothing works.

(Informal conversation, 28.11.2012)

Djénabou is not alone with her complaints. I heard similar criticisms repeatedly, even from groups whose members are highly educated and have good connections to the local administration. That is why Giorgio Blundo and Pierre-Yves Le Meur talk about “a real process of initiation” based on corruption and trust, before someone understands how bureaucracy functions: “In contexts in which the public is rarely familiar with administrative laws and rules, the monopoly of technical-bureaucratic knowledge combined with a low degree of accountability enables the daily negotiation of the powers of the administration” (Blundo and Le Meur 2009, 20). Such obscure procedures are not adapted for women who can neither read nor write – the majority of Kankan’s women. They necessarily need an intermediary who understands and speaks French, is familiar with the administrative language, and knows how to set up projects. These intermediaries must be paid and then, if a project gets financed, they take their share again. As different authors note (e.g. Gupta 1995; Mama 1997, 41; Blundo and Le Meur 2009, 29–32; Bano Barry 25.12.2013), there is the risk that the population in general does not profit from such funds or the work of associations. I argue that this is very much the case in Kankan where a small, highly educated elite benefits from governmental support, while ordinary women do not or only sparsely profit.

The people take up the government’s idea of well-organised and institutionally acknowledged (women’s) associations. I was repeatedly told that women and groups of young people should get together, form an association, and jointly start some income generating activities. Representative of that is Jeanne Konaté’s statement, a female historian who teaches at the university.

She figuratively explained: “We women have understood the importance of being together. Then, we have more power. One finger alone cannot take an object. One single wing does not make any noise” (interview, 12.12.2012). Therefore, the government and the population share the hope that thanks to such associations, people would in the long run be able to generate revenues without the state’s support. Finally, this would lead to Guinea’s ‘development’.

Without economic, educational, and social capital, associations are not able to get officially acknowledged. Such accreditations are a means for the state to generate money. Djénabou’s and Jeanne Konaté’s statements above are true: An ordinary person, who does not have the necessary social networks, can hardly achieve his or her aim when dealing with the local or national administration. Therefore, forming what Asef Bayat (2010) calls, a ‘passive network’ and jointly making claims is a successful strategy, which women make use of. In Kankan, the organisational degree of women’s associations varies: While members of some associations meet regularly, set activities, are officially accredited, and have thus followed the state’s call to ‘formally’ organise, other women ‘are just together’, without much of a formal organisation, ‘because they have more power’ as a group than alone, as Jeanne Konaté put it (interview, 12.12.2012).

With the fund for women that the national government set aside, the government demonstrated that, in its eyes, women require special treatment. Nantènin Cherif repeated the President’s intention to help the female population “because they are suffering a lot.” The minister summarised Alpha Condé’s actions concerning women as follows:

Regarding human rights, many people of the Guinean population are excluded from the process of qualification, decision-making, and economic development. This is especially the case for women because of the invisibility of their contribution, the lack of statistical data, and the informal character of numerous economical organisations that they guide and manage. But women are important actors of development. Therefore, the government wants to adjust this imbalance by a national policy of female promotion. This includes women’s concerns and puts the accent on the economic dimension. The government wants to facilitate the access to credits, develop women’s entrepreneurship, their organisational level, and their capacity in the management of developmental projects. The government has elaborated a new strategy for a greater visibility of women’s actions for their own promotion.

(Recording, Development Forum, 13.11.2011)

This statement, once again, depicts women in the role of the population’s needy part, which requires the state’s support. Local state employees also stressed the importance of listening to women and their concerns (field notes, 20.12.2012). At the same time, the bureaucrats portrayed women as particularly difficult to handle. Madame Kouyaté mentioned that while some women

reacted very positively to her intentions, others responded with suspicion. She continued that ordinary women did not easily understand why they should pay back the money allocated by the government. Madame Konaté described women as stubborn, as harsh, and not well-educated. According to the head of the prefectural Office of Women's and Children's Affairs, women do not, for example, comprehend what political parties are about. Madame Konaté was convinced that if a woman supported party A and another woman supported party B, this could cause trouble; it could lead to problems between the two, and finally they would not go to the baptism of the others' child, for example. It should not be like this, Madame Konaté stressed, because all women are sisters (informal conversation, 12.03.2012). This was a typical language when talking about women, but not about men. It was considered as normal that men disagree at various levels. Regarding women, however, people expected them to speak with one voice; cleavages among them were not regarded as normal. The statement of Hadja Aissata Daffé, the head of the UFR's women at the national level, echoes this idea: "[...] I ask all my sisters to unite and to overcome our cleavages" (Ramatoulaye 31.03.2013).

The Office of Women's and Children's Affairs is vital for the analysis of how the official state is addressing gender issues. Another insight is provided by the First Lady. As Jo-Ansie van Wyk (2017) notes: "The First Lady is more than often the symbolic representation of women's role in a particular society. Closely related to this is her relation with the media, and vice versa. The representation of the First Lady in the media often reinforcing certain gender stereotypes, and her involvement in her spouse's political agenda contributes to her role as a political symbol." Djènè Kaba Condé, the President's wife, is thus subject of the next section.

The First Lady Syndrome

Academic research has so far not been interested in the roles of African First Ladies (van Wyk 2017; van Wyk, Muresan, and Nyere 2018) – in contrast to American First Ladies, who have received considerable attention from social science (e.g. Watson 2000; Parry-Giles and Blair 2002), and also from a feminist perspective (Erickson and Thomson 2012). Exceptions are four articles: Firstly, a contribution by Amina Mama (1997) that focuses on Nigeria by looking more generally at women in institutional politics. Secondly, an article by Jibrin Ibrahim (2004) that draws on the examples of Ghanaian and Nigerian First Ladies. Thirdly, two recently published contributions on Southern African First Ladies and their roles in domestic politics and international relations, the first by Jo-Ansie van Wyk (2017) alone and the second by Jo-Ansie van Wyk, Arina Muresan, and Chidochashe Nyere (2018). Regarding Guinea, the role of the First Ladies has not been explored.

Sékou Touré's wife Andrée was born in Kankan. Before Guinea's independence, she became the secretary of the Association of the French Women Union (Camara, O'Toole, and Baker 2014, 289). Lansana Conté lived a polygynous life and was

married to four women: Henriette Bangoura, Kadiatou Seth Camara, Asmaou Baldé, and Mamadie Touré. Henriette Bangoura was committed to the fight against HIV/Aids.⁴ It is known that she and Kadiatou Seth Camara became more and more influential as the President's health deteriorated in the 2000s. The two of them were fierce rivals, not least due to their different religious background (Chambers 2004, 131–132; Camara 2014, 397–398). Mamadie Touré's name appears in investigations into the illicit affair around the Simandou mine (Radden Keefe 2013).

In many African countries, the First Ladies headed the largest women's organisations during the period of the one-party rule up to the mid-1980s. With the democratic opening of the 1990s, they turned towards the newly emerging NGOs (Tripp 2003, 235). These NGOs typically represent women's interests. They for example advocate women's rights, and therefore, the First Ladies "arrogat[e] to themselves the right to represent and lead women" as Amina Mama (1997, 40) puts it. In reality, however, First Ladies' organisations serve, rather, as a means to campaign for their husband's ruling party and to generate votes. Additionally, they are misused for personal enrichment (Ibrahim 2004, 1–2). Amina Mama (1997, 41) calls this phenomenon 'femocracy' which she understands as "an anti-democratic female power-structure which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but is unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than from any actions or ideas of their own. Femocracies exploit the commitments of the international movement for greater gender equality while actually only advancing the interest of a small female elite, and in the long-term undermining women's interests by upholding the patriarchal status quo."

Jibrin Ibrahim (2004, 1–5, here 5) also mentions positive impacts of the so-called First Lady Syndrome: Through their promotion of gender equality, First Ladies can create opportunities for women at the political, economic, and social levels: "By bringing their influence to bear on the placement of women into positions of power, First Ladies can be said to have helped increase the pool from which women could be recruited into positions of power."

The First Lady Syndrome can be traced back to the 1990s (Ibrahim 2004, 1). It is still very much in vogue, as for example the African First Ladies Summit in Dar es Salaam of 2013 indicates. This conference, initiated by the George W. Bush Presidential Center in partnership with ExxonMobile, had the title 'Investing in Women: Strengthening Africa' and was attended by Michelle Obama, Laura Bush, and nine African First Ladies. The official video proclaimed that a "First Lady has an unmatched and unique platform to affect positive change for society. As an advocate for women and girls, she can raise awareness for pressing issues, support effective best practice programs and champion public-private partnership that lead to sustainable results."⁵ In brief, First Ladies reproduce the international discourse of development and women's empowerment not least because their organisations – and therefore they personally – profit from the financial support of international donors. Here, Djènè Kaba Condé is no exception.

Djènè Kaba Condé, Guinea's First Lady

Djènè Kaba Condé, Guinea's First Lady since 2010, was born in Kankan where she attended primary school. After High School in Conakry, she went to France and studied sociology in Paris. Subsequently, Djènè Kaba first worked for the *Agence de la Francophonie* and later for the National Employment Agency. In May 2010, just a month before the first round of Guinea's presidential elections, she married Alpha Condé. Originating from the popular Kaba family in Kankan, she is said to have heavily contributed to the massive victory of her husband in that region. In September 2011, Djènè Kaba Condé launched her own foundation in the presence of the media, diplomats, members of government, and Sékou Touré's widow, Andrée Touré. According to its website, her foundation promotes women and children's health, reinforces the capacities of marginalised, poor, and disabled people, and stands up for peace.⁶ Djènè Kaba Condé is often present at launching events of NGOs, as a speaker on occasions such as the International Women's Day, and takes part in international meetings discussing deadly diseases. She is also a member of the First Ladies' Organisation for the fight against HIV/Aids that was created in 2002.⁷

When asked in an interview how she interprets her position as First Lady, Djènè Kaba Condé answered that this was a huge opportunity for her to help others. Thanks to her position she could be in touch with ordinary women, who were all too often in difficult situations, and listen to their sorrows. Therefore, she saw her role to accompany the head of state's politics "socially and humanly." Djènè Kaba Condé stressed that her husband "makes a lot for women" by mentioning his initiatives, such as micro-credits that should enable the female population to become economically independent and to lead a better life. With her foundation, Djènè Kaba Condé fights against premature marriages of young girls. Further, she stands up for girls' school attendance. Concerning women's status in Guinea, the First Lady said:

If I compare the situation of women with those in other countries, Guinean women are very active, far-sighted, and very dynamic. History shows it very well because during the First Republic, women were honoured everywhere. Further, there is a tradition that makes women fight. Generally, they are responsible that their families get something to eat.

(Seneweb 20.05.2013)

The actual Guinean First Lady represents very much what Amina Mama (1997) and Jibrin Ibrahim (2004) describe in their articles. Djènè Kaba Condé performs the social side of her husband's government. Thereby, she reinforces local gender duties: While men provide for their families, women take care of the children and the household. Djènè Kaba Condé created her own foundation that focuses on women and children. Her journeys at home and abroad as well as her presence at so-called humanitarian events guarantee

her media presence, which she also uses to campaign for her husband and his RPG. The First Lady depicts women as suffering and needy, but at the same time courageous.

When I asked the research participants which Guinean women are well-known, they often mentioned Djènè Kaba Condé. Some female hairdresser apprentices stressed that the First Lady ‘helped women and children’ for example by financing wells in one neighbourhood (field notes, 11.11.2012). However, Alpha Amadou Bano Barry (25.12.2013) criticises associations like hers. He said in an interview with a national newspaper, not only referring to women’s organisations: “We must stop with the creation of NGOs which become ‘Individuals Non-Governmental’, entrepreneurial NGOs that misuse this label to bypass taxes.”

She Brought Just Dust: The First Lady’s Arrival in Kankan

Djènè Kaba Condé came to her hometown Kankan on November 29, 2011, after her pilgrimage to Mecca, thanks to which she earned the respectful name Hadja. I learned of the First Lady’s visit to Kankan when I took part in a RPG meeting at the local party office two days before her arrival. During that meeting, the mayor announced the closure of the local markets and asked the people to appear in great numbers to welcome Djènè Kaba Condé and her ‘Arabic delegation’. Perhaps the latter would invest in Kankan, the mayor added. Additionally, he stressed that the RPG members should dress in white – a religious symbol – and not in yellow, the party’s colour, nor in shirts with Alpha Condé’s portrait, because this event was not about politics but to celebrate Djènè Kaba Condé’s pilgrimage to Mecca. Lastly, the mayor explicitly invited women to welcome the First Lady; ‘it is a joyful event for them,’ as he said (field notes, 26.11.2011).

The arrival of the First Lady has been announced for 10 a.m. on a soccer pitch beside the local military basis. Thierno and I decided to go there not earlier than 11 a.m. to avoid spending time waiting. However, at eleven o’clock, there were just a few festively dressed persons, most of them elderly women, standing in the shadows of the trees. When I returned at 12.30 p.m., the crowd had grown: The military and the police were present and parading, the military music played, the comedians made their jokes, and some big cars were standing there, hinting to the presence of some important individuals. Therefore, I was confident that the First Lady would arrive soon. At 2 p.m. there was still no sign of the helicopter transporting Djènè Kaba Condé. I felt especially sorry for the elderly women, who were members of the same *sèrè* as the First Lady. They had spent all these hours in the hot sun without a place to sit and without food or water. As Thierno and I had an important appointment that afternoon, we decided to leave and catch up on her arrival later on.

At 4.15 p.m., we learnt that Djènè Kaba Condé had not yet arrived because she had made a stopover in another city. After having finished our duties, Thierno and I returned to the football pitch. This time, the governor,

again dressed in his white uniform, the prefect, and some other people from the local authorities were present. In the meantime, it was 6 p.m. and the sun had set. We got hold of a standing place on the little four-level tribune when we noticed the humming of a helicopter far away. 'Finally!', we thought. But when the helicopter came into our field of vision, it flew over the pitch and hovered in the air slightly away from where we were waiting. 'He does not find us', people from the crowd around us muttered. As the designed landing site was not at the airport, there were no lights indicating where the helicopter should land. And indeed, it turned and flew away in search of the Milo River that would help the pilot to orientate. To the amusement of the bystanders, people from the local RPG started contacting the persons in the helicopter and instructing them where to find us. Finally, it flew back and slowly descended onto the football pitch. The spectators – me included – had never seen such a huge, impressive helicopter.

Throughout the day, a car from Kaba Guitier, a company that was reconstructing Kankan's roads and belongs to one of the First Lady's brothers, had watered the dusty football pitch and the road alongside it. But as the helicopter descended, it raised such an amount of dust that, suddenly, a wall of sand was approaching us. 'This must be how it feels like being in the middle of a desert storm', I thought, while clinging onto Thierno's arm. We could not see twenty centimetres ahead when we were trying to hide behind the tribune. The policemen, the military, the governor, and his entourage were all crouching and coughing nearby. As the dust slowly began to settle, they tried to wipe it off their uniforms. Like the people around us, we could not stop laughing: What a sight, the governor's previously white uniform! And the nicely dressed ladies who bewilderedly sat in their chairs, covered with dust! Moreover, the black car that the First Lady was supposed to take: All efforts to make it shine again were fruitless!

The governor tried to maintain control of the situation. He ordered the military to snap to attention and the music to play even though we could not see them through the dusty air. The door of the helicopter opened and Djènè Kaba Condé, together with her entourage, stepped out. Initially, she wanted to board the waiting car directly, but some people urged her to at least briefly greet the women of her *sèrè*. After having done so, she immediately left the scene: The First Lady's appearance, for what some people had been waiting the whole day, lasted not more than ten minutes. 'She arrived with a boat full of dust as a gift', was Thierno's comment (field notes, 29.11.2011).

According to Djénabou, the opinions regarding the First Lady's visit varied. While for some it was unnecessary and a waste of money to fly to Kankan, others – most of all members of the RPG – considered it Djènè Kaba Condé's duty to visit her family after having made the pilgrimage to Mecca. However, the manner of her arrival was not endorsed: Letting people wait the whole day is not nice, they said. Members of the government should, by their behaviour, set an example and punctuality cannot be learned like this, said the

research participants who were asked for their opinion. Especially, the market women were discontent as they lost a whole day's income. One of Djénabou's neighbours, for example, was therefore unable to give her children something to eat that night (field notes, 02.12.2011).

The First Lady stayed in Kankan for two days. When she was not busy meeting her family, the *Sotikemo*, and other members of Kankan's notability and the local government, Djènè Kaba Condé received different associations in a nice, big house near the old airport. Tents were set up outside the house's wall, under which people waited in plastic chairs until it was their turn to access the yard. Two bodyguards at the door controlled the entrance. Inside the courtyard were sofas, on a small table stood plastic flowers, and on the wall hang curtains and two pictures of the President. Thanks to contacts with a former vice-mayor, Djénabou got an audience, along with other board members of an NGO that fights against mortality during childbirth. Judging by their dresses, jewellery, and hairstyle, these board members must have had quite some money and influence. They were all wearing a shirt and carried a poster with the slogan of their organisation. Djénabou gave a short speech that the vice-mayor had written for her and a cameraman was filming. First, Djénabou praised the President and the First Lady, then she presented her NGO and its goals, and lastly she put forward the organisation's pleas. Several days later, the speech was broadcast on the national TV and the whole neighbourhood where Djénabou lived applauded her for the performance. After having listened to her talk, the First Lady promised to support the NGO and to sponsor a motorbike-ambulance – an announcement that attracted applause. Besides this group, there were other NGOs and associations present, such as the disabled and some ordinary women who had named their children after the First Lady or the President (field notes, 02.12.2011).

To sum up, the arrival of Djènè Kaba Condé in Kankan in November 2011 was not well organised. The people who welcomed the First Lay complained about the discourtesy of letting them wait a whole day and finally just catching a glimpse of her. A change in the population's attitudes cannot be achieved if the leaders do not set a good example, they claimed. At the same time, the whole performance made people laugh. The symbols of power – the governor's white uniform and the black, big, shiny car were covered with orange dust, thus undermining the image of the state's power and capacity. Even RPG members criticised Djènè Kaba Condé's behaviour, which illustrates that they do not blindly follow her. Similarly, when she was in Kankan in May of the same year, the RPG militants reminded Djènè Kaba Condé of her husband's promises throughout his electoral campaign (Guinée Actu 23.05.2011). Despite her awkward arrival in Kankan, Djènè Kaba Condé once again tried to spread an image of herself as a caring person who listens to the sorrows of her hometown's ordinary population. However, her promises were not much more than lip service.

Conclusions: The Ambiguously Gendered State

In Guinea, according to the official discourse which also echoes in Djènè Kaba Condé's speeches, gender equality becomes equal to women's promotion at the social, economic, and political levels. This illustrates that the state depicts women (and youth) as the needy and vulnerable part of society. That is the reason why the state bundles the different efforts labelled as 'women's concerns' within the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs. As noted, the Guinean government and its employees consider the female population as a monolithic bloc in need of special treatment. Especially, the women not 'formally' educated are framed as victims, and devoid of agency. State officials – that is, the President, the First Lady, from the top of the administration right down to the simple bureaucrats – on the one hand, depict women as immature children, who must be taken by the hand. According to this discourse, women are not completely responsible for their own actions. This point of view is echoed in the declaration by Hadja Aissata Daffé, a female politician at the national level, that especially because they are women, they cannot be pursued by the state for their wrongdoings. On the other hand, the head of state as well as state employees emphasise women's economic role and their importance with regard to their families.

The signing of international treaties regarding human rights in general and gender equality in particular, does not automatically translate into better conditions for women on the ground. One typical way in which the government tries to foster gender equality is through workshops and fora. On account of the internationally promoted and funded approach, ordinary women should profit. As illustrated, this is not necessarily the case as the target groups of these workshops are mostly the country's intellectual elite. The government's way of handling women complies with the international jargon of gender equality and women's promotion at the social, political, and economic levels. The state's gender efforts are concentrated within the Office of Women's and Children's Affairs. Its duty is to collaborate with 'civil society' organisations and to strengthen their capacities. One way of doing so is by distributing the money of the fund the government put aside for women (and youth). Women should form associations, formally register them, and as a consequence launch income-generating activities. Because of these, they would become better off and could improve their living conditions. This focus on (women's) associations also echoes the international development discourse that is highly influenced by a neoliberal do-it-yourself paradigm. At the time of my research, however, I did not know about any women's association that benefitted from these credits.

For the members of such associations, it is unclear under what circumstances they may profit from the state's or international donors' support. When ordinary people must deal with the local or, even worse, the national administration, this can be depicted as a process of initiation. Women who do not speak French and who have little 'formal' education have difficulties understanding the bureaucratic language. For them, the women heading the

Office of Women's and Children's Affairs are intellectuals who have money and prestige. Ordinary people without personal relations in the concerned administrative unit have difficulties accessing them. The local administration in Kankan, as elsewhere, is highly clientelistic and builds up obstacles through which it can partially avoid responding to the population's demands. Having a gate keeper, as I had with Djénabou's NGO that enabled me to meet the First Lady during her stay in Kankan, is essential when addressing the local authorities. Generally, the gap between ordinary people and state employees widens the higher the latter's administrative rank is. However, there are also exceptions because much depends on a bureaucrat's personality. While many are hardly available to ordinary people and enrich themselves thanks to their posts, there are also bureaucrats who are committed to their tasks and able to establish "pockets of effectiveness" as Michael Roll (2014) puts it.

As I have shown with the ethnographic example of Djènè Kaba Condé, the Guinean First Lady's behaviour can aptly be categorised using the concept of the First Lady Syndrome described by Jibril Ibrahim (2004) and of femocracy defined by Amina Mama (1997). As soon as Djènè Kaba Condé became Alpha Condé's wife, she started campaigning for her husband. Additionally, she promoted gender equality and women's rights. She did this by launching her own foundation. Or as Jo-Ansie van Wyk (2017) put it, First Ladies such as Djènè Kaba Condé are the national "Social worker-in-Chief [sic]."

The First Lady's arrival in Kankan in December 2011 was staged as a National Holiday: Firstly, the city's markets and boutiques had to close that day. Secondly, the local government and especially the members of the local RPG invited the population to receive Djènè Kaba Condé. Thirdly, she was welcomed with distinguished honour: All important representatives of the local government were present and military music played. As described, the plan to fortify the state's power did not work. The First Lady and her 'Arab delegation' did not arrive in the morning as scheduled. Then, the helicopter did not know where to land. Bystanders witnessed how members of the local elite had to guide the pilot to the football pitch. Finally, the helicopter stirred up so much dust that the intended staging degenerated into a parody. Many elderly women, who had known Djènè Kaba Condé from their childhood in Kankan, had waited a whole day to welcome her. They were heavily disappointed that the First Lady barely said hello.

By acting as their spokesperson, the Guinean First Lady acts as though she knows, from first-hand experience, about the daily preoccupations of ordinary women. However, to the contrary Djènè Kaba Condé has spent large part of her life in France. Since her return to her home country, she is preoccupied with the role of the First Lady and must consequently not suffer from any shortages ordinary women are confronted with on a daily basis. By launching her own foundation whose flagship interests are 'women's and children's concerns and empowerment', Djènè Kaba Condé neatly fulfils the expectations of the international development discourse. Through her foundation, she is able

to get access to international money and state resources. However, only a small segment of society profits from this capital, namely the country's (female) elite. Additionally, the official discourse and actual practices of these NGOs are not congruent: In reality, male and female presidents of such NGOs are all too often not interested in changing the status quo regarding gender relations and men's domination within the Guinean state.

The position of the First Ladies is victim to several gender biases, as Jo-Ansie van Wyk (2017) notes: On the one hand, no constitution refers to this position and thus undermines the First Ladies' "democratic accountability" even though they often yield power. On the other hand, the role of a First Lady is to fulfil the expectations of a good "spouse; mother; care-giver and nurturer of the sick, young, elderly." Especially the state's media portray the "First Lady in patriarchal terms as a national symbol; the Ideal Woman; a trophy; and a trailblazer for issues stereotyped and associated with women." Consequently, they "remain subordinate to the patriarchy in their societies" and at the same time, reproduce the very same patriarchal system. Generally, to have a more profound knowledge about the role and impact of African First Ladies and special women's ministries in Africa, much more social science research is necessary. This chapter is an attempt to address this gap in relation to Guinea.

Notes

- 1 <https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-sl-PROTOCOL%20TO%20THE%20AFRICAN%20CHARTER%20ON%20HUMAN%20AND%20PEOPLE%27S%20RIGHTS%20ON%20THE%20RIGHTS%20OF%20WOMEN%20IN%20AFRICA.pdf> (accessed on 05.08.2019).
- 2 In the local context, more weight is considered as beautiful and connected to wealth; people congratulate each other when they put on weight. I would argue that Madame Konaté's weight, together with her dresses and jewellery, add to her demonstration of power.
- 3 The government has also made available a fund of 30 million Guinean francs for youth groups (Guinée 24 10.03.2011).
- 4 <https://fondationmhc.pagesperso-orange.fr> (accessed 05.08.2019).
- 5 <http://www.bushcenter.org/first-ladies-initiative/african-first-ladies-summit> (accessed on 05.08.2019), Forbes (03.07.2013).
- 6 <http://prosmi.org> (accessed on 05.08.2019).
- 7 http://www.unaids.org/fr/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2014/november/20141124_PR_OAFLA (accessed on 05.08.2019).

Bibliography

- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou. 25. 12. 2013. "Comment changer la Guinée? Dr. Bano Barry, sociologue, répond à la question à travers une analyse pertinente!" Accessed 05. 08. 2019. <http://guineedirect.org/index.php/a-la-une/739-comment-changer-la...> sociologue-repond-a-la-question-a-travers-une-analyse-pertinente.
- Bayat, Asef. 2010. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

- Blundo, Giorgio, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur. 2009. "Introduction. An Anthropology of Everyday Governance. Collective Service Delivery and Subject-Making." In *The Governance of Daily Life in Africa. Ethnographic Explorations of Public and Collective Services*, edited by Giorgio Blundo, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur, 1–37. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Britton, Hannah E. 2006. "South Africa. Mainstreaming Gender in a New Democracy." In *Women in African Parliaments*, edited by Gretchen Bauer, and Hannah E. Britton, 59–84. Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2014. *Political History of Guinea Since World War Two*. Vol. 23. New York: Peter Lang.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou, Thomas O'Toole, and Janice E. Baker. 2014. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*. 5 ed. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press.
- Chambers, Paul 2004. "Guinée. Le prix d'une stabilité à court terme." *Politique Africaine* 94:128–148.
- Erickson, Keith V., and Stephanie Thomson. 2012. "First Lady International Diplomacy: Performing Gendered Roles on the World Stage." *Southern Communication Journal* 77(3):239–262.
- Forbes, Moira. 03. 07. 2013. "Michelle Obama and Laura Bush: Can A First Ladies Summit Change The Future For African Women?" Accessed 04. 08. 2019. <http://onforb.es/1cRsOOQ>.
- Guinée 24. 10. 03. 2011. "Discours Nantou Chérif, international women's day." Accessed 17. 02. 2016. <http://www.guinee24.com/lire/detail/celebration-de-la-journee-internationale-de-la-femme-discours-de-bienvenue-de-madame-le-ministre/>.
- Guinée Actu. 23. 05. 2011. "Les militants RPG de Kankan rappellent à la femme d'Alpha Condé ce que son époux avait promis..." Accessed 18. 12. 2019. <http://www.guineeactu.com/HTML/les-militants-rpg-de-kankan-rappellent-a-la-femme-d-alpha-conde-ce-que-son-epoux-avait-promis.htm>.
- Guinée news. 01. 05. 2014. "Boké: les femmes réclament les cent milliards d'Alpha Condé, la ministre Sanaba Kaba intervient." Accessed 31. 03. 2017. <http://guinee-news.org/boke-les-femmes-reclament-les-cent-milliards-d-alpha-conde-la-ministre-sanaba-kaba-intervient/>.
- Gupta, Akhil. 1995. "Blurred Boundaries. The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State." In *The Anthropology of the State. A Reader*, edited by Aradhana Sharma, and Akhil Gupta, 211–246. Malden: Blackwell.
- Ibrahim, Jibrin. 2004. "The First Lady Syndrome and the Marginalisation of Women from Power. Opportunities or Compromises for Gender Equality?" *Feminist Africa* 3:1–14.
- Kaloum Press. 10. 03. 2014. "Dr Makalé Traoré: 'Les femmes, la Guinée, le président et Moi'." Accessed 08. 07. 2019. <http://kaloumpresse.com/2014/03/10/inter-view-de-dr-makale-traore-l-les-femmes-la-guinee-le-president-alpha-conde-et-moi-r/>.
- Mabandla, Brigitte. 1994. "Choices for South African Women." *Agenda* 10(20):22–29.
- Mama, Amina. 1997. "Feminism or Femocracy? State Feminism and Democratisation in Nigeria." In *The Expansion of Democratic Space in Nigeria*, edited by Jibrin Ibrahim, 37–58. Dakar: CODESIRA.
- Mazur, Amy G., and Dorothy E. McBride. 2007. "State Feminism since the 1980s. From Loose Notion to Operationalized Concept." *Politics & Gender* 3(04):501–513.
- OECD. 2015. "Guinea. Gender Index." Accessed 09. 09. 2015. <http://genderindex.org/country/guinea>.

- Parry-Giles, Shawn J., and Diane M. Blair. 2002. "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789–2002." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5(4):565–599.
- Radden Keefe, Patrick. 2013. "Buried Secrets. How an Israeli Billionaire Wrested Control of One of Africa's Biggest Prizes." *The New Yorker*, 08. 06. 2013.
- Ramatoulaye. 31. 03. 2013. "'Beaucoup de femmes sont persécutées dans l'administration. Surtout celles de l'opposition', dit Dr Hadja Aissata Daffé, présidente nationale des femmes de l'UFR." Accessed 02. 04. 2014. <http://www.ramatoulaye.com/fr/actualites-continent/oceanie/322-bea...hadja-aissata-daffe-presidente-nationale-des-femmes-de-l-ufr.html>.
- République de Guinée. 2014. "Rapport de la République de Guinée sur l'Evaluation de la Mise en Oeuvre du Programme d'Action de Beijing+20." Conakry: Ministère de l'Action Sociale, de la Promotion Féminine et de l'Enfance.
- République de Guinée. 2015. "Code Civil de la République de Guinée." Accessed 09. 07. 2019. <https://sites.google.com/site/guineejuristes/codes>.
- République de Guinée. 2016. "Nouveau Code civil." Accessed 09. 07. 2019. <http://www.mccguinee.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NOUVEAU-CODE-CIVIL-DE-LA-REPUBLIQUE-DE-GUINEE-Fevrier-2016.pdf>.
- Roll, Michael. 2014. "The State that Works: A 'Pockets of Effectiveness' Perspective on Nigeria and Beyond." In *States at Work. Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, edited by Thomas Bierschenk, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 365–397. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Seneweb. 20. 05. 2013. "Condé Djéné Kaba. 'Mon statut de première Dame est une opportunité pour aider mon prochain'." Accessed 05. 08. 2019. http://www.seneweb.com/news/Afrique/conde-djene-kaba-laquo-mon-statut-de-premiere-dame-est-une-opportunite-pour-aider-mon-prochain-raquo_n_96014.html#.
- Steady, Filomina Chioma. 2011. *Women and Leadership in West Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tripp, Aili Mari. 2003. "Women in Movement Transformations in African Political Landscapes." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5(2):233–255.
- van Wyk, Jo-Ansie. 2017. "The First Ladies of Southern Africa: Trophies or Trailblazers?" *South African Journal of Political Studies* 14(1): 157–172.
- van Wyk, Jo-Ansie, Arina Muresan, and Chidochashe Nyere. 2018. "African First Ladies, Politics and the State." *Politeia* 37(2):1–20.
- Watson, Robert P. 2000. *The Presidents' Wives. Reassessing the Office of First Lady*. Colorado/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

5 Women's Limited Impacts on Institutional Politics

Introduction

Women are marginalised in politics. Not only does society reject them, women minimise themselves. Therefore, women do not pay attention to politics. They tell themselves that even if they campaign, even if they present themselves, people will consider them as crazy: 'How can a woman govern us? How can a woman lead us?' People very much reject that idea. Thus, women themselves do not have the courage to participate in politics.

(Aishatou Diakit , young female graduate, group discussion, 29.01.2013)

When asked about their relation to institutional politics, many ordinary women in Kankan claim that they are not interested in politics. Firstly, because they consider politicians as hypocritical. Secondly, women are occupied with many household duties and therefore say they do not have any time left for politics. Thirdly, they consider politics as a cause for the division of people. Lastly, politicians in general and female politicians in particular have an ambivalent reputation in society. Still, quite a number of women frequent one of the local political parties which all have a women's wing. During the last years, several women even got hold of highly visible political positions, such as Fatoumata Maty who, between 2006 and 2008, acted as Kankan's first female mayor. Further, almost all the female (as well as male) research participants voted during the presidential elections of 2010, which they considered as mandatory for a 'good' Guinean citizen.

