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Race, Islam, and Ethnicity in the Pits

In the late 1950s, on the eve of Senegal's independence from France, a respected Muslim diviner from Kéniéba, Mali, traveled to coastal Senegal to visit relatives. On the way, he stopped to visit a friend in "Jakha," the colloquial name for several Jakhanke villages that line the Gambia River in Kédougou. News of the diviner's arrival spread quickly. Using cowries and the Qur'an, the diviner consulted with clients seeking advice about infertility, business arrangements, and marriage. Every night, the compound of his host filled with visitors bearing kola nuts, chickens, and fonio as payment for divination. The day before his departure, the diviner delivered a prophesy that affected all of his clients: Kédougou contained riches in gold that would attract people from Dakar, Bamako, and across the ocean. But to dispense these riches to human hands, the patron spirit of Kédougou's gold demanded the sacrifice of a light-skinned woman with a distended bellybutton. The description matched one person: the daughter of a chief of the Jakha. Outraged, Jakha's leaders admonished the diviner and prayed for Kédougou's gold to stay underground.

The story of the traveling diviner is widely recounted in southeastern Senegal as a folk theory for why gold appears in some places and not in others. This tale resonates with elements of West Africa's ritual geology dating to the medieval period: the annual sacrifice of a young woman to Bida, the spirit snake of Wagadu. Rumors of human sacrifice remain a key idiom through which Kédovins narrate the social costs of orpaillage, the intimate sacrifices required to generate wealth from the earth's subsurface.[1]

Concerns about the morality of wealth from minerals are found around the globe. In her ethnography of Mongolia's recent gold rush, Mette High observes that gold is "polluted money," unusable for many transactions. As High writes, while gold is considered a store of universal value—presumably

exchangeable with all other objects—in many parts of the world, it is also a fraught material that is not easily commodified because it "retains strong ties to the landscape and its many spirit beings."[2] In Papua New Guinea, artisanal gold miners handle "wasted money."[3] In Burkina Faso, Mossi-speakers classify gold as "bitter," as do the Luo of Kenya.[4] Diamond mining in Congo-Zaire and in Sierra Leone produces "wild" or "fast" money.[5] In Kédougou, money derived from orpaillage is similarly "fast" or "quick" money (*wari teriya*).[6] Quick money—which is produced by activities based on luck, illicit enterprises, or nefarious engagements with the occult—is contrasted with clean money, wealth earned incrementally through hard work.[7] In contemporary Kédougou, clean money is also associated with following Islam: performing daily prayers and ablutions and paying the religious tax (*zakat* in Arabic) prescribed in the Qur'an.[8] While clean money can be invested in any domain, quick money should not be invested in sentient beings: cattle and bridewealth. Quick money is best used on consumables—clothing, motorcycles, gasoline—or in construction, which returns gold to the earth.

Scholars offer competing theories for the fraught moral status of mineral wealth. Laboring underground brings miners in proximity to death, human burials, and the underworld of the Abrahamic religious traditions. In agrarian societies, mining may threaten agricultural production and the forms of social reproduction bound to agrarian lifestyles. Compared with earning a set wage in an industrial mine, artisanal mining is often viewed as a game of chance because earnings are based in large part on luck—that is, the quantity of minerals one finds. Mining rushes invite cosmological upheaval, pulling the young into spaces of multiethnic mixture and violence far from the oversight of elders. Similar to street hawking and sex tourism—other domains associated with "short-cut" and "rushed" money—artisanal mining has grown with the rise of market liberalization and the casualization of labor. In such settings, as anthropologists working elsewhere in Africa document, notions of ill-gotten wealth are a commentary on growing economic inequality and antisocial wealth.[9]

These concerns animate moral anxieties about orpaillage in Kédougou. But rumors of human sacrifice and quick money also speak to a far older association of gold with occult forces on the West African savanna and Sahel. The most common concerns I heard expressed about gold wealth during my research were centered on the historic association of orpaillage with pagans. Of particular concern to my interlocutors was the contested transition of orpaillage from the primary domain of ancestral religious practitioners, putatively ethnic Maninka, to an activity pursued by Muslims and people

from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Small groups of Muslims have lived and worked in Kédougou for centuries. But conversion to Islam among the majority of its rural residents has been slow compared with elsewhere in Senegal. This has changed in recent decades, however, as most of Kédougou's diverse residents have converted to Islam, including many of the Maninka lineages that historically presided over Kédougou's juuras.

Despite the growing presence of Muslims in orpaillage, it has been difficult to dislodge the centuries-old adage that "gold is in the hands of spirits" (*sanu ye jinne le bulu*). Patron spirits of gold disliked Muslim prayers and ablutions, which were prohibited on Kédougou's goldfields as late as the 1970s and are still discouraged on some juuras. Because spirits were thought to reward individuals who engage in ancestral religious practices, many in Kédougou accuse Muslims who become wealthy from orpaillage of engaging in non-Muslim rituals. Rumors often take on a racial character. Muslims are quick to assert the universalism of Islam with the phrase, "A Muslim is a Muslim." Behind closed doors, however, many Kédovins argue that conversion does not erase an individual's ethnolinguistic heritage.

In Kédougou, different ethnolinguistic groups are understood to sit on a spectrum between ancestral religious practices and Islam, based on the timing of the conversion of their ancestors to Islam.[10] Ancestral religious practices are associated with "firstcomer" groups, those who claim precedence to a given territory because they entered into exchange relationships with spirits upon their arrival. It is even rumored that subterranean spirits can detect the "soul" or "essence" (*ni*) of orpailleurs. As one orpailleur put it: "The jinne knows where you come from, and they know where you have been. They want a dirty body. You will never find a Muslim who gets rich off gold."[11] A "dirty body" refers to someone who either does not practice Muslim ablutions or is proximate, in hereditary terms, to firstcomer groups. Statements of this genre express "essentialism," what Susan Gelman defines as the "view that categories have an underlying reality or true nature that one cannot observe directly but that gives [category members] their identity."[12] The "underlying reality" in Kédougou is the notion that a person's ethnolinguistic origins are part of an embodied essence. Rumors that a person's success in orpaillage is due to their ethnolinguistic heritage is a means of morally ranking groups in terms of their perceived proximity to ancestral religious practices or Islam.[13] Essentialist notions are so widespread on Kédougou's goldfields that mining chiefs (*damantigi*) typically recruit at least one descendant of a firstcomer group, which is thought to enhance the team's prospects.