In this chapter, I analyse women's political articulations in institutional politics. I therefore ask how women's presence in and influence on institutional politics at the national and local levels looks like. I do this by, first, providing an overview on women's access to and presence in politics on a continental scale. Here, I especially focus on characteristics of African political parties and how they influence women's access to decision-making positions. Then, I analyse women's presence in Guinean politics over the last few years. Furthermore, I show how women's roles within political parties are constructed discursively and what practical impact women have on decision-making therein. I discuss, on the one hand, the ordinary female party members' reputation and, on the

other hand, the reputation of those with highly visible posts. In brief, based on portraits of women who have been or who still are actively engaged in politics, I show characteristics of women's political articulations within institutional politics. I argue that in Guinea, institutional politics is not the sphere in which women can enhance gender equality nor fight for better living conditions.

Female Politicians in Africa

Supporters of decentralisation point to its positive influence on women's access to and presence in local politics and the latter's accountability regarding gender equality. However, studies have illustrated that while this is the case in the 'Global North', it is not necessarily so in African countries where women are better represented in national politics than in local councils. The examples provided by Josephine Ahikire (2009) and Jo Beall (2013) suggest that the outcome of the devolution processes for women's influence on the local political sphere is ambivalent and thus, decentralisation is rarely the magic bullet for an increase in women's access to and presence within institutional politics. Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim hint at specific reasons for that: "First, traditional patriarchies can be more intense and immediate in their repressive effect on women's public engagement at the local level compared to the national level. Second, the women's movement's capacity to support women in local politics and help develop gender equity policy platforms can be fragmented by decentralisation" (Goetz and Hassim 2003, 21).

As already mentioned, but to remind the reader and to facilitate the argument, women are not a monolithic block. They can for example, identify themselves in class, educational, age, regional, or ethnic terms. Besides, such identities can partly change and be adapted according to specific situations. Therefore, 'women's issues' do not exist per se and, consequently, women's mere representation within institutional politics does not necessarily make a difference for all women. Accordingly, scholars called for a move beyond numbers (cf. Ahikire 2009; Goetz 2009; Childs and Lovenduski 2013) and to make a distinction between descriptive, mere numerical, and substantive representation. Scholars maintain that a critical number (typically 30 percent) of women is needed to move from descriptive to substantive representation (Bauer and Britton 2006, 4). To measure the latter is rather difficult. Authors look at factors such as the political competition and party affiliation, differences among male and female representatives, women's wings, institutional norms, representatives' experiences and leadership qualities, the status of women's policy machinery, etc. (Childs and Lovenduski 2013, 506). Still, mere female representation can have a positive impact as ordinary women might prefer consulting women with their problems. Moreover, women in office act as role models for the younger generation (Ahikire 2009).

In many African countries, the end of the Cold War led to the demise of military rule. This enhanced democratic transformations, multi-party elections, and the hype of 'civil society'. On the one hand, this change opened up new spaces for women's movements and female politicians, but, on the other

hand, some of them lost the minimal protection that authoritarian states had offered (Pankhurst 2002, 119–120). The political institutions adopted through these democratisation processes are generally masculinist (Fallon 2008, 35). Nevertheless, the number of female parliamentarians and ministers in Africa has increased significantly over the last few decades. Generally, women are more prominently represented within the legislative than the executive, whereas in most African countries, the decision-making power lies within the latter (Adjamagbo-Johnson 1997, 64). The advancement of female parliamentarians, also occurred due to transformations of the electoral systems and quotas. As women's representation in parliament is not a mere indicator of women's influence on institutional politics, the application of quotas for women (and other minorities) has been contradictorily discussed (Tripp 2013, 515).

Since the early 1990s, the number and influence of African women's associations grew. Supported by international women's movements and donors, they pushed for laws that inscribed gender equality and also engaged in workshops regarding women and politics. Several scholars have demonstrated that women can more easily enter the political sphere in countries that have been affected by conflict followed by major political transformations; during the war and its aftermath, women have taken up new responsibilities due to men's absences. Finally, more and more women completed secondary school or even university and could profit from the new possibilities that the cell phone and the internet offered (Pankhurst 2002, 119–123; Bauer and Britton 2006, 9–12; Irvine and Hays-Mitchell 2012).

The increase in female politicians is also ascertainable at the highest political level: Mame Madior Boye in Senegal (2001), Maria das Neves in São Tomé and Príncipe (2002), and Luísa Dias Diogo in Mozambique (2004) became the first female Prime Ministers in Africa. In 2006, Liberia's population elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as Africa's first female President. Therefore, several of the male and female research participants mentioned Liberia as a role model regarding women in politics. Nowadays, women regularly participate in presidential elections on the continent, however, far less successfully than Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Since 2003, Rwanda has the highest percentage of female parliamentarians worldwide and there are other African countries with a high number of women in national legislature such as Senegal, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Burundi, and Uganda. Likewise, women increasingly head political parties. Significant changes can also be determined within the state bureaucracy as ministries, special departments, and commissions are primarily concerned with 'women issues' (Tripp et al. 2009, 140–142). However and as mentioned, the effectiveness of such women-specific ministries is contested (Tripp 2003, 252). At the regional level, the trend of an increase in women's representation is also visible: In 2004, Gertrude Ibengwe Mongella from Tanzania became the AU's first female speaker of parliament. Further, the AU's executive commission has reached gender parity and each country's commission must include at least one woman (Adams 2006, 195).

Women and politics in Africa have increasingly perceived scholarly attention since the 1990s. Regarding Guinea, however, there is – once more – a major gap in research. There exists only Filomina Chioma Steady's (2011, here 23–24) book on women and leadership in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea that offers a short summary of women's presence in institutional politics and gives examples of female politicians. She describes that female politicians within these three countries are often of a certain age because “[m]enopause transforms women into ‘social males’ and ‘neutral persons’ and signals the end of their reproductive roles, thereby making them more available for public and political roles”. For Steady (2011, 21), the qualities of motherhood, “perceived as being nurturing, compassionate, and protective,” are essential for female leadership. Motherhood symbolises “creativity, caring, continuity, and peace.” Judith Van Allen (2009, 65) points to the long history of women's political mobilisation as powerful ‘mothers’ too. She argues that, in contrast to female politicians in the ‘Global North’, political leaders in Africa draw on that tradition and combine it “with appeals to women's rights based on feminist appropriations of liberal democratic traditions, women can enter male-gendered political spaces as ‘equal rights powerful mothers’ – as citizens, activists and leaders – and potentially transform their societies.” The notion of motherhood is also a powerful rhetoric weapon for female politicians in Guinea, as I illustrate. However, it comes with the danger of gender essentialism: Women are, once again, reduced to a typically subordinate, nurturing role that does not take into account other characteristics nor differences among women.

Political Parties in Africa

African political parties have received little scientific attention. Especially, empirical research outside party headquarters in capital cities is missing. This is one of the research gaps this book aims at filling. There seem to be some commonalities among African parties, namely “personalism, patronage, [and] clientelism” as well as their basis along class and ethnic lines (Erdmann, Baseau, and Mehler 2007, 12). Political parties in Africa are generally characterised as having poor internal democratisation and no open debating culture. Decisions are taken from the top down, without consulting the rank and file. Political parties are often founded by so called ‘Big Men’, who are not willing to give away their positions. Posts are distributed according to economic potential and personal bonds. Political programmes resemble each other and are of minor importance. Consequently, election campaigns focus on the party leader and on his or her ability to ‘develop’ the country (Gyimah-Boadi 2007). Furthermore, political transhumance is common (Gazibo 2006, 8).

As noted, women have been highly involved in the struggles for independence in many African countries. But until the mid-1980s, they have typically been side-lined in the single parties’ women's wings and mass organisations. Their role was to canvass, dance, sing, and cook for the parties’ dignitaries. This marginalisation might be one explanation for women's suspicion of

political parties (Goetz 2009, 11). Today, political parties still seem to be an especially difficult sphere for women: Women are quite well represented in the rank and file, but secluded in women's wings where they are to support the male party leaders. "Away from the international spotlight, political parties have been able to resist calls for increased power sharing with women" as Onalenna Doo Selolwane (2013, 144) in regard to Southern Africa notes.

Until recently, there have been almost no female party leaders in Africa. Women's difficulties to get into decision-making positions within political parties in Africa originates from the parties' lack of institutionalisation and internal democratisation. Women must "exploit kinship resources, drawing upon their relationship to prominent male politicians to secure leadership position" (Goetz 2009, 13). Consequently, female party functionaries typically do not challenge male authorities within their parties nor advance gender equality. However, we must note that women's exclusion from decision-making positions within their political party is not an African particularity but can be observed everywhere: "Accounts of the experience of party women's sections in western democracies suggest that traditionally they [parties' women's sections] have been viewed as essentially auxiliary bodies through which to recruit women's support and in which women have been expected to occupy themselves in ways echoing their domestic role and concerns, rather than as a part of the party's decision-making machinery. [...] women's sections in African parties seem not to have been so different" (Randall 2007, 98).

Due to the described difficulties, women from 'civil society' (but not exclusively) are confronted with what Georgina Waylen (1994, 339–340) calls the "autonomy versus integration" dilemma. The question is whether they should integrate themselves into political parties and, thus, risk losing their autonomy or stay outside but risk remaining marginalised and without influence, especially because parties are "the gatekeeper" for women's elections into parliaments (Bauer and Britton 2006, 8). In summary, political parties in Africa are paramount for women's election into decision-making positions, but due to their lack of internal democratisation and their patriarchal hierarchies, they are a tough sphere for female politicians.

Women in National Politics

Women and Political Parties in Guinea¹

Until Sékou Touré's death in 1984, only one political party existed in Guinea, the PDG. This did not change under Lansana Conté's first years in office. After their legalisation in 1992, many new parties emerged which "tended to form around personalities or ethnic identity rather than ideology" (Camara 2014, 241). Subsequently, the political landscape shifted constantly as new parties emerged, existing vanished, and short-living coalitions were formed. In 2011, more than 120 political parties were officially recognised, but only a minority of them were present throughout the country (Union Européenne

2011, 10). In the first round of the presidential elections of 2010 and 2015, the same three leaders of the corresponding political parties gained most of the votes. In the legislative elections of 2013, the coalition *RPG-arc-en-ciel* gained fifty-three seats (out of 114), the UFDG thirty-seven, and the UFR ten (Union Européenne 2013, 94). In Kankan, Lansana Kouyaté's PEDN is also of some relevance.

The earlier described characteristics of African political parties holds true also for Guinea. Discursively, the male party leaders devote to democratisation, promote gender equality, and deny any ethnical dimension of their party. The reality, however, looks quite different: Party leaders are a club of elderly men who have often been in the political business for a long time already. Even though most parties have local branches all over the country, decision-making takes place in Conakry's headquarters and the party leaders have the final say. The debating culture and the internal democratisation are rather poorly developed: People who contradict the (local) party leader(s) might face major problems. Candidates are not primarily selected due to their abilities; personal connections and one's devotion to the party count. The parties' political programmes resemble each other; their main goal is the country's 'development'.

The Guinean sociologist Alpha Amadou Bano Barry (25.12.2013) describes his country's political parties in an interview as follows: "If you want to say something, you have to create a party [...] because the political parties that we have are essentially individual enterprises that belong to leaders." He further accuses Guinea's economic and intellectual elite of not playing "the democratic game" because neither political parties nor NGOs are internally democratised (Bano Barry 09.09.2013). Even Kankan's head of the PEDN admitted that politicians are just looking for money. He complained that in Guinea nothing happens transparently (informal conversation, 20.01.2013). Sala Diawara, a teacher at Kankan's university who holds an important position within the local RPG, is very critical of political parties, regardless of his RPG membership. He stated:

My conviction is that Big Men create a political party and that almost 99.9 percent of the people vote for a party due to the party's head; they just follow him. But they do not like the political parties because of their programs. All parties are similar. If I will once have a lot of money, I will also create my own party to increase my influence.

(Interview, 26.11.2011)

Local party branches are organised in accordance to the national party: all have a youth and a women's branch. The party members meet regularly, typically on Saturday afternoons. Then, local party dignitaries praise their leader(s) and the party's achievements, badmouth other politicians and their parties, call for cohesion, and talk about organisational issues. During such meetings, women and men sit separately. Local party members send a delegation to the national bureau in Conakry when they have an important issue

to discuss. When asked about women's presence and role within their party, male party leaders hinted at important female figures within their parties. In addition, they stressed the women's branch and that women constituted a majority amongst the ordinary party members. But they also lamented the lack of suitable, meaning well-educated women for leadership positions. To sum up, there is a wide gap between the discourse of political parties' function and their actual practices regarding organisation and institutionalisation, ethnic inclusion, as well as women's and youth's participation in the decision-making process.

Since 2000, the number of women within Guinean politics, especially in the national assembly and as head of ministries, has slightly increased. Still, their presence in committees at the national level is small and progress is rather slow (Doumbouya 2008, 19; Steady 2011, 71). At the end of 2015, women constituted 22 percent of the General Assembly, 13 percent of the ministers, 12 percent of the governors, 9 percent of the prefects, and 8 percent of the mayors (Union Européenne 2015, 40). The research participants of both gender noticed this gradual change regarding women's presence in institutional politics as well. I have been told, for example, that it had been impossible to have a female governor, prefect, or mayor some decades ago. According to Mike McGovern (2007, 137, author's translation), women are even "particularly visible in the Guinean public sphere."

In February 2010, interim President Sékouba Konaté signed the new electoral code, which, for the first time stipulated that 30 percent on the candidates' list for the General Assembly shall be reserved for women (N° 91/012/CTRN, article 129). Thanks to this innovation, twenty-five women out of 114 were elected in 2013. And once elected, female parliamentarians must still fight for their representation in the different commissions, so they complained (Africa Guinée 16.02.2014). This electoral code also reserves a third of the places in the district councils (article 103) and the town councils (article 115) for women. But these legal texts have not been applied and political parties that do not respect the quota face no consequences (UN WOMEN 10.05.2019). Male party leaders typically justify this by hinting to the difficulty they apparently face when looking for suitable women (CENI Guinée 31.03.2016). On May 2, 2019, Guinea again adopted a new law that candidate lists for elective positions must be alternatively drawn up by men and women (UN WOMEN 10.05.2019)

Female Presidential Candidates

In the presidential elections of 2010, the candidacy of a woman, Saran Daraba Kaba, was a first (Union Européenne 2011, 68). Kaba had been actively engaged in 'civil society', especially in the Mano River Union, an organisation that is concerned with peace, security, as well as economic and social 'development'. She entered the political scene only after her children had grown up (Steady 2011, 83, 89). However, Saran Daraba Kaba received merely 0.39 percent of the votes (Union Européenne 2011, 80). In 2015, there was

again only one woman amongst the eight presidential candidates. Marie Madeleine Valérie Dioubaté occupied the last place with just 0.33 percent of the votes (Union Européenne 2015, 50). Dioubaté, born in Kankan in 1967 and the youngest of all candidates, is a business woman who recently entered the political sphere. During the elections, she ran for the Guinean Ecological Party (*Parti des Ecologistes de Guinée*, PEG) (BBC Afrique 07.10.2015). In an interview (Vision Guinée 02.11.2015), she stated: “We will fight so that women get interested in politics because it has been them who contributed to the country’s independence. They are the pillar of development, but they are pushed off.”

The male, well-educated research participants tended to make women responsible for the poor performance of the female presidential candidates. As women constitute a majority in Guinea, Daraba Kaba would have been elected if all women had voted for her, they argued. Along that same line of reasoning, women did not do so because they are too jealous of each other. By regarding women as a monolithic block and neglecting the fact that men do not vote collectively for the same candidate either, these men try to preserve the status quo. In their reports on the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2013, respectively, the EU (Union Européenne 2011, 68; 2013, 34) determines several factors for the low participation of female candidates: Lack of sensitisation, female illiteracy, patriarchy, impediments of cultural and ‘traditional’ nature, economic factors, and, lastly, the political institutions’ functioning. With the help of international donors, a significant number of NGOs try to raise awareness of the subject of women and politics.

Alpha Condé has, on several occasions stressed the importance of women’s promotion within the political sphere. When listening to the politicians’ discourse, women’s presence in the political sphere is desirable and their promotion is a fact. However, women typically occupy subordinate posts in institutional politics, especially within political parties (Touré 2013, 94); their promotion is superficial and mainly takes place through workshops and ateliers. However, party leaders do not question the basic problems, for example, the patriarchal and non-democratic party structures. Furthermore, women typically do not raise their voices during party meetings. Zalikatou Diallo, a female parliamentarian, deplored the discrepancy between the politicians’ discourse and reality regarding female empowerment and involvement in decision-making processes as well (Africa Guinée 17.02.2014). The EU (Union Européenne 2015, 41, author’s translation) writes in this regard: “Women [in Guinea] are [...] not very present in the highest functions within political parties. Often, they are the main focus of the candidates’ and the political parties’ speeches during electoral campaigns; nevertheless, they remain restricted to the female party wings and just rarely integrated into the executive offices.” Generally, the image of female Guinean politicians is ambivalent. The trade union leader and politician Rabiadou Sèrah Diallo, in contrast, is rarely the subject of controversies.

Rabiatou Sèrah Diallo, the Fearless

Rabiatou Sèrah Diallo, the mother of six children, was born in Mamou in 1949. Originally, she was a secretary, then she became a court clerk, and later a magistrate. When she was young, she frequented different women's associations, but quickly preferred the rather male environment of the trade union due to its debating culture, as she explained. Between 1985 and 2000, Diallo headed the female wing of the National Confederation of Guinean Workers (*Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée*, CNTG) until she became its general secretary. As the political and economic situation in the country grew worse in mid-2000, Rabiatou Sèrah Diallo wrote several memoranda to Lansana Conté, but the President did not act accordingly. Thus, Diallo as one of the two leading and identification figures of the trade union helped to launch general strikes that paralysed the whole country in 2006 and 2007. During the confrontations between protesters and the police, she was heavily beaten and shot in the leg. When Diallo was accused of setting the country on fire, she explained her engagement in the general strikes with her mother role:

I am a woman and a mother of six children. If I light a fire it is under the cooking pot for nourishing my children. But in Guinea, the cooking pot is empty. Our children do not go to school anymore because the teachers cannot pay the transport costs any longer. That is what heats up the country!

(Jeune Afrique 25.02.2010)

Rabiatou Sèrah Diallo did not give in when Lansana Conté heavily intimidated her and she finally reached one of her goals, to have a Prime Minister, Lansana Kouyaté. When Moussa Dadis Camara became President, Diallo kept her distance from the men in power. It was only after the massacre at the stadium on September 28, 2009, that she re-entered the political scene and participated in the negotiations in Ouagadougou. From February 2010 onwards, Diallo headed the CNT (Jeune Afrique 25.02.2010).

Rabiatou Sèrah Diallo, nicknamed Guinea's Iron Lady, is known for her outspokenness, her straight talking, and her political independence. The male and female research participants in Kankan knew of her and many admiringly said about Diallo: 'Wow, she is a real woman!' In a portrait in the weekly news magazine Jeune Afrique (25.02.2010), Diallo is characterised as follows: "[She] is an assertive trade unionist who is not faint-hearted. Due to her long combat against Lansana Conté's dictatorship, she achieved to impose herself in a largely masculine environment." The International Crisis Group (2013) describes Rabiatou Sera Diallo as a "strong personality" and the latest edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Guinea* (Camara, O'Toole, and Baker 2014, 115) considers her as "one of the most respected leaders of today's Guinea." In an interview with the International Trade Union Federation, Diallo took an unequivocal stand regarding women in institutional politics:

We [women] are used for production but when it comes to sharing positions of responsibility, we are pushed to the margins. We are not asked to take part in making important decisions. And yet women are less reckless, for example in management. They analyse things better because they think of their families first. [...] We are raising women's awareness; we are motivating them so that they understand that we must stop simply being seen and make ourselves heard, so that we are not just given posts such as 'head of social affairs', because while the men are making the big decisions, the women are serving the drinks! Women are not even given the minutes of important meetings, to keep them equally informed.

(Cited in Steady 2011, 81–82)

Rabiatou Sera Diallo is a very exceptional figure within Guinean politics. She has been involved in 'civil society' and had an important position within the trade union. In the 2000s, when Diallo was in her fifties, she unmistakably started engaging within the political sphere; 'she said loudly what all the others just thought' as Thierno once put it. Diallo explained her central engagement in the general strikes with her mother role (Pauthier 2007, 234–237). This is very characteristic for Guinean women who raise their voices in and outside institutional politics as it helps in enhancing their credibility. Furthermore, Diallo focussed not only on political change, but also on ordinary families' everyday struggles. This facilitated women's mobilisation. Interestingly, the research participants perceived Rabiatou Sera Diallo as standing above politics, even though she presided over the CNT. This can be traced back to her political independence as she does not belong to the governing party or to the opposition.

Women in Local Politics – Highly Visible Posts

Fatoumata Maty, the Former Mayor

When the RPG won the local elections in December 2005, it was its turn to appoint the mayor. During a party meeting, the RPG's members were to choose a new mayor and two vice-mayors amongst a list of twenty-six persons. Only a small minority of the names on the list were women, but Fatoumata Maty did not figure among them, Amadou Kaba, young male graduate and an important RPG member, told me (interview, 16.01.2013).² Two men on the list, Mamadi Kaba Kapo and Djénabou Moussa Diaré, both wanted to become mayor. Heated debates about which one was to head the list and, thus, take the post blocked the party for a long time. I have been told that Alpha Condé was very displeased with this dispute: It had been the first time for his party to beat the PUP in a local election and the RPG's leaders in Kankan were unable to decide upon a mayor. Finally, Condé summoned Kapo and Diaré to Conakry. As they were still unable to agree, he decided to put neither Kaba nor Diaré in this post but, instead, a woman, Fatoumata Maty. Diaré

became the first vice-mayor and Kaba the second vice-mayor. Thus, Fatoumata Maty had been taken by surprise. I asked the research participants why Alpha Condé chose Maty as mayor: 'She had been a RPG party member from the very beginning. Moreover, she had been to school for some years, and thus, knew the basics of reading and writing.' Mister Konaté, the local RPG coordinator, remembered the reactions of Kankan's elite after Alpha Condé's decision:

We have been a little bit discomforted because Kankan is a religious city. Thus, the RPG's coordination in Kankan contacted the notabilities, the *Sotikemo* and his staff, the Imam, as well as Kankan's important personalities to tell them that the President wishes a woman to head Kankan's municipality.

(Interview, 21.01.2013)

According to Mister Konaté, everybody accepted Alpha Condé's choice because he, as the party leader, was regarded as legitimate to take all decisions. Furthermore, by having a female mayor, they hoped to attract more financial support from international donors. Mister Koivogui, a university teacher, however, vividly remembered the reluctance within Kankan's notability to be headed by a woman (interview, 14.01.2013). When I wanted to know how Kankan's population reacted to their first female mayor, I received different answers. Amata Camara, the head of Dibida's market, mentioned her pride of having a female mayor (informal conversation, 25.01.2013). Koulako Cherif, an elderly man who was doing sensitisation programmes on the radio for gender equality, told me that Fatoumata Maty became mayor because many women threatened to march on the streets if she did not get the post (interview, 17.12.2012). The dyer Oumar Koma remembered that the women of an association he had trained were so happy that they had invited Madame Maty to their reunion (informal conversation, 23.01.2013). Djénabou and her friend Aishatou Diakité told me that the real news for Kankan's population was that the RPG had won the local elections, not that a woman had become the mayor (informal conversation, 29.01.2013).

Fatoumata Maty has been Kankan's mayor during the turbulent periods of 2006 and 2007, during which rioters attacked, looted, and destroyed many government buildings. This also resulted in the destruction of the local archive. According to US diplomatic sources, revealed through WikiLeaks (19.02.2009), Fatoumata Maty remained in Kankan during that time while the governor and the prefect fled the city. Twice, I have been told about Fatoumata Maty's initial efforts to clean Kankan's roads and markets. However, her inglorious end is what people remember. Officially, Fatoumata Maty had been suspended in 2009 due to embezzlement of public funds (Aminata 19.02.2009). Then, her vice-mayor Djénabou Moussa Diaré took the post. The latter did not last for long either. He, too, has been accused of embezzlement (Mamby Bah, interview, 12.01.2013) and, finally, a so-called special delegation from the RPG headed the city hall during the time of research.

Amadou Kaba claimed that Fatoumata Maty had to leave her post because she did not support the new President Dadis Camara (interview, 16.01.2013). Amata Camara, who knows Fatoumata Maty personally, considered the reason for the mayor's departure to be her lack of experience and education, especially her ignorance of arithmetic. Three other research participants did not blame Fatoumata Maty directly but rather her staff, who had been able to torpedo all her good efforts. Due to her background outside Kankan, people also called Fatoumata Maty 'the imported mayor'. Ismael Drame, Djénabou's elder brother, pondered:

ISMAEL: Has it been her who had eaten the money or the others? Only the lady had to go. I do not say that it has clearly been her. Did the other persons not profit from the lady's weakness to eat money and say it had been her?

CAROLE: Why do you say 'the lady's weakness'?

ISMAEL: The man is always more intelligent. You take a woman and you place her in front of ten, fifteen, twenty men, that is not easy. And especially here in our place, she arrived recently, she did not know how things are done here. (Interview, 24.01.2013)

When I learned, in December 2012, that Kankan had been briefly presided over by a woman, I was puzzled. Not by the fact per se, but I was wondering why I did not find out about Fatoumata Maty much earlier; I had been gathering data on women's political articulations for more than eight months before I became aware of her. I came up with different explanations: It is possible that some people preferred concealing the fact that 'traditional' Kankan had been headed by a woman. Besides, the way in which she received the post revealed problems within the ruling party that its officials were reluctant to disclose. Fatoumata Maty's unglamorous departure could also be a reason why people did not like to talk about her. I was also wondering whether my interest in Fatoumata Maty and the local population's obvious lack of interest in her hints at a 'Western' female researcher bias. Lastly, it could similarly hint to the lack of power the local government in Kankan has and, thus, it is of minor interest who presides over it.

Fatoumata Maty's case again reveals the decision-making structure within Guinean political parties: It is the party leader who has the last word. Behind the scenes, his decisions can be criticised; however, in the end they are accepted. It also illustrates that Alpha Condé's commitment to female empowerment is sometimes more than just empty words. I suppose by putting a female mayor in Kankan, the rebellious city, Condé wanted to create a contrast with Lansana Conté's PUP. In addition, he hoped to attract national and international attention. Problematic for Fatoumata Maty were her lack of education and executive experience. Correspondingly, her two vice-mayors had wanted the post and were therefore not interested in a positive outcome of her reign. Besides her embezzlement, Maty's initiative of cleaning-up Kankan's markets and roads is what people remember from her time as mayor.

Keita M'Balou Kaba, Emerging From 'Civil Society'

Yesterday, I was preparing my evening salad in the yard sitting beside Madame Fofana and Diaka who listened to one of the local radio stations. Together, we heard the news that fifteen persons had been appointed for the Prefectural Independent Election Commission (*Commission Electorale Préfectorale Indépendante*, CEPI). The commission was headed by a woman, M'Balou Kaba, who represented the 'civil society'. The RPG had appointed the vice president and the PEDN, one of the opposition parties, had appointed the treasurer. I am very excited about the fact that a woman presided Kankan's CEPI for the first time, however, it seems that not many of Kankan's inhabitants share my enthusiasm. Probably, the national public trial that takes place at the time is much more important for them because men and women of all ages and backgrounds debate headedly about it.

(Field notes, 26.01.2013)

M'Balou Kaba was born in the mid-1970s. She abandoned school after having failed the final examination. Neither her parents nor her female friends encouraged her to repeat them as they all considered it high time for her to marry. Thus, Kaba got married at the age of twenty-one, had two children, and stayed at home thereafter. When her husband died twelve years later, in 2006, she found herself in a completely new situation, where she could not rely on the income of anybody anymore. Hence, Kaba decided to take her chance in a formation of one year to become a teacher. When she finished the training, she started giving lessons, but could hardly make ends meet as she was only temporarily employed. Finally, she was integrated into public service: M'Balou Kaba became a member of a local women's NGO involved in gardening. Thus, she could plant her own vegetables and therefore better nourish her children. After the death of her husband, Kaba refused to marry her late husband's younger brother and returned to her family. Then, another man proposed to her and she accepted, even though she was his third wife, whereas formerly she had been the only one. They had two children together which makes Kaba the mother of four children.

In 2010, before the presidential election, M'Balou Kaba was elected to the CEPI as one of two 'civil society' members. As rapporteur, her role was to keep minutes. In preparation for the legislative elections in 2013, the bureau had to be newly constituted and it was the 'civil society's' turn to provide the president. Kaba finally decided to present herself and was elected. She recounted: "There have been two men and I was the only woman. The men accepted that I became president due to my experience. The CEPI accepted because it was told to favour women and experience and I represented both" (interview, 15.02.2013). When I asked Sala Diawara, a tutor and one of the RPG's youth representatives, why his party had supported Kaba's candidacy, he explained that during the consultations in the run-up to the elections, they had been informed about Alpha Condé's advices: to encourage female candidates (interview, 31.01.2013).

For the first time in Kankan's history, the CEPI had a female president.³ Kaba's husband supported her activities within the CEPI because of his educational background, she explained. However, many women had advised her against running for this post. They had tried to convince her that in Muslim Kankan women should not become a head of a commission. At the same time, some male friends had encouraged her:

People told me that this was not good for a woman. They gave so many negative examples and intimidated me. They said all kind of things, but I wanted to get this post. At least the elections would let me lose it, but I wanted to give it a chance. Nevertheless, at a certain point, when the elections drew closer, I did not sleep for three nights.

(Interview, 15.02.2013)

M'Balou Kaba took matters into her own hands. After the death of her first husband, she decided to leave his family with her children and not to marry his younger brother. Then she completed a professional training and started working as a teacher. Furthermore, she accepted the proposal of her current husband. Kaba was aware of his educational background and was sure he would approve of her occupations, for example the frequenting of a local NGO. As a committed member of 'civil society' she then gained an important position within Kankan's public sphere. Running for that job was not an easy decision for Kaba, as she was aware of habitual gendered norms according to which a woman in Kankan should not get such a highly visible post. Interestingly, it was Kaba's husband and her male friends who encouraged her to present herself as the CEPI's head. Her female friends were afraid that M'Balou Kaba would be badmouthed once elected.

Ordinary Party Members

Néné Sagno, Temporarily Participating

Néné Sagno was born in the early 1950s in Côte d'Ivoire. Sagno started her schooling in Côte d'Ivoire, but then came to Guinea and continued until the tenth grade. After marriage, she again moved to Côte d'Ivoire because her husband worked as a sculptor in Abidjan. Together, they had eleven children, of which seven survived. At the time of the research, three of these children lived in Japan and one in the Netherlands. Thanks to their remittances, the family in Kankan did not complain about food shortages. Finally, Néné Sagno and her husband had to return to Kankan. Néné Sagno proudly told me about the many different things she had done to generate an income for her family: She acted as a sewer, a hairdresser, made *bonbons* and cakes, sold different items at the market, made soap, and embroidered sheets. Whenever one activity was no longer profitable, she simply changed her strategy and did something else. Néné Sagno repeatedly stressed the importance of work: "In

Guinea, all women work, all Guinean women have courage. Men are different: Even if he knows his work, men here are lazy; they do not want to work. They only sleep, that's no good" (interview, 15.11.2011).

When Néné Sagno's husband died, his younger brother wanted to marry her and her co-wife, but they both refused, because the latter did not want to take care of their (her own and her co-wife's) children. Néné Sagno explained that widows who marry again face many problems. Because she feared that her new co-wives would not treat her well, especially because they were older than she was, she preferred to remain alone and in peace. Therefore, Sagno and her co-wife remained in their late husband's house, together with some of their children and grandchildren. Néné Sagno and her co-wife collaborated well, she told me; there was no jealousy. It had been the latter who had encouraged Néné Sagno to frequent the PEDN party meetings two months before the presidential elections in 2010. Like her co-wife, Néné Sagno emphasised that, naturally, she liked Lansana Kouyaté, the PEDN party leader. She pointed to his performance as a prime minister under Lansana Conté:

Kouyaté wants to work for the people, for all Guineans, for the young generation, for women, and for children. As soon as Kouyaté took office, he stood up for women when he massively reduced the prices.

(Interview, 15.11.2011)

Néné Sagno enthusiastically told me how she went to greet her party leader at Kankan's entrance. The crowd had been overwhelming, she emphasised. At party meetings, Sagno did not raise her voice. She explained that her role was to listen to what the local party leaders had to say. If ordinary women like herself did not agree with that, they could say so. At these reunions, only female leaders spoke, not ordinary women. For Sagno, participating in those meetings was one way of catching up on news regarding her country and Kankan. She did not profit from her party membership, she emphasised. Néné Sagno further explained that the party leaders had encouraged women to join the meeting and to bring other women along. Sagno exclaimed: "That is politics. If you like politics, you must frequent party meetings. That is what shows that you like the party" (interview, 15.11.2011). In November 2012, Néné Sagno told me that she had stopped going to the reunions, because she disliked the quarrels within the party for which, according to her, low-level party executives were responsible. 'If you are of a certain age, you should not get involved in certain things anymore', she explained (informal conversation, 30.11.2012).

Néné Sagno is a very self-confident woman. Throughout her life, she adapted flexibly to new circumstances. When her husband died, she decided not to marry his younger brother as she disliked his behaviour and was not dependent on his money. Having children abroad through which she profits in the form of remittances, Sagno has no need to bother too much about financial issues. The younger women in her compound are now responsible for the many tasks in the household, so she has enough time to do things she likes:

Chatting with her friend, knitting and embroidering sheets, and going to party meetings. Even though she does not see herself in an active role during these reunions, she openly commits herself to the PEDN. Néné Sagno understands politics as joining a political party and going to its meetings. Thus, she focuses on the institutional sphere, however, without acknowledging ordinary women's decision-making power. But her political articulation goes much further. Sagno, for example, accuses Guinean men of being lazy. She expects them to work as hard as women for their families. From the head of state, Néné Sagno demands that he takes care of the population as a father should of his children. He should do this by reducing food prices, the precise task that Lansana Kouyaté had laudably accomplished as Prime Minister. At a certain point, the quarrels within the local party branch became too apparent and, thus, Sagno decided not to frequent the meetings anymore. She thought that an elderly woman should engage in conflict settling and not socialise in a sphere where quarrels are frequent.

Adama Diawara, Cleaning Kankan

Adama Diawara was born in the mid-1950s in a village near Dabola. The family then moved to Kankan because her father worked for the railways. Out of Diawara's eight children, only one girl survived. At the time of the research, the latter and her family lived together with Adama Diawara. Both women did divination sessions thanks to which they earned some money. Above Diawara's bed hang a portrait of Alpha Condé and one of the leaders of a popular faith-based group.

Adama Diawara told me that her sister had lost her job as a border guard during the Conté-period because of her support for Alpha Condé. It was at this point that Diawara started engaging within the RPG. She recounted: "I fought with heart and soul for Alpha's concerns so that he will become President of the Republic" (interview, 08.10.2011). Adama Diawara emphasised that she had never campaigned for becoming a governor or a minister. Firstly, she was already too old for such things, and, secondly, she was not formally educated; she engaged within the RPG to create a better future for her children, that is, for Guinea's younger generation. Diawara stressed that she was not a party member because she had financial interests. "I like the RPG and Alpha Condé naturally, without any reason," she explained (interview, 8.10.2011). During the presidential election campaign, she and many other female RPG followers sang a song about their natural love for the actual President. Sometimes, Diawara participated in the weekly party meetings.

When Lansana Conté was still in power, Adama Diawara and other female party members started organising in a voluntary association called *Fason Sagnia*, which means 'cleaning up the homeland'. Their goal was to make Kankan tidier and more beautiful. However, Diawara recounted that their association had to stop all activities until Kankan came into the RPG's hands at the end of 2005. It was when Alpha Condé finally became President that

Fason Sagnia was reactivated and, thus, powerful again, she recounted. For the cleaning work, all members wore the same yellow shirt, the RPG's colour. Together they cleaned Kankan's markets, the municipality's offices, the main hospital, the mosques, and some of Kankan's streets. As they worked voluntarily and even had to pay for the material they used, they were looking for a financial aid. Thanks to contacts they had due to their party affiliation, a delegation of thirteen persons met Alpha Condé and the First Lady personally. Djènè Kaba Condé was impressed by the women's project and promised to help them. Through that, the association was to receive funds and rubbish bins from the government. According to Diawara, this financial support was a form of compensation for their long-time militancy for Alpha Condé.

In February 2012, the association wanted to clean the ditches along Kankan's main streets which were full of rubbish. The women negotiated with the municipality to use one of their lorries. Finally, they agreed that the association had to pay 200,000 Guinean francs (around 20 euros) a day plus the required petrol. But on the arranged day, the van's chauffeur did not show up which made the women very angry. They complained that they had to do the municipality's work and the latter did not even help them (field notes, 23.02.2012). Nevertheless, two days later I observed *Fason Sagnia* emptying the ditches. They were well organised and had the help of three young men who heaved the garbage onto the lorry. The men in the café where Thierno and I were sitting congratulated the women and stopped passing cars and motorcycles to facilitate their work. In addition, they insulted the local government for not meeting their obligations (field notes, 25.02.2012).

In January 2013, Adama Diarara told me that their group had not so far received the promised funds. Thus, she and other women had visited the local government where they had argued: "Look at us, we are mothers. We stand up early every morning, we are the ones who suffer on the ground. You in contrast just remain in your comfortable situations. So, you must help us" (informal conversation, 11.01.2013).

Adama Diawara has been politicised due to an injustice her sister had experienced. Since 'her' leader became President, she has clear expectations: He should recompense the RPG party members for their engagement and commitment. However, Diawara makes a clear distinction between those who should get a post – the formally educated people – and those who should not – ordinary women like herself. When I asked the research participants about powerful women in Kankan, some mentioned Diawara's association *Fason Sagnia*, because they cleaned in spaces where decision-making takes places, such as the municipality or the main mosque. The women from *Fason Sagnia* purposely used their party affiliation and the thereby established contacts to achieve their goals, namely to receive equipment. Promising this association some financial support can have a positive effect for the party and its President, because the women then again help canvassing. Furthermore, it goes hand in hand with Alpha Condé's commitment to women's promotion by means of forming associations. However, these women do not solely

pursue the goal of networking; their engagement can rather be seen as an expression of their love for their city which they would like to look nice.

The example of Adama Diawara and her association illustrates that party affiliation does not hinder those women from following their own interests. They bargained directly with representatives of the local government when the promised money did not arrive. In their plea, they pointed to their long-standing party engagement and focussed on their roles as mothers purposely to legitimise their collective political articulation in the municipality. My data demonstrates that women especially refer to motherhood when they want to socially legitimise the fact that they raise their voices in public, just like Rabiadou Sèrah Diallo. As noted, this strategic use of their roles as mothers to make political claims can be observed in other African countries as well (Tripp 2003, 241).

Doussou Sidibé, the Long-Time Party Member

Doussou Sidibé was born in the mid-1940s and was married at a very early age. Her husband had other wives and their matrimony had not been happy. The amount of work she had to do at that time was too much, she said. Sidibé had to give everything she earned directly to her husband, nothing was for herself. She gave birth to thirteen children, among which were two sets of twins. Doussou Sidibé told me that she was an RPG member from the very beginning. During the Conté period, she could not publicly stand up for her political affiliation, and the RPG reunions had to take place secretly. Sidibé recounted that during her twenty years of militancy for Alpha Condé, she had never been discouraged. Every time one of the party members faced a problem because he or she had been in opposition to the Conté government, Alpha Condé had called and appeased them. Doussou Sidibé had presided over her neighbourhood's women's branch. I was interested why she had been appointed to this post and she explained:

I have been elected to become the women's district RPG president because of my courage. For example, I never failed to appear to party meetings. Even if it rained, I took my little umbrella and I went to the reunion just as I did under the heat of the sun. Like this, the people already knew that I had the courage for the RPG militancy.

(Interview, 18.10.2011)

As an RPG neighbourhood president, Doussou Sidibé had several duties: Firstly, she helped to accommodate partisans from the rural area who came to Kankan for important reunions. She prepared beds and, if she had the financial means, she also cooked for the guests. Secondly, she helped to settle disputes among party members. Thirdly, she mobilised people for different party activities, for example for canvassing. However, her major task was to welcome Alpha Condé when he visited Kankan (interview, 18.10.2011).

Like Adama Diawara, Doussou Sidibé also expected Alpha Condé to recompense ‘formally’ educated party members, among them women, when he became the head of state. She made a clear distinction between those who went to school and those who did not. The former should make decisions and speak openly, but not the latter. Sidibé was elected to a representative post due to her long-time RPG membership and her party commitment. Interestingly, this did not enhance her decision-making power within the RPG. Her role was rather based on her duties as a mother and wife: to prepare food and sleeping possibilities for visitors, to clap, dance, and canvass, and to welcome Alpha Condé as well as other party dignitaries. This illustrates that the women’s branch is of no importance when it comes to decision-making within political parties. The male party authorities, on the contrary, claim that representatives of these women’s branches have a say in every major decision. However, I heard that they do not meet regularly and are often not informed about important issues, thus their decision-making power is rather weak. Young women are also present within the youth’s branches. But its representatives are – once more – mostly male, and I never met a young woman who holds an important post within her party – contrary to young men.

Néné Sagno, Adama Diawara, and Doussou Sidibé are all elderly women. This is a typical characteristic of female party members. Male party members, in contrast, are mixed in age. Once women are less occupied with children and household tasks, they have more time for other things, such as participating in party meetings. Additionally, as they have matured, they are less exposed to sexual badmouthing than younger women. Lastly, elderly women are socially more respected than their younger counterparts. The three examples illustrate, once again, women’s primary preoccupation with food prices. These women chose their favourite political leader in accordance with his (former) performance in this regard, and then because they liked him naturally – for which they were disregarded by ‘formally’ educated women. Ordinary female supporters of Alpha Condé like to say *Alphako*, meaning that they would, under no circumstances, change their political camp. The words ‘I love him or her naturally’ are frequently used in French, Maninkaka, and Pulaar for expressing one’s profound attachment and love for another person. By transferring them to the political sphere, they state that their choice of political camp is emotional and does not need any further explanation. This phrasing hints to the limitations of ordinary women’s political articulations within institutional politics.

Ordinary female party members do not gain anything out of their party membership and have no pre-determined goals, for example gaining an important post. Furthermore, they do not talk at party meetings as their role is not to influence the decision-making process. Rather, they are (mis)used for canvassing and garnering votes, for dancing, clapping, entertaining, doing voluntary work, and praising the leader. Ordinary women’s primary motivation to become a party member is the social side of it. However, they can, at times, profit from the acquaintances they make at party meetings. In brief, my

data resembles to a great extent what Babacar Fall (2001, 215) noticed for Senegal almost twenty years ago: “The dominant image of the woman participating in political life is that of the socialite woman providing with folklore.”

Conclusion: Institutional Politics as a Male Domain

The Ambivalent Image of Women in Institutional Politics

Despite women’s active engagement in the struggle for independence and Sékou Touré’s promotion of women, the institutional political sphere in Guinea is still defined as a male domain “but women have played important roles through holding political office, especially at the ministerial level” (Steady 2011, 71). The image of female politicians in Guinea is quite contradictory – be it at the local level or the national level. On the one hand, they are praised for being honest, less corrupt, and ruling more transparently than men. People trace these positive characteristics back to women’s roles as caretakers and nurtures: They are predestined to play important roles within politics since they have the experience in caring for the stability and peaceful cohabitation of their families, the research participants claim. Some of the female research participants would like to have more women in institutional politics as they know their problems better than men do. Female politicians are also said to be very brave and ambitious. They are praised for talking in front of large audiences, for being able to defend their positions, and for imposing their interests. Because of such things, they are congratulated on behaving like men.

On the other hand, exactly these characteristics are also seen negatively: From this point of view, female politicians are accused of being ruthless and evil. Some of the female, non-formally educated research participants of different ages think that politics is a male affair and therefore not for women. ‘Women are women, they cannot talk instead of men’, is a typical statement in this regard. When a woman enters the political sphere, other women might critically ask whether she has nothing better to do than that, meaning that she must first care for her children and her husband. Several well-educated elderly male research participants pointed to exemplary female politicians who, even though they attend political meetings and travel a lot, are still able to care for their husbands and to look exemplarily after their households. This illustrates that, in their eyes a woman should still conform to locally expected gender duties as a mother and wife, even if she becomes a (national) politician. Generally, female politicians are badmouthed to a greater extent than their male counterparts: Accusations of sexual favours are frequent whenever a woman, not only in the political sphere, obtains an important post.

Regardless of official statements, Guinean political parties are hierarchical and rather undemocratic organisations; dissonant voices are not welcome. This proved to be a problem for some well-educated women emerging from ‘civil society’ who held more or less important positions when they internally criticised their parties and their local leaders. In Guinea, as in many other

African countries, it is quite easy to bypass female politicians due to their ambivalent image. This can also be illustrated with two notions in Maninkaka, *musowkung* and *musowkriki*. *Musow* is a woman, *kung* the head, and *kriki* means brave. Both notions are used for a female leader, a woman in a responsible position who can do things others can't. Still, there is room for interpretation as the notion *musowkriki* has a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers to a fearless woman who is not afraid of bargaining with high-ranking state employees and other important personalities. On the other hand, it implies that the woman debauches, that she is too close to men. If a woman has a high position in the army, for example, people might call her *musokriki*, a woman who gained her position only because of sexual favours to the generals. This badmouthing hints at a problem Mary Moran (2012, 61) accurately describes: "Women seeking public office assert their right to hold authority over unrelated males, which does profoundly challenge patriarchal values." The contested image of women engaging in the political sphere is not new: Writing about the years before independence, Elizabeth Schmidt (2002, 293) notices that the RDA members "quickly gained a reputation as a haven for prostitutes, loose women, and divorcées since their party engagement caused tensions within the households."

All these findings are not a Guinean particularity, though. Drawing on data from Uganda and Nigeria, Aili Mari Tripp (2006, 116–117) and Jibrin Ibrahim (2004, 10) notice that conforming to the local expectations of motherhood and housewives is highly important for female politicians. Their moral standings are always put into question. Men's behaviour and dress style, in contrast, do not matter. The data I gathered on women and institutional politics in Benin show similar results: Female politicians are not to neglect their household obligations. Furthermore, they are easily accused of being prostitutes. To reduce such insults, women in Benin, like in Guinea, enter the political sphere typically after menopause (Ammann 2010, 67–69).

Women in Local Political Parties

As highlighted, gender is a decisive factor regarding political articulations within Guinean party politics. While the rank and file constitutes of men and women, people holding decision-making positions are mostly male. But there are also other important differences regarding the party member's identities. In Kankan, ethnicity is decisive for a person's party affiliation: While the Fulani tend to support the UFDG, the majority of the Manding vote for the RPG and a minority for the PEDN.

Age is another crucial factor: I never saw a woman below her forties at a party meeting, and most of them are in their fifties or even sixties. Men also tend to be elderly, but there are also many, mostly well-educated, male party members who are between twenty and forty-five years old. Ordinary, elderly women are sought after for their abilities to mobilise different social groups and for folkloristic purposes, not because the party leaders want to integrate

their opinions into the decision-making processes. By supporting their party's leader, they hope their children, that is to say, the younger generation would profit if the leader ever comes to power. Besides, attending party meetings is a socially accepted reason for leaving the house. In this way, elderly women, whose main preoccupation is not to generate an income, keep themselves busy. They not only show up to listen to the local dignitaries' speeches, but also to chat and exchange news with acquaintances and friends. As a consequence, they can enlarge their network from which they might profit one day. Adama Diawara's group, *Fason Sagnia*, is a case in point. Thanks to the women's party membership, they had a direct contact to the actual President and the First Lady.

Lastly, there is also a major gap between well-educated and 'non-formally' educated women, which manifests at the discursive and practical levels: Intellectual women derogatorily recount that 'non-formally' educated party members cannot explain why they adhere to a specific political party. Moreover, the former cannot understand why the latter are there just for canvassing and do not strive after certain posts to increase their power within the party. According to 'non-formally' educated female party members, education is the decisive factor as to whether one is supposed to make propositions at reunions.

During my time in Kankan, I was able to talk to four well-educated women who had or still held an important position within their political party. Interestingly, all of them claimed that they had not actively been looking for the posts: They recounted that friends had suggested them for these positions or they held destiny accountable for their achievements. Three out of these four women mentioned problems they had with the local party leaders – something I never heard of in relation to men. They deplored the bad organisation of their parties, especially the lack of internal democratisation. When they directly criticised the party principals, they had a high price to pay: The party's local dignitaries internally mobbed and bypassed them and important information no longer reached these women. Consequently, one of these women decided to withdraw from her position as head of Kankan's female UFDG-wing. Others played the game and profited from their posts and personal connections, knowing the consequences they faced if they did not. I never heard a non-formally educated woman criticising her party. However, as the example of Néné Sagné, who stopped frequenting party meetings due to constant quarrels, shows, they are not just mute clappers, but they consciously decide whether to engage or to distance themselves from their party.

These four female politicians all mentioned the lack of women's education and political experience as obstacles for women's promotion in politics. Another problem is women's lack of political experience once elected into office. Further, they deplored women's shortage of money, time, and self-confidence. As Anne Marie Goetz (2009, 13) writes, the lack of funds for campaigning seems to be a general problem for female candidates. Lastly, some well-educated female research participants explained that they preferred staying in 'civil society' and abstaining from political life as the latter has the reputation of being ruthless.

Emic Understanding of Politics

In this chapter, I have shown the characteristics of female political articulations within the institutional political sphere. From the female actors' point of view, someone who is a member of a political party is in politics, even if he or she only frequents party meetings. Thus, a politically active person supports a political leader and therefore also his party. Voting, in contrast, is not considered as doing politics. I have been told that every person who loves his or her country should vote. Electing a President is understood as a duty and not as a political act. This emic understanding is noteworthy bearing in mind Guinea's history of electoral manipulation since 1993. Even though (some of) their votes did not count in the end, these experiences did not change people's conviction of the importance to cast a ballot.

The research participants' reactions to the question regarding politics depended mostly on their experience and opinion of political leaders and, more generally, on politics at the national level. Many, irrespective of differences regarding gender, age, ethnicity, and education, do not have much confidence in politicians and their parties. Accordingly, the latter are not regarded as capable of presenting solutions to ordinary people's problems and therefore improving their daily lives. The local expression 'it has been made politically' hints to the rather negative image of politics. This notion is used whenever something has not been done 'normally'. Since Alpha Condé became President in 2010, the political sphere has been marked by quarrels between the ruling party and the opposition and their leaders, respectively. By distancing oneself from politics, people state that they do not want to get involved in these endless disputes.

However, this disassociating also has historical roots: During the First and Second Republics, every form of dissidence could have severe personal consequences. Thus, framing one's political articulations as apolitical has, for a long time, been a way of protecting oneself. Such habitual behaviour does not change rapidly. The mistrust regarding political parties is one reason why they are just rarely able to mobilise the masses in Kankan – something other organisations are more capable of, such as the trade unions during the general strikes of 2006 and 2007. I have been told on several occasions that this extraordinary time in Guinea's history enhanced women's political articulations within the institutional sphere because, during the strikes, they were regarded as legitimate actors who were allowed to demand political and social transformations.

Striking is the way women express their political activities as social and not political articulations. As I have illustrated, especially well-educated women such as Rabiadou Sèrah Diallo and also the women from the Association of Female Leaders use their kinship identity as mothers and not their gender identity for making political claims. A mother is powerful; she must be respected, and her words count – contrary to the wife who takes orders from her husband. Thus, by drawing on the socially acknowledged moral authority as mothers, women make sure their political articulations are taken seriously. Those research

participants who claimed that women are better suited for leadership positions because they are nurturing, caring, more peaceful, and less corrupt than men, explained that in the context of their roles as mothers. This discourse of drawing on women's identification with motherhood is widespread in 'civil society' and the political sphere throughout Africa. Aili Mari Tripp (2003, 241) argues that due "to the historically cultural separation between women's and men's mobilization, women have often used their position as 'mothers' as a basis of moral authority from which to argue for their inclusion in politics. They have used it as a resource with which to demand political changes not only in practice, but also in political culture, demanding that the value of nurturing, caring and justice be included in political practice and that corruption be rejected."

As the image of strong mothers and motherhood has "emotive power" (Van Allen 2009, 65), it is purposely and strategically used and manipulated to legitimise and strengthen women's political articulations. However, we must not forget that the problem of essentialising exists here also: Mothers are not more equal than women are. During her campaign in 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf successfully played with local understandings of gender expectations in the social and political spheres. On the one hand, she repeatedly emphasised that she is a mother and a grandmother, hinting at the moral authority that accompanies motherhood and seniority. On the other hand, her voting slogan was "she is our man" (Moran 2012, 59). Mary Moran (2012, 54) argues that Johnson Sirleaf "has successfully synthesized the authority-bearing role of female elder with the claims to gender neutrality embedded in Western notions of liberal democracy."

Summing up, within the sphere of party politics, with the exception of well-educated women who hold important positions, women are not to express their ideas, make propositions, or raise new issues to discuss at party meetings. Once, during a party meeting, I witnessed a market woman complaining about the lack of space in the market. Mister Konaté, the RPG coordinator, brusquely rebuked her that this was not the place for such a complaint (field notes, 26.11.2011). This example illustrates that political parties are not considered to take care of ordinary people's immediate preoccupations. Therefore, women are more likely to meet the *chef de quartier*, the treasurer, or the mayor's representative and not party dignitaries when they have a problem. I come to the conclusion, as I have argued, that ordinary women's political articulation within parties is very limited. Therefore, women's influence on governmental practices is not bargained for in the sphere of political parties.

Notes

- 1 Minor parts and earlier versions of this chapter have been published in the following article: Ammann, Carole. 2018. "Political Parties and Participation: Guinea." In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*, edited by Suad Joseph. Leiden: Brill Online. Reprinted with the publisher's permission.
- 2 I also tried to contact Fatoumata Maty personally. I was almost successful thanks to a friend of a friend, but in the end, she did not want to talk to me, probably because of the way she had been dismissed. I heard colloquial story of her

appointment several different times from different participants; however, I was unable to verify the content through official sources.

- 3 Lansana Kouyaté later accused Keita M'Balou Kaba of manipulating the legislative elections in favour of the ruling party (Vision Guinée 05.10.2013). For the presidential elections in October 2015, Kaba was confirmed as the CEPI's president (Guinée 360 12.06.2015). For the local elections in early 2018, she was still in her position (Kankan 24 15.01.2018).

Bibliography

- Adams, Melinda. 2006. "Regional Women's Activism. African Women's Networks and the African Union." In *Global Feminism. Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*, edited by Myra Marx Ferree, and Aili Mari Tripp, 187–218. New York/London: New York University Press.
- Adjamagbo-Johnson, Kafui. 1997. "La politique est aussi l'affaire des femmes." *Politique Africaine* (65):62–73.
- Africa Guinée. 16. 02. 2014. "Politique. Les femmes parlementaires veulent une modification du code électoral... ." Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <http://www.africaguinee.com/articles/2014/02/16/politique-les-femmes-parlementaires-veulent-une-modification-du-code-electoral>.
- Africa Guinée. 17. 02. 2014. "Elections, cas des femmes au gouvernement: Ce qu'en pense Dr Zalikatou Diallo... ." Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <http://www.africaguinee.com/?q=articles/2014/02/17/elections-cas-des-femmes-au-gouvernement-ce-qu-en-pense-dr-zalikatou-diallo>.
- Ahikire, Josephine. 2009. "Who Speaks for Whom? Women and the Politics of Presence in Uganda's Local Governance." In *Governing Women. Women's Political Effectiveness in Contexts of Democratization and Governance Reform*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, 216–235. New York/London: Routledge.
- Aminata. 19. 02. 2009. "Guinée: Le Maire et le Receveur Communal suspendus!" Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <https://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200903060339.html>.
- Ammann, Carole. 2010. "'Vraiment on a du travail'. Frauen und Politik in Benin – eine Fallstudie." Master Thesis, University of Basel.
- Ammann, Carole. 2018. "Political Parties and Participation: Guinea." In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*, edited by Suad Joseph. Leiden: Brill Online.
- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou. 09. 09. 2013. "Les partis politiques que nous avons, pour l'essentiel, sont des entreprises individuelles qui appartiennent à des leaders." Accessed 30. 03. 2017. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWyZyW-xKhA>.
- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou. 25. 12. 2013. "Comment changer la Guinée? Dr. Bano Barry, sociologue, répond à la question à travers une analyse pertinente!" Accessed 05. 08. 2019. <http://guineedirect.org/index.php/a-la-une/739-comment-changer-la...sociologue-repond-a-la-question-a-travers-une-analyse-pertinente>.
- Bauer, Gretchen, and Hannah E. Britton. 2006. "Women in African Parliaments. A Continental Shift?" In *Women in African Parliaments*, edited by Gretchen Bauer, and Hannah E. Britton, 1–30. Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- BBC Afrique. 07. 10. 2015. "Marie-Madeleine Dioubaté, portrait d'une candidate." Accessed 06. 08. 2019. http://www.bbc.com/afrique/region/2015/10/151006_guinee_profile_marie_dioubate.
- Beall, Jo. 2013. "Decentralizing Government and De-Centering Gender. Lessons from Local Government Reform in South Africa." In *Governing Women. Women's*

- Political Effectiveness in Contexts of Democratization and Governance Reform*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, 175–195. New York/London: Routledge.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou. 2014. *Political History of Guinea Since World War Two*. Vol. 23. New York: Peter Lang.
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou, Thomas O’Toole, and Janice E. Baker. 2014. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*. 5 ed. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press.
- CENI Guinée. 31. 03. 2016. “Kankan. Le quota de 30% non respecté!” Accessed 24. 06. 2016. <http://www.ceniguinee.org/index.php/departements/communication/183-kanan-le-quota-de-30-non-respecte>.
- Childs, Sarah, and Joni Lovenduski. 2013. “Political Representation.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, edited by Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola, Georgina Waylen, and Laurel S. Weldon, 489–513. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Doumbouya, Oumar Sivory. 2008. *La situation sociale des femmes en Guinée. De la période précoloniale jusqu’à nos jours*. Paris: L’Harmattan.
- Erdmann, Gero, Matthias Baseau, and Andreas Mehler. 2007. “Introduction. Research on Electoral Systems, Parties and Party Systems in Africa.” In *Votes, Money and Violence. Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Gero Erdmann, Matthias Baseau, and Andreas Mehler, 7–20. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
- Fall, Babacar. 2001. “Senegalese Women in Politics. A Portrait of Two Female Leaders, Arame Diène and Thioumbé Samba, 1945–1996.” In *African Words, African Voices. Critical Practices in Oral History*, edited by Luise White, Stephan F. Miescher, and David William Cohen, 214–223. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Fallon, Kathleen M. 2008. *Democracy and the Rise of Women’s Movements in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gazibo, Mamoudou. 2006. “Pour une réhabilitation de l’analyse des partis en Afrique.” *Politique africaine* (4):5–17.
- Goetz, Anne Marie. 2009. “Governing Women. Will New Public Space for Some Women Make a Difference for all Women.” In *Governing Women. Women’s Political Effectiveness in Contexts of Democratization and Governance Reform*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, 1–24. New York/London: Routledge.
- Goetz, Anne Marie, and Shireen Hassim. 2003. “Introduction. Women in Power in Uganda and South Africa.” In *No Shortcuts to Power. African Women in Politics and Polity Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, and Shireen Hassim, 1–28. London/New York: Zed Books.
- Guinée 360. 12. 06. 2015. “Guinée: Kankan, la présidente de la CEPI dément l’entrôlement des enfants.” Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <https://www.guinee360.com/12/06/2015/guinee-kankan-la-presidente-de-la-cepi-dement-lenrolement-des-enfants/>.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. 2007. “Political Parties, Elections and Patronage. Random Thoughts on Neo-Patrimonialism and African Democratization.” In *Votes, Money and Violence. Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Gero Erdmann, Matthias Baseau, and Andreas Mehler, 21–33. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
- Ibrahim, Jibrin. 2004. “The First Lady Syndrome and the Marginalisation of Women from Power. Opportunities or Compromises for Gender Equality?” *Feminist Africa* 3:1–14.
- International Crisis Group. 2013. “Guinée. Sortir du bourbier électoral.” In *Africa Report N°199*. Dakar/Bruxelles.

- Irvine, Jill A., and Maureen Hays-Mitchell. 2012. "Gender and Political Transformation in Societies at War." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13(4):1–9.
- Jeune Afrique. 25. 02. 2010. "Rabiadou Serah Diallo, une passionaria à Conakry." Accessed 18. 12. 2019. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articleimp_ARTJAWEB20100225113318_ra_biatou-serah-diallo-une-pasionaria-a-conakry.html.
- Kankan 24. 15. 01. 2018. "Kankan: le Président de la C.E.N.I se réjouit du travail effectué par la C.E.P.I." Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <http://www.kankan24.com/kankan-le-president-de-la-c-e-n-i-se-rejouit-du-travail-effectue-par-la-c-e-p-i/>.
- McGovern, Mike. 2007. "Janvier 2007 – Sékou Touré est mort." *Politique Africaine* (107):125–146.
- Moran, Mary. 2012. "Our Mothers Have Spoken. Synthesizing Old and New Forms of Women's Political Authority in Liberia." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13(4):51–66.
- Pankhurst, Donna. 2002. "Women and Politics in Africa. The Case of Uganda." *Parliamentary Affairs* (55):119–128.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2007. "Tous derrière, les femmes devant! Femmes, représentations sociales et mobilisation politique en Guinée (1945–2006)." In *Perspectives historiques sur le genre en Afrique*, edited by Odile Goerg, 221–237. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Randall, Vicky. 2007. "Political Parties in Africa and the Representation of Social Groups." In *Votes, Money and Violence: Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Gero Erdmann, Matthias Baseau, and Andreas Mehler, 82–104. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2002. "'Emancipate Your Husbands!' Women and Nationalism in Guinea 1953–1958." In *Women in African Colonial Histories*, edited by Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi, 282–304. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Selolwane, Onalenna Doo. 2013. "From Political Sidecars to Legislation." In *Governing Women. Women's Political Effectiveness in Contexts of Democratization and Governance Reform*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, 129–147. New York/London: Routledge.
- Steady, Filomina Chioma. 2011. *Women and Leadership in West Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Touré, Mabetty. 2013. "Les rapports de genre et la filière néré en Haute Guinée." PhD Thesis, Université Toulouse.
- Tripp, Aili Mari. 2003. "Women in Movement Transformations in African Political Landscapes." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5(2):233–255.
- Tripp, Aili Mari. 2006. "Uganda. Agents of Change for Women's Advancement?" In *Women in African Parliaments*, edited by Gretchen Bauer, and Hannah E. Britton, 111–131. Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- Tripp, Aili Mari. 2013. "Political Systems and Gender." In *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, edited by Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola, Georgina Waylen, and Laurel S. Weldon, 514–535. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tripp, Aili Mari, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa. 2009. *African Women's Movements. Transforming Political Landscapes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- UN WOMEN. 10. 05. 2019. "Guinea Adopts Law on Parity, Securing Equal Representation of Women on Electoral Lists." Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/5/news-guinea-adopts-law-on-parity>.

- Union Européenne. 2011. "Rapport Final. Mission d'observation électoral en République de Guinée. Élection présidentielle de 2010." Conakry: Union Européenne.
- Union Européenne. 2013. "Guinée. Rapport final. Élections législatives 28 septembre 2013." Conakry: Union Européenne.
- Union Européenne. 2015. "République de Guinée. Élection présidentielle, 11 octobre 2015. Rapport final." Conakry: Union Européenne.
- Van Allen, Judith. 2009. "Radical Citizenship. Powerful Mothers and Equal Rights." In *Power, Gender and Social Change in Africa*, edited by Muna Ndulo and Margaret Grieco, 60–76. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Vision Guinée. 02. 11. 2015. "Qui est Marie Madeleine Dioubaté, la seule femme candidate à la présidentielle?" Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <http://www.visionguinee.info/2015/09/02/qui-est-marie-madeleine-dioubate-la-seule-femme-candidate-a-la-presidentielle/>.
- Vision Guinée. 05. 10. 2013. "Déroulement du scrutin: Lansana Kouyaté dépeint les irrégularités à Kankan." Accessed 06. 08. 2019. <http://www.visionguinee.info/2013/10/05/deroulement-du-scrutin-lansana-kouyate-depeint-les-irregularites-a-kankan/>.
- Waylen, Georgina. 1994. "Women and Democratization Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics." *World Politics* 46(03):327–354.
- WikiLeaks. 19. 02. 2009. "Kankan: History Destroyed, Uncertain Future." Accessed 06. 08. 2019. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07CONAKRY434_a.html.