Essentialist notions of embodied ethnolinguistic difference are part of a racial language that has flourished on Kédougou's goldfields over the past two decades. It has developed in dialogue with the more public-facing language of subterranean rights described in chapter 6. My use of the term *racial* draws on the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's definition of *racialism* as a notion that humankind is divided into different categories, each distinguished by inherited traits and characteristics. Racism—at least, one form of it—is the belief that categories of peoples, nations, or ethnicities can be ranked in a hierarchical fashion according to universal registers of moral inferiority or superiority.[14] Racial language draws attention to the fact that practices or stereotypes attached to groups of people evolve through debate among diverse parties. Most Kédovins claim to belong to one or more ethnolinguistic groups. These affiliations become imbued with racial meaning only when emphasis is placed on ideas about hierarchy and bodily descent across groups.

Corporate capital contours this racial language. For one, growing competition for access to juuras among orpailleurs, and between orpailleurs and corporations, has accelerated the formalization of land titles in a region where rural land ownership was once fluid.[15] With the corporate enclosure of large tracts of land, there has been a modest rise in nativist thinking in Kédougou. This is part of a continent-wide trend as growing land pressure has encouraged people to make claims to ethnic belonging bound to specific tracts of land.[16] For example, some ethnic Maninka argue that they have the exclusive right to manage juuras due to their heritage as ritual intermediaries with territorial spirits. But calling attention to ancestral ritual practices is a risky enterprise for recent converts to Islam who seek social legitimacy as practicing Muslims.

Scholars of capital-intensive mining in Africa attend to the ways in which migrant labor regimes and the segregation of work on mines create racialized divisions of work and skill between African workers and (mostly) white mine management and technicians.[17] I build on this critical literature to explore how categories of race and skill are forged among different segments of West African society.[18] These racial formations are shaped by Black-white binaries, but they also emerge from long-standing concerns in the West African savanna and Sahel about the perceived relationship among embodied difference, ethnolinguistic affiliation, firstcomer status to the land, and Islam. I present the landscape of rumor and racialization on Kédougou's goldfields first by surveying the ethnolinguistic spectrum along which debates about the relationship between gold and embodied difference

are drawn in the region. Next, I examine how divergent histories of settlement and religion shape engagements with orpaillage in three villages. In closing, I consider how orpailleurs and other residents of Kédougou justify their intense concerns about the morality of gold wealth in the face of the corporate enclosure of gold-bearing land.

Ethnolinguistic "Origins" in Kédougou

During the rainy season, an aerial view of southeastern Senegal reveals a verdant green landscape dotted with bald brown patches of cleared land that are villages, juuras, and gold-exploration camps. While agrarian life appears uniform from a distance, on the ground Kédougou is characterized by ethnolinguistic and religious diversity. This is a legacy of the region's history as an Atlantic-era refuge for the enslaved and those fleeing enslavement by large-scale states. In most corridors, interethnic settlement is organized around dyadic relationships between putative firstcomers and incomers. Table 7.1 provides an overview of the ethnolinguistic and religious affiliations associated with firstcomer and incomer groups as commonly reported by Kédovins. The reader should keep in mind that individuals and entire lineages have moved across these groups over time and that the boundaries between groups is far more porous in practice than suggested by these typological categorizations. Yet many Kédovins remain invested in the notion that these categories are static, embodied, and hereditary. As the anthropologist Frederick Barth once pointed out, "categorical distinctions" are based not on the absence of mobility but on "social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories."

Firstcomers in Kédougou are typically from one of three ethnolinguistic groups: Maninka, Jallonke, and speakers of Tenda languages (Bedik, Beliyan-Bassari, Coniagui, and Badiaranke peoples).[19] Ethnic Maninka and Jallonke speak distinct languages of the broader Mande language family: they share many lexical features but are not mutually intelligible.

Firstcomers all claim autochthony of given zones in Kédougou—that their ancestors were the first inhabitants of the land. They claim their ancestors encountered territorial spirits, not humans, when they arrived. Speakers of Tenda languages, and ethnic Jallonke and Maninka people, claim precedence to land in different corridors in Kédougou. Bedik and Beliyan-Bassari are widely credited as the first known residents of the region. They trace their presence in the zone to the sixteenth century, although some

Table 7.1 Ethnolinguistic, religious affiliations, and settlement history in Kédougou

Ethnolinguistic Affiliation	Settlement History	Religious Affiliation
Jakhanke	Incomers	Muslim
Pular	Incomers	Muslim, ancestral religion
Maninka	Firstcomers, incomers	Muslim, ancestral religion
Soninke	Firstcomers, incomers	Muslim, ancestral religion
Bedik, Beliyan-Bassari, Coniagui, Badiaranke	Firstcomers	Christian, Muslim, ancestral religion
Jallonke	Firstcomers	Muslim, ancestral religion

scholars date their arrival to the thirteenth century or earlier.[20] During the Atlantic period, Beliyan-Bassari and Bedik—whom Muslim states targeted as potential captives—moved to Kédougou's upland massifs for protection, where they engaged in hunting, plant collection, and mountainside farming. Bedik ethnogenesis may also date to the Atlantic era, a product of alliances between speakers of Tenda and Manding language varieties who sought refuge in the highlands.[21] Jallonke claim to be the original inhabitants of the Fouta Djallon mountains, from which they derive their name: mountain (*jallon*) inhabitants (*ka*). In the seventeenth century, the Muslim Pular theocracy that rose to power in the Fouta Djallon pushed Jallonke to the edges of the plateau, including southeastern Senegal.[22] Ethnic Maninka in Kédougou claim their ancestors began settling the zone in the thirteenth century, having migrated from Manden during Sunjata's reign. It is also likely that refugees of diverse backgrounds, fleeing enslavement, integrated into Maninka lineages in Kédougou during the Atlantic period.[23] Some Maninka villages concede that Tenda-speakers preceded them on the land but moved voluntarily upon the arrival of Maninka settlers in the zone.

Incomers to Kédougou settled in the region at different times, but they all report having been practicing Muslims prior to their arrival in southeastern Senegal. Incomer groups include ethnic Soninke, Pular, and Jakhanke. Soninke, speakers of a Mande language variety of the same name, constitute a small minority in Kédougou. Tracing their ancestry to the medieval empire of Wagadu, they established several villages along the Falémé, suggestive

of their influence on early gold mining in the region. In some settlement narratives, Soninke were glossed as pagan firstcomers, but they were Muslim in other cases. The Jakhanke trace their lineage to the Soninke but teach the Qur'an in Jakhanke, a Manding language variety. The Jakhanke established autonomous Muslim communities along the Gambia River in the Atlantic period—today's Jakha. Finally, Pular-speakers in Kédougou trace their ancestry to several waves of Pular migration to the zone associated with the rise of the Pular states of Bundu and Fouta Toro (both in Senegal) and the Fouta Djallon (Guinea) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Pular migration to Kédougou accelerated in the early twentieth century as large numbers of Pular-speakers from the Fouta Djallon fled a violent rubber tax regime in French Guinea. While searching for wild rubber vines, they settled villages in Senegal, where colonial officials accepted head taxes in cash or in kind through a range of products. In the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of ethnic Pulars fled persecution from Guinea's first president, Sékou Touré. Most refugees simply passed through Kédougou, but a number settled permanently.

Depending on the corridor and period in question, relationships between firstcomers and incomers in Kédougou ranged from complementary to violent. In many cases, Muslim incomers deferred to firstcomers as their hosts, recognizing their authority over the land and asking permission to settle autonomous villages. Such rights were often granted in a region where population density was low and wealth in people was valued. This dyadic relationship pertained on the gold-bearing Birimian rocks that stretch from Kédougou town toward the Malian border, home to the Maninka-dominated provinces of Bélédougou, Sirimana, and Dantila. Here, Jakhanke and some Pular incomers accessed land by deferring to Maninka chiefs. In other corridors, Muslim incomers conquered or displaced firstcomers by force. This transpired in some parts of historical Niokolo, populated today by ethnic Maninka, Bedik, and Pular; in the highlands of southwestern Kédougou, home to the Beliyan-Bassari; and in the foothills of the Fouta Djallon in southeastern Kédougou, home to the Jallonke. In these zones, Muslim Pular incomers, primarily originating from Guinea, entered into conflict with firstcomers. In the Atlantic era, Pular immigrants and mercenaries from the Fouta Djallon pillaged Jallonke, Beliyan-Bassari, Bedik, and Maninka for captives. These skirmishes pushed Jallonke and speakers of Tenda languages farther into the region's rock escarpments, and onto marginal farmland, as Pulars claimed fertile valleys for their livestock and villages.[24]

The legacies of slavery further complicate interethnic relations in Kédougou. During the Atlantic period, most firstcomer groups did not own slaves or owned very few. By contrast, Jakhanke and Pular incomers relied heavily on slave labor for agricultural production. Pular nobles and free farmers from the Fouta Djallon were heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade and kept slaves of their own. They targeted pagans who refused to convert to Islam. Captives lived in separate villages, called *runde* in Pular. Large numbers of Pular-speakers of former slave descent—those with ethnic Maninka, Jallonke, and Tenda origins—populated southern Kédougou under colonial rule. They established separate villages from their former overlords and engaged in some intermarriage with ethnic Jallonke, Bedik, and Beliyan-Bassari.[25]

Today, as in the past, membership in different ethnolinguistic groups is fluid as individuals and entire lineages adopt new religions and languages. Conversion to Islam, in particular, occasioned transitions in status. For descendants of formerly enslaved people, becoming Muslim created distance from slave heritage. For example, since being Pular was synonymous with Islam, former captives often adopted the common Pular patronym Diallo when they converted.[26] Christianity offered an alternative path for some. In the 1960s, Senegal's President Léopold Senghor invited a French Catholic mission to open in Kédougou and Salemata. Hundreds of Tenda-speakers and ethnic Maninka adopted Catholicism, but by the late 1970s, Islam had gained a stronger foothold among these groups. Several descendants of respected Maninka Muslim lineages from Niokolo proselytized in Maninka and Jallonke villages, earning converts and establishing small outdoor mosques for communal prayer. In the 1990s, many Tenda-speakers, including some former Christians, adopted Islam. This trend continues today.

The multilayered history of interethnic settlement and religious conversion in Kédougou helps us understand the stakes in rumors about the relationship between success in orpaillage and one's ethnolinguistic "origins." Orpaillage invites commentary on ethnolinguistic difference because of its tightly bound association with territorial spirits, with whom firstcomer lineages cultivate relationships. The locus of controversy centers on two factors. The first is whether a person's ethnolinguistic background alone garners them favor with underground spirits or the authority to preside over juuras. The second concerns the ubiquitous practice of blood sacrifice on Senegal's goldfields. Both Muslim and non-Muslim orpailleurs slaughter chickens, goats, sheep, and cows to seek protection while working underground and to give thanks for a productive mining shaft. In southeastern

Senegal, these sacrifices are called *sadaxo*, a modification of the Arabic term for "alms giving" in the Qur'an. But blood sacrifices differ in their protocols and intended recipients. Historically, Maninka masters of the mines (*juurakuntigi*) and orpailleurs slaughtered domestic animals directly on the juura or on lineage shrines (*jalan*) in the name of territorial spirits, Nininkala, or a Supreme Being. Historically, Muslims view jalans as the most potent symbol of ancestral religious practices in Kédougou. Animals sacrificed on juuras or on jalans were often suffocated or buried. By contrast, Muslims following halal protocol severed the animal's jugular vein with a knife. They made sacrifices in the name of Allah in lineage compounds or mosques, never on shrines or in the bush.[27]

With the growing embrace of Islam by members of diverse ethnolinguistic groups in Kédougou, the degree to which individuals still engage in ancestral religious practices, or admit to doing so, varies. Today, some juurakuntigi openly sacrifice animals on juuras and jalans in the name of territorial spirits. But most are self-professing Muslims who perform sacrifices in lineage compounds by halal protocol while reciting prayers from the Qur'an. Some jalans have been abandoned; others are consulted in private. A few have generated a cult following with the recent expansion of orpaillage, frequented by those seeking the favor of local spirits. Regardless of what any individual does or does not practice, both Muslims and non-Muslims who succeed in orpaillage can be accused of "passing by the shrine [*jalan*]," a euphemism for engaging in ritual practices that run counter to Islam. Statements of this genre in Kédougou are often directed at people with shallow Muslim genealogies, although no one is safe from the accusation. Attempts to make orpaillage into a secular activity in which Muslims, regardless of their ethnolinguistic background, can derive morally regenerative wealth is challenged from multiple angles.