6 Everyday Politics

Introduction: Daily Bargaining over Gender Relations

Norms of respectability and morality are gendered – in Kankan as well as elsewhere. Norms are imposed through positive and negative sanctions whose enforcement provides the individual, group, or institution with power and authority. Such morality is not fixed but bargained and reinforced on a daily basis. Jean Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2008, 14) notes that “on the one hand, norms change (sometimes rapidly), they adapt, hybridize and are created, on the other hand, normative pluralism is the rule and not the exception.” In this chapter, I analyse women and men’s daily negotiation of social norms in Kankan. What is regarded as a male or a female activity, demeanour, and duty and by whom? How do women bargain over standards of dressing, speaking, courtesy, marrying, handling and sustaining a family? How do local gendered norms influence women’s agency and vice versa? In brief, this chapter explores how and by whom masculinities, femininities, and gender relations are constructed and bargained over in Muslim Kankan. Even though bargaining processes take place in the present, they are very much influenced by the other two temporal dimensions of agency, namely habitual practices and the imagination of the future (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). People always compare their memories of past gendered moral behaviour – or what they have heard about it – with their actual experiences and convictions in this regard.

I begin this section with a tale Djénabou told me. According to Djénabou, this and similar tales are not only recounted to children by elder relatives, they are also present in Guinean schoolbooks. Such folk tales, legends, and proverbs are used to reinforce societal gendered expectations according to which “the Mande woman’s most valuable roles are to bear and raise children, care for her home and obey her husband” (Hoffman 2002, 5). By providing the example of Sakoba Mara, I then illustrate how women behave according to social gendered norms in some regard, while having different ideas of their own lives in others.

The Tale of the Three Princes and their Mother

“Once upon a time, there was a king with three sons. When the king died, one of them was to succeed him. For this decision to be taken, the people went under the parley tree to listen to the wisdom of the eldest. Normally, the oldest son was to succeed his father. But when he started to speak, the birds on the tree made such a noise that nobody understood what he was saying. After that, the second eldest son started to speak. But again, the people could not hear what he was saying due to the birds’ noise. Then, the youngest prince started to talk. Now, the birds remained silent. When he had finished, the sons were wondering why the birds had prevented the elder sons from talking. An elderly man stood up and said: ‘Princes, go and ask your mother. She will explain the birds’ reaction.’ Thereafter, the princes told their mother everything and the latter started explaining: ‘It was planned that I should marry your father, but I rebelled, I wanted to marry someone else. It did not work and finally, I had to marry your father. Afterwards, I contradicted everything your father said because I wanted your father to give up, but he did not. It has been in this period of rebellion that I gave birth to you, my first son. That is why when you started talking, the birds prevented you from speaking. It translates directly in what I have done to your father.’ The second son wanted to know whether this had been similar for him. The mother affirmed. Then the youngest son wanted to know why the birds had led him talk. The mother carried on: ‘The birds have not been mistaken. I rebelled when I had your brothers, but then, I understood that your father would not let me go. Thus, I told myself that the best thing to do was to respect my husband. In the end, he is stronger than I am, he is the king. From that moment on, I did everything he wanted’” (Djénabou, informal conversation, 17.02.2013).

This tale illustrates the importance of female subordination in Guinea and other West African countries. Submission is just one of women’s exemplary behaviour; others are tranquillity, paying respect, dressing properly, and not protesting publicly. Showing respect for Manding women is, according to Saskia Brand (1998, 140), “to know how to greet, to know when to speak and – more importantly – when to remain silent, to control one’s feelings, not to disagree publicly, [and] to accept authority.” Throughout my fieldwork, men and women repeatedly praised women who restrained themselves. A popular Manding song goes as follows:

A woman who does not behave properly will never have a well-educated child.
 A woman who does not subordinate herself will not have a strong child. The child will not be able to do anything in its life. Everywhere people talk of women’s suffering. But it is better to subordinate – for your children’s sake.

(Djénabou, informal conversation, 17.02.2013)

An elderly woman told me another proverb: ‘If a woman becomes a lion, her child becomes a cat that cannot even crack an egg’ (informal conversation, 04.02.2013). And Thierno explained that ‘like mother, like daughter’ is a popular saying in

Kankan (informal conversation, 26.10.2012). In her article on gender ideology in Manding societies, Barbara Hoffman (2002, 8) recounts similar proverbs. One says: “The child of a good woman will not be spoiled. [...] The child of a bad woman becomes nothing.” Another implies: “If a woman crows over her husband, [...] her son will cackle like a hen [...]” The lesson of these proverbs is, in Hoffman’s (2002, 10) terms, that “conformity to the expectations of society leads to happiness and prosperity; non-conformity leads to destruction.”

According to the local understanding – and by referring to the Qur’an – a woman’s behaviour shapes her social destiny, that is, the future of her offspring. If a mother does not conduct herself properly, her children will be cursed. Thus, a mother is held responsible for her children’s misbehaviour, especially of her daughter(s) (Bano Barry, Diallo, and Camare 2006, 13). In these tales and proverbs, the children stand metaphorically for a woman’s success in the future. Both research collaborators saw this as one explanation why some women do not divorce even if they quarrel constantly with their husbands, their mothers-in-law, and other family members, get beaten, and do not get any financial support. In brief, this menace is used as an effective means of enforcing the status quo in Kankan’s patriarchal society. However, as Anita Schroven (2019, 62) based on Sherry Ortner (1997) aptly notes “compliance may be a strategy employed by people to achieve their aims.”

Sakoba Mara, a Resolute Woman

Sakoba Mara, one of Djénabou’s neighbours, was born in the year of Guinea’s independence. She grew up in Sierra Leone and did not go to school. In Sierra Leone, she was married, but due to her childlessness, the couple divorced. During one of our conversations, Mara told me that no man has ever beaten her, because she obeys their every command: ‘If he says “stop!”, I stop. That’s good for you and especially for your children. If a woman climbs on the head of her husband, her children will do the same’ (informal conversation, 04.02.2013). At the same time, Mara appreciated the fact that nowadays in Guinea, women do the same work as men, for example becoming prefects.

At first sight, Sakoba Mara’s statement is not extraordinary at all. However, if we look closely at her special situation, it becomes clear that in her daily life, she did not subordinate herself very often. Mara is the third wife of her current husband and the favourite one, as she proudly stressed. With him, she did not have children either, but she fosters two of her brother’s daughters. Interestingly, she does not live with her husband and her two co-wives in a village some 35 kilometres from Kankan, but stays in the city. From time to time, her husband and Mara visit each other. She explained that this physical distance had economic and practical reasons. Her husband, a farmer, does not earn enough to nourish all his wives. Because of Mara’s weight, she cannot fulfil the tasks a woman in a village must, such as fetching firewood. If she got special treatment, this would not please her co-wives, Mara stated. Thus, she remains in Kankan where she earns a living by selling her

embroideries. Even though she has no biological children and does not live in her husband's household, two issues that can make life difficult for a woman in Kankan, she is highly respected in her neighbourhood. Whenever there is a social problem, people fetch the resolute woman to solve it. Due to her age, her rhetoric capabilities, her support of her family, and her 'good' behaviour in general, Sakoba Mara has gained an important position within her community.

Sustaining One's Family¹

I teach at the university. From there, I come to make the household chores, I am near my children. At the end of the month, I get paid. If my husband does not give me some money, I have something to say within the household.

(Jeanne Konaté, interview, 12.12.2012)



Figure 6.1 Women Refuelling their Motorcycles in the City Centre

According to the Guinean Civil Code (article 329; République de Guinée 2015) that was in force at the time of the research, both spouses are to subsidise the household budget according to the economic capabilities of each spouse, but the main burden lies on the husband's shoulders. It also states that the women are allowed to administer their own budgets. In accordance with local popular perception, men should be the number-one breadwinner. The image of the man as the family's provider is widespread in many African societies (e.g. Cornwall 2002; Hunter 2006). However, because of economic hardship, women – sometimes substantially – contribute to the household budgets. Therefore, more and more Guinean men, like in other West African countries, encourage their daughter(s), girlfriend(s), and wife/wives to launch commercial activities, to acquire a profession, or to complete higher education. Consequently, most of these women have some degree of economic independence, such as the two women portrayed below, who are even their families' main breadwinners.

Nantènin Nabé, Selling Sweets in Town

Nantènin Nabé was born in the mid-1970s in Côte d'Ivoire where her father was selling second-hand clothes on a large-scale basis. Due to this lucrative business, the family lived well. Nabé's father then had to go back to his place of birth, a village some eighty kilometres from Kankan, to care for his elderly parents. It was in this Guinean village that Nabé became aware of, and personally experienced, what it means to be poor. She then married her current husband, who is just a few years older than she is. Until today, she is his only wife. In 2009, Nantènin Nabé and her husband decided to move to Kankan, because they hoped their six children would get a better education there.

When moving to Kankan, she did not generate an income. After one year, Madame Fofana asked her whether she would like to sell *bonbons* (iced sweets) for her. Since then, Nabé has installed herself at a strategically good place in the city centre and sells the *bonbons*. Her husband was engaged in the transportation of petrol, but one day, his lorries were attacked and, thus, he lost all his money. At the time of the research, he helped in a friend's boutique. However, according to Nabé, he does not earn anything and is merely there while waiting for other possibilities. Therefore, her husband no longer contributes to the household budget. Nantènin Nabé stressed that she sells these *bonbons* because she has nothing else to do and is obliged to gain her family's income. However, could she choose freely, she would prefer to own a small shop. Furthermore, she did not like the way she had to leave the young children alone at home, "but what to do?", she asked rhetorically. "Here in Guinea, women are the ones who get their children by" (interview, 08.11.2011).

When asked about decision-making at home, Nabé made clear that she accepted whatever her husband demanded. She added: "If my daughter wants to marry or if I want that she marries, my husband will accept this. But if I say that she should remain at my side, my husband will also accept that. I try

to convince him by talking to him until he agrees” (interview. 08.11.2011). It seems that Nabé and her husband get along very well, something a woman selling nearby confirmed. Nantènin Nabé explained that there are all too many households in Kankan where the couples quarrel endlessly. This is always the woman’s fault, Nantènin stressed: ‘It is necessary that the woman forgets the quarrels. Even if her husband insults her or someone throws a pebble at her, she should not say anything. Like this, the problems will end. If she gets beaten, she must remain calm’ (informal conversation, 15.01.2013).

Ever since her husband lost his two lorries, Nantènin Nabé is her family’s only breadwinner. As they are just getting by and sometimes cannot eat three times a day, she does not like this responsibility. Nabé imagines a bright future in which she owns a small shop and does not have to cope with the actual financial problems. However, compared to the first year after arriving in Kankan when she did not earn anything, Nabé feels she has already made a first step due to her income-generating activities. According to her, God is responsible for this change. Nabé could not tell us directly that she and her husband have similar perceptions. In Kankan, couples typically do not show when they are on good terms, as this would expose them to the mockery of others. Nabé and her husband also exchange their ideas regarding family affairs. I suppose that one reason for this harmony lies in their similar ages. If the husband is much older than his wife – a reality for many couples in Guinea – the woman subordinates not only because he is a man, but also because he is an elderly person and thus deserves respect. Still, Nabé’s words illustrate that she is habitually subservient to men. She makes clear that women should not contradict nor defend themselves even if they get attacked physically.

Fanta Doumbouya, Heading a Hairdressing Salon

Fanta Doumbouya, born in the mid-1980s, grew up in Conakry and attended school through to the fifth grade. In her teens, she moved in with her father in Kankan. At one point, she became very ill, and it was not her father but a young Ghanaian living next door who took care of her; in fact, according to Doumbouya, he saved her life, and fell in love with her as well, so she wanted to marry him. But the people around her disapproved: He was not only a foreigner but also a Christian. The Ghanaian encouraged her to learn a respectable profession to be economically independent, in case he ever had to return to Ghana. Thus, in 2001, Doumbouya began an apprenticeship as a hairdresser. Because, in Kankan, apprentices do not earn anything but, on the contrary must pay a fee, she bought artificial hair whenever she visited her family in Conakry, and sold it at a profit upon her return to Kankan. Thanks to this trade, she was able not only to support herself, but even to set aside some savings.

The Ghanaian boyfriend did indeed depart, whereupon Fanta Doumbouya met another young man, who declared that he intended not only to marry her but also to move with her to the United States, where she could open her own hairdressing salon. When her new boyfriend made this suggestion, Doumbouya

found this idea so alluring that she did not hesitate to follow him on the first stage of the proposed journey, to Bamako. There, he claimed to be arranging their visas, but one day he disappeared – with all her savings. Her dreams shattered, Doumbouya returned to Kankan, where she eventually married a man who already had two children, whom she fosters. Nowadays, she also takes care of a cousin's two children; though not their biological mother, she does everything she can for these four children.

In 2004, having completed her apprenticeship, Fanta Doumbouya opened her own hairdressing salon. At the time of research, she complained about the lack of clients. Sometimes, there were economically difficult situations like in January 2012, when she had to pay the rent of her salon for six months in advance. As Doumbouya had no cash, she had to borrow the money from a friend. She explained: 'People do not give me money easily, because I come to work by motorbike every day and I have my own salon. They think, I am luckier and wealthier than most of the people in Kankan' (informal conversation, 21.01.2013). Doumbouya's husband has no regular job. Thus, she pays the family's grocery bills – including those of her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law. Asked whether being the breadwinner had an impact on gender relations, Doumbouya said:

There is a change in gender relations, but men remain in power. Women subordinate to men. They do so to make their children succeed and being blessed by God. If they put themselves on a same level with men, only because of their income, it would not be good for their children's benediction.

(Informal conversation, 15.12.2012)

When Fanta Doumbouya's Ghanaian boyfriend encouraged her to start an apprenticeship as a hairdresser, she heeded his advice. Because she and her boyfriend were in love, marriage seemed to be the inevitable next step. However, she knew that marrying a man who was not only a foreigner but also a non-Muslim was problematic. Having evaluated the possibilities at hand, Doumbouya decided not to marry her Ghanaian boyfriend, who shortly thereafter returned to his native land. Fanta Doumbouya has no children of her own. Childlessness is, as a rule, a huge problem for a married woman in Kankan, because she is not considered to be a 'real' woman. Doumbouya, however – like many other childless couples in Kankan – has chosen to rear foster children. Thus, she became a mother and therefore achieved social adulthood. In addition, she is successfully preventing her husband from using her failure to bear him a child as an excuse to marry another wife. Doumbouya is economically independent of her husband, being the family's breadwinner. Having her own hairdressing salon strengthens her independence. At the same time, Fanta knows that she – like every other wife in Kankan – must remain subservient to her husband, for the sake of 'her' children.

Challenging Men's Position through Breadwinning

Nantènin Nabé and Fanta Doumbouya are representative of women in Kankan in many regards. They are both faithful Muslims whose submissive attitude is embodied. Like Nabé, many women act as petty traders and earn just enough to satisfy (parts of) their families' basic needs. Doumbouya owns a hairdressing salon, something many young women dream of. Thus, she is better off than most of the other female hairdressers. The educational background of the two women is also representative of the average woman in Kankan: Just a small minority of them finish school up to the twelfth grade. Most women frequent school for just a few years or none at all.

The fact that Nantènin Nabé and Fanta Doumbouya contribute substantially to their families' income has earned them the respect of their families, neighbours, and peers. Regarding income-generating activities, these two women are not exceptional – nowadays, most women in Kankan somehow contribute to the family's grocery bills. Aurélie Godard, Barbara Meffe, and Véronique Petit (2007) describe how women in the Guinean Coast Region help to pay for all kinds of expenses. This is contrary to the popular discourse according to which they pay for only the ingredients of the daily sauce,² which is seen as a female duty, whereas buying cereals is regarded as the men's obligation. Because women's responsibilities go far beyond household chores, Lynne Brydon (2010), talking of Ghana, states that a "feminisation of family responsibility" has taken place. M'Balou Béréte (2005, 51) found out that 41 percent of the Guinean women pay more than half of their families' expenditures. Those who provide for all the household expenses are typically older than 35 years, divorced, or widows. The level of schooling, however, has no impact in this regard. Nantènin Nabé and Fanta Doumbouya are two of these women, even though the latter is younger than 35. Women's substantial contribution to the household budgets is also acknowledged by local state employees. Mister Nabé, the vice mayor, stated:

The Guinean woman is very brave. Nowadays, in eight out of ten households women provide for half of the requirements. If there are children, the man can travel, leave, and look for an income. But a woman with children cannot do that. So, we must thank the Guinean women.

(Interview, 22.11.2011)

By looking at M'Balou Kaba, the CEPI's president, Madame Fofana, and Nantènin Nabé, it becomes clear that so called "vital conjunctures" (Johnson-Hanks 2002) are crucial to understand why and when a woman starts or changes income-generating activities. Suddenly becoming a widow, like M'Balou Kaba and Madame Fofana, neither of whom gained an income before, is an incident that changes a woman's life course dramatically, not least the financial side of it. The financial situation of Nantènin Nabé's family became very tight when her husband did not earn an income anymore. From that point onwards, she became the family's only breadwinner.

Due to economic hardship, spouses must rely more on each other. Consequently, they must “communicate more directly and more extensively” as Saskia Brand (2001, 306) observes for Bamako. Nantènin and her husband are a case in point: Together they decided to move to the city where the educational possibilities for their children are better than in the village. However, they say that it was him who made this decision, which is typical: As women are officially under men’s authority, we must look at the hidden and the silent in regard to women’s political articulations.

The described female participation in the labour market stands in contrast to the local norms regarding economic gender division in Kankan. Hence, even though men by and large welcome women’s financial contributions, they have ambivalent feelings in this regard: Some men, younger and older ones with different educational backgrounds, see their status as head of the household threatened by an economically powerful wife. Thijane Sidibé’s statement, a graduate who was born in the late 1970s and works as an accountant for an international NGO, nicely illustrates this. On the one hand, he encouraged his wife to start petty trade. On the other hand, it is out of the question for him that she engages in long-distance trade. He explained:

When a husband has nothing, it is like a shock. In our traditions, the man must be the family’s breadwinner. So, if a woman does what a man should do, it is like the man does not take his responsibilities seriously. Consequently and because the woman is not at home, the children are not well educated. Divorce will inevitably follow or he becomes his wife’s slave.

(Interview, 26.01.2013)

This quotation reveals the disjunction between proclaimed gendered norms and realities at the local level. The male discourse of how things ought to be stands in harsh contrast to the actual practices. Many of those who have failed to generate a decent income feel threatened. Saskia Brand (2001, 145) confirms that “men’s fear of being overpowered by women [...] is deeply ingrained in Mande society.” The quotation also illustrates the fact that women cannot travel alone without becoming the object of malicious gossip.³ Through gossip, local gendered norms and conventions are articulated. I was often told that in Kankan, gossip is everywhere. Men confirmed that when it comes to gossip, women are the main target. Hence, there are more societal norms defining women’s behaviour than that of men. Men discourage their wife’s or wives’ travels for two reasons. Firstly, if they have only one wife, they do not want to be left in charge of the household, including the children. Secondly, they fear that they will be perceived as less than masterful.

According to the female research participants, it makes no difference whether the breadwinner is the man or the woman. A woman who finds herself in this role has no right to demand special treatment. Batamaka Somé (2013, 265) confirms this for Burkina Faso: “The head of the household who cannot provide enough food for the members keeps a low profile, and his wife can

have more visibility, though she is normally careful not to overstep and be branded ‘the man of the house’, a stigma that very few women would want to carry [...]” However, the fact of a woman’s being the breadwinner necessarily has an impact on intra-household dynamics, since economic independence gives room to manoeuvre. This becomes obvious when looking at Fanta Doumbouya. She recounted, for example that when her husband complains about the fact that she is still in contact with her former Ghanaian boyfriend, she retorts that without him she would not be the successful businesswoman she is today; would not have her own hairdressing salon and, thus, would not be able to feed the whole family. If, on the contrary, a woman must constantly ask her husband for money, this increases her dependence.

Becoming and Being a Wife

One woman told the other one about a gift her husband had given her: ‘My husband really loves me, he gives me presents all the time. He adores me, he does not go out without me.’ The second woman responded: ‘Lucky you! My husband leaves me at home, he does not love me. In addition, he wants to marry a second wife.’

(Field notes, 14.03.2012)

In Kankan, as elsewhere, many of women’s conversations circle around the issue of men. Young women talk about their boyfriends and devotees. They long for marriage and, thus, socially becoming an adult woman. At the same time, young women fear leaving their homes and starting a new period in life as a member of their future husband’s family. Many discussions also circle around the different characteristics their husbands should have. Married women talk about their relations with their spouses and express their fear of becoming a co-wife. Wives who have severe marital problems ponder the possibility of divorce. Lastly, divorced women and widows consider remarrying.

Diaka Fofana and Mariam Bah Want to Wed

If I could choose between a job and a husband, I would not know what to take.
(Mariam Bah, informal conversation, 06.03.2012)

Diaka Fofana and her friend Mariam Bah spent many hours sitting and chatting together in our courtyard. Marriage was one of their main issues of conversation. Both young women are good looking, socially respected, and well-educated. Diaka and Mariam told me repeatedly that they were ready to marry but finding a ‘good’ husband was a delicate matter and they were afraid of becoming too old for marriage. Besides, they knew that not every man in Guinea wanted a highly educated wife. In brief, the two young women spent a lot of time and energy thinking about their futures.

Diaka was promised to Mory, a distant kin. Diaka told me that she wanted to marry him and she regretted that he had not initiated the first steps of the lengthy marriage procedure. At the same time, Aboulaye, a young trader, regularly visited Diaka with his big motorcycle, always bringing something to eat for the whole family. Madame Fofana told me that she would like to have Aboulaye as a son-in-law: He was always friendly and liked good discussions, just as Madame Fofana did. Important was also his economic background – a fact that could not be neglected by a widow who has four children and a foster child. Lastly, there was Lancéi who seemed to be very close to Diaka. I often saw the two sitting on the porch, discussing and laughing. When I asked Diaka whether marrying Lancéi was an option, she said ‘no’. The latter stems from a Wahabia family and Diaka could not imagine herself covering her body. At the end of 2011, Lancéi became severely ill and he finally died in February 2012. Besides Mory, Aboulaye, and Lancéi, there seemed to be other young men who were interested in marrying Diaka. Until my departure in 2013, Diaka was not officially engaged.

Mariam and Diaka both wanted to avoid polygyny. The man in whose courtyard Mariam was temporarily living had four wives and more than fifteen children. The quarrels and jealousy amongst them were things Mariam experienced regularly. One day, she confusedly told me that her father had remarried, something he had promised not to do. Additionally, his second wife was younger than herself. This caused Mariam to be worried about her mother and she desperately wanted to find a job to be able to sustain her financially. At the time, Mariam was dating Sidiki. She explained to me that she could not marry him because she was a Fulani and they have very complicated issues regarding marriage: If people see you with a certain man, it would be impossible to marry him later. Further, Sidiki’s parents did not want Mariam to be their son’s wife. Later, she remembered that time: ‘I was really miserable. Because of him, I did not accept young men who proposed to me. Carole, I had so much worries due to him, they did not finish’ (informal conversation, 17.12.2012).

When I came back to Kankan in November 2012, Mariam had become engaged and moved to her future husband’s family in Conakry. She briefly came back in December for the civil and religious marriage celebration. When I asked her whether her husband approved that she would work, she nodded. Even though Mariam was happy to have found a suitable husband, she felt extraordinarily tense the week before the marriage and even felt ill. Mariam especially feared her mother-in-law. The relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law is always very delicate: A woman can be on very good terms with her husband, but if she has problems with her mother-in-law or her husband’s family more generally, her life can become quite difficult. This fear turned out to have become reality: When I met Mariam in Conakry in February 2013, she told me that she barely spoke with her mother-in-law and her husband’s sisters; they all hated her, she lamented.



Figure 6.2 Young Women at Mariam Bah's Wedding

Marrying signifies a major step in a young woman's life. It is, what Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2002, 871) calls a vital juncture, a "nexus of potential social futures." Thus, the choice of one's spouse is a very delicate matter. If the family does not, for example, approve a marriage, the consent of the man is meaningless. Mariam's story illustrates that cohabiting with the mother-in-law can severely impact one's matrimony. Often, it is the mother-in-law who decides what a young spouse must do and not her husband. While Madame Fofana allowed young men to visit and go out with her daughter Diaka, Mariam had to hide her current boyfriend Sidiki from her host family. Mariam explained this was because of their different ethnical backgrounds: Diaka is a Manding and Mariam belongs to the Fulani. According to Mariam and Djénabou, being a Fulani complicates a young woman's search for a husband for two reasons: Firstly, because, among the Fulani, virginity has immense social and economic value, and, secondly, because marriages within extended families

are common. Virginity is of huge importance among other ethnicities as well. However, I have been told that gendered norms are more restrictive for women within the Fulani ethnic group and they are known for practicing a restrained form of Islam (cf. Furth 2005, 237–241; Andrews 2009, 52).

The extent to which a young Guinean woman has a say in the choice of her husband depends on many factors. The most important are her ethnic, educational, and economic background and her family's marriage tradition. The research participants stressed that nowadays in Kankan young women have a greater say regarding marriage issues than they did only a generation or two ago – a statement supported by findings for the whole country (Bano Barry, Diallo, and Camare 2006, 71–72). Interestingly, these findings show that parents are more involved in choosing a woman for their son than a husband for their daughter. The life trajectory of young women, their conduct, and bargaining abilities have an impact as well.

Diaka and Mariam are aware that polygyny is an integral part of Guinean society, and they dread the prospect of ending up as a co-wife. Thus, they hoped to live a monogamous life, being allowed to work and, thus, being economically independent. Young women such as these two profit from the attention, the guarding, and the gifts of male friends and boyfriends. Further, they constantly ponder their various possibilities at hand: They check out which man, who meets the most important characteristics imposed by their families, is seriously interested in marriage. At the same time, they leave several suitors' offers open, until they decide which admirer they prefer.

Mariam's example shows that even if young women choose their husbands themselves, they mostly do so within the boundaries set by their families. Bruce Whitehouse (2016, 43) shows the gap between the imagined, idealised husband and lived realities for young people in Mali: "Confronting both economic uncertainty and severe social penalties for defying family authority, and mindful of their responsibility to uphold family honor, they often accede to kin demands and consent to unions they would not have entered independently." This also holds true for young women in Kankan – and for young men alike, as my data and the example of Boubacar described by Michelle Engeler (2015, 110–113) depicts. Women can, for example, say no to a proposed husband but also try to convince their parents, especially their fathers, of their own choice. However, in Guinea, 'forced' marriages for young women and, to a lesser extent, for young men, are still widespread (Koundouno-N'diaye 2007, 36).

The Neighbour's Quarrels

Thierno lives in a room of a one-floor house. I regularly visited him and, thus, got to know his neighbours, especially Fatoumata Barry and her three children. Fatoumata Barry and her husband Oury Barry got along quite well, as Thierno recounted. In the evenings, they often sat beside each other, chatting and joking. In the mornings, they left together for the market where Madame Barry sold rice. But then, she had an accident with a motorcycle and did not

generate an income anymore. Once, her husband left for a nearby city for some days where he married a second wife. This young woman, whom I estimated to be barely fourteen years old, is the younger sister of Mister Barry's close friend. Since the second wife entered the household, there have been constant disputes between Mister Barry and his first wife.

One source of quarrels were the finances. The first wife complained of no longer receiving any money. She also criticised her husband for giving his new wife all sorts of presents, such as a small, portable TV. Whenever Madame Barry met someone in the neighbourhood, she complained about her husband's behaviour. Then, the first wife's mother intervened and asked Mister Barry to share the TV equally between the two wives. He retorted that this was exactly what he did. As the quarrels continued, Madame Barry once decided not to wash her husband's clothes. When he complained, she argued that he had abandoned her, meaning that he did not spend the night with her as would have been his duty. At a certain point, Mister Barry's elder brother and Thierno's father came to the house, the latter an elderly man and the second imam of the neighbourhood's mosque. In front of the two men, Madame Barry accused her husband of neglecting her since he had taken a second wife: He did not give her any money, nor did he buy her any gifts. Further, he did not sit beside and chat with her as he used to do. And in addition, he never spent the night with her – all things her husband did solely with his second wife. After listening to the two sides, Mister Barry's elder brother and Thierno's father considered a separation between the two as the best solution, but neither of the concerned agreed. The two mediators then asked Mister Barry to treat his two wives equally. They also urged Madame Barry to respect her husband and not to contradict him.

One evening some days later, Mister Barry was very angry because his first wife had gone to watch TV at a friend's home. He shouted that he would chase her away. The following Sunday evening, more than ten women, some of whom were selling at Dibida market, came to talk to Mister Barry. First, Madame Barry explained her viewpoint and the problems she has with her husband. She only criticised her husband's misbehaviour, never her co-wife. When he wanted to defend himself, the women did not give him the chance to do so. One elderly woman spoke in the name of the others. She summed up as follows: Firstly, at the very start of his matrimony with the second wife, Mister Barry had not sensitised his two wives to collaborate. Secondly, since he had married his second wife, he did not spend half of the nights with Madame Barry. Thirdly, Mister Barry did not give his wives the same amount of money and bought the small TV only for his second wife. Fourthly, he did not eat together with both wives. Fifthly, Mister Barry chatted and joked only with the second. Lastly, he did not drive Madame Barry to the market anymore. After every point the female speaker asked he whether her statement was true to which he agreed. Thus, the verdict of the women was clear: 'The first wife is right. The husband did not do what he was support to do', Thierno recounted (field notes, 19.12.2012). Further, they asked Madame

Barry to forgive her husband and she accepted. During the following days, Thierno saw the two women talking to each other. He also observed that they were having dinner together with their husband.

By not washing her husband's clothes, Madame Barry protested against his behaviour in a discrete and subtle way that her husband, however, understood perfectly. The story illustrates that women hint at the Qur'an whenever men do not behave according to social gendered norms, one of which is to treat their wives equally. Even though "women do not have the right to speak in front of their husbands," as Djouba Boumbaly, a female radio journalist, put it (interview, 06.03.2012), they can call on third parties for interventions when they have severe problems with their husbands. Such mediations are common in case of quarrels between spouses but also between other people who have fallen out. In Kankan, I have repeatedly been told that elderly women are especially suited to act as mediators because they are regarded as guardians of harmony. During such mediations, both sides give their views and the intermediating party passes judgment based on local gendered norms. These gendered norms of behaviour are not fixed but can be bargained in everyday life, for example through such intermediations.

Bargaining Polygyny

I first want to reproduce a conversation of women talking about marital problems. Several women have installed a simple place for braiding hair under a corrugated iron roof at Sogbé market. While the women braided the hair of their customers, a conversation emerged. A woman complained about her husband who did not treat his wives equally. Another woman responded that, according to her, a man should not take more than one wife, but if he does so nevertheless, he should wait until the first attains menopause. Further, the co-wives should live in separate buildings. A third woman disagreed as she still saw problems because men do not treat each wife in the same way. All women agreed that no wife can prohibit her husband from taking another wife. Often, she is not even informed but finds herself confronted with a *fait accompli*. Another woman joined the discussion and suggested going to a diviner. For the first woman, this was not a suitable solution; she said she would just endure the situation. Then, one of the women turned to me, the scribbling ethnographer, and told me that she had so much poison in herself due to her marital problems, that if I wanted to write about it, it would fill my whole notebook (field notes, 27.02.2012).

Whether polygyny is an advantage or a problem for women's bargaining power is a much-debated issue (e.g. Madhavan 2002; Glover 2015; Kringelbach 2016). Writing about Hausa women in Nigerian Kano, Alaine Hutson (2001, 751) stresses that uncertainty is a huge challenge in polygynous households. As a consequence, both sexes uphold strong bonds with their families, neighbours, and friends in case of emergency. Jealousy is a widespread problem in

polygynous families, as the story of the quarrelling neighbours indicates. This does not only affect the women themselves, but also their children and other members of the family as various authors describe. I have heard many stories about half-siblings not being on good terms. Thus, the mothers' competition often passed onto to the children.

From my interviews and conversations, I learned that most women in Kankan would prefer a monogamous marriage. Many women stressed that, in principle, they have nothing against polygyny as long as the man lives up to his duties according to what is written in the Qur'an, which is, to nourish the whole family and to accord equal treatment to his wives. They complained, however, that in reality this is never the case. The example of Mariam's father shows that Guinean Muslim men are all "potential polygynists" (Antoine and Nanitelamio 1996, 138). This gives polygyny a looming presence. I contend that, in Kankan, the practice of polygyny generally enhances men's power: In a polygynous household, every wife tries to gain the position of the favourite, since this has certain emotional, social, and economic advantages for her and also for her children. The first and the last wives are typically those who are in the best positions; the first one because she is the eldest and thus, the younger women and other family members pay her respect and obey her commands; the last one because she is often the husband's favourite.