Tinkoto: A Maninka Ritual Territory

In 2014 I was living in the compound of Bambo Cissokho, the charismatic chief of Tinkoto village, when I witnessed the opening of a new juura. Roughly two miles from Tinkoto, gold detectors operated by two Guinean migrants illuminated in a thicket of bamboo. Guided by a quickening beep, the men dug a test pit and hit an alluvial gold seam four meters underground. They reported their discovery to the head of Tinkoto's tomboluma, the customary police force of the juura. The tomboluma called Cissokho, who was traveling at the time, to report the discovery. Cissokho authorized

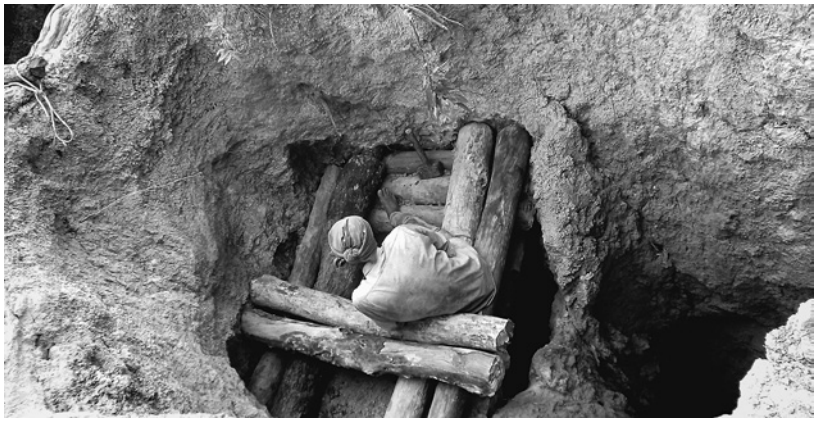

Figure 7.1 Deepening a mining shaft. Tinkoto, Senegal, 2012. Photograph by Aliou Bakhoum.

the men to open the new juura.[28] Within a week, the bamboo thicket was puckered with mine shafts (figure 7.1).

Cissokho named the new juura Thiankoun Bassadié, after a small Beliyan-Bassari farming hamlet adjacent to the gold discovery. Residents of Thiankoun Bassadié sent a delegation to Cissokho's compound to declare that only they, not Tinkoto, had the right to open a juura found in their agricultural fields. In exchange for this breach, they demanded a share of gold from each mine shaft. Cissokho refused, arguing that any gold deposit discovered within ten kilometers of Tinkoto was within his jurisdiction. Cissokho justified this claim on the grounds that only those who follow "Maninka custom" (*Maningolu laado*) have the requisite ritual knowledge to manage juuras. Beliyan-Bassari are considered the firstcomer group in this zone and proximate to territorial spirits. But in the case of gold rights, Cissokho did not recognize their claim on the juura because Beliyan-Bassari did not historically mine for gold. Cissokho underscored the alliance between ethnic Maninka and gold as a justification for why Maninka should control orpaillage even on land occupied by other first-comers:

> Where there is a juura, there are Maninka behind it. Every juura you go to, you will hear the names *daman* [shaft], *soli* [pick], *tomboluma* [security force of the juura], *juurakuntigi* [master of the mines]. Are these Pullo [Pular] words? No, they are Maninka. The juura is for the Manden [people from the heart of the Malian empire]. From here as far

as you can see, this is the land of Manden. If I conduct a sacrifice here, its force will be felt in Bélédougou and Sirimana. Even Niokolo, they will know the benefits of our sacrifice.[29]

Cissokho references the fact that the words commonly used to describe the labor, tools, and political institutions on the mines derive from Maninka, not, as he argues, from Pular. Cissokho also credited the ritual labor of his ancestors, such as making blood sacrifices to territorial spirits, for loosening the grip of spirits on gold. This, he argued, accounted for the strength of Maninka juuras compared with those of Muslim Pulars. Cissokho himself is a self-proclaimed Muslim, but he openly admits to maintaining "one foot in Islam and one foot in tradition" (*A sin kilin be dino to*, *sin kilin don be laado to*).[30] While he attends prayers at mosque, he also displays Maninka ritual objects in his sleeping hut.

Cissokho was the target of frequent social commentary about the moral ambiguity of ritually blending Islam and Maninka ancestral practices. Like many chiefs of orpaillage villages, Cissokho often sacrificed sheep, chickens, and even cows in his lineage compound to secure the safety of orpailleurs and to keep Tinkoto's juuras fertile in gold. These sacrifices were public affairs, performed according to halal protocol and accompanied by Qur'anic recitations. One afternoon, shortly after the discovery of Thiankoun Bassadié, Cissokho organized a sacrifice of three white sheep in his compound to mark the ritual opening of the new juura. He divided the meat among his wives and a recent widow as a form of alms giving. Cissokho asked his wives to prepare the meat with rice and invited the male heads of Tinkoto's founding households to a communal meal. During the festivities, I shared a bowl of rice with Cissokho's youngest wife and several women whom I had never met before. They blessed Cissokho and praised the tenderness of the meat. Toward the end of the meal, an older woman commented in a hushed tone in Pular that the "real sacrifice took place in the bush" (*sadaxo fano be kela wulo to le*). This references the historical practice of sacrifices made to the spirits of gold-bearing land at lineage shrines or on the juura. The other women laughed, and the conversation moved on. Such a statement could be made in jest because Cissokho is proud of his Maninka ritual heritage. In other contexts, however, an accusation that an orpailleur "eats his sacrifice in the bush" is a public questioning of the person's authenticity as a Muslim, suggesting that he (or more rarely she) secretly engages in ancestral religious practices. Descendants of long-standing Muslim lineages, as we shall now see, face different challenges in navigating the moral landscape of orpaillage.

Making a Muslim Juura in Kanoumering

Kanoumering village is roughly six kilometers from Tinkoto, but its architecture and daily rhythms diverge remarkably from those of its neighbor. For almost twenty years, Kanoumering has hosted the exploration camp of Randgold (now Endeavor). Unlike the makeshift palm frond huts that characterize Tinkoto, most compounds in Kanoumering feature at least one concrete building encircled by concrete walls. A few boutiques border the mosque at the center of town, but commercial activity is minimal compared with that in Tinkoto's bustling marketplace. Today Kanoumering is majority-Pular, but it was initially founded as a Maninka agricultural hamlet more than a century ago. During the droughts of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Maninka firstcomers welcomed dozens of Pular families from villages in Bélédougou and Sirimana whose wells had run dry. Different Pular lineages in Kanoumering trace their heritage to the Muslim states of Fouta Toro, Bundu, and Fouta Djallon. By their account, their ancestors were Muslims when they migrated to Kédougou. They settled peaceably in Maninka villages, establishing separate neighborhoods or farming hamlets while conceding political authority to their Maninka hosts. Life in Kanoumering was historically centered on rainy season agriculture and raising cattle, sheep, and goats. During the dry season, children studied the Qur'an. Adult men, and occasionally women, migrated to Dakar or Tambacounda to seek wage labor, sell fruit in roadside stands, or work as domestic help in wealthy households. It was only during the droughts of the 1980s that Pular men from Kanoumering entered orpaillage (see chapter 5).

Men from Kanoumering also worked as bush guides and geological assistants of independence-era mineral research missions, including those of the United Nations and the French parastatal, the Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières. In the 1990s, Anmericosa, a gold-exploration company, also employed guides and laborers from Kanoumering. In 2003, the Senegalese state granted Randgold (Endeavor) land to open an exploration camp adjacent to the village. Since then, residents of Kanoumering have worked as guardians, geological aides, and laborers in the exploration camp, financing the purchase of cattle, corrugated tin roofs, and a village mosque.[31] As the price of gold rose in the early 2000s, more of Kanoumering's residents entered orpaillage. They mined in Tinkoto and Bantaco, a Maninka village west of Kanoumering that competed with Tinkoto as Kédougou's most popular orpaillage site in the mid-2000s.[32]

In 2010, a young man from Kanoumering discovered gold in one of the village's agricultural fields. A council of elders assembled to discuss the

discovery and decided they would open the village's first juura. The decision was controversial because, at the time, there were few Pular villages in southeastern Senegal that oversaw juuras. The village elected a juurakuntigi and a group of tomboluma, following historical Maninka practices. But they vowed to manage the ritual dimensions of the juura according to the Path of Islam (*Laawol Allah* in Pular). Torodo Diallo, the chief of Kanoumering, recounted the opening of the juura: "The tradition of the juura, people say, is based on the jinne. The jinne own the juura. Our juura is based on the tradition of the Qur'an. Gold is in the hands of God. It was God who put gold in the ground for humans, not jinne. God also created jinne, and some of them guard gold, but … we asked God to let gold rise to the surface of the earth." Torodo reverses the common statement, "Gold is in the hands of jinne," insisting that the Almighty God of the Qur'an "put gold in the ground for humans, not jinne." Prior to opening the juura, the village recruited a Muslim cleric from the Fouta Djallon. He blessed the gold-bearing land and planted amulets—Qur'anic verses bound in leather bundles—in the juura's soil. These amulets draw on the power of the written word of the Qur'an to chase away spirits. Torodo contrasted Kanoumering's management of its juura with Tinkoto's ritual protocols: "There is the jalan in Tinkoto. We … have studied the Qur'an, and our path is Islam. Before we dig in the earth and before we make our sacrifices, we say, 'Let this work be in the name of God.' They say this in Tinkoto, but they also take chickens to the juura. In Kanoumering, we do not make sacrifices in the bush. The Imam will tell us to make a sacrifice, and we will go and prepare the sacrifice for the people in the mosque. We eat the sacrifice."[33] The statement "We eat the sacrifice" refers to a historical practice carried out by some Maninka juurakuntigi in Kédougou, whereby the sacrificed animal was offered to spirits—rather than consumed by people—by burying the carcass in gold-bearing land.

Bambo Cissokho reportedly warned Kanoumering's elders that their juura would be unprofitable without Maninka oversight. The elders dismissed Cissokho's warning, but his prediction proved accurate. Kanoumering's juura produced little gold. A few months after it was opened, young men had left the juura in favor of employment with Randgold or to mine in Tinkoto. When I visited Kanoumering's juura in 2014, it was largely mined by women to meet daily food expenses. Cissokho argued that Kanoumering's juura produced poor returns because it was managed by ethnic Pular who did not know the traditions of orpaillage. Kanoumering's residents, by contrast, argued that the middling success of their juura was evidence of their piety as Muslims. Consider the words of Bana Sidibé, a tomboluma on Kanoumering's

juura: "It is difficult to see a Muslim juura with lots of gold. It is always little by little that you will find gold in a Muslim juura. You will never find a true Muslim earn wealth quickly. It is always little by little, by the sweat of his brow. Because God gives those who practice the 'way of Islam' what they need…, not more."[34] Sidibé placed a positive valence on the "slow" wealth of Kanoumering's juura, contrasting it with the "quick" but dubious wealth of non-Muslim juuras. The ascription of different temporal qualities to Muslim and non-Muslim religious techniques used in orpaillage articulates with the notion, widespread in Kédougou, that wealth from gold is quick money. Indeed, most Muslims and non-Muslims in Kédougou agree that ancestral religious practices produce quick wealth that diminishes over time. By contrast, techniques based on Islam generate gradual but enduring profits. Kanoumering's residents point to Tinkoto as evidence for this principle. Despite the tons of gold pulled from Tinkoto's juuras over time, Kanoumering appears far more prosperous, with its concrete buildings, than Tinkoto.

Within this discursive framework, it is easy to see why a Muslim who becomes enriched by orpaillage can be accused of trafficking in occult forces. For this reason, many Muslims who work full time as orpailleurs reject the idea that rapid wealth creation from juuras is a sign of their engagement in non-Muslim ritual practices. When I met Ousmane Diallo in 2014, he was finishing construction of a multi-bedroom concrete home in Kanoumering that was financed by orpaillage. Then in his late twenties, Diallo had achieved financial success that was notable for a young man who grew up in a farming family. He first entered orpaillage by laboring on a mining team in Tinkoto and worked his way up to becoming a damantigi, overseeing several mining teams of his own. As he recounted to me, while gesturing to workers pouring concrete bricks for his house:

> I am a Muslim. My father raised me on the Qur'an. But I have had luck in gold. I work with the Qur'an; everything I do it is based on the Qur'an.… And you see this house I am building? You tell me that this house is not blessed? Because it is here my mother will age and I will raise my children. I will never have to replace my roof with thatch, like my father. And you tell me this work is not blessed? All work performed in the name of Allah is blessed.[35]

Diallo assigns gold to the category "All work performed in the name of Allah," rejecting the common accusation that gold money is not blessed with divine grace (*baraka* in Arabic) because of its historical association with ancestral religious practices.

Most of the Muslim leaders I interviewed in Kédougou town and other villages shared Diallo's perspective that orpaillage was like any income-generating activity: it could generate blessed money when carried out according to the precepts of Islam. They resisted the idea that gold or orpaillage was bound to ancestral (non-Muslim) ritual practices. Rather, they emphasized that the physical dimensions of mining made it difficult to follow Laawol Allah. Thierno Sidi Bâ, the Imam of the neighborhood of Laawol Tamba in Kédougou, a vibrant Pular man, elegantly captured a range of talking points that emerged across my interviews:

> We cannot say that there is something forbidden (*haram* in Arabic) about orpaillage because Allah put gold in the earth for the benefit of humankind. What we can say is this: it is difficult for the man who searches for gold to practice Islam. In Islam, you must pray five times a day, facing Mecca. It is best if you can perform ablutions, to be clean before Allah. But if from sunrise to sunset you find yourself in the bush searching for gold, you can find yourself forgetting to pray. There is no water to pray, the people around you are not praying, so it becomes easy to stray. When you are digging underground, you do not see the sun moving across the sky. You can forget when you are supposed to pray. It is for this reason that we can say that gold mining does not go with Islam, but not because gold is forbidden. . . . We can also say that the juura is not a place of Islam because it is not a clean place. It is not a healthy place for people and for children. There is prostitution; there is drinking. And the Prophet, peace be upon him, instructed Muslims to avoid unclean places.[36]

The Imam relates the dangers of orpaillage to a constellation of practices that run counter to the daily practices of Islam: heeding the call to prayer, access to water for ablutions, and cleanliness. In addition, Muslims are counseled to avoid places where activities that are forbidden in the Qur'an—such as drinking alcohol and prostitution—are common. While none of these factors makes money from gold mining unclean, each makes it harder to follow Islam while mining.