Women adopt various strategies to avoid polygyny or enhance the chance of remaining or becoming the favourite wife. As we have seen, generating an income helps to alleviate marital problems. One tactic is to indirectly convince one's husband of not taking another wife. Here, a woman talks to a confidante, for example the husband's siblings, mother, aunts, or friends, who then discuss the issue with him. Women try to bear many children – boys, if possible – thereby pleasing not only their husbands, but their in-laws as well. Furthermore, they try to make their spouses content by means of their appearance and attentiveness. Women also try to influence their lives by consulting a marabout or a diviner. Thus, the marabouts and diviners – after being paid a modest fee – offer these women hope of attaining their conjugal objectives. According to Saskia Brand (2001, 155) the goal of visiting a marabout is "to keep the attention of one's (future) husband or lover from straying to other women, not just for the sake of love, but also to secure an income for oneself and the children (it is an open secret that often more money is spent on girlfriends than on wives)."

My data show that men as well as women seek help from marabouts and diviners, but for different reasons: men's reasons tend to be business-oriented, while women's reasons tend to be family- and health-oriented. In Kankan, people differentiate between marabouts and diviners (*féticheur*). The former use Islamic scripts, whereas the latter typically work with shells. Visiting diviners is socially contested, not least because they are said to be able to curse someone. The work of marabouts is also discussed contradictorily; therefore, most women do not openly talk about this topic.

The Challenges of Female Graduates⁴

There are women who are freer or more intellectual than men. But you must know that even if a woman is the President and makes the law for her country, her husband still rules over her. In the end, the country remains under the husband's authority.

(Discussion among young men in a café, field notes, 30.01.2013)

Djénabou Dramé, Labelled a Rebel

Djénabou Dramé was born in Kankan in 1986. She is a faithful Muslim who prays several times a day. Djénabou's father, whom she calls 'a real dictator', is the second muezzin of a nearby mosque. Her mother had been engaged in petty trade. Djénabou was always very ambitious at school. As a result, she was always among the best in her class, competing rather with the boys than with the other girls, as she repeatedly emphasised. Because of this interest in education and her friendship with boys, the other family members regarded Djénabou as a rebel. Unlike many young women in Kankan – as, for example, her sisters – she did not leave school after several years to marry but wanted to go to university. Her father, however, was quite sceptical. He did not like the idea of having one of his daughters pursuing her educational ambitions without first getting married. The fact that all her older sisters, whose husbands he had chosen, had separated eventually made him change his mind; Djénabou was thus able to earn a bachelor's degree in political philosophy.

Even though she was not yet a mother, Djénabou had assumed this role some years ago, when she had started caring for her homonym,⁵ the daughter of a relative. While still a teenager, she became a member of different NGOs. As a result, she gained work experience, met interesting people, and visited other parts of the country. Djénabou's father did not like her travelling around and being with men, but he knew that this might mean the possibility for his daughter to generate some income, thus contributing to the low family budget. Equipped with her bachelor's degree, Djénabou found a job as a teaching assistant at the university. Working conditions were not favourable, but it was better than being unemployed – the fate of all too many young graduates. Whenever possible, Djénabou took on other job opportunities; she was my research collaborator throughout fieldwork and acted as an election observer in her district during the legislative elections in 2013. With the money she earned, she supported her family. Thierno admiringly remarked that this was not the obvious thing to do: 'Usually young women just think of their boyfriends and spend their money in other forms. They buy fancy dresses, a new cell phone, or even a trendy, Chinese motorcycle,' he stressed (informal conversation, 24.02.2012).

Whenever we met elderly people, they praised Djénabou for being not only smart, but also faithful, respectful, and helpful. After teaching at university, she usually immediately returned home to cook for everybody. Thus, in many

regards she was behaving according to local gendered norms. However, Djénabou's university studies, her engagements in the NGOs, and, above all, her financial support of the family had not gone without criticism. Some of her elder brothers and sisters did not like the fact that she had succeeded where they had not. Sometimes, Djénabou's financial responsibility was a heavy load and she complained about her brothers' irresponsibility.

Djénabou was not yet married, but she hoped to find an appropriate husband soon: An intellectual who understands her, supports her decision to engage in various activities, and gives her many liberties. Furthermore, he should be honest, faithful, and monogamous. However, Djénabou was keenly aware that finding such a husband will not be easy. Regarding marriage, she was torn between her own aspirations and those of her family. One day, she told me: 'Marrying is a personal thing. After the wedding, you must spend your whole life with that person. Marrying is not just for the family, it also includes feelings' (field notes, 28.11.2012). Djénabou was afraid that her father would run out of patience and try to marry her to someone she did not like, as he had already once tried to do, in the summer of 2012. The suitor, a close friend of her father and a distant relative, already had a wife. According to Djénabou, he did not treat women respectfully and was very egoistic. Thus, she refused to marry him.

In autumn 2013, thanks to the financial help of a friend, Djénabou was able to start a master's degree in human resources at a private university in Conakry. In the evenings, she attended additional classes, for example in computer science. During her free time, she was busy writing poems and a novel. When Djénabou graduated, she was lucky enough to gain temporary employment in a project. However, when she did not receive her salary for two months in a row, Djénabou quit the job. After some months in the capital city during which she was unsuccessfully looking for job opportunities, she went back to Kankan. There, she found a temporary job as a consultant for an international NGO. Thanks to this position, she had a good salary and travelled a lot for further education and sensitising campaigns to small towns and villages. Djénabou, being very ambitious, has high hopes; she dreams of someday becoming a foreign ambassador.

Generally, not many young women in Guinea are able to study. Djénabou's case is exceptional because she went to university even though she stems from an underprivileged family. Also, her parents and sisters have only basic formal education. The difference between the high number of men and the low number of women at university level is striking (République de Guinée 2006, 37–38). However, this is not a Guinean particularity but a matter of fact throughout Africa; only 6 per cent of the professoriates at African universities are women (Mama 2007, 4). In the administrative region of Kankan, the rate of women who have never been to school is, at 83 per cent, the highest in the country (Danfaca 2005, 22–23).

Guinean graduates regard their university studies as a privilege, and other people consider them to be very courageous, especially the women. At the same time, their academic background implies specific expectations to their life

trajectories. For Djénabou, education has always been the key to success. Djénabou's vision of herself is that of a caring mother who, at the same time, pursues her professional goals, a supportive, faithful husband by her side. Aware that for this vision to become reality she must acquire more professional qualifications, she decided to continue her academic studies in Conakry. Similar to Djénabou, many Guinean graduates dream about continuing their academic career. They wish to go abroad on scholarship, to a place where the educational system is better than in Guinea. Once back in their country, they would have earned the esteem of their community and improved their chances of getting fixed employment.

Djénabou and other graduates always try to follow the most promising path that might help them to achieve their goals one day. Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2005, 370) calls this constant evaluation of the present in circumstances, where uncertainty prevails, "judicious opportunism." She states: "The challenge is not to formulate a plan and implement it regardless of what comes but to adapt to the moment, to be calm and supple, recognizing the difference between a promising and an unpromising offer." Throughout the day, male young graduates, like non-graduates, are busy with all kinds of different things. That hustling (Kaufmann 2016, 166–172) is not easily understandable for an outsider. Some of Kankan's male graduates have started their own little commerce with the help of so-called Big People. However, none of the female research participants started their own business. Nevertheless, some help their mothers or relatives to sell items on the market or in a boutique. Contrary to male graduates, female graduates usually do not hustle; they must reveal exactly where they are going and why whenever they leave home.

Djénabou took on the role of a foster mother for her homonym. In a socially accepted way it enables her to learn how to care for a child and, thus, to become a 'good' mother. Usually, women marry and have children at an early age. I was told that some young women fear entering university without marrying first because people would talk negatively about them. For Djénabou, studying was an accepted excuse to postpone marriage. But as she had finished her masters' degree in summer 2014, the pressure from her family increased. How to find an appropriate husband, somebody who would treat them well and support their various activities, was a constant topic of conversation for female graduates such as Djénabou, Diaka, and Mariam. Additionally, female students and graduates have a bad reputation; gossip and stories about prostitution, sexual favours, or multiple boyfriends are omnipresent. Some men are leery of intellectual women, suspecting that they are more likely to oppose the practice of polygyny than illiterate women. And the facts bear out this suspicion: The polygyny rates for well-educated and illiterate women are 33 percent and 56 percent, respectively (République de Guinée 2006, 97). Aishatou Diakitè, Djénabou's friend who holds a bachelor's degree in sociology, explained:

A woman who has been to university has a bad reputation. People say: 'An educated woman is full of herself. She wants to dominate the household.' So not many men want to accept and understand you if you have

been to university. If your education achieves a higher level, you are already rejected by a certain part of the society; you are not highly esteemed.

(Field notes, 29.01.2013)

Marrying and founding a family is also a necessity and a huge challenge for male graduates. However, it is not so much the question of finding an adequate wife but of having enough money, firstly, to pay for the bride wealth, secondly, for the expensive wedding, and, thirdly, to settle down. Former male students typically dream about constructing their own house where they could take care of their whole family. This puts much pressure on male graduates. Consequently, in Guinea like in most other West African countries, the foundation of a family has become increasingly difficult for young men and hence, they marry much later than women (Sommers 2010, 326–327; Honwana 2012, 104).⁶

Djénabou is of Muslim faith. She respected local Muslim principles and emphasised that her husband must be faithful as well. According to Djénabou's explanations, God is the one who predestines life and watches her closely: If she is a 'good' woman, this will positively influence her life. This, however, does not result in passiveness. On the contrary, by behaving according to local Muslim principles, Djénabou actively participates in her divine destiny and thus takes responsibility for her life. Becoming a 'good' woman is a central identity for most young women in Kankan, regardless of their educational, ethnic, or economic background: By creating an image of herself as a 'good' young Muslim woman, Djénabou hopes to achieve several goals: Firstly, that elderly family members and neighbours respect and praise her publicly. Secondly, that she gains the confidence of her father. Thus, she has been able to travel around for her workshops and to study in Conakry, far away from her nuclear family. Above all, behaving like a 'good' young woman enabled her to pursue her academic ambitions and not to marry yet: Because Djénabou had always obeyed her father's dating strictures, she found herself in a good bargaining position when she opposed his choice of a husband; as her behaviour had been irreproachable, her judgment was respected.

Djénabou subordinates to her father, brothers, and other men. Usually, she does not question this. However, being a young intellectual woman in a place such as Kankan where a strict understanding of gendered norms prevails is not always easy. There are instances when Djénabou, like other female graduates, challenges female subordination. Djénabou and her friend Aishatou once lamented:

It is true; a woman must submit to her husband. I think this is the case in every community. But here, it has a slavish aspect. Women are not allowed to say what they think; they should not discuss. Everything men do is good, everything women do is bad. When we went to school we started looking at the world differently. For us, it is hard to accept certain perceptions.

(Field notes, 29.01.2013)

Djénabou and Aishatou stated that because of their educational background and NGO activities, they were aware of certain sorts of gender-related injustice. Their harsh critique has to be seen in the context of the general difficult social and economic reality women in Kankan face. On the one hand, they must behave according to gendered norms and subordinate to men; on the other hand, they must gain sufficient funds to sustain their families in the times when their husbands or fathers are not capable of doing so. Still, men remain the heads of the household.

Conclusions: Bargaining Local Gendered Norms

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that, locally, men's control over women is an important aspect of masculinities. Barbara Hoffman (2002, 11) describes women's status in the Mande world as ambiguous. According to her, women enjoy "respect and reverence as mothers and elder sisters while enduring public and often private domination and lack of personal autonomy as individuals. Mande society generally reserves relatively little public acclaim for the bearer or the role of motherhood, and none at all for the woman who chooses to follow another destiny."

While the female research participants claim that their decision-making is limited, they make multiple choices that reveal their agency. These decisions are influenced by past habits and experiences and their imagined future lives, thus an outcome of the interplay between the three dimensions of human agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Female strategies to reach their goals are manifold. Women use 'sweet talk' on their husbands or intermediary parties if they want to convince them of certain issues. Making decisions relating to income-generating activities, family affairs, education, and marriage issues can create difficulties, thus women do so with discretion. Furthermore, women try to behave properly according to social and religious norms, for example by keeping the house and the children in order, being polite to elderly people, praying five times a day, or by not wandering around at night. By acting so, they gain a reputation as a 'good' Muslim woman. What it means to be a 'good' Muslim, however, is open for bargaining. Erin Stiles and Katrina Daly Thompson rightly note: "Women are deeply involved and impacted by debates about what it means to be a 'good Muslim' – a label that often hinges on notions of normative gender performance and understandings of appropriate Islamic sexuality that affect both men and women" (Stiles and Daly Thompson 2015, 1–2).

I contend that women strategically (re-)negotiate various forms of power and authority. Women in Kankan know very well in which situations it is suitable to remain silent and when it is legitimate to raise their voices. Their proper behaviour such as being obedient and attentive, and treating one's husband respectfully helps, for example, to alleviate marital problems. Further, women consciously work on their reputation by conducting themselves properly, which might enhance their possibilities in the future. Thus, while

they conform to local gendered norms in many aspects of their lives, they sometimes challenge them, but mostly within socially accepted boundaries, as the examples depicted in this chapter have illustrated.

Haleh Afshar (1996, 134) calls this “the politics of activism, resistance and compromise.” Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera (2010, 18), writing about young Muslims, describe the “[m]anoeuvring within the constraints and making the best of what is available” the politics of possibilities. In brief, women in Kankan adopt manifold ways of daily manoeuvring to achieve some of their goals within the context of the local political, social, and economic structures. They generally challenge gender relations only within accepted norms and only seldom – in Deniz Kandiyoti’s (1988, 282–283) words – “step [...] out of line and lose [...] their respectability.” Women may become their family’s main provider and thus gain economic independence, but they do so without violating the men’s social position as heads of families. They test the limits of socially pre-defined gender relations, but not far enough to provoke a backlash that would give them a bad reputation as a woman or wife.

While Nantènin Nabé and Fanta Doumbouya take up the local discourse regarding gendered norms and thus reproduce it, their actions sometimes belie their words. Financial independence is a good tool at their disposal to improve their situations. Nowadays, quite a number of women in Kankan are economically powerful. This changed economic reality has fundamentally influenced gender relations in Kankan and elsewhere. It is common to hear men complaining about their wives and daughters not being under their control anymore and, thus, getting loose. In an idealised past, men have been responsible for the income of their households. Actually, however, four out of ten women in Guinea provide for more than half of their family budgets. Hence, many women not only manage their household, but also (partially) its income and thus, its survival. Men fear they would no longer master their wives and daughters. Women’s economic power and their associated political articulations indirectly question men’s authority. However, given the difficult economic conditions in Kankan, men have no choice; therefore, many men provide their wives and daughters with the seed money that permits them to set up as petty traders.

The whole issue of gendered economic possibilities is closely interlinked with marriage. If men are, for example, unable to provide for their families, they also lose the possibility of rewarding their wives with gifts or punishing them by taking another wife. However, we should not forget that female income-generating activities do not only lead to tensions; they might also contribute to a better social climate between couples. Not being forced to ask one’s husband for money all the time diminishes matrimonial problems. This enhances the chances of remaining the only wife or of being the beloved one.

Young graduates’ agency is also manifold regarding marriage issues and they are influencing their fates by different means. Mariam hid her boyfriend from her family to behave in accordance with Fulani gendered norms. Later, she was able to convince her father of her husband’s suitability. Diaka was weighing the pros and cons of marrying one of her admirers. While their

character was one important criterion, their financial possibility was another. Djénabou credits her behaviour to local norms that made her father accept her refusal to marry a man who did not suit her. At the same time, Djénabou likes to consider herself a rebel at heart who does question and sometimes challenge local norms.

Generally, it would not be too difficult for female graduates such as Diaka, Mariam, or Djénabou to find any husband. But they typically do not imagine their future solely staying at home, running the household, and caring for their children and husbands. On the contrary, female graduates are quite ambitious. Thus, much time and energy is put into the challenge of finding a spouse who fits their ideas: Female ex-students are typically looking for a man who gives them enough liberties to pursue their own professional ambitions and encourages their various activities. In brief, these young highly educated women perform a balancing act between behaving like a 'good' Muslim woman and following their ambitions and pursuing their goals to lead an independent life as a soon-to-be wife. Therefore, young female graduates form a specific category within Kankan's society and are not representative of young women in general. Regarding marriage, there is a major difference between young women and men: Men have much more time at their disposal until they come under social pressure to wed. Thus, they can primarily concentrate on establishing themselves in order to have enough money to finance a marriage. While a man can wait until he is around forty, a woman who is not yet married at the age of twenty-five has a major problem.

The example of the quarrelling neighbours illustrates that women can call for interacting parties in cases of major conflicts with their husbands. Such mediators are typically elderly people of both sexes. The powers of the mediating elderly women become visible in the example of when they did not let Oury Barry defend himself. Women such as Fatoumata Barry also contest the behaviour of their male counterparts by referring to the Qur'an, according to which a man should treat his wives equally. For Mali, Rosa De Jorio (2009, 103) remarks that "references to Islam emerged as an authoritative idiom that some women used to question existing power relationships within Malian society and their conceptual foundations." And Orit Avishai, Lynne Gerber, and Jennifer Randles argue that "religious women appropriate religion to further extrareligious ends such as economic opportunities, domestic relations, political ideologies, and cultural affiliation" (Avishai, Gerber, and Randles 2012, 409). Visiting a marabout or a diviner is another applied strategy to attain one's marital goals, for example avoiding polygyny.

I argue that criticising aspects of gender relations, such as polygyny or a husband who is considered as too old and, thus, probably impotent, is a strong political articulation as it challenges the status quo. I therefore agree with Corrie Decker (2015, 6) who notes that debates about sexuality and gendered norms in general "are windows into the religious, social, economic, and political forces at play." Everyday political articulations become visible when bargaining processes take place, that is, whenever individuals or groups

challenge existing gendered norms. In Kankan, these are mostly contestations about normative ideas of femininities and masculinities which are multiple and in a constant process of production and reproduction.

Notes

- 1 Parts of an earlier version of this subchapter have been published in the *Journal of Culture and African Women Studies (JENdA)*: Ammann, Carole. 2016. "Women Must not Become Lions – Gendered Norms in Kankan, Guinea." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* (28): 68–81. Excerpts are reused with the publisher's permission.
- 2 Every day, someone prepares the meal. People do not cook twice or three times a day, they cook just one sauce and one big pot of rice a day.
- 3 However, as Anna Dessertine (2013, 135, author's translation) notes, long distance trade is allowed for first wives in polygamous households "because they are emotionally and economically often neglected." Saskia Brand (2001, 130), in contrast, argues that their advanced age makes traveling possible.
- 4 A large part of an earlier version of this section has been published in an edited volume on young graduates in urban Africa: Ammann, Carole. 2017. "Looking for Better Opportunities. An Analysis of Guinean Graduates' Agency." In *Dealing with Elusive Futures. University Graduates in Urban Africa*, edited by Noemi Steuer, Michelle Engeler, and Elisio Macamo, 93–121. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. Excerpts are reused with the publisher's permission.
- 5 In Guinea, homonyms are people with the same first name. The relationship between homonyms is often very close. In Kankan, it is not uncommon during childhood to spend some time in the family of one's homonym.
- 6 Whereas in Guinea only 3 percent of women are still celibate at the age of 25, 44 percent of men are not yet married at this stage (République de Guinée 2006, 96).

Bibliography

- Afshar, Haleh. 1996. "Women and the Politics of Fundamentalism in Iran." In *Women and Politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Afshar, 124–144. London/New York: Routledge.
- Ammann, Carole. 2016. "Women Must not Become Lions – Gendered Norms in Kankan, Guinea." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* (28):68–81.
- Ammann, Carole. 2017. "Looking for Better Opportunities. An Analysis of Guinean Graduates' Agency." In *Dealing with Elusive Futures. University Graduates in Urban Africa*, edited by Noemi Steuer, Michelle Engeler, and Elisio Macamo, 93–121. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Andrews, Lacey B. 2009. "Family Relations. Sub-Saharan Africa. Fulbe Societies." In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures*, edited by Suad Joseph. Leiden: Brill Online.
- Antoine, Philippe, and Jeanne Nanitelamio. 1996. "Can Polygamy Be Avoided in Dakar?" In *Courtyards, Markets, and City Streets. Urban Women in Africa*, edited by Kathleen Sheldon, 129–152. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Avishai, Orit, Lynne Gerber, and Jennifer Randles. 2012. "The Feminist Ethnographer's Dilemma. Reconciling Progressive Research Agendas with Fieldwork Realities." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42(4):394–426.

- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou, Alpha Bacar Diallo, and Mohamed Campbel Camare. 2006. "Étude situationnelle sur la famille en Guinée." Accessed 30. 03. 2017. http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/barry_baro_alpha_amadou/etude_famille_guinee/etude_famille_guinee.pdf.
- Bayat, Asef, and Linda Herrera. 2010. *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Béréte, M'Balou. 2005. "Caractéristiques des femmes et des hommes enquêtés." In *Enquête démographique et de santé, Guinée 2005*, edited by République de Guinée, 33–56. Conakry/Calverton: Direction Nationale de la Statistique (DNS) du Ministère du Plan.
- Brand, Saskia. 1998. "Civil Law vs the Mande Conception of Gendered Personhood. The Case of Bamako, Mali." In *Negotiation and Social Space. A Gendered Analysis of Changing Kin and Security Networks in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Carla Irene Risseuw, and Kamala Ganesh, 137–153. New Dehli: Sage Publications.
- Brand, Saskia. 2001. *Mediating Means and Fate. A Socio-Political Analysis of Fertility and Demographic Change in Bamako, Mali*. Leiden: Brill Academic Pub.
- Brydon, Lynne. 2010. "Post-Adjustment, Post-Mitigation, 'Post-Poverty'? The Feminisation of Family Responsibility in Contemporary Ghana." In *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty. Concepts, Research, Policy*, edited by Sylvia Chant, 117–122. Cheltenham/Northampton: Edward Elgar.
- Cornwall, Andrea. 2002. "Spending Power: Love, Money, and the Reconfiguration of Gender Relations in Ado Odo, Southwestern Nigeria." *American Ethnologist* 29 (4):963–980.
- Danfaca, Fatoumata. 2005. "Caractéristiques des ménages." In *Enquête démographique et de santé, Guinée 2005*, edited by République de Guinée, 19–32. Conakry/Calverton: Direction Nationale de la Statistique (DNS) du Ministère du Plan.
- De Jorio, Rosa. 2009. "Between Dialogue and Contestation. Gender, Islam, and the Challenges of a Malian Public Sphere." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15(1):95–111.
- Decker, Corrie. 2015. "Love and Sex in Islamic Africa. Introduction." *Africa Today* 61 (4):1–10.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2013. "Le lu ne meurt jamais. Mobilités des individus et pérennité de la résidence dans un village malinké de Guinée." *Géocarrefour* 88(2):131–138.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Anne Mische. 1998. "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103(4):962–1023.
- Engeler, Michelle. 2015. "At the Crossroads. Being Young and the State in the Making in Guéckédou, Guinea." PhD Thesis, University of Basel.
- Furth, Rebecca. 2005. "Marrying the Forbidden Other. Marriage, Status and Social Change in the Futa Jallon Highlands of Guinea." PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin.
- Glover, Evam Kofi. 2015. "Development Discourse and Practice. Female Education, the Law and the Place of Polygyny." *BIGSAS Working Papers* (5):101–120.
- Godard, Aurélie, Barbara Meffé, and Véronique Petit. 2007. "Diversification et complémentarité des réponses des ménages ruraux face à la pauvreté en Guinée Maritime." In *Dynamiques de pauvretés et vulnérabilités en démographie et en science sociales*, edited by Bruno Masquelier, and Thierry Eggerickx. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain.
- Hoffman, Barbara G. 2002. "Gender Ideology and Practice in Mande Societies and in Mande Studies." *Mande Studies* (4):1–20.

- Honwana, Alcinda Manuel. 2012. *The Time of Youth. Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa*. Sterling: Kumarian Press.
- Hunter, Mark. 2006. "Fathers without Amandla: Zulu-speaking Men and Fatherhood." In *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*, edited by Linda Richter, and Robert Morrell, 99–107. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Hutson, Alaine S. 2001. "Women, Men, and Patriarchal Bargaining in an Islamic Sufi Order. The Tijaniyya in Kano, Nigeria, 1937 to the Present." *Gender and Society* 15 (5):734–753.
- Johnson-Hanks, Jennifer. 2002. "On the Limits of Life Stages in Ethnography. Toward a Theory of Vital Conjunctions." *American Anthropologist* 104(3):865–880.
- Johnson-Hanks, Jennifer. 2005. "When the Future Decides. Uncertainty and Intentional Action in Contemporary Cameroon." *Current Anthropology* 46(3):363–385.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1988. "Bargaining With Patriarchy." *Gender & Society* 2(3):274–290.
- Kaufmann, Andrea A. 2016. "Spaces of Imagination. Associational Life and the State in Post-War, Urban Liberia." PhD Thesis, Social Anthropology, University of Basel.
- Koundouno-N'diaye, Michèle Sona. 2007. "Les femmes et les pratiques coutumières et religieuses du mariage en République du Guinée." *Research Partnership, The Danish Institute for Human Rights* (2).
- Kringelbach, Hélène Neveu. 2016. "'Marrying Out' for Love. Women's Narratives of Polygyny and Alternative Marriage Choices in Contemporary Senegal." *African Studies Review* 59(1):155–174.
- Madhavan, Sangeetha. 2002. "Best of Friends and Worst of Enemies. Competition and Collaboration in Polygyny." *Ethnology* 41(1):69–84.
- Mama, Amina. 2007. "Is it Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom." *African Studies Review* 50(1):1–26.
- Olivier de Sardan, Jean Pierre. 2008. "Researching the Practical Norms of Real Governance in Africa. Discussion Paper." In *Africa Power and Politics Programme*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1997. "Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering." *Representations* (59):135–162.
- République de Guinée. 2006. *Enquête démographique et de santé, Guinée 2005*. Conakry/Calverton: Direction Nationale de la Statistique (DNS) du Ministère du Plan.
- République de Guinée. 2015. "Code Civil de la République de Guinée." Accessed 09. 07. 2019. <https://sites.google.com/site/guineejuristes/codes>.
- Schroven, Anita. 2019. *Playing the Marginality Game: Identity Politics in West Africa*. Vol. 19. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Somé, Batamaka. 2013. "'Hot Money'. Gender and the Politics of Negotiation and Control Over Income in West African Smallholder Households." *Africa* 83(2):251–269.
- Sommers, Marc. 2010. "Urban Youth in Africa." *Environment and Urbanization* 22 (2):317–332.
- Stiles, Erin E., and Katrina Daly Thompson. 2015. "Introducing Gender, Sexuality, and Marriage into the Study of Islam in the Western Indian Ocean." In *Gendered Lives in the Western Indian Ocean: Islam, Marriage, and Sexuality on the Swahili Coast*, edited by Susan F. Hirsch, Erin E. Stiles, and Katrina Daly Thompson, 1–31. Athens/Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Whitehouse, Bruce. 2016. "Sadio's Choice. Love, Materialism, and Consensual Marriage in Bamako, Mali." *Africa Today* 62(3):28–46.

7 Struggling for Recognition

Interactions with Local Authorities

Introduction

When there is a problem, people often take us women for complaining. People put them in front because they think women are more listened to than men when they complain. And people are afraid of protesting women. When women make something, it is until the end. The Presidents fear dealing with them, they prefer the youth. Politicians are afraid of women taking off their clothes. People say that this brings bad luck for the sitting President, thus people are afraid of women's protests.

(Djénabou, informal conversation, 19.01.2013)

Interactions between Kankan's female population and local bureaucrats are manifold. Typical spheres of encounters are public buildings, such as the governorate, the prefecture, and the municipality and their courtyards, but also the markets, hospitals, schools, or the streets where ordinary citizens come upon teachers, nurses, the police, or tax officers. All these encounters are influenced by the three temporal dimensions of agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998), that is, people's past experiences of statehood during the rule of Sékou Touré, Lansana Conté, and the short period under Moussa Dadis Camara. Furthermore, how women imagine state and statehood impacts on these interrelations. Lastly, statehood is being bargained over in everyday encounters between ordinary people and state officials in the present. In this chapter, I focus on women's interactions with low and middle ranking bureaucrats. What constitutes this relationship? How do women link up with state institutions? What modes of political articulation do they use and for which purposes? Which topics can galvanise women for collective social action in Kankan?

I myself have personal experience of interacting with local (male) state employees. One frustrating but at the same time very insightful experience was when I was trying to get a research permit from the Julius Nyerere University in Kankan. I did this with the help of Boubacar Condé, who was teaching at the university and who was on good terms with many important personalities within the tertiary education institution. For my request, I needed the signature of several elderly men from within the university. Whenever I was

knocking on their doors, they were absent and when we had an appointment, they did not show up. When I was finally able to meet them, they told me that I had written something wrong in my request. This whole process was highly annoying and the lack of a research permit was problematic regarding the advancement of the project because I was unable to talk to the local authorities. When I finally received my signed and stamped mission order in early November 2011, Boubacar Condé was very surprised about how smooth the process has been; normally, such a procedure takes much longer, he explained. Thanks to this experience I learned what problems ordinary people in Kankan face when they ask for a particular service from the administration.

In 2000, various authors recorded a lack of research on postcolonial states' bureaucracies. They called for anthropological studies of state employees' daily behaviours and their interaction with ordinary people (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 17; Greenhouse 2002, 11; Blundo and Le Meur 2009, 22). Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2014) present exactly this type of empirical studies in their edited volume, *States at Work. Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*. In this chapter, however, I do not analyse statehood by merely focussing on bureaucrats. I mainly look at daily and ordinary encounters between various female segments of Kankan's society and employees of the local government. In what follows, I first illustrate different forms of female claim-making. In the second section, I look at Kankan's markets as a sphere where "actors fight for access to and control over space, resources and political allegiance" (Prag 2010, 65). Hereby, I specifically focus on women selling at Kankan's markets and their experiences of statehood by analysing the interactions between market women and the local government represented by different actors such as the chief of the market, tax collectors, security agents, and various employees of the local government.

Women Making Claims

Traditional' Authorities: Women's Restricted Influence

For many different social problems, be it between couples as we have seen in the story of the neighbours' quarrels, or be it between two persons who, for example, both claim a certain terrain, the people in Kankan prefer looking for solutions within their close environment rather than going to the police or the gendarmerie. Recognised persons who are approached for conflict solution are mostly elderly people. They can be of either gender, however, men are consulted more often than women. These people also act as moral guides by emphasising their understanding of local codes of conduct. Solution-finding can take place within families, neighbourhoods, *sèrès*, or among friends. Other respected persons who are often consulted are the Imams, the muezzins, members of the council of the elders, or representatives of the *Sotikemo*, or the *Sotikemo* personally. The line between 'traditional' authorities and local government is blurred and often an actor represents both. The *chef de*

quartier, for example, officially belongs to the state administration and should be elected by the neighbourhood's population. However, he is not remunerated and people usually mentioned him in the same line as 'traditional' authorities. The statement by Madame Koyaté (interview, 21.11.2011), one of the Female Leaders, nicely illustrates how solution-finding processes can take place: "If I have a problem, I go to my mother. My mother says to my father: 'Your daughter has a problem.' And if there is no solution, we go to the sectorial chief. Above him is the *chef de quartier*, then the urban community and so on."

The image of a hierarchical administration has been fostered throughout Guinea's history. It implies the normative behaviour that each citizen should respect the hierarchies and act accordingly. This has two sides: On the one hand, people have easy access to persons they are already familiar with, such as the *chef de quartier*. On the other hand, going up the hierarchical ladder step by step is time and energy consuming. All too often, people complain that their issues are left hanging. Therefore, these hierarchies restrict access to state institutions and enhance the state's authority as well as the image of its strengths. One way of bypassing the hierarchical route is through personal contacts. If a person knows someone working in the local or – even better – the national administration, that person goes directly to him or her.

This behaviour, namely to rely on personal networks instead of going through the hierarchical route, is condemned: "It is not normal, but everyone does it if he or she has the possibility to facilitate the task" Mamby Bah, a taxi driver born in the late 1960s, explained (interview, 12.01.2013). As I have illustrated in Chapter 3 on corruption, people denounce it, but still, everyone does it.

'Traditional' authorities are said to be quite strong in Kankan – as they are throughout Guinea (Rey 2010). The research participants used to say that if they do not give their accord to a certain issue, nothing happens. Here, Fatima Sadiqui, Amira Nowaira, and Azza El Kholy's (2009) distinction between power and authority is useful: While the local government has power, the 'traditional' authorities possess authority, that is, power acknowledged by the society. When I asked Ismael Diallo, a young male graduate, who yields power in Kankan, he explained: "It is a decentralized power that is here but there are also *les sages*. The latter are listened to. You must try not to frustrate them if you want to achieve a certain goal. The authorities are more powerful but *les sages* are more listened to. Because they are credible, people trust them" (interview, 24.01.2013). State officials working on the national level are aware of 'traditional' authorities' influence in Kankan: Twice I could observe how important people, mostly ministers, arriving from Conakry gathered in Mister Konaté's courtyard, and together they went and greeted the *Sotikemo*. As the example of these ministers illustrated, before going to meet and greet the governor, the prefect and the mayor, they went and paid their respects to the *Sotikemo* first.

All recognised 'traditional' posts can only be occupied by a man. Furthermore, in Kankan there is no female *chef de quartier*. That means that women are to a large degree excluded from important and powerful positions. When I

asked the male research participants why women did not have access to these posts, they hinted at the ways in which things have been done in the past that, apparently, cannot be changed. Interestingly, some research participants regardless of gender mentioned women's hidden strategies to influence male leaders. 'Traditional' authorities would consult their wives, sisters, mothers, aunts, daughters, and other women of their social surrounding and listen to their advice. Jeanne Konaté, a university teacher, hinted at exactly that, while, at the same time demanding a change in gender relations:

Traditionally, women whispered behind their husbands, because sometimes we say that the husband transmits what the handkerchief has said during the night. Another saying is: The night will bring advice. But I have said to myself that a woman can be at the man's side and participate in the same manner he does.

(Interview, 12.12.2012)

Women are consulted in specific situations, for example when a new Imam is selected. Aisha Bah, an elderly woman, explained that women can easily establish whether or not a man is honest – an important characteristic when someone wants to occupy an influential 'traditional' post: "If you want to choose an Imam, ask a woman. Women know all the weaknesses and qualities of the men in their community. If a woman says, 'he is honest, he can become Imam', automatically her words are taken into consideration" (interview, 09.02.2012).

By quoting the saying 'the night will bring advice', Jeanne Konaté and others explain that women do not necessarily have to be present when important decisions are made; they have already influenced the male decision-makers beforehand. Gendered norms in Kankan inhibit a man from openly admitting that a woman has affected his decision; thus, her influence passes unnoticed. Female interventions are secret and behind the scenes, as people in Kankan would say. Still, by mentioning that "behind every big man stands a strong woman" (interview, Bemba, 10.12.2012), men can counter every argument that pleads for more gender equality within the 'traditional' sphere. Furthermore, women are able to exert influence on people in their social circle only if they are listened to, as they have no possibilities to impose their opinions. As we have seen, in Kankan – as in other African cities – elderly people's words have considerable weight. Thus, a woman's position and influence increases with age. Therefore, the older a woman becomes, the more seriously her advice and suggestions are taken. Still, that does not reverse the fact that women's influence in the sphere of 'traditional' authorities is restricted, as they themselves cannot occupy such a position.

Madame Kanté, Releasing a Prisoner

Madame Kanté, a financial inspector, was born in the mid-1950s in Mali but she has been living in Guinea for many years. Since 1995, she has worked for the National Service for Water Facilities, first in the Forest Region and then

in the Upper Guinea Region. Besides this main employment, Madame Kanté headed the Local Office of Women's and Children's Affairs. Furthermore, she was an active member of different local, national, and regional NGOs. These organisations were concerned with human rights issues, environmental problems, and the promotion of women. Madame Kanté for example presided over an organisation called 'Women and Development in the Upper Guinea Region'. In addition, she has been an active RPG member for twenty years. I suppose that Madame Kanté got the position as Local Director of Women's and Children's Affairs thanks to her engagement in women's organisations and her longstanding party affiliation. Madame Kanté is proud of the fact that ordinary women trust her and therefore come for consultations with their problems. When I asked Madame Kanté about her view on women's place in Kankan's society, she said: "Women are the barometer of society, they are indispensable. The problem is that they do not know their rights which makes it difficult to make claims. And those little female intellectuals who make claims are treated as liars" (interview, 21.02.2012).

Madame Kanté is a member of the local state bureaucracy, but at the same time, she criticises its output from her viewpoint as a leader of women's NGOs. Madame Kanté sees her position as an intermediary between the local government and ordinary women: "We are here, at the interface," she explained. Often, her posts and roles blur: One morning, at the beginning of the 2000s, a female family member to whom Madame Kanté refers to as sister, arrived breathlessly at her house. She informed Madame Kanté that a young man had been arbitrarily detained at the gendarmerie. He had spent the night with his friends and a young woman in a bar drinking. But apparently, they had all drunk too much and started fighting over the woman. Thereafter, the men had all been detained, but as the others had enough money, they could pay their way out of prison. He, however, had given all the money he had to the girl in question.

Madame Kanté and the sister immediately went to the central prison. When she saw the bad conditions the young man was being detained under, she started crying. The officers explained that the man had taken drugs, but Madame Kanté contradicted them and stressed that he had been drinking, not taking drugs. The officers asked her to pay a certain amount of money, but she refused because, in her view, the young man was innocent. When Madame Kanté could not persuade the responsible officer to release the prisoner, she went to see the governor Ibrahima Sory Diallo. Madame Kanté and the governor returned together to the central prison. The latter became very angry when he learned what had happened. "The situation was really hot that day," Madame Kanté recounted. Thereafter, the person responsible for the central prison was dismissed immediately due to her efforts, as Madame Kanté stressed: "I made him leave before sunset." The young man was released, after which his whole family came to thank her, Madame Kanté remembered.

Madame Kanté stressed that it is her duty as an intellectual to speak for and aid the voiceless such as this young man who had been unjustifiably arrested. When she could not find a solution herself, she did not hesitate to call on the

governor in person. And she insisted on his presence in the central prison: “Everybody knew that Ibrahima Sory Diallo was difficult. When I went to fetch him, he said that he is busy. I answered that I knew he was busy but his duty was to be at our disposition. Finally, he came with me” (interview, 21.02.2012).

Madame Kanté could partly act individually when she helped to release a prisoner because she has the possibilities to do so: First, she is a well-educated woman who has the intellectual and linguistic capacity to bargain with anyone. Secondly, she has long-standing experience of working for the state administration and, thus, speaks the ‘bureaucratic language’. Thirdly, she is also able to communicate in the vocabulary used in the international development industry. Fourthly, Madame Kanté is well connected in and outside the local administration. She knows whom to address in which situation. Thus, it has been easy for her to knock at the governor’s door to ask him for a service – something which would be impossible for an ordinary woman who does not know him personally. Lastly, Madame Kanté, being around fifty at the time this episode occurred, could count on her seniority to lend weight to her words.

This episode shows the blurring of Madame Kanté’s different positions: Initially, it started with a call from a sister. When Madame Kanté arrived at the central prison, she showed her membership card of the Guinean Organisation for Human Rights. She then asked the governor for help in her role as the head of the Local Office of Women’s and Children’s Affairs. Summing up, Madame Kanté wears many hats and uses the one most appropriate for each situation. However, ordinary women who do not have such important personal connections and who do not hold powerful positions would never visit the governor, the prefect, the mayor, or any other such person on their own.

Demanding One’s Widow’s Pension

Madame Fofana’s husband, a school director, died in January 2009. He had been a state employee and, thus, Madame Fofana – as her husband’s only wife – was entitled to receive a full widow’s pension. However, a good colleague of her late husband told Madame Fofana not to apply for the widow’s pension yet. He was in charge of paying the state officials’ salaries and disguised Mister Fofana’s death – a common practice, and not only in Guinea. He thus continued disbursing Mister Fofana’s salary until some people detected the practice and he had to reduce the amount. Two years after his death, the administrative controller stopped the payment altogether. Thus, Madame Fofana filed the necessary papers for receiving her widow’s pension in 2011. However, the matter was complicated and she had to fight for it.

One evening in early 2013, I noticed that Madame Fofana was coming home from the city, nicely dressed, jewellery hanging from her ears and neck. She told me that she had been at the prefecture to see the treasurer. Mister Touré, an acquaintance who worked at the prefecture, had informed her two days before that her widow’s pension had arrived. When she went to see him the following day, he gave her a small part of the money and told her to go to

the treasurer the day after. The very next day, she went there, but Mister Traoré, responsible for disbursing the pensions, had 'eaten her money'. Madame Fofana was angry and exclaimed: 'If tomorrow he will not give me my money, I will directly go to the gendarmerie' (field notes, 07.01.2013).

These were not the first troubles Madame Fofana had with Mister Traoré. She had deposited the claiming papers for receiving her widow's pension, but she still did not get it, so she went to Mister Traoré asking what the problem was. He then told her that he had lost the paperwork. Thereafter, Madame Fofana travelled to Conakry where an uncle was working in the concerned ministry. He helped her and said that she should get her pension in the capital city. Madame Fofana, however, declined the offer as she was afraid that she would have to travel to Conakry quarterly in order to obtain the widow's pension. She wanted the money to be transferred to Kankan.

From then on, Madame Fofana regularly went to the treasurer. "I did everything, but the money is still not released," she exclaimed (interview, 14.01.2013). Madame Fofana became very angry and intended going to the gendarmerie as she had some male relatives working there, but another woman advised her not to do so. It could be that she would never get the money at all if she went to the gendarmerie, the woman explained. It would be better to visit the treasurer repeatedly. In fact, Madame Fofana was not the only women not getting her widow's pension; there were many women who regularly visited the treasurer for the same reason. There, they got to know each other. One day, one of these women proposed to visit the prefect. Everybody agreed and together they directly went to the prefect's office:

MADAME FOFANA: We went directly to the prefect's office and they let us in.

The people could not stop us because we were many, fifty or sixty women. An elderly woman, the oldest amongst us, was speaking in our name. She spoke in Maninkakan. She said to the prefect that we had come for our pensions: 'If you can do something about the pensions, you should say so. If you cannot, we will go to the governor. If the governor cannot do anything either, we will go to Conakry.'

CAROLE: And how did the prefect react?

MADAME FOFANA: He said: 'You are right, stay calm.' He called the treasurer and we remained there. The treasurer told us that he will give us our money at 4 p.m. At 4 p.m. we went to fetch it. The prefect said that they should not pay us at the treasurer but in his office, so that he could witness. The women have been paid in front of him. (Interview, 14.01.2013)

Madame Fofana was not among the women who received their widow's pensions in the prefect's office that day. She was told to wait until mid-February. Madame Fofana explained that she could not have gone to the prefect if she had been on her own. She would have continued frequenting the treasurer, "by staying behind him and sensitising him little by little until, one day, the first pension will come" (interview, 14.01.2013).

Madame Fofana's husband belonged to the local administration's highest pay grade, thus Madame Fofana's life did not, at first, change much in economic terms as she still received his salary for two years after his death. Her way of recounting this is interesting: For her, this practice seemed to be perfectly normal and she did not see anything condemnable in it; everyone would profit from such an occasion. At the same time, Madame Fofana became mad at the treasurer, Mister Traore, because he had – in her terms – ‘eaten her money’. Regularly visiting and bargaining with Mister Traore, then again, was perfectly right according to Madame Fofana's normative understanding. However, she once told me that she would not do the same, namely bargaining, at school for her children to receive better marks: They get the marks they deserve; she explained (informal conversation, 24.01.2012). This illustrates, once again that people condemn corrupt practices in certain situations while they accept and are involved in them in others.

When the disbursement of her late husband's salary stopped, Madame Fofana started fighting for her widow's pension. At first, she did this alone using her contacts in Conakry. But then, she opted for not going to the gendarmerie but joining other women in similar situations. Together, these widows went to the prefect. Contrary to Madame Kanté, Madame Fofana could not have gone to the prefect on her own. But the widows easily got access to the prefect's office due to their high number. There, some of the widows received their pension. Mamby Bah, who worked as a driver at the city hall, nicely depicted that collective agency can increase the chances of a positive outcome: “If you have a personal problem, you cannot go alone to the mayor. If you have got a relative, you go there and you explain your issue. But if you happen to be in a group, you are strong and you can directly go to the municipality” (interview, 12.01.2012).

These widows represent what Asef Bayat (2010, 22) calls a ‘passive network.’ ‘Passive networks’ “refer to instantaneous communications between atomized individuals, which are established by tacit recognition of their commonalities directly in public spaces or indirectly through mass media.” Madame Fofana got to know the other women at the treasury. There, she learned that she was not the only one who had difficulties receiving her widow's pension. By forming a ‘passive network’, these women massively enhanced their bargaining possibilities and partly achieved their goals.

Women's (Almost) Absence from Youth's Protests

In mid-November 2011, we heard that youths had blocked a road in the Kankan Koura neighbourhood to protest against the local enterprise Kaba Guiter, because their vehicles raised too much dust. Dadis Camara had promised to asphalt the country's principal roads and the most important streets of major cities in the country's interior. In Kankan, the government commissioned the enterprise Guiter to do the work. Locally, Guiter is named Kaba Guiter in accordance with its boss's name, Ousmane Kaba, one of the First

Lady's brothers. The initial contract consisted of thirty-three kilometres; however, Kankan Koura did not get a share. As the company's headquarters was in Kankan Koura, the neighbourhood's inhabitants considered this unfair. Thus, some young men went to see the company's president and asked him to asphalt their main street. The latter promised to do what he could to deliver the neighbourhood an asphalted road, Saa Daffé, who held a good position within Kaba Guiter, stated (interview, 14.12.2011). Then, the government granted Kankan ten additional kilometres in which Kankan Koura was included. The work, however, did not proceed as planned and only parts of Kankan's major streets had been asphalted as at the end of 2011.

After signing the contract in 2009, Kaba Guiter took away what was left of the ancient tarmac that Sékou Touré's government had constructed in Kankan Koura. However, the enterprise did not apply the new asphalt and, consequently, the enterprise's heavy vehicles raised copious amounts of dust that disturbed the neighbourhood inhabitants. Initially, the enterprise irrigated the road twice a day to reduce the dust, Daffé said (interview, 14.12.2011). However, Kaba Guiter stopped doing so regularly, Fodé Guidou Sakho lamented, a young graduate who was one of the protest's spokespersons, and the dust problem was aggravated as soon as the dry season started.

On Monday morning, November 14, 2011, young people living in Kankan Koura blocked the road between the N1 that crosses the bridge and leads to Kankan's centre and Kaba Guiter's base. Hence, they were hindering the enterprise's employees from going to work. Fodé Guidou Sakho explained that their goal was to raise the authorities' awareness of the issue. For that, a protest was necessary, otherwise the authorities would not have done anything, he stressed (interview, 21.11.2011). First, the enterprise's representative for human resources came to talk to the young people. Then, a police car arrived. The police officer asked the young men to write a request. Being well aware that this was what the local government wanted, they had already done so before. In a very polite tone the young people told the governor, the prefect, the mayor, and the security director to asphalt their road which would eliminate the dust problem. Finally, two vehicles of the mobile squadron full of heavily armed policemen came to the spot. They had been told that Kankan Koura's youth were protesting violently. When they saw that the scene was peaceful, their chief proposed that the young men should present five representatives and together, they would go to the prefecture. They agreed and delegated five young men of different ethnical and educational background. According to Sakho, the following persons were present in the prefect's office: the prefect, the *Sotikemo's* representative, Kaba Guiter's chief Ousmane Kaba and some of his staff, journalists representing the national radio and two private radio stations, the military camp's major, the police chief, the squadron's leader, and the five young men from Kankan Koura.

First, the prefect accused Kankan Koura's youths of having taken the wrong approach; they should have respected the hierarchical ladder and deposited the complains in written form. The prefect also stressed that with

the change that Guinea underwent thanks to Alpha Condé, people should stop protesting. Fodé Guidou Sakho, as the spokesperson, replied that Kankan Koura had massively supported Alpha Condé in the presidential elections' second run and that they share his vision of change. Therefore, they would protest peacefully without throwing stones as has happened in previous times (interview, 21.11.2011). As the meeting between the different actors went on, the positions hardened. At one point, Bangaly, Kankan's youth representative, told the young men to leave the room for a brief moment. Outside, the former advised the latter to pay the local authorities more respect and to apologise. The five young men then did as they had been asked, however, but against their will. Thereafter, everybody left the prefecture.

Once the five young men went back to Kankan Koura, they told their peers what had happened. Together, they decided that they would push the matter "until the President knows what is happening in Kankan. Because we now want the asphalt" (interview, 21.11.2011). The very same evening, a delegation went to see the mayor to inform him that they did not agree with the prefect's verdict and that they would block the road again the following day. The second day of protest finished with another reunion, during which the governor told Kankan Koura's youth representatives that they had been right and not the prefect. Additionally, Ousmane Kaba promised to irrigate the affected street twice a day until it would be asphalted.

Youths in Kankan Koura deliberately chose to block the road instead of presenting their pleas in written form by addressing the local administration, because they knew that they would not be able to achieve an immediate result if they had chosen to proceed along the hierarchical route. Fodé Guidou Sakho emphasised that Kankan Koura's youth were merely claiming their rights, but the local government perceived their actions as a strike. Having previously had bad experiences with striking youths in 2007, when the latter demolished many administrative buildings in Kankan, the local government summoned all the representatives of the security sector. This (imagined) threat gave the young people in Kankan Koura power: Within a few hours, a meeting with all the important parties was assembled.

During that meeting, no women were present, whereas some took part in the protests – at least at the beginning. Once the military arrived, the women left the scene because they were afraid. I have been told on several occasions that women fear protests because they regularly turn to violence. In Kankan, a huge number of women have been marching on the streets only during the general strikes against Lansana Conté. During the incidents in Kankan Koura, the young men had tried to co-opt young women, as Fodé Guidou Sakho explained: "We tried to mobilise the girls to protest, because the authorities are not really afraid of boys' protest. But once there are girls, the authorities are afraid" (interview, 21.11.2011). Anna Dessertine (2019, 2) confirms this: "[O]nce women take to the streets to participate in protests and mobilizations, their presence alone becomes politically efficacious." These statements illustrate that if women make claims alone or alongside men, the

local government takes the events much more seriously. This has been regularly observed during (youth) protests, in which women would typically only engage in cases of real necessity.

Djénabou's citation at the beginning of this chapter hints at the President's fear of women's protests – especially if they threaten to take off their clothes and thus place a curse upon the watching men: 'If you are the President, you must do everything not to be hated by women, because women are sacred. If they are against you, sooner or later you must abandon power', Djénabou explained (informal conversation, 30.11.2012). This phenomenon is what Laura S. Grillo (2018) calls 'Female Genital Power'. In her book, Grillo provides numerous examples of (mostly) elderly women stripping naked and making lewd gestures during protests. In this way, they cast the severest curse they have to sanction the people in power. When elderly women expose their breasts and genitals, this "is a rebuke in the strongest of terms" (Grillo 2018, 9). That is why even if women are mostly absent from protests such as when Kankan Koura's youths were bargaining over dust, the mere thought that they could participate – and much worse, take off their clothes – gives them power, not only in Guinea, but also throughout West Africa.

Market Women Interacting with the State¹

Kankan's markets were the key for the city's urbanisation; they had already made it flourish at the end of the eighteenth century, when it became "a thriving, transregional trading hub" (Osborn 2011, 165). At that time, both men and women were engaged in trading activities: Men typically sold salt, imported candles, beads, matches, and kola nuts. Women preferred selling foodstuffs, cloth, cotton, and woven mats (Osborn 2011, 166). Thus, Kankan's market was "a vibrant and dynamic place that was neither a masculinized nor a feminized space" (Osborn 2011, 168).

Nowadays, each market disposes of an office responsible for the distribution of the market tables, tax collection, foodstuff inspection, the installation of night guards, dispute settlements, and so on. If someone disregards a regulation, or if the inspector decides so, the commodities of the corresponding market woman are to be seized and brought to the market office. There, she must bargain with members of the market office to free the seized commodities. The local government appoints the market offices' members, who are typically selected due to their party affiliation. According to Sarata Cherif, the responsible of Sogbe's market office, they do not get any remuneration. However, they use unofficial means to gain money. Cherif proudly told me that she can guide all these market women even though she is not an 'intellectual' (interview, 31.01.2012).

Additionally, each of Kankan's markets has a market chief. Aminata Camara officially represents the small minority of male and the large majority of female vendors at Dibida market. She acts as an intermediary between them and the local government. Camara is an elder and – judging by her appearance and the food she sells – a rather poor woman who sells half-

spoiled tomatoes. A former mayor has appointed Camara due to her long-standing RPG membership. The female market chief is known for her ability to settle disputes, a vital skill for market leaders (cf. Clark 1994). Aminata Camara recounted: ‘Sometimes even the military’s families come to look for me, or high ranking officials. They come to me to solve conflicts. I am well known at the market, at the security, everywhere. People do not put me into prison, I am not someone like that. I have power’ (field notes, 07.12.2012).

Market women’s interactions with representatives of the local government are manifold. Some encounters take place on a regular basis, such as tax collection. Others are quite unpredictable, for example food inspections. In what follows, I elaborate on three examples of interrelations between women selling at Kankan’s market and the local government, namely tax collection, the unblocking of a road next to Dibida market, and instances in which the local government shuts down Kankan’s markets.

Collecting Taxes

Local governments want to exercise control over markets “but often lack legitimacy or means of regulation” (Prag 2010, 65). One possibility of exerting authority is through food inspection. Employees from the market office control whether the offered foodstuff has the required quality. One official regulation in this regard is that vendors must cover all aliments that cannot be washed, for example palm oil, cassava flour, or peanut paste. Market women, however, do not cover their merchandise after every sale. They use codes to warn each other whenever employees of the market office inspect food: One day I was doing research with Djénabou at Sogbe market. Suddenly, a woman selling at the market entrance said in a loud voice: ‘There is the risk of rain!’ Within three seconds, all vendors quickly covered their merchandise and half a minute later three persons from the market office started their inspection (field notes, 20.01.2012). The women at Dibida market use a similar code to inform the other vendors of the inspectors’ arrival by naming the head cover women wear for entering the mosque (field notes 25.01.2012). If the inspectors find food that is not covered, they confiscate it and bring it to the market office.

Collecting taxes is another instance of authority’s control. All vendors at Dibida market must pay 100 Guinean francs (approximately 1 euro cent) per day. Officially, all vendors must pay this tax regardless of the size of their market stands. This theoretically also holds true for ambulant vendors. In practice, however, they easily avoid the tax collectors due to their mobility. Further, debating the fee and personal relations with tax collectors can result in a tax remission. At the time of research, the smallest banknote was 500 Guinean francs. During a conversation in 2012, Oumou Silla, a meat vendor, explained that the tax she must pay felt like a rent to her, as the place was government property. The female vendors expected the local government to use this tax to clean and refurbish the market.²



Figure 7.1 Women Selling their Commodities

Members of the market office employed by the municipality collected the tax every third day. The market women appreciated the man responsible for collecting taxes inside Dibida market, calling him Ali Sebebilala, ‘the ticket giver’. The research participants told me that they let Sebebilala keep the respective change of 200 Guinean francs, a practice that seemed to be accepted by all vendors I talked to. Even though giving Ali Sebebilala the change was voluntary, ‘it became somehow obligatory,’ because all market women followed the practice, as Silla explained. The female vendor emphasised that they respected the tax collector because he was very sympathetic and compassionate: If a woman happened to be absent from the market for some time because of family obligations, illness, or because she had travelled, Sebebilala would not complain about the missing taxes, nor would he confiscate her commodities or give the table to someone else, as would be the official requirement. However, Sebebilala’s employer, the municipality, had nonetheless sanctioned his

‘misbehaviour’ by cutting his salary as it was noticed that he did not deliver the amount of money he should have in accordance with the number of tables (Oumou Silla, informal conversation, 14.01.2012).

The blurred boundaries between the state and society become exemplified by ‘the ticket giver’ Ali Sebebilala, who, despite being an employee of the municipality was considered by the market women to belong to their own social group, rather than to the local government. Typically, men working at the market office have a bad reputation among the market women. The research participants consider it unbecoming for a head of a family to wander through the market quarrelling with women all day long to collect taxes. However, Sebebilala due to his behaviour was seen differently. Dibida’s vendors decided to give Ali Sebebilala the change of 200 Guinean francs – almost twice the amount of the official tax – due to his personal behaviour, and continued to do so, even after the municipality had cut his salary. Thus, Sebebilala could continue working at the market and the women still had the ticket vendor they wanted. The practice of giving a state’s employee a small sum of money or some natural products as a sign of gratitude for his or her work seems to be a widespread practice in West Africa, as Giorgio Blundo and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2006, 75–76) demonstrate. The relationship between Sebebilala and Dibida’s vendors can be described as a reciprocal dependency: The market women give Sebebilala an additional 200 Guinean francs every third day, thus paying a part of his salary. The tax collector, in return, turns a blind eye on vendors disregarding official regulations. The municipality, too, profits from this arrangement as it can reduce its outlay on Sebebilala’s wage.

Unblocking a Market Road

A second example of an interaction between representatives of the local government and market vendors highlights the bargaining for the control over parts of Kankan’s main market: In February 2012, the municipality decided to remove street vendors from the road around Dibida market that leads directly to the central bus station. Normally, the road is crowded with market stalls. Some women illegally sell their commodities with clothes spread on the floor and ambulant vendors carry goods in pushcarts or on their heads, which makes it difficult for cars and motorcycles to get through, resulting in accidents. The problem of women illegally selling on the street had been an old but still unresolved one, a member of the market office explained (informal conversation, 27.02.2012).

The information that the market women should no longer use the road as market place spread through various channels: The municipality informed both the head of market and the market office’s members. They were then to pass the message to the market women. In addition, the news was announced in the local radio stations through which the women were continuously sensitised to respect the law by not selling on the streets. Obviously, the message spread rapidly by word of mouth among the market sellers. Nevertheless, some affected women reported that they had not been informed beforehand.

Members of the local government widely debated the reluctance of these market women to free the road. Especially involved were the mayor Fodé Quatre Kourouma, whom the local population just called Fodé Quatre, the vice-mayor Mister Nabé, as well as two municipal officials, Madame Konaté and Madame Kanté, the heads of the Office of Women's and Children's Affairs at prefectural and municipal level, respectively. Fodé Quatre told me that there was enough space in the market for those selling their commodities illegally outside. Some of them even had a table inside the market, but they were convinced they would sell more quickly if they were situated outside the market walls, Fodé Quatre lamented (informal conversation, 01.03.2012). Some women selling inside the market shared his view, as they told me. They even congratulated the mayor for his decision as they hoped to gain an advantage and to sell more in the future (informal conversations, 03.03.2012).

Madame Kanté complained about the police being too arrogant vis-à-vis these market women, whose situation she understood: 'Most women are poor. They sell quickly during the day to buy something to eat for their family's evening meal. We have to make these women understand that we are not their enemies; on the contrary, we are here to help them' (informal conversation, 23.02.2012). Like Madame Kanté, Madame Konaté stressed that they would find a solution together with the concerned women. One viable option would be the relocation of the latter to Sénkéfara or Missira, two almost empty markets within half an hour's walk from the city centre. One problem with these solutions, however, was the local assumption that the first people who sell on a newly established market would eventually die. After a meeting with Dibida's market chief and some vendors, Madame Konaté emphasised that the law had to be respected. Furthermore, she underlined that the women concerned were very difficult to convince: 'The problem is that they are not educated; too many of them did not go to school. It is so difficult to make them understand things. They do not know their rights and duties. The law is on our side, they are not allowed to sell on the street' (informal conversation, 23.02.2012).

The affected vendors for their part were furious, not knowing where to go. They were afraid of losing their clients if they had to change their points of sale. Furthermore, the commodities of several women were confiscated and taken to the market office. Mister Nabé the vice mayor, was not optimistic of finding a satisfying solution as he was unsure whether the measures taken by the municipality would solve the problem of women selling on the street. In addition, he considered the discussions with these market women as an unsuitable tool to solve the conflict. He explained that, for four days in a row, female vendors had come to his office to explain their situations as their families' breadwinners. They wanted a selling table inside Dibida market, but there were not enough for all of them: 'It is a question of habits and money,' he said (informal conversation, 02.03.2012). In the end, Mister Nabé was right: The measures taken by the local government did not resolve the problem of women selling on the market road. A few days later, the market road was as crowded as before.

Market women can be characterised as a ‘passive network’, which in Asef Bayat’s (1997, 66) words represents “an inherent element of street and back-street life; [it] ensure[s] instant cooperation of the individual actors once they feel a threat to their well-being.” When the government banned the vendors from selling on the street near Dibida market, they, on an ad hoc basis got together and discussed the problem with Aminata Camara, the female chief of the market. Together, they then decided that the latter accompanied by some vendors, should go to the municipality to find a solution for the difficulties at hand. Aishatou Diakité, a young female graduate, remarked in this regard: “Market women are very united. When one of them has a problem, they help each other or give advices or they make that their husbands intervene in their problems” (interview, 20.01.2013).

As the examples show, market women do not hesitate to call on local state employees to consider their special situations – as breadwinners of their families – and help them in times of trouble without making their lives harder by confiscating their commodities or giving their selling-tables to someone else. As the statements by the mayor, Mister Nabé, Madame Konaté, and Madame Kanté illustrate, employees of the local government create boundaries between themselves and women selling at Kankan’s markets at different levels. First, they manifest through the bureaucrats’ posture: While members of the local government sit uprightly on a chair behind a desk in their offices, the women must bring their pleas forward while sitting on a wooden bench. State employees in Kankan usually wear so-called ‘traditional’ outfits or modest suits. Female state bureaucrats demonstrate superiority and hint at wealth by having an expensive-looking hairstyle, wearing jewellery, and holding a big handbag in front of them. Secondly, difference is being established by the discursive formation of governmental employees; on the one hand by referring to the law that backs their position and thus gives their actions legitimacy; on the other hand, by promoting an image of Dibida’s vendors as a uniform group. Even though some men have also been affected by the municipality’s prohibition to sell commodities on the road around Dibida market, the governmental representatives only talked of women, labelling them as uneducated, stubborn, and therefore difficult to handle. The state employees, in contrast presented themselves as well educated, and knowing right from wrong. Interestingly, Sarata Cherif the head of Sogbe’s market office, did the same even though she is not highly educated herself. She said: “The minds of these women resemble children’s minds a little bit” (interview, 31.01.2012). Altogether, these practices create a boundary between members of the local government and the market women.

That dispute around the market road was a conflict of interest: The local government, on the one hand, officially wanted to ensure free traffic circulation. Its actions, however, can also be analysed as a means of enforcing its authority. The affected vendors, on the other side, were reluctant to move to another market far away from the city centre, as they were afraid of losing both clients and income. Dibida’s vendors, such as Oumou Silla, typically



Figure 7.2 Women Selling on the Road next to Dibida Market

complained that the local government ‘does nothing but eating money’ (informal conversation, 14.01.2012). They expected the municipality to use the tax money to clean, equip, and reconstruct the market. Besides, the (local) government should build up infrastructure; deliver basic services, such as education, health, and electricity; provide micro credits; and create jobs. Above all, the market women demanded lower food prices. These claims and the contestation over regulation at Kankan’s markets is a typical example of silent politics: Even though a delegation of Dibida’s vendors and the market chief went to discuss the issue at the municipality and the prefecture, they did not consider their action as political. Summing up, Kankan’s market women are not as powerful as those described by Ebbe Prag (2010, 66–67) in Cotonou’s largest market, Dantokpa, but they are still able to influence the local government by political acts emerging from the everyday due to their sheer number.

Closing the Market: Feeling Ethnically Discriminated

One of the most prominent differences amongst female vendors is their ethnical background. This cleavage is noticeable in daily interactions in Kankan's markets. Manding customers accuse Fulani vendors of charging them more than Fulani clients. In return, Fulani vendors accuse employees of the market office, who are all RPG members, of treating them worse than their Manding counterparts. They claim, for example, that commodities belonging to Fulani sellers are more often seized and brought to the market office. Another such instance is when the local government closes Kankan's markets. Whenever important persons from the government arrive in Kankan – as when the First Lady visited the city – the administration closes the city's markets, schools, and sometimes even the small boutiques under the pretext of a spontaneously declared public holiday. Madame Camara, an elderly woman working for the local government, explained that the closing was implemented in order to have many people welcoming the important guests. She further told me that during the Conté period people in Kankan indirectly showed their malcontent with the President and his government by not showing up and, thus, not welcoming the ministers when they arrived in the city (interview, 19.01.2012).

Market women are hugely affected by these closures, as they do not earn the money to buy the evening meal for their families. Therefore, they all lament such orders. I also heard women who are generally in favour of the local government and who are not directly affected by such measures complaining about them. People working for the local government such as the above-mentioned Madame Camara or Sarata Cherif, the representative of Sogbe's market office, are aware of the difficulties women get in to due to such closures. But they both emphasise that this does not happen regularly and, therefore, the vendors must accept the government's decisions (interviews, 19.01.2012 and 31.01.2012).