For Muslims, the growing engagement of young people in orpaillage also threatens Qur'anic education, which is a dry season activity. Because orpaillage requires living at or near the juura, it is difficult to pursue complementary activities. Thus, it is far more disruptive to the rhythm of Qur'anic school than hunting, plant collection, and making charcoal. This point was brought home to me during a social visit to a friend in a Pular village near the border of Guinea. Then in his early thirties, he had spent much of the

previous decade selling fruit on the streets of Dakar but had returned home to farm and care for his aging mother. While he had not attended Qur'anic school, he was eager for his children to do so. As we shelled peanuts, he gestured to a patch of bare earth adjacent to the village mosque, where children had once convened to learn the Qur'an. He lamented, "The Qur'anic school has fallen" (*Jande dudal Qur'an ronkaama*, in Pular), because the teacher, one of his agemates, had abandoned teaching the Qur'an to pursue orpaillage full time.[37]

Kédovins from across the ethnolinguistic spectrum raised another secular concern about orpaillage: its creep deeper into the rainy season. With some exceptions, orpaillage in Kédougou was historically practiced for a few months of the dry season. But rising gold prices—and new machines and chemicals—have enabled mining, and gold processing, well into the annual rains, when agricultural fields are seeded. State officials have raised alarm about attrition in agricultural production in Kédougou, where many households already experience food shortages for several months of the year. It is debatable whether orpaillage has worsened this problem, as many orpailleurs invest some of their earnings in farming enterprises. What is clear is that increased reliance on orpaillage makes more families dependent on the market for food on a resource frontier where inflation is high. If households opt out of farming together, a bad year on the juura could mean hunger.

Moralizing Geology in Samecouta

The Jakha—a cluster of Muslim Jakhanke villages flanking the Gambia River several kilometers east of Kédougou town—has enjoyed more material prosperity than many corridors in Kédougou. Building on a long history as successful farmers and Muslim clerics, the Jakhanke encouraged their sons to emigrate to Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Families farmed collective fields of cotton to finance emigration to France and, later, Spain.[38] By the early 2000s, before cellphones were common, most compounds in the Jakha had a landline to call relatives in Europe. With remittances, families in the Jakha were among the first to construct concrete houses and mosques outside Kédougou town.

Jakhanke women occasionally panned for gold along the banks of the Gambia. When the river descended to its lowest point in April, women sank calabash gourds into the riverbed, drawing out silt and gold flakes. Most women stored this gold dust until they had a sufficient quantity to commission a goldsmith to make earrings for themselves or their daughters.

Jakhanke men dedicated the dry season to teaching at their famous Qur'anic schools, which attracted children of prominent Muslim families from Mali, Senegal, and the Gambia. For decades, the leaders of the Jakha considered the lack of juuras on their land—beyond the modest quantity of gold dust panned by women in the Gambia—as the outcome of their collective prayers to Allah to "keep the gold underground." As one elder from Samecouta recounted, in the past "gold would never come out in the Jakha because the land of the Jakha was blessed. A juura never comes out of blessed land."[39] For him, gold is not an accident of geology but the product of divergent human ritual engagements with the land. As I was told frequently in private conversations with Muslim Jakhanke and Pular friends, "Gold appears in abundance only in the land of pagans."[40] Such statements moralize geology, embedding the distribution of metals in the earth within ritual engagements: human-spirit exchanges or the power of Islamic prayer.

There is, in fact, a strong correlation in Kédougou between the settlements of ethnic Maninka and the region's gold-bearing Birimian rocks. By contrast, relatively few gold deposits have been discovered—by geologists or orpailleurs—in historical Pular and Jakhanke villages, with the exception of those directly adjacent to Maninka settlements. Kanoumering, which is located in a majority-Maninka area, is a case in point. There are historical reasons for the correlation of Maninka villages with Birimian rocks. For one, when Maninka lineages migrated to Kédougou from Guinea and Mali—perhaps as early as the thirteenth century, as oral narratives suggest—they settled landscapes that resembled the wooded savanna regions from which they had departed. Birimian rocks undergirded many of these weathered landscapes. In other cases, Maninka settlers—or those who later claimed Maninka cultural heritage—also settled land explicitly for its gold-bearing potential. Many Maninka villages in the provinces of Sirimana and Bélédougou were first settled as seasonal juuras and later converted into agricultural villages. This was the case of Sabodala, Sambarabugu, Duuta, and Kharakenna. By contrast, many Pulars settled landscapes that resembled the Fouta Djallon plateau, which consists of thick sandstone formations overlying granite basement rocks. These rocks contained rich iron deposits and were ideal for animal pasturage but contained few gold deposits. Jakhanke, in turn, settled fertile farmland along the Gambia, positioned along a key Atlantic-era caravan route. Jakhanke likely traded in gold dust at different junctures, but their primary occupation was agriculture and Qur'anic education. In sum, there are clear geophysical and cultural reasons that the villages of ethnic Maninka—firstcomers to the land—align

with gold-bearing geological shear zones, while those of Muslim incomers do not. At the same time, the grafting of ethnolinguistic difference onto distinct geological landscapes fuels rumor and speculation about the ritual engagements of different groups with the land.

Since the late 1990s, however, Kédougou's gold boom has loosened the association of juuras with pagan villages as intensified gold exploration by corporations and orpailleurs alike has led to the discovery of new gold deposits outside historical Maninka territories. In 2013, the Jakha was thrown into tumult when a young man discovered gold on a stretch of land north of the Gambia River. While there are no permanent settlements on the road, the land is considered part of the traditional territory of Samecouta because the village has several fallow fields bisecting it. The young man discovered an alluvial gold deposit, one likely created by an ancient tributary of the Gambia that subsequently dried up and was covered by laterite rock thousands of years ago. Samecouta's elders prohibited opening a juura at the discovery site. In defending his opposition to the juura, the head Imam of Samecouta argued: "Gold can bring great benefit to people. But not in the Jakha. This is a land of Islam, and gold does not go with Islam."[41] Here we see another implication that gold and the juura reside in the land of pagans, not in the land of Islam.