Market women claim not to be in a powerful position vis-à-vis the local government. However, there are always means to bypass the administrative directives to close the markets. Some women sell their goods as ambulant vendors, moving from place to place to escape the local police. Market women call this 'the market of running, running'. Others just go to the market for a few hours. As there are not many vendors but still quite a high number of clients, they may even profit from the prohibition. Nevertheless, ignoring the government's directives is risky as one's commodities could be confiscated. On the day before the closing of the markets and especially on the following days, one can hear heated debates all over the markets. Women of Fulani ethnicity claim that the market officials systematically turned their eyes away if they see Manding women selling commodities. They in contrast, risked getting arrested by the market offices' members and thus losing parts of their merchandise. This example illustrates how Kankan's Fulani minority may interpret actions by the local RPG governmental as acts of ethnic

clientelism or discrimination. Mister Nabé, the vice mayor who is married to a Fulani wife and a Manding wife, is aware of this perception. He noted: ‘The matter of the market women is not solved easily; it always turns into a question of ethnicity’ (field notes, 03.02.2012).

Market women are typical victims of harassment. Especially Kankan’s Fulani vendors perceive governmental decisions, such as the closing of the markets or individual acts by members of the market office, as discriminatory practices. Because both state officials and the market office’s employees are RPG members and thus represent the very government many Fulani oppose, their actions are eyed critically and interpreted in ethnic terms. Generally, market women cannot simply be regarded as victims; on the contrary, their agency is manifold. Kankan’s market women, especially ambulant vendors, sometimes avoid tax collection or engage in bargaining with the tax collectors to reduce the fee they must pay. Others make special profits on days Kankan’s markets are officially closed by participating in the ‘running market’, to avoid being caught by members of the market office.

Conclusions: From Silent Politics to Marching on the Streets

Women Shaping Statehood Silently

In this chapter, I have looked at women’s political articulations and their agency regarding the local government. Jo Beall (2013, 175, italics in original) rightly notes that the “local government can often prove to be an ambiguous arena” for women. It “has the *potential* to engage more effectively with women and to address their interests. Nevertheless, however circumscribed, competing interests remain clustered around power and resources at local government level in ways that exclude women.” In Kankan, there are different layers of encounters between ordinary women and the local government. Such interactions take place in the bureaucrat’s office, in front of a governmental building, at a crossroads, in the *chef de quartier*’s boutique, at Dibida market, and elsewhere. Women of all ages, ethnicity, religious, economic, and educational background take part in these encounters. The local bureaucrats also have different ethnicities, the Manding, however, are the most numerous. In Kankan, there are a handful of female state employees, but they are still a small minority. Like in neighbouring countries, most bureaucrats are advanced in age. Lastly, they can draw on more educational competence than the average inhabitant.

State employees gain legitimisation for their work through the state as an institution. Many bureaucrats misuse the state’s image as a powerful actor for their own, personal interests. By putting on a hegemonic attitude, they assume an air of superiority and intimidate people, especially ordinary women, who typically do not marshal the same economic and intellectual capacities and personal networks. Because of this and other practices, Kankan’s inhabitants experience employees of the local government as arbitrary and corrupt and

the whole bureaucracy as inefficient. At the same time, the local government, whose employees in the end represent the state, is still a strong point of reference. Whenever, for example, one of Kankan's many associations undertakes something, they first talk to the responsible institution at the correct administrative level: When women form a new group, they try to get an accreditation by the Local Office of Women's and Children's Affairs; when a women's association decides to clean the ditches along Kankan's main roads, its members inform the mayor or the vice-mayor beforehand; and when a youth association repairs one of the neighbourhood's roads, they will have first talked to the neighbourhood's Imam or the *chef de quartier*. The goal of this information policy is to get the local authority's consent, so that nobody can later claim they should not have done this or that. Besides, such exchanges of information are a way of getting to know the local bureaucrats, and these contacts might be helpful as, in the future, these associations might hope to receive funding.

While in Kankan, the local government is an ambivalent sphere for women, the 'traditional' authorities are even more so. While women, especially elderly women, are sought after to resolve social conflicts and give advices, they cannot occupy a 'traditional' post, such as becoming the *Sotikemo*, who is said to have the most powerful position in Kankan. Several of the research participants hinted at women's silent influence, because in their positions as mothers, sisters, aunts, or wives, they would advise these powerful men. These counsels would then shape decision-making without being noticed, they stressed. Regardless of this advice, I argue that women are systematically excluded from the influential 'traditional' sphere, not least because in Kankan, the impact of 'traditional' authorities goes far beyond their own realm: They also influence women's presence and access to local institutional politics. Alpha Condé for example, through an intermediary, asked for their consent when he installed Fatoumata Maty as Kankan's mayor. Furthermore, 'traditional' authorities can impede general alterations regarding local gendered norms. Even though people such as Bemba, one of the *Sotikemo*'s advisors, might be quite open for changes within the 'traditional' political sphere and also greatly welcomes the ongoing democratisation process in Guinea, it remains clear that 'traditional' authorities are not willing to share (part of) their power with women and other minorities.

Women's Formation of 'Passive Networks'

I have followed Thomas Bierschenk's (2014, 242) call for empirical research of statehood that "focuses on the heterogeneity, the incompleteness and 'omnipresence' of statehood – so that it is impossible to define, once and for all, where exactly the border between state and non-state lies." Aminata Camara, Dibida's market chief, is one such example that illustrates the blurred boundary between the state and the population. A former mayor nominated her due to her support of the governing party and her age, whereas

educational and economic factors were not important. The chief of the market does not receive any salary from the municipality and sells her commodities at Dibida like the other vendors. At the same time, Camara is expected to act as an intermediary between them and the local government in times of conflict, such as during the dispute over the access and control of a public space, namely the road outside Dibida market. Therefore, the market chief is an “intermediate, situated [...] at the interface between the state and society” (Cornwall and Coelho 2007, 1).

The street in Kankan, as in other parts of the world, can become political (Bayat 1997). Street politics are typically not institutionalised, but erupt on a spontaneous, non-organised basis. This also holds true for the various examples I have given in this chapter, such as when the local government prohibited ambulant vendors around Dibida market to sell their commodities on the street or when youths protested against the local enterprise Kaba Guiter in the neighbourhood of Kankan Koura. These forms of claim-making were not planned long beforehand nor will the instances have long-lasting effects. Nevertheless, Dibida’s vendors and Kankan Koura’s youth have caught the local government’s attention.

In the “political streets” (Bayat 1997) of Kankan’s markets, “the political in its fleeting and intangible, transmogrified forms” (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 3) becomes visible. There, bargaining between local state employees, such as tax collectors and members of the market offices, and ordinary market vendors occurs on a daily basis. For Dibida’s vendors, the state’s actions are sometimes predictable, for example the routinised tax collection. Dibida’s market women give Sebebilala, the tax collector, 500 Guinean francs every third day – almost twice the amount of the official fee – thus paying a part of his salary. The tax collector, in return, turns a blind eye to vendors disregarding official regulations. The municipality, too, profits from this arrangement as it can reduce its outlay on Sebebilala’s wage. As Christian Lund (2007, 24) notes, the line between taxation and bribery is often fuzzy; both enforce governmental authority. The vendors do not consider their action as political. Nevertheless, it has an impact on the behaviour of the local government insofar as Sebebilala, despite ignoring official guidelines, is not replaced. Other events, such as food inspection or the closing of the markets on special occasions, are quite unforeseeable. The exact procedures of these instances, such as how to release one’s merchandise when it has been brought to the market office, are unclear and therefore give representatives of the local government a looming presence, therefore enhancing the state’s authority.

The (female) vendors recognise the similarities of their daily struggles. Based on these shared difficulties, a sense of solidarity emerges that forms the basis of political demands. In Kankan, market women are loosely organised, forming a ‘passive network’ using Asef Bayat’s (2010) term, which they fall back on in case of necessity. This has been the case when the local government decided to banish ambulant vendors from selling on the market road or when one of the responsible night guards was stealing their commodities

earlier the same year. Bayat (2010, 14) claims that commonly perceived dangers trigger “collective actions of noncollective actors.” Such ‘passive networks’ form into collective networks, after which public protest might eventually follow, only if they are afraid of losing their gains. Women selling outside Dibida market indeed felt threatened by the local government and were afraid of losing their clients and, thus, their daily income. However, they decided not to march on the street, but to send a delegation to the municipality to bargain and to find a solution for the problem at hand.

The concept of the ‘passive network’ is also viable for the widows claiming their widows’ pensions. It was at the treasury where Madame Fofana recognised that other women were facing a similar fate. By exchanging and discussing their situations, these women advised each other of how best to do something. Therefore, they started forming a ‘passive network’. At a certain point, one widow proposed to communally go to visit the prefect. The latter was very understanding and thanks to his help some of the women finally received their widow’s pensions. As Djénabou put it: ‘Here in Guinea, the voice of a single person does not count. The voices of many people frighten the authorities’ (informal conversation, 19.01.2013).

Having personal relations to state employees is helpful in many ways. Firstly, one has direct access to a specific institution and need not take the hierarchical route, which might never lead to the desired outcome. Secondly, it enables people, also women, to act individually when addressing their problems. Then personal involvement is very important, as the example of Madame Konaté and Madame Kanté shows. Because Madame Konaté had newly arrived in Kankan, she could handle the problem with the market women from a greater distance than Madame Kanté, who had spent many years in the city and who is engaged in different NGOs. The latter showed more empathy with the market women and did not try to increase the distance between herself and these ordinary women.

The Fear of Women’s Protests

How have statehood practices and interactions between local authorities and ordinary people changed since Alpha Condé’s election as the head of state? By looking at the case of the protests by Kankan Koura’s youth, some changes have become visible. Fodé Guidou Sakho and his fellows emphasised that they were claiming their rights and did not strike. These young men, like the members of the local government they were dealing with, support the current President and thus reinforced his notion of change. Hence, Kankan Koura’s youth stressed that they would not protest violently, nor would the summoned police and gendarmerie use force, as has been the case in former times (and is, obviously, still happening nowadays).

The young men who protested in Kankan Koura motivated young women to accompany them. Fodé Guidou Sakho explained that women’s presence would give their actions more legitimacy and the local government would

take them more seriously. This idea is widespread in Kankan. An acquaintance who works at the *Hôtel de l'Université* told me of his problem when he officially wanted to register for public electricity. When his endeavours were unsuccessful for some months, he sent his younger sister. He explained: 'In Guinea, it is like this: If you want a problem to be solved, you have to send a woman' (field notes, 16.01.2013). This is related to the assumption that women only go to the local government in case of urgent necessity. Thierno's statement echoes that: 'People know that if a woman comes, there is really a big problem because women do not dare going to the authorities. So, the little women who dare are listened to' (informal conversation, 26.11.2012). However, a woman would only go to the mayor, the prefect, or the governor if she is in an appropriate position to do so, for example if she knows them personally, such as Madame Kanté who persuaded the governor to accompany her to the local prison. As we have seen, women otherwise go to these offices in groups.

I argue that ordinary women in Kankan, like the female vendors, despite not forming a strong network, can put pressure on the local government by their sheer number and can thus sometimes pursue their goals. The statements by members of the local government demonstrate that they were aware of market women's economic role within their families. They feared that the female vendors would publicly protest if their income were further reduced. Especially in a region where the majority of the population supports the President, the government tries to avoid negative publicity. The fear of women's public protest – and even worse, taking off their clothes and using their Female Genital Power (Grillo 2018) – therefore, prompted members of the local government to handle market women more carefully to a certain extent.

Notes

- 1 Parts of this section have been published in an earlier article: Ammann, Carole. 2016. "Everyday Politics. Market Women and the Local Government in Kankan, Guinea." *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 16(30):37–62. Excerpts are reused with the publisher's permission.
- 2 For a discussion on the distinct perception of market fees and local taxes in Forécariah, see Anita Schroven (2019, 173–181).

Bibliography

- Ammann, Carole. 2016. "Everyday Politics. Market Women and the Local Government in Kankan, Guinea." *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 16(30):37–62.
- Bayat, Asef. 1997. "Un-Civil Society. The Politics of the 'Informal People'." *Third World Quarterly* 18(1):53–72.
- Bayat, Asef. 2010. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Beall, Jo. 2013. "Decentralizing Government and De-Centering Gender. Lessons from Local Government Reform in South Africa." In *Governing Women. Women's*

- Political Effectiveness in Contexts of Democratization and Governance Reform*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, 175–195. New York/London: Routledge.
- Bierschenk, Thomas, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, eds. 2014. *States at Work. Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Bierschenk, Thomas. 2014. “Sedimentation, Fragmentation and Normative Double-Binds in (West) African Public Services.” In *States at Work. Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, edited by Thomas Bierschenk, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 221–245. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Blundo, Giorgio, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan. 2006. “Everyday Corruption in West Africa.” In *Everyday Corruption and the State. Citizens & Public Officials in Africa*, edited by Giorgio Blundo, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 69–109. Cape Town: Zed Books.
- Blundo, Giorgio, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur. 2009. “Introduction. An Anthropology of Everyday Governance. Collective Service Delivery and Subject-Making.” In *The Governance of Daily Life in Africa. Ethnographic Explorations of Public and Collective Services*, edited by Giorgio Blundo, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur, 1–37. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Clark, Gracia. 1994. *Onions Are My Husband. Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Cornwall, Andrea, and Vera Schattan P. Coelho. 2007. “Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas.” In *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, and Vera Schattan P. Coelho, 1–32. New York/London: Zed.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2019. “Women, Power, and the State in Guinea.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, edited by Thomas Spear. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.538.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Anne Mische. 1998. “What Is Agency?” *American Journal of Sociology* 103(4):962–1023.
- Greenhouse, Carol J. 2002. “Introduction. Altered States, Altered Lives.” In *Ethnography in Unstable Places. Everyday Lives in Contexts of Dynamic Political Change*, edited by Carol J. Greenhouse, Elizabeth Mertz, and Kay B. Warren, 1–34. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Grillo, Laura S. 2018. *An Intimate Rebuke. Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat. 2001. “Introduction. States of Imagination.” In *States of Imagination. Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, edited by Thomas Blom Hansen, and Finn Stepputat, 1–38. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Lund, Christian. 2007. “Twilight Institutions. An Introduction.” In *Twilight Institutions. Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa*, edited by Christian Lund, 13–32. Malden: Blackwell.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2002. *Faces of the State. Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Osborn, Emily Lynn. 2011. *Our New Husbands Are Here. Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State From the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Prag, Ebbe. 2010. “Women Leaders and the Sense of Power. Clientelism and Citizenship at the Dantokpa Market in Cotonou, Benin.” In *Africa’s Informal Workers*.

- Collective Agency, Alliances and Transnational Organizing in Urban Africa*, edited by Ilda Lindell, 65–81. New York: Zed Books.
- Rey, Pascal. 2010. “The Local and the Global: Local Power and Globalisation.” *International Social Science Journal* 61(202):437–444.
- Sadiqi, Fatima, Amira Nowaira, and Azza El Kholy. 2009. *Women Writing Africa. The Northern Region*. Vol. 4. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Schroven, Anita. 2019. *Playing the Marginality Game: Identity Politics in West Africa*. Vol. 19. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Conclusion

Women's Silent Politics

Introduction

In this book, I have analysed various aspects of women's political articulations in Kankan, Guinea. The empirical data shows that generally, women in Kankan do not see themselves as political actors. Their emic notion of politics solely refers to the male dominated institutional political sphere. In their understanding, someone who is a party member and frequents party meetings is engaged in politics – even if ordinary women's role within political parties is not to raise their voices nor to make decisions. I argue that to reveal political articulations of marginalised people, such as women in Kankan, we must also look outside what is considered to be institutional politics, which is typically identified with elections, parliaments, ministries, political parties, trade unions, and rebellions. Women's political articulations are subtle and often hardly visible. They mostly manifest themselves in women's daily agency such as during encounters with representatives of the local government, but also within everyday actions, for example within their families.

The concept of agency as promoted by Mustafa Emirbayer and Anne Mische (1998) proved to be helpful in investigating various aspects of social life in the secondary city of Muslim Kankan. Researchers typically neglect the habitual and the projective dimension of agency. However, they must be taken into consideration when analysing a person's everyday actions. I have argued that local gendered norms are constantly formed and reformed. Here, the habitual side of agency is crucial. Especially elderly people tend to stress that local, habitual ways of doing things are unchanged since past times. Kankan's elderly inhabitants, in particular elderly men, do not understand why things should change if they have been successfully done that way in the past. Alterations in gendered norms are therefore often not welcome – not least because they threaten to change current power and gender hierarchies. According to this understanding, issues such as women's empowerment are perceived as being imported from the 'West', triggered by 'modernity', and consequently not compatible with local gendered norms. The prohibition of polygyny, for example, does not fit into local habitual Muslim practices, these elderly (and, by the way, also many young) men and sometimes also (elderly) women claim.

The imagination of an altered future is crucial for any form of agency. If, for example, the two graduates Diaka Fofana and Mariam Bah had not imagined their future husband to be highly educated and economically well off, they would not have evaluated the various options at hand and made their choices accordingly. And if Djénabou Dramé would not have seen in schooling the possibility to change her prospects, that is, not to end up as a petty trader like her mother, she would not have invested so much time and energy in her education. Thanks to the imagination of her future work situation, she is able to make a living by working for various NGOs and to substantially contribute to her family's otherwise tight budget.

As I have emphasised throughout this book, women in Kankan, as everywhere else, cannot be considered as a monolithic block: They only partially share the same interests and goals. One similarity is their gendered duties to take care of their children and (to some extent) nourish their families. I have argued that they also mostly share a certain expectation of what the state should do for its citizens. In Kankan, women expect the state to build up infrastructure, to deliver basic services, and to make staple food affordable for ordinary people.

There are, though, many lines of division among women in Kankan. The most prominent are the differences concerning educational background, age, ethnic belonging, and economic and social positions. In Guinea, as in many other parts of the world, seniority is a crucial aspect, as power and authority increase with age. This holds true for women and men alike. Regarding West Africa, Filomina Chioma Steady (2011, 23–24) writes that it is usually with menopause that women's access to political leadership roles becomes easier. Elderly women can thus achieve the status of 'social males' and 'neutral persons'. The same holds true in Kankan. Women of a certain social age do not get accused of being prostitutes or sexually loose as young women would do if they join a political party as an ordinary party member – or even worse, if they aspired to public and political roles. Furthermore, postmenopausal women have typically less obligations within their households and therefore more time to frequent political parties.

The practice of highly respecting elderly people in Kankan is habitual and influenced by local, religious norms (Brand 2001, 305).¹ It is not regarded as respectful to contradict someone who is older than oneself. Nevertheless, in reality, the older generation is criticised by the youth because it is the elderly who control and disapprove of the young men's and women's behaviour. Djénabou explained that young people like herself secretly call their parents, and mostly their fathers, 'dictators': 'They do not see that things are changing', she once lamented (informal conversation, 21.11.2012). Young women, especially those who are highly educated, disapprove of certain local practices and norms. My data shows that in a secondary city such as Kankan, where the inhabitants claim to be attached to 'traditional values', a (young) person's behaviour is closely watched. Especially (young) women must behave according to local gendered norms if they do not want to be stigmatised as a 'bad' woman, for

example by getting pregnant without being married. According to the local understanding, such behaviour would also have negative consequences for one's (future) children.

Another dividing line among Kankan's women is ethnic belonging. At the time of the research, Guinea's elite was able to politicise ethnicity, above all the mistrust between the Manding and the Fulani. In Kankan, the former constitutes the majority and mostly supported Alpha Condé, Guinea's President since 2010, and his RPG. The Fulani are the largest minority and typically voted for the main oppositionist, Cellou Dalein Diallo and his UFDG. In this book, I have shown that while Kankan's Manding and Fulani inhabitants mostly live harmoniously together and interact habitually with each other, ethnic tensions became virulent before, during, and after the presidential elections of 2010. Ever since, the issue pops up from time to time, especially when rumours consolidate into prejudices about the social 'other'. In Kankan, the Fulani have a contradictory image: On the one hand, they are praised for being successful and well-connected traders; on the other hand, they are blamed for being egoistic and only profit-orientated. As a result, they are regularly accused of manipulating the food prices, especially the price of rice.

As the RPG has not only won the presidential but also the legislative elections, many Fulani feel systematically excluded from the state. Consequently, acts by the national and the local government are (rightly or wrongly) interpreted in ethnic terms. Regarding ethnic belonging, gender is not a prominent issue: Both men and women get involve in ethicised disputes, and both men and women are among those who call for forgiveness, national unity, and reconciliation. However, there are differences regarding Fulani's and Manding's gender relations: According to the local popular perception, the Fulani perform a 'strict' version of Islam. Consequently, wedding practices among the Fulani seem to be more complicated than those among the Manding. Moreover, Fulani women are more closely watched.

The educational background of a woman is also crucial. I often heard 'intellectual' women talking condescendingly about ordinary women, labelling them as stubborn and ignorant. Ordinary women, in contrast, consider the educated elite as too far away from their own daily problems. Members of women's associations lamented that the 'intellectual' women got rich at their expense when setting up a project that received funds from the government or international donors. Women who speak French fluently have a privileged access to state institutions, where French is the lingua franca. The use of French gives women power and sometimes also authority in the political sphere, as Fatima Sadiqi (2009, 259) describes for educated feminists in Morocco.

However, being a well-educated woman in a city such as Kankan comes with its own challenges: On the one hand, their professional ambitions are high. They expect the state to provide a job as it has done for the generation that studied during the First Republic. At the same time, young graduates are aware that they would probably not get hold of a post within the administration without crucial personal connections. Therefore, they are constantly

on the lookout for other possibilities to make an income and finally becoming a social adult and a respected person. On the other hand, finding an adequate husband is quite a demanding challenge. Some men are leery of intellectual women, assuming the latter would contest local gendered norms which stipulate women's submissive behaviour. It is a balancing act for highly educated women to go their own way without stepping outside the accepted behaviour and losing their credibility and the image of a 'good' Muslim woman.

In Kankan, women claim that their bargaining possibilities within households are very limited. Their actions, however, sometimes contradict their words. A woman such as Fanta Doumbouya, who has her own hairdressing salon and who is her family's main breadwinner, makes use of quite a few possibilities to influence her husband and her larger family. Generally, women's bargaining powers in Kankan increase if they substantially contribute to their households' budgets – similar to what Ann Katherine Wiley (2014, 107) demonstrates for Mauretania – even though they do not officially state so.

Women and Politics in Guinea

On the markets, the women sang songs for Alpha Condé's government's praise. And people talked a lot about Nantou Chérif who presented the RPG during the legislative elections. The opinions differed: Some liked her, others said that she was too old and had not the necessary competences for a seat in the parliament. Everywhere people only spoke about the elections. In my neighbourhood, some erudite men from the mosque had a place where they met and talked about politics every day. Young people discussed politics in their *grains*, women talked about it at the market. Everyone became a politician.

(Djénabou, email, 23.10.13)

In this email, Djénabou described how Kankan's inhabitants, young and old, men and women, Fulani and Manding alike, were animatedly discussing politics before the legislative elections in 2013. As noted, from the local female actors' point of view, the institutional sphere constitutes politics. In the emic perception, politics also hints to everyday bargaining processes where actors fight ruthlessly or when nepotism is prevalent. If, for example, a person gets a certain post within the local administration without having the necessary requirements, people say: '*On a fait ça politiquement.*' 'Doing something politically' is a standing phrase Kankan's inhabitants utter when corrupt practices are used to attain a certain goal. The notion of politics is then negatively connoted because, firstly, power and personal connections are exploited; and, secondly, because the politicisation of ethnic belonging has been virulent since 2010. That is one reason why women in Kankan generally claim to be uninterested in politics. Nevertheless, many are surprisingly well informed as to what is going on locally and nationally. In the emic perception, voting is not considered to be a political act. When I asked the research participants whether they voted during the presidential elections of 2010, they

reacted with surprise as if to cast one's ballot is an unwritten law. Therefore, for the people in Kankan voting is rather an obligation as a 'good' Guinean citizen than a political action. Many male and female Manding research participants also stressed their pride in finally having a democratically elected head of state.

Ordinary women mostly claim that they choose the political leader by love, that they love him 'naturally' and because they confide in his abilities to improve their overall living conditions. My data shows that the people discuss their choices among family members and friends, but they do not impose their own view on others. One female research participant explained that women can also claim they vote for the same person as their husbands, but they might then not do so. No one will know the truth; when you vote, 'it is between you and God only', as a man in a café stated (field notes, 11.12.2012).

I have argued in this book that, generally, women in Guinea keep away from public protests. Throughout Guinea's history they have done so only when it is absolutely necessary, to 'wipe out the fire that was about to light'. Or as Djénabou put it: 'If the situation becomes too painful, if the population suffers too much, women stand up against the President' (informal conversation, 27.11.2012). One such example mentioned is the Association of Female Leaders in Kankan. Because they were afraid that the ethnic tensions would turn into mass violence during the presidential elections of 2010, they engaged in actions they would not have done otherwise: Amongst others, they went to see the elders with the plea to do something against the prevalent hostilities. Moreover, they organised a peaceful march on Kankan's streets holding signboards with messages of peace. These women framed their actions in an apolitical way. With slogans, such as 'Don't kill our sons and husbands!', they argued from within their social roles as mothers and wives and were not expressing their messages in political terms. As noted, in Guinea as in other West African countries, mothers are highly respected.

Similarly, during the general strikes of 2006 and 2007, Rabiadou Sèrah Diallo argued in economic terms as the provider of her family, when she said that she was unable to prepare the evening meal because the cooking pot was empty. That was what had made her launch the general strikes. Another example is the preparations for the *Mamaya* in Kankan in 2011: When the *sèrè* collected the money for the festivities, the female members were successful in bargaining for a reduction of their contribution. They argued that women had to pay for their children's clothes and shoes and "because of the economically difficult situation" they were unable to simultaneously contribute their share (interview, two male members of a *sèrè*, 21.10.2011). Céline Pauthier (2007, 237) makes similar observations: "As principal supporters of families, women are considered to be the spokesperson of everyday problems regarding the survival of a large majority of the population, without actually putting themselves on the dangerous and slippery terrain of directly challenging the power in place."

I suggest that this line of argumentation, namely to frame political claims in social or economic terms, must not be considered as a weakness or as a sign of conservatism. On the contrary, I have contended that women stress their social roles to increase their bargaining powers. In the local context, motherhood is a powerful resource women can draw upon to make their claims more credible, to increase their importance, and to finally reach their goals. Women's political articulations which are framed in social terms enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the broader Guinean population. And this is not a new phenomenon, as Anna Dessertine (2019, 8) reminds us: "Whether in more recent steps or previously in the nationalist struggles, politically active women are generally presented, and present themselves, as mothers defending their children who have been unjustly killed, assaulted, or wronged."

In Kankan, as elsewhere, women loudly rant about things they dislike, for example when the national government increases the petrol prices, when the night watcher of Dibida market steals the vendors' commodities instead of protecting them, or when a few of the newly installed solar streetlamps suddenly disappear and then again show up in the prefect's private courtyard. Amongst themselves, women also extensively complain about their husbands if they feel badly treated by them, for example if the latter wants to marry another wife. In brief, women often vehemently and loudly stand up for their demands. Why do I then name such articulations 'silent politics'? I choose to use the notion of silent politics to demonstrate that women's political articulations are subtle and mostly present outside the institutional setting. Furthermore, women in Kankan do not frame their actions in political terms. This holds true when they are visiting a marabout in cases of family problems, but also when they are marching on the streets. According to emic perceptions, women are not doing politics in the first instance, nor in the second instance. Because women frame their actions as apolitical, they do not overstep the line of locally accepted gendered norms. Consequently, their actions are considered legitimate; although they are transgressing those norms. Summing up, the "visibility of women in politics is thus characterized by demands that rely upon a domestic register, foregrounding the maternal figure, which the population associates with an impartial form of social justice" (Dessertine 2019, 10)

In Kankan, the ideal image of a 'good' Muslim woman is that of a subordinate person who fulfils the locally expected duties of a mother and wife. Amongst other things, she prepares the meals for her family, she takes care of the children and educates them, she is sexually available, she brings her husband the water for washing, and she does not quarrel with him nor contradict him. If a woman does not behave accordingly, she might be labelled as a rebel which, according to local perceptions, has negative consequences for her children. Djénabou explained: 'If you insult your husband, it is a malediction for your children' (informal conversation, 28.11.2012). A woman's silence, however, must not necessarily be interpreted as resignation. As Nomi Dave (2014, 19) reminds us and as my data confirms, voicing one's concerns is not the only form of political articulation. At the same time, silence is not necessarily a sign of

exclusion and marginalisation. Silence can be considered as everything in between submission and resistance. Madame Kanté, the head of the local Office of Women's and Children's Affairs aptly explained that "there are people who fight, but silently. Not everyone is noisy" (interview, 21.02.2012).

Women do not just tolerate and endure things they dislike, for instance if they are not well treated by their husbands. If a couple for example constantly argues, a woman might seek help from a family member, a neighbour, or another confidante. These people are typically elderly men or women. A whole group can also act as mediators, such as the female vendors from Dibida market in the example of the quarrelling neighbours. These mediators then listen to both parties and pass their judgment which is not always in favour of the husband. Here, they take into consideration the behaviour of both, the husband and the wife, according to local gendered norms.

Everyday practices often have a highly political character. Djénabou for example resisted marrying a man her father had proposed to her, because she did not want to become his second wife and because she disliked how he treated women in general. However, she did not say so directly. Instead, she allied herself with her brother, Ismaël. During the summoned family council, the latter stressed that the suitor did not have the same educational background as Djénabou, which might become the root cause for troubles in the future. He added that he considered the proposed man as being too old to become his sister's future husband. Thanks to this tactic, Djénabou did not have to contradict her father directly and, consequently, she did not act as 'a rebel' by not respecting local gendered norms. It was her brother Ismaël who argued against that marriage. In the end, the tactic proved successful.

In Kankan, as elsewhere, multiple gendered norms coexist; they are not fixed but subject to bargaining processes and therefore they are constantly adapted and transformed. The beating of a woman is one such issue: I have been told that in former times, this has locally been considered as normal. Nowadays, a man is only allowed to beat his wife if she has 'misbehaved'. What kind of conduct falls under 'misbehaviour' and how much beating is appropriate, is again something on which opinions diverge. In brief, in Kankan as elsewhere, there exist various gendered norms which are constantly bargained over as people's ideas change in the long run as to how things ought to be. Consequently, gender relations are constantly shifting.

The Women-State Nexus

A special focus of this book lies at the nexus between women and the state. As noted, the state is not a unitary actor but manifests itself in various actions at different levels. Through such actions, it performs gender and thus, in part, shapes gender relations. In this book, I have demonstrated that encounters between ordinary women and representatives of the local administration are characterised by power imbalances. They are noticeable on the city's streets, but even more distinctly discernible inside the administrative offices. While the

(mostly male) state employee sits behind his desk, the claimants must take a seat on benches. For the bureaucrats, it is a 'home game', because they are familiar with the official procedures and practically set the rules for the encounter. They can, for example, purposely let people wait outside before they can enter the office. The imbalances are underlined by the differences regarding dress code and educational background, which mostly crystallises in the ability to speak French, the bureaucratic language. Ordinary women's bargaining powers are shaped by their economic and social status. If someone makes use of relations with important state employees, local politicians, or people belonging to 'traditional' authorities, they have the possibility of individually making claims, such as Madame Kanté, who could personally release a prisoner. In contrast, ordinary women typically merge into a 'passive network' (Bayat 2010) and arrive at the state employer's office in groups, such as the widows who claimed their widows' pensions. By the sheer weight of their number, the representatives of the local government were forced to listen to them.

The hierarchical function of the state restricts access to the state for ordinary citizens, because people must deposit their claims with the entity in charge. To make claims and to demand public services is difficult, especially for people at the state's margin, such as women. Representatives of the local government do not deal with these demands but rather put them 'into the cupboard', as the research participants put it. Without money, personal insistence, or appropriate relations, things do not advance. The local bureaucrats are highly inefficient; they postpone matters and lose documents. Consequently, Kankan's inhabitants generally do not have much institutional trust. Political affiliation further influences the bargaining process during interactions between state employees and ordinary people. As the municipalities' employees belong to the governing party, an RPG membership facilitates the encounter. Here ethnic belonging comes into play. When a Fulani, who typically supports the main opposition party, the UFDG, does not attain the envisaged outcome, he or she interprets this in ethnic terms: In his perception, he or she did not reach his goal because he or she is a Fulani.

State employees denigrate ordinary people, for example market women when they refuse to unblock the market road, by calling them 'uneducated', meaning rather 'uncivilised'. They do the same with youths such as those in Kankan Koura. However, young men who protest are typically students and pupils and, consequently, they are not uneducated. By accusing protesters of having such characteristics, local state employees pose their superiority. Moreover, young protesting men are attributed with violent behaviour, as this has been the case when youths destroyed the local governmental buildings and the local archive during the general strikes of 2006 and 2007. Women, in contrast, are characterised as being peaceful because of their social roles as mothers. Consequently, young men, such as those in Kankan Koura or the tutors who went on strike in early 2013, strive to co-opt women because their presence enhances the protestors' legitimacy: If women take part, the local authorities as well as the population take the protests more seriously.

“Women’s intervention seems in effect to bring a supplementary, even determining, efficacy to collective action, despite their institutional under-representation” (Dessertine 2019, 7). Consequently, the mere thought that women might protest, which is a bad omen for the sitting President, enhances women’s power; even more so, if they threaten to take off their clothes and to use their Female Genital Power (Grillo 2018). Furthermore, in a place such as Kankan, where most inhabitants support the RPG, the governing party tries to avoid protests that lay bare its shortcomings.

As repeatedly noted, ‘traditional’ authorities in Kankan are very powerful. They not only yield power like the local government, but they also have authority, that is, power recognised by the population (Sadiqi, Nowaira, and El Kholy 2009). I argue that within the sphere of ‘traditional’ authorities, women’s impact is even smaller than within the local government. No woman holds a ‘traditional’ position. They are occupied by elderly men who can draw on the authority of masculinity and seniority. These elders dismiss efforts to change existing practices by referring to ‘traditional’ habits. They reject women’s inclusion by claiming an incompatibility with local Muslim values. Still, women can silently influence these elderly men.

Ostensibly, many educated men, especially those who have a certain position within the administration, institutional politics, or an NGO, state that they want to promote women, for example their participation in the institutional political sphere and women’s rights. President Alpha Condé is a case in point: He repeatedly stressed that women’s well-being and their promotion was one of his main concerns and the first thing to tackle in his project of change. Sometimes, he could pronounce statements that were aptly followed by appropriate actions, for example when, in 2005, he decided to make Fatoumata Maty Kankan’s first female mayor. However, the discourse regarding gender equality all too often diverges from actual practices, which is not only a problem in Guinea, but also in many parts of the world (Goetz and Hassim 2003, 6). According to official practices, women are depicted as a uniform category; they are regarded as the needy part of society. The state bundles the different efforts concerning women within the Office of Women’s and Children’s Affairs. In reality, gender imbalances that exist within society at large are reinforced and enacted through interactions between (mostly male) state employees and ordinary women, and through efforts taken by the elite, such as the foundation launched by Djènè Kaba Condé, Guinea’s First Lady.

Women’s normative expectations of how the President, as the state’s number one representative, ought to act, are precise: He should care for Guinea’s inhabitants as a father should care for his children. He does this by providing efficient healthcare, high-quality education, working infrastructure, by generating jobs for the country’s youth, and – above all – by guaranteeing affordable food prices. When the research participants articulated their expectations of statehood in Guinea, they often denounced things that were not functioning normally. ‘*Dans des conditions normales*’ is a standing phrase in Kankan. It always hints at how people imagine things to be in an idealised

‘normal’ life. People for example claim that, ‘normally’ the local government should take care of cleaning Kankan’s roads and markets. With Alpha Condé’s accession to power, the proclaimed change became a strong notion the local Manding population believed in. They hoped that ‘their’ President would turn things around for the better. In 2006 and 2007, Anita Schroven (2019, 194) observed a similar “atmosphere of hope for change” when the population expected that “change in the political system [...] would [...] improve everyday life for the wider population.” However, two years into Alpha Condé’s presidency, ordinary men and women in Kankan were still struggling with daily hardship.

Concluding Remarks

When looking at the country’s history, it becomes obvious that women, too, have shaped Guinean politics: Women were already active in political parties and women’s movements before independence. The discourse and practices of Guinea’s past regimes regarding gender issues have influenced how women acted within the institutional sphere. Sékou Touré integrated women into his state-building project and placed a great deal of emphasis on female emancipation, gender equality, and women’s political participation. However, in Touré’s one-party state, women were allowed to diffuse the party’s ideology only, not to make suggestions or oppose the government’s view. During the era of General Lansana Conté, women were not put on the front stage. President Conté signed international treaties concerning women’s rights mostly to please the ‘International Community’. Nevertheless, thanks to Guinea’s political opening since the 1990s, many women’s movements have emerged. Still, in Kankan, women’s movements are typically dormant. Because they are headed by men or women of the elite, they are not the space where ordinary women can put forward their proposals.

Today, there are quite a number of women who are affiliated to one of the main political parties. Moreover, several women are present within the national state institutions. In 2010, the candidacy of a woman, Saran Daraba Kaba, for the presidential elections was a first. However, women’s presence in institutional politics, especially within political parties, does not cover up the fact that their role is not to take decisions. Even though every political party has a women’s wing, the female party members are used rather for dancing, canvassing, and applauding the male party chiefs than to make propositions, express their own ideas, or contradict the predominant practices. In brief, women’s political articulations within institutional politics is limited. More importantly, the research has shown that it is in the silent politics that women’s political agency comes most to the fore; yet this is often still ignored.

In this book, I have shown the resilience of gender discrimination as a result of the deeply embedded patriarchal structures in Kankan, Guinea. Today, many gender disparities persist. This does not mean that women are mere victims. In their discourse, women mainly stress that men are in power

and that the latter have the decision-making power, even if reality sometimes belies their words. There are countless instances when women renegotiate patriarchy. Women in Kankan (as with any other social actors) imagine their own future and the future of their society differently. Thanks to this, they challenge the status quo. Women do so for example through (wedding) songs or jokes in which they critique prevailing gender relations in times of economic hardship and political and social transformations. Furthermore, senior women often decide on who marries whom. A woman who is the main breadwinner of her family typically keeps a low profile so as not to provoke a negative backlash. However, the fact that her husband depends on her economically has an impact on gender relations within the household.

Because politics in general, and female politicians in particular, have an ambivalent stance, women mostly frame their actions in a non-political way. The study has shown that this form of claim making by bringing social and economic problems to the forefront is an especially efficient means of political articulations for women in Guinea because such behaviour is approved by state actors and society at large. Similarly to Asef Bayat (2010), I argue that Muslim Guinean women bargain gender relations not with the means of collective protest and large-scale women's movements, but through passive networks that form loosely among individuals who face similar situations. Elements of 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet 2002) – such as continuing one's education, generating an income, choosing a future husband, or divorcing – enable women to gain ground exactly because they do not fundamentally challenge existing norms. Anna Dessertine (2019, 2) confirms that “women's powers, particularly with regard to decision-making, are scarcely visible and do not overlap with the same processes of autonomization as they do at the household level, despite women's fundamental role in the domestic economy or even in agricultural production.”

Women imagine and thus propose alternatives to the current social order. At the same time, they also reproduce it. Women in Kankan, such as the market women in Mauritania described by Katherine Ann Wiley (2014, 114), do not just indirectly subvert local gendered norms “but rather [try] to improve their positions within it.” Despite the fact that Kankan's women live in a structural context of patriarchy where norms are highly gendered and powers and authority lay dominantly in the hands of men, this book has shown that women can nevertheless articulate themselves politically and exert influence, by means of the almost invisible route of 'silent politics'. It is by investigating the sphere of silent politics that women's political articulations become most visible. Therefore, it is quintessential that we acknowledge the relevance and significance of silent politics if we want to integrate the agency of actors, who are typically at the margin of the state such as women, into the overall picture of politics and state formation processes. I sum up that women's political articulations within Guinea's institutional politics are limited. The research has shown that it is in the silent politics that women's political agency comes most to the fore; this is, however, often ignored in academic research.

Note

- 1 A pilgrimage to Mecca is also helpful in strengthening one's social position as it is linked to religious eruditeness.

Bibliography

- Bayat, Asef. 2010. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Brand, Saskia. 2001. *Mediating Means and Fate. A Socio-Political Analysis of Fertility and Demographic Change in Bamako, Mali*. Leiden: Brill Academic Pub.
- Dave, Nomi. 2014. "The Politics of Silence. Music, Violence and Protest in Guinea." *Ethnomusicology* 58(1):1–29.
- Dessertine, Anna. 2019. "Women, Power, and the State in Guinea." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, edited by Thomas Spear. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.538.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Anne Mische. 1998. "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103(4):962–1023.
- Goetz, Anne Marie, and Shireen Hassim. 2003. "Introduction. Women in Power in Uganda and South Africa." In *No Shortcuts to Power. African Women in Politics and Polity Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz, and Shireen Hassim, 1–28. London/New York: Zed Books.
- Grillo, Laura S. 2018. *An Intimate Rebuke. Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Kerkvliet, Benedict J. 2002. *Everyday Politics in the Philippines. Class and Status Relations in a Central Luzon village*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pauthier, Céline. 2007. "Tous derrière, les femmes devant! Femmes, représentations sociales et mobilisation politique en Guinée (1945–2006)." In *Perspectives historiques sur le genre en Afrique*, edited by Odile Goerg, 221–237. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Sadiqi, Fatima, Amira Nowaira, and Azza El Kholy. 2009. *Women Writing Africa. The Northern Region*. Vol. 4. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Sadiqi, Fatima. 2009. "Language, Gender, and Power in Morocco." In *Gendering Religion and Politics. Untangling Modernities*, edited by Hanna Herzog, and Ann Braude, 259–275. New York: Springer.
- Schroven, Anita. 2019. *Playing the Marginality Game: Identity Politics in West Africa*. Vol. 19. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Steady, Filomina Chioma. 2011. *Women and Leadership in West Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wiley, Katherine Ann. 2014. "Joking Market Women. Critiquing and Negotiating Gender and Social Hierarchy in Kankossa, Mauritania." *Africa* 84(1):101–118.

Index

- Africa 3, 10, 12, 20, 27, 31–32, 37–39, 43–44, 53, 55, 65, 78, 83, 84, 89, 100, 106, 108, 114–115, 122, 125, 126–129, 142, 145, 148, 157, 170, 180, 182; Pan-Africanist 55; South 67, 107; Southern 114, 129; West 29–30, 39, 53–54, 83, 89, 100, 154, 157, 172, 189, 192, 205, 208
- African Cup of Nations 67
- African Democratic Rally 32
- African Union 100, 127
- age 1, 2, 4, 6, 41, 53, 63, 72, 101, 106, 110, 126, 128, 137, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 156, 158, 171, 175, 176, 182, 197, 198, 205
- agency 3–5, 7, 8–10, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 27, 30, 54, 107, 120, 153, 173, 174, 179, 186, 197, 204–205, 213–214
- agriculture 28, 81
- association 5, 38, 52, 71, 106, 117, 119, 135, 140–142, 198; of age-set 52, 71; of Female Leaders 8, 17, 63–65, 72, 147, 208; of hunters 63; of women 4, 32, 34, 38, 54, 107, 109–114, 120, 127, 133, 198, 206; of youth 71, 198
- Bah, Ramatoulaye 85
- Baldé, Asmaou 115
- Bamako 159, 161
- Bangoura, Henriette 115
- Bangoura, Mafory 35
- Bano Barry, Alpha Amadou 12, 71, 94, 112, 117, 130, 155, 165
- Baté 28–30
- Bayat, Asef 4, 7, 10, 113, 174, 186, 194, 199–200, 211, 214
- Brand, Saskia 154, 161, 168, 176, 205
- bureaucracy 28, 31, 80, 112, 127, 180, 183, 198; bureaucrat 8, 80, 88, 113, 120, 121, 179, 194, 197, 198, 211; bureaucratic language see language
- Burkina Faso 41, 42, 83, 161
- café 15–16, 34, 39, 42, 51, 54, 56, 58, 66, 60, 78, 83, 84, 89, 92, 95, 97, 141, 169, 208
- Camara, Kadiatou Seth 115
- Camara, M'Balía 45
- Camara, Mohamed Saliou 12, 28, 30–35, 37–47, 55–58, 60, 71, 73, 79, 88, 114–115, 129, 133
- Camara, Moussa Dadis 4, 41–42, 59, 96, 133, 136, 179, 186
- change 9, 17, 20, 27, 30, 32, 37, 40, 42, 43, 46, 47, 53, 57, 58, 60, 65, 78–86, 89–102, 107, 109, 115, 119, 126, 127, 129, 131, 134, 138, 143, 147, 148, 153, 158, 159, 160, 169, 174, 182, 186, 188, 193, 198, 200, 204–205, 212–213; train of change 86–88
- chef de quartier* 148, 181, 197, 198
- Chérif, Nantou 207
- Centre for Women's Promotion 81
- Cissé, Jeanne Martin 35
- city 1, 2, 3, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 29–31, 40, 52, 55, 60, 61, 68, 69, 79, 83, 90, 91, 91, 93, 95, 96, 98, 108, 117, 121, 135, 136, 142, 155, 156, 157, 161, 166, 170, 184, 185, 189, 193, 196, 200, 206, 210; secondary city 11–13, 204, 215
- Civil Code 12, 20, 106, 157
- civil society 120, 126, 129, 131, 134, 137–138, 144, 146, 148
- colonialism 5, 15, 28–31, 43, 45, 53, 54, 73; pre-colonial 42, 53; postcolonial 5, 33–41, 180; anti-colonial 28
- Conakry 11, 13, 31, 32, 36, 41, 55, 56, 60, 63, 66, 67, 81, 84, 87, 89, 92, 116,

- 130, 134, 158, 163, 170, 171, 172, 181, 185, 186
- Condé, Alpha 4, 17, 18, 33, 38, 51, 57–63, 65–67, 69, 69, 70, 71, 73, 78–82, 84–89, 93, 94, 96–101, 108, 109, 110, 113, 121, 134–137, 140–147, 188, 198, 200, 206, 207, 212, 213
- Condé, Brahim 29
- Condé, Djènè Kaba 4, 17, 18, 106, 108, 114–121, 143, 147, 212
- Confederation of Guinean Workers 133
- conflict 9, 29, 53, 54, 63–64, 72, 127, 140, 175, 180, 190, 193, 194, 198, 199
- Conté, Lansana 4, 11, 17, 28, 35, 37–41, 45–46, 54–57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 66, 73, 79, 80, 85, 92, 93, 114, 129, 133, 136, 139, 140, 142, 179, 188, 196, 213
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women 106
- corruption 39, 40, 41, 59, 89–90, 92, 93–94, 100–101, 112, 148, 181
- Côte d'Ivoire 12, 67, 83, 84, 138, 157
- coup d'état 4, 37, 41, 42, 57, 83
- culture 39, 55, 112, 128, 130, 133, 148
- decentralisation 126
- de Gaulle, Charles 32, 41
- democracy 33, 57, 75, 84, 98, 101, 129, 148; democratisation 41, 54, 82, 83, 90, 100, 127–130, 146, 198; democratic elections see elections
- Democratic Party of Guinea 28, 32–34, 44, 45, 55, 57, 129
- Democratic Party of Guinea-African Democratic Rally 28, 32
- Dessertine, Anna 5, 11, 28, 31, 37, 44, 46, 84, 176, 188, 209, 212, 214
- development 43, 79, 81, 83–85, 95, 100, 108, 111, 113, 115, 120, 130–132, 184
- Diakite, Aboubakar 'Toumba' 41
- Diallo, Cellou Dallein 51, 57–63, 66, 73, 99, 206
- Diallo, Rabiataou Sèrah 18, 35, 42, 65, 132, 133–134, 142, 147, 208
- dictator 79, 169, 205; dictatorship 37, 44, 133
- Dioubaté, Marie Madeleine Valérie 132
- discourse 15, 17, 19, 27, 38, 44, 52, 54, 62, 67, 70, 71, 79, 83, 86, 93, 98, 100, 101, 106–111, 115, 120–122, 131, 132, 148, 160, 161, 174, 212, 213
- Doré, Jean-Marie 42
- doyens* 64
- dozo* 42
- Dramé, Djénabou 2, 5, 12, 14–15, 20, 42, 61–65, 89, 90, 92–95, 97, 112, 113, 118–119, 121, 135, 136, 153–155, 164, 169–173, 175, 179, 189, 190, 200, 205, 207–210
- Economic Community of West African States 100
- economy 37, 45, 53, 55, 86, 96, 214
- election 6, 41, 54, 60, 64, 69, 79, 101, 126, 128, 138, 169, 204; presidential 4, 6, 38, 41, 42, 46, 51–73, 79, 82, 98, 101, 116, 126, 127, 130–132, 137, 139–140, 149, 188, 200, 206–208, 213; legislative 4, 17, 41, 65, 71, 80, 83, 86, 100, 129, 130, 137, 149, 169, 206–207; local 134–135, 149
- Electoral Commission: national 58; prefectural 137–138, 149, 160
- electricity 2, 78, 83, 86, 94, 96–97, 195, 201
- elite 4, 29, 31, 32, 34, 39, 52–55, 60, 71, 88, 96, 112, 115, 120–122, 130, 135, 206, 212, 213
- Emirbayer, Mustafa 9–10, 153, 173, 179, 204
- Engeler, Michelle 33, 40, 41, 47, 80, 82, 165, 176
- ethnicity 1, 4, 6, 12, 17, 32, 33, 40, 42, 44, 45, 51–67, 69–73, 79, 91, 99, 106, 126, 128–130, 145, 147, 164, 165, 172, 187, 196–197, 205–208, 211; ethnocentrism 62, 70
- European Union 58, 62, 73, 79, 81–83, 100, 129–132
- Female Genital Power 189, 201, 212
- feminism 43, 107
- fieldwork 2, 2, 13–14, 60, 66, 67, 82, 83, 85, 93, 154, 169
- First Lady 4, 17, 18, 97, 106, 108, 114, 116–122, 141, 146, 186–187, 196, 112; First Lady Syndrome 18, 108, 114–116, 121
- food 17, 37, 45, 56, 78, 84, 95, 96, 101, 117, 138, 143, 161, 189–190, 199; food price 8, 17, 56, 84–86, 88, 97–101, 140, 143, 195, 205, 206, 212
- foreign 11, 29, 37, 38, 58, 81, 100, 158, 159, 170
- Forest Region 1, 12, 41, 52, 56, 58, 70, 182; Forestier 52, 58, 59
- Förster, Till 8, 15, 19, 67, 102

- Fouta Djallon 1, 11, 29, 52, 55, 58–60
 France 57, 62–63, 116, 121
 Fulani 12, 14, 51–73, 91, 98–99, 145,
 163–165, 174, 196–197, 206–207, 211
 future 9–10, 13, 15, 28, 34, 54, 79, 80, 84,
 86, 88, 100–102, 140, 153, 155, 158,
 162–164, 168, 173, 175, 193, 198,
 205–206, 210, 214
- gender 10, 11, 15, 17–18, 27–47, 52, 53,
 65, 71, 106–122, 126–131, 135, 144,
 145, 147–148, 153–156, 173, 180, 182,
 204–207, 210, 212–213; equality
 17–18, 28, 44, 47, 106–109, 115,
 120–121, 126–127, 129–130, 135, 182,
 212; gendered norms 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14,
 18, 28, 32, 33, 110, 138, 153, 161, 165,
 167, 170, 172, 173–176, 182, 198,
 204–207, 209–210, 214; relations 7, 10,
 12, 18, 28–31, 43, 106, 122, 153, 159,
 174, 175, 182, 206, 210, 214
 general strikes 7–8, 32, 38–47, 57, 65,
 79–80, 133–134, 147, 188, 208, 211
 Ghana 67, 84, 114, 158–160, 162
 Guinean Coast Region 11, 65, 160
 Guinean Ecological Party 132
 Godard, Aurélie 11, 13, 36, 160
 Goerg, Odile 12, 28, 29, 31, 43,
 54–55, 60
 Goetz, Anne Marie 3, 126, 129, 146, 212
 government 2, 4, 6, 17, 20, 33, 35, 36,
 38–42, 44–46, 54–56, 59, 61, 66,
 67–72, 80–86, 89–102, 106–114, 116,
 118–119, 122, 135, 141–142, 148,
 186–187, 190, 194, 196–197, 199, 206,
 207, 209, 213; local 8, 17, 19, 63–64,
 67, 71, 78, 88, 92, 95, 97–98, 102, 119,
 122, 136, 141–142, 180–181, 183,
 187–201, 204, 206, 211–213
 Guéckédou 80
- health 13, 32, 39, 78, 81, 95, 107–108,
 115, 116, 168, 195, 212
 history 11, 27–47, 52–57, 65, 73, 79, 81,
 116, 128, 138, 147, 181, 208, 213
 Human Rights Watch 40–41, 70, 79
- Ibrahim, Jibrin 18, 108, 114–116,
 121, 145
 identity 9, 51–54, 62, 65, 70–72, 91, 99,
 129, 147, 172
 income 18, 36, 84, 112, 119–120,
 137–138, 146, 157–161, 166, 168–169,
 173–174, 200–201, 207, 214
- independence 4–5, 15, 28, 31–34, 39, 53,
 55, 62, 73, 78, 81, 89, 107, 109, 114,
 116, 128, 132, 134, 144–145, 155,
 157–159, 162, 165, 174–174, 213
 International Crisis Group 40–41, 47,
 56–57, 59–60, 65–66, 70, 73, 81 133
 International Monetary Fund 37, 45, 54,
 79, 81
 International Women's Day 109
 Islam 11–12, 20–30, 42, 52, 165, 168,
 173, 175, 206
- Jenné, Fadima 30
 Johnson-Sirleaf, Ellen 79, 127
- Kaba, Alfa Kabiné 29–30
 Kaba, Saran Daraba 131–132, 213
 Keita, Sun(d)jata 28
 Kerkvliet, Benedict J. 6–8, 214
 Konaté, Sékouba 42, 58, 63, 131
 Kouyaté, Lansana 40, 51, 71, 98 130,
 133, 139–140, 149
- language 20, 52, 53, 55, 61, 65, 80, 112,
 114; bureaucratic 4, 120, 184, 211
 Liberia 11, 12, 46, 79, 83, 99, 127, 128
 Lower Guinea Region 58
- Mali 1, 28, 31, 58, 83, 165, 175, 182
 Mama, Amina 18, 32, 108, 112, 114–116,
 121, 170
 Mamaya 69–70, 73, 208
 Mamou 133
 Mande 28, 29, 55, 73, 153, 161, 173;
 Manding 12, 30, 31, 42, 51–52,
 55–73, 84, 99, 145, 154–155, 164,
 196–197, 206–208, 213; Maninkakan
 20, 52, 185
 Mano River Union 131
 marginalisation 128, 210
 market 15, 19, 32, 36, 51, 54, 56, 66, 69,
 84, 89, 94, 97, 117, 121, 135, 136, 138,
 141, 148, 165, 166, 167, 171, 179,
 180, 189–200, 207, 211, 213; Dibida
 1–3, 63, 109, 135, 166, 198–200, 209,
 210; office 69, 85; women 2, 7, 8, 19,
 36, 64, 90, 109, 119, 148, 189–201,
 211, 214
 marriage 2, 11, 15, 18, 29, 34, 52–53, 71,
 116, 138, 139, 159, 162–165, 168,
 170–174, 206, 210, 214
 Mauretania 207
 McGovern, Mike 28, 33, 35–38, 40–41,
 43–47, 55–56, 58–59, 62, 99, 131

- Mecca 117–118, 215
 media 15, 27, 65, 80, 89, 109, 144,
 116–117, 122, 186
 menopause 29, 64, 145, 167, 205
 military 30–31, 37–39, 41–42, 55, 71, 82,
 117–118, 121, 126, 187–188, 190
 Millennium Development Goals 39, 47, 107
 Milo River Valley 28–29, 42
 minority 12, 57, 129, 134, 145, 160, 189,
 196–197, 206
 Mische, Anne 9–10, 153, 173, 179, 204
 modernity 33, 34, 79, 97, 204
 Muslim 2, 3, 10, 12, 16, 18, 28–29, 39,
 41, 138, 153, 159, 160, 168, 169,
 172–175, 204, 207, 209, 212, 214
- national assembly 84, 131
 National Confederation of Guinean
 Workers 133
 National Council for Democracy and
 Development 41–42, 79, 82
 nationalist movement 5, 11, 28, 32–33, 43
 National Transitional Council 18, 35, 42,
 133–134
 national unity 42–43, 45, 55, 65, 206
 nation-building 27, 33, 44, 55
 network 38, 61, 78, 90, 91, 96, 110, 113,
 142, 146, 181, 197; passive 4, 19, 113,
 186, 194, 198–200, 211, 214
 Nigeria 83, 114, 145, 167
 non-governmental organization 4, 9, 14,
 38, 63, 71, 79, 83, 100, 107–108, 111,
 115–117, 119, 121–122, 130, 132,
 137–138, 161, 169–170, 173, 183, 198,
 200, 205, 212
 N'Zérékoré 36
- Office of Women's and Children's Affairs
 2, 64, 106, 108–110, 114, 121, 183,
 184, 198, 210, 212
 Osborn, Emily Lynn 11, 28–31, 43, 189
 Ouagadougou Declaration 42
- Participation 13, 40, 44, 53, 70, 108, 131,
 132, 161, 212, 213
 Party of Hope for National Development
 51, 70, 71, 98, 130, 137, 139–140, 145
 past 3, 9–11, 17, 27, 42, 54–57, 70, 70,
 72, 79, 80, 82, 86, 98, 102, 109, 153,
 173, 174, 179, 182, 204, 213
 patriarchy 5, 10, 18, 29, 31, 110, 115,
 122, 126, 129, 132, 150, 155, 213–214
 Pauthier, Céline 5, 11, 32, 34–38, 40, 44,
 45, 47, 55, 56, 134, 208
- Peul/Peulh see Fulani
 President 4, 6, 11, 17, 18, 27, 33–42, 45–47,
 51–63, 65–66, 69–71, 73, 78–102, 106,
 108, 109–112, 115, 119–120, 122, 127,
 131, 133 135, 136, 137–138, 140–142,
 146–147, 160, 169, 179, 187, 188–189,
 196, 200, 201, 206, 208, 212–213
 price see food price
 political party 6, 58, 65, 67, 69, 84,
 129–130, 140, 146–147, 205, 213
 politician 6, 11, 18, 54, 65, 67, 70–71, 73,
 92, 125, 129–130, 132, 147, 179, 207,
 211; female 6, 35, 72, 120, 125,
 126–129, 132, 144–146, 214
 politics 3, 5, 29, 30, 32, 34–35, 37–39, 44,
 52–57, 60, 62, 64, 67, 72, 108, 110, 114,
 116, 117, 199, 207–209, 213–214;
 everyday 6–7, 95, 153–176, 214;
 institutional 3–4, 6, 18, 35, 44, 57, 65,
 114, 125–149, 204, 212–214; silent
 2–5, 7–8, 10, 20, 154, 161, 173, 195,
 197–198, 204–214
 polygyny 13, 20, 35, 106, 163, 165,
 167–168, 171, 175, 204
 poverty 12, 66, 80, 107
 power 4, 7–9, 12, 17–20, 29–35, 36–41,
 43, 45, 47, 52–56, 60, 62, 66, 70,
 72, 78–80, 82, 85–86, 88–89, 96–97,
 99–101, 107–109, 112–113, 115, 119,
 121–122, 127–129, 132–133, 136,
 140–141, 143, 146–148, 153, 159, 161,
 167, 168, 173–175, 181, 184, 188–190,
 195–198, 201, 204–214
 protest 3, 6, 8, 9, 19, 31, 36–37, 40–41,
 44–46, 61, 64–65, 86, 95, 133, 154, 167,
 174, 179, 186–201, 208, 210–212, 214
 Pulaar 52, 143
- Rally of the People of Guinea 12, 35, 56, 61,
 69–71, 73, 82, 85, 93, 96, 98, 117–119,
 121, 130, 134–135, 137, 140–143, 145,
 148, 183, 190, 196–197, 206–207,
 211–212; *RPG-arc-en-ciel* 130
 reconciliation 20, 63, 65–73, 109, 206;
 Provisional National Commission on 67
 regime 36–39, 41, 43–46, 55–56, 59,
 82, 213
 religion 2, 4, 6, 2, 32, 53, 175
 repression 35, 41
 Republic 85, 140; First 17, 27–28, 35, 43,
 45, 60, 78, 80; Second 37, 45, 56, 78,
 147, 116, 206
 research 3, 6, 7, 11–15, 20, 38, 50–54, 63, 80,
 85, 102, 106, 108–109, 111, 114, 120, 122,

- 128, 135–136, 138, 140, 157, 159,
179–180, 190, 192, 198, 206, 213–214;
collaborator 2, 12, 14–15, 20, 155, 169;
participant 9, 14–15, 17–18, 20, 27–28,
33–39, 42–43, 45–46, 52, 55–56, 59–60,
62, 67, 70–72, 78–79, 82–86, 89–90,
92–94, 97, 99–201, 117, 119, 125, 127,
131–136, 141, 144, 146–148, 161, 165,
171, 173, 181–182, 191, 198, 207–208,
211–212; researcher 13, 104
- resistance see protest
- revolution 17, 32, 36, 40, 44
- Revolutionary Union of Guinean
Women 34–35, 44–45
- rice 1, 2, 36, 40, 66, 81, 94, 97–99, 101,
165, 176, 206
- rural 7, 11, 46, 11, 142
- Sangaré, Siaka Toumani 58
- Schmidt, Elizabeth 5, 11, 19, 32–33, 39,
43, 54, 65, 145
- Schroven, Anita 8, 33, 40, 47, 52, 62, 63,
81, 83, 90, 97, 155, 201, 213
- security 10, 33, 37, 39, 40–41, 60, 73, 81,
94–95, 97, 102, 113, 180, 187, 188, 190
- sèrè* 52, 117–118, 180, 208
- sexual violence 41
- Sierra Leone 11, 12, 46, 83, 128, 155
- socialism 33, 37, 43, 45, 66, 98, 99
- Sotikemo* 12, 119, 135, 180–181, 187, 198
- Sow, Thierno Aboul 2, 14–15, 30, 39, 57,
61, 63, 66, 68, 84, 90–91, 94, 97, 109,
117–118, 134, 141, 154, 165–167,
169, 201
- state 3–5, 7–8, 11–12, 16, 18–19, 27, 31,
33–35, 36–38, 50, 42–47, 53–55, 59,
62, 67, 69, 70, 72, 73, 78–81, 85–86,
88, 91–102, 106–122, 127, 145, 160,
179–181, 183–184, 189–201, 206–207,
210–214; building/formation 11,
28–31, 33, 42, 53; statehood 19,
101–102, 179–180, 213–214
- Steady, Filomina Chioma 11, 32, 35, 43,
107, 128, 131, 134, 144, 205
- stereotype 51, 66, 72, 107, 144, 122
- strike 7–8, 28, 32, 38, 39–41, 46–47, 57,
65, 73, 80, 94, 97, 133–134, 147, 188,
200, 208, 211
- Structural Adjustment Program 54
- Susu 12, 37, 55–56, 58–60, 62, 65, 70
- Syli National 67–68
- tax 117, 179–180, 189–192, 195, 197,
199, 201
- trade 1, 6, 29–31, 35–37, 39, 56, 72,
93–93, 98, 158, 160–161, 163, 169,
174, 176, 205–206; union 18, 40, 42,
47, 57, 132–134, 137, 204
- ‘tradition’ 5, 9, 19, 39, 58, 64, 72, 72, 84,
116, 126, 128, 129, 132, 136, 161, 165,
194, 198, 205; ‘traditional’ authorities
4, 8, 19, 63, 72, 180–182, 198, 211, 212
- transition period 4, 28, 41–42, 54, 58, 83,
100; Legislative National Transitional
Council 18, 35
- Traoré, Diarra 55–56, 73
- Touré, Ahmed Sékou 4, 7, 11, 13, 28, 32,
33–37, 39, 41, 43–46, 52, 54–57,
59–60, 66, 72, 73, 78, 81, 96, 98, 101,
114, 116, 129, 144, 179, 184, 187, 213
- Touré, Andrée 114, 116
- Touré, Mamadie 115
- Touré, Samory 30–39
- Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea
51, 58, 111, 130, 145, 146, 206, 211
- Union of Republican Forces 111,
114, 130
- United Nations 12, 33, 39, 47, 79, 100,
107, 131
- Unity and Progress Party 35, 38,
134, 136
- university 13–14, 39, 46, 52, 57, 78, 88,
112, 127, 130, 156, 169–172, 179, 182
- Upper Guinea Region 11–12, 17, 31, 58,
60, 79, 183
- violence 8, 30, 41, 45, 57, 60–63, 73, 107,
109, 188, 208
- voting 4, 32, 38, 51, 54–55, 58–59, 62–63,
65, 79, 82, 84, 86, 99, 100, 105, 125,
130–132, 143, 145, 147–148, 206–208
- war 12, 20, 28–32, 46, 71, 83, 126, 127
- wedding see marriage
- World Bank 45, 54
- youth 2, 7, 13, 17, 34, 38, 41, 61, 63,
68–69, 71, 73, 79, 80, 83, 84–86, 88,
89, 94, 100, 101, 120, 122, 130, 131,
137, 179, 186–189, 198–200, 205,
211, 212