Samecouta's younger generation rejected the advice of their elders and opened a juura north of the village.[42] In response, Muslim leaders from across the Jakha organized a series of *du'as*, Muslim prayers of supplication. In the words of one du'a participant, "We asked Allah to protect our village, with all our force. We asked him to not let gold rise to the surface to turn our children away from Islam."[43] Gold did emerge from the juura of Samecouta, but production was low compared with the massive quantities of gold rock and dust pulled from juuras run by Maninka authorities during the same time period in Kédougou. While many young men from the Jakha worked in Samecouta's juura, they distanced themselves physically and ideologically from the labor of orpaillage. Gold deposition in Samecouta's juura was not visible to the naked eye; it could be sensed only with the use of gold detectors. In the early 2010s, Jakhanke immigrants in Europe began sending gold detectors to their younger brothers and cousins in Senegal, facilitating a unique labor system. Young men from the Jakha operated the detectors while immigrants from Mali and Guinea dug out the gold. Proceeds from the mine were divided between the owner-operator of the detector and the workers. There was a moral valence to this system. By only operating detectors, and not physically digging for gold, youth from Jakha sidestepped concerns from elders about their interaction with underground spirits.

Claims to physical distance from the juura—and from the act of mining—echo a much older principle operative on the West African savanna and Sahel: the strict geographic separation of spaces controlled by Muslims and pagans (chapter 2). Indeed, many men and women I encountered in Kédougou who did not live in orpaillage villages boasted that they had "never stepped foot in the juura." Such statements staked out physical and, by extension, moral distance between the speaker and the space of the juura. Distancing oneself from the juura was largely a class privilege. In Kédougou, where half of regional residents older than sixteen derive at least part of their income from activities tied to orpaillage, it is only wealthy merchants, bureaucrats, and teachers who can separate themselves from the juura. But as orpailleurs argue, even state officials are "in the juura" because many of their wives own freezer chests—powered by their privileged continuous access to electricity—out of which they sell frozen ice blocks. Merchants purchase ice from their compounds. Loaded into Styrofoam coolers and strapped to the roof of bush taxis, this ice makes it way to juuras across Kédougou, where it is sold at double the price. Moral and physical distance from juuras is valued by those who can afford it. Even for this privileged few, it is difficult to resist the lucrative returns afforded by economies of orpaillage.

Tubabs, Sacrifices, and Inequality

For most Kédovins, orpaillage was not a neutral activity. Men and women who worked in juuras went to great lengths to convince their families, themselves, and me that money earned from gold was morally legitimate. Everyone I encountered agreed that there were clear limits on how much gold should be mined in a given place or by a given person. As I was told repeatedly, gold has a "price" (*songo*) that must be paid through sacrifices made in the name of Allah or territorial spirits (figure 7.2). There were stretches of the Gambia, the savanna, and hillsides where gold was not mined because the spirits of those territories asked for human sacrifices in exchange for gold. When the sacrifices were not met, spirits took revenge on human interlopers on the land: "There are places here that we do not touch.... Someone saw gold with his machine. He detected it. He became crazy. We spent two months treating him. The son of Sano Sy..., where he dug. Since he reached the gold, he became blind. He saw nothing. Those places are innumerable here."[44] This was the account of Sajoh Kamara of Linguekoto, a small Maninka village on the Gambia. I heard countless stories of this genre. The French colonial archive is also littered with accounts of people rendered blind and insane by

Figure 7.2 Preparing kola nuts for sacrifices on the juura. Tinkoto, Senegal, 2014. Photograph by the author.

handling gold nuggets (*sanubiro*). These stories operate as warnings against taking gold from spirits without making sacrificial payments.

Such intense moral concern about the mining of gold juxtaposed sharply with the fact that itinerant engineers—mostly white men of Euro-American descent—extracted millions of dollars of gold from Senegal's soil each year from gargantuan open-pit gold mines. I asked my interlocutors whether the white staff of mining corporations were subject to the same ritual constraints as African orpailleurs. Responses pivoted on two core interpretations—one rooted in a materialist and Afro-pessimist framework; the other, in affirmations that white itinerant workers did make ritual payments to spirits, but they differed from those of Africans.

One evening, I recounted a story I had recently heard on a juura to a close friend who runs a transportation company in Kédougou. Reportedly, there were rocks at the bottom of the Sabodala mine that could not be broken because the spirits refused it. "That is ridiculous," my friend retorted. "It is just a psychological problem. If you have the right machinery, you will find gold.

It is that simple. They have machines, and they will get out every piece of gold and rock that they see fit."[45] Such sentiments are common among Kédougou's college-educated class, state bureaucrats, and Senegalese geologists. No one I interviewed denied that differential access to capital and machinery affected how much orpailleurs or corporations could mine. The question was whether corporations, like orpailleurs, had to pay for the gold they mined with sacrificial exchanges. While educated men and women dismissed concerns about spirits as "psychological" justifications from the less educated, they often took ritual precautions when handling gold. My friend, for example, sought a protective amulet before accepting gold rock as payment for a service. He would not have taken such precautions to accept payment in sorghum or corn.

Others argued that foreign white workers, known by the Wolof term *tubab*, could mine large quantities of gold because they had privileged relationships with the occult, not an absence of such relationships. The affinity of tubabs with land spirits has a deep genealogy in Atlantic West Africa, where otherworldly forces are often associated with the color white.[46] Today in southeastern Senegal, land spirits are described as light-skinned creatures with long and straight "hair like a tubab." During a group interview with elderly residents of Mako, a village situated on the national highway and along the Gambia River, I was told a story about a colonial-era French mining engineer who held special sway over territorial spirits. The engineer was based in Mako in the late 1940s, where he oversaw the construction of a bridge across the Gambia. The female spirit who haunts this portion of the river repeatedly interrupted construction, cracking a portion of the bridge and causing several workers to fall ill. Frustrated with delays caused by the spirit, the engineer approached the construction site one day holding a glass jar. He announced he wanted to play a game with the jinne. As one resident of Mako recounted, the engineer said: "I am going to go into this bottle and come out, and then you will do the same. The jinne agreed. One morning, the tubab transformed and went into the bottle, and then came out. The jinne did the same and then he [the engineer] trapped him [the jinne]." This version of the classic 'genie in the bottle' story—a long-standing genre in the Muslim world—credits the French engineer with taming a powerful spirit of the Gambia River.[47]

Tubabs also made sacrifices to the spirited owners of gold. Prior to starting work on a new exploration permit or opening a mine, geologists sacrificed cows and sheep in ceremonies overseen by local imams or juurakuntigi. I witnessed two such ceremonies in Kédougou—one performed by a team of Senegalese and foreign geologists; the other carried out by the village of

Kerekonko with a Danish man, the owner of a small gold mining operation. In both cases, cows were slaughtered for the sacrifice following halal protocol.[48] For some Senegalese participants in these ceremonies, ritual animal slaughter was simply a polite gesture to local custom. Others viewed these ceremonies as essential to securing the ritual and physical safety of their mining operations. I also overheard rumors that tubabs performed human sacrifices on their mining permits under the cover of night.

At times, tubabs have suffered for their negligence of ritual sacrifices. One widely circulating story of this genre concerned the Compagnie de la Haute Gambie, a French firm that operated an alluvial gold-dredging boat on the Gambia River from 1911 until the eve of World War II. The company closed several times due to lack of capital and broken machinery. In oral histories I conducted near the Falémé River, I was told that inadequate sacrifices caused these equipment failures. In the 1920s, three Frenchmen working for the company were navigating a small canoe on the Falémé. When they were halfway across the river, the serpent spirit Nininkala emerged from the river and swallowed the canoe with the men inside. There are parallels in a more recent rumor concerning a Rotary Air Blast drill operated by a subcontractor working for Randgold. In the early 2000s, the drill reportedly punctured a giant snake as it perforated the ground, stopping a machine that uses a pneumatic piston-driven hammer to drive a heavy drill bit into rock. It was rumored that Randgold's mechanics could not repair the machine. A local juurakuntigi concluded that Nininkala, the Maninka spirit snake, had entrapped the machine. He advised the geologists to sacrifice a red cow, and the machine sprang back to life.[49]

Many of my interlocutors concluded that sacrifices carried out by the personnel of mining companies were only the public face of more elaborate ritual engagements carried out in private. Others argued that Africans were forced to conduct blood sacrifices because their poverty left them with little else to offer spirits in exchange for gold. As Soriba Keita, a former orpailleur and long-term resident of Tinkoto, mused at the end of a long evening of conversation: "We do not have materials; we do not have machines; we do not have detectors. We have only sacrifices. It is because we have so little else to offer that the jinne asks us for our children. But for tubabs, it can be different. They can offer the jinne something else it desires, other riches we cannot offer."[50] Kédougou's residents debated whether differential access to machinery or ritual expertise shaped success in gold mining. They all agreed, however, that the primary difference between orpailleurs and corporations was profoundly unequal access to capital.

Golden Bones

A month before I concluded my field research in Kédougou, I was escorted by a close friend to a shrine, a jalan, managed by Koumba Keita, near a village situated on the Gambia River. Most jalans in southeastern Senegal are strictly private affairs. But Keita, a Bedik woman, proudly leads visitors to her jalan for a fee. Keita and I approached the jalan on two motorcycles, which we leaned against two large trees at the edge of a dirt path. Several meters into the woods, I glimpsed a tangled heap of iron bicycle parts and agricultural hoes, glass bottles, batteries, and bundles of leaves and sticks smeared with chicken blood at the base of a tree. Keita erected this jalan after she suffered three miscarriages. Within a year she had given birth to her first child and a lifelong relationship with the jalan. For years, Keita visited the jalan on her own and with other women struggling with infertility. With the uptick in orpaillage in the 2000s, hundreds of clients came to her door, seeking favor with regional spirits. She began monetizing visits to the jalan.[51] This financed a concrete house for Keita and her son, who was handicapped by a car accident and can no longer work.

Keita's jalan is an example of how some descendants of firstcomer groups have valorized their ancestry to profit from new economic opportunities created by orpaillage. But in a region where Islam is increasingly hegemonic, most descendants of firstcomer groups distance themselves from jalans. Indeed, some Muslims decry the popularity of Keita's jalan as evidence of the moral corruption of orpaillage, which, they claim, has cultivated a resurgence of paganism in a region long stigmatized for its ties to ancestral religious practices. With the religious and economic upheaval propelled by the gold boom, rumors about success in orpaillage can also operate as accusations about the relationship of different individuals and entire ethnolinguistic groups to Islam or paganism, regardless of their own ascription of religious belief. This is one prong of a racial language that has thrived on the goldfields of twenty-first-century Kédougou.

This racial language was also on display in a rumor about golden bones that circulated in Kédougou during my research. "You will only know a true Muslim when he dies in the mines," an elder in Tinkoto relayed to me at the end of a long interview. "Those who say they are Muslims but perform sacrifices to the jinne, if they die underground, their bones turn to gold."[52] As the reader may recall, this metonymic link between the bones of pagan orpailleurs and gold riddles the archival record of Atlantic and colonial-era Bambuk. In 1855, Frédéric Carrère and Paul Holle, early French colonial of-

ficials based in Soudan (now Mali), visited alluvial gold mines near Kéniéba. They recorded a story, likely relayed by their African interpreter, about the bodies of miners who were buried alive by collapsed mining pits: "If a miner is surprised by a cave-in and is buried underneath, the space belongs to the relatives of the deceased. No one has the right to place a hand on it. It is not until after seven years that the family can unearth the cadaver. It is claimed that the pores of the bones are filled with gold dust."[53] A half-century later, André Arcin, a French official based in Guinea, recounted a similar story that was circulating on the goldfields of Siguiri during his stay there: "When one returns later to the abandoned shaft after the accident, one finds, it appears, much more gold, the genie having been satisfied by this immolation. The gold itself becomes lodged in the bones of the cadaver."[54] Stories of miner's bones turned to gold parallel the spiritual alchemy performed by Nininkala's consumption of iron deposits, which she converted into secreted gold veins. The stories trouble the boundary among spirits, humans, and gold—as did the payments made in gold dust and iron bars for human captives during the Atlantic era. They speak to the razor-thin line between earning a moral living from orpaillage and trafficking with occult forces and human greed.

Today, Muslims in Kédougou argue that gold is in the hands of God (*sanu ye Allah le bulu*), a mundane material that can be bought and sold like any other product. These arguments are framed, however, against a much older regional understanding: that gold is in the hands of the spirits (*sanu ye jinne le bulu*) who reward ancestral religious practices. Not everyone in Kédougou is trying to make juuras or orpaillage Muslim. Nor are all descendants of firstcomer lineages ashamed of their ties to the non-Islamic and to territorial spirits. Others challenge essentialized notions of ethnolinguistic difference, drawing on the universalizing principles of Islam or Christianity to argue for equality before Allah. At the same time, no Muslim who practices orpaillage is safe from accusations that they traffic in pagan rituals. Much is at stake in these debates in a region where conversion to Islam is fragile for many and where rumors about ethnolinguistic origins fuel racial arguments. The view from Kédougou's juuras offers one regional account of how orpailleurs are remaking the ritual geology of savanna West Africa to new circumstances. It speaks, moreover, to how corporate mining is shaped by histories of wealth and sacred engagements with the earth that predate and evolve alongside it.