

THE TRADITIONS AND HISTORY OF INDIGO DYED TEXTILES IN SIERRA LEONE
AS THEY RELATE TO THE ART AND LIFE OF
HAJA KADIATU KAMARA

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by
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Kathryn Elvira Catalano-Knaack, Candidate for the Master of Arts Degree
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ABSTRACT

Indigo dyeing or ‘Gara’ has a lengthy history as well as a major role in the economies and cultures of West African countries. Although most gara dyers remain anonymous outside of their communities, Hajjah Khadijatu Kamara (nee Turay) was an exception. Using a combination of anthropological, art historical, and archaeological approaches, the history and tradition of gara-dyed cotton textiles are discussed in their cultural context and as they relate to the art of Khadijatu Kamara. The importance of her traditional or apprentice style education, as well as her family life, is discussed as an important factor in her production of dyed textiles. She distinguished herself by combining traditional materials with innovative designs of her own creation, resulting in national and international recognition. Without her firm grounding in tradition, her designs would not have had the broad appeal that comes from reinventing the familiar.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled “The Traditions and History of Indigo Dyed Textiles in Sierra Leone as They Relate to the Art and Life Of Hajja Kadiatu Kamara,” Presented by Kathryn E. Catalano-Knaack, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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GLOSSARY

Bast fiber- a term for any fiber obtained from the stem of a plant, usually by retting or allowing the stem to partially decompose, freeing the fibrous material within. Examples include linen, nettle, hemp, and kudzu.

Batik- This Indonesian word originally referred to a specific method of wax-resist dyeing, but has become an internationally used word to refer to any process where hot wax is used as a resist.

Broom-style Candle- Pattern formed by flicking or spattering hot wax onto cloth before it is dyed; also called scattered candle.

Candle- This term refers to the use of hot wax as a resist, since usually the wax was obtained by melting candles. Sometimes the word batik is used instead. (See broom-style candle, spattered candle, and stamped candle) After dyeing, the wax was removed by immersing the cloth in boiling water. When the water cooled, the solidified wax was removed and re-used. For safety, wax was always melted in a vessel that containing approximately one third water, one third wax, and at least one third empty space, which kept any spitting or spattering of hot wax contained.

Cassava/Cassava resist- Native to South America and introduced to Africa by exploring Europeans, cassava is a starchy tuber that is a staple in many parts of Africa. It thrives in a wide variety of climates ranging from arid to that of the rainforest, is easy to propagate from small cuttings and it keeps for years if left un-dug.

Because of its starch content it makes an excellent resist paste that is both cheap and readily available (see glossary entry for Kolinge.) Detailed information on cassava's history and role in Africa can be found in John Reader's *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*

Cellulose fiber- Any fiber that comes from a plant; cotton and linen are both cellulose fibers.

Gara- This term can refer to West-African dyed fabric in general, but originally referred specifically to material dyed with the gara plant, *Philenoptera cyanescens* or Yoruba indigo.

Gara leaf- Indigo dye or gara is obtained by fermenting these leaves. This plant is unrelated to *Indigofera tinctoria*, (Indian or "true" indigo) though the resulting dye is the same. Indigo can be obtained from a number of unrelated plant species around the world. See also 'indigo'

Immersion dyeing- The practice of immersing a length of material in a dye bath, as opposed to applying dye to the surface of the cloth.

Indican- The compound that produces indigo blue. It is found in a number of unrelated plants around the globe; examples include Indian indigo- *Indigofera Tinctoria*, woad- *Isatus tinctoria*, Japanese indigo- *Polygonum tinctoria*, and Gara (also called Yoruba or vine indigo)-*Philenoptera cyanescens*

Indigo- Originally referred just to the *Indigofera tinctoria* plant, native to India. The compound that produces indigo

Indigo Dye- Any dye whose active ingredient is indican

Kolinge- Mandinka word meaning ‘comb’ but is also used to refer to a pattern created by applying cassava resist paste to a cloth and then drawing a comb through the wet paste, exposing the fabric which is then dyed. The areas which were covered by the cassava paste remain untouched by the dye.

Lappa- A length of material, usually measuring 48” by 66” (122cm by 168cm) that is wrapped around the waist as a women’s skirt. Usually they are dyed back-to-back to produce matching cloths and are purchased in pairs. This way, one of the cloths may be used as a skirt and the other made into a matching top and head wrap.

Loom state- cloth that has not been treated in any way since it was removed from the loom on which it was woven

Loom weight(s) - Small stones or ceramic pieces that, when attached to the warp threads of a vertical loom, provide the tension needed for successful weaving.

Mordant- Also called a fixative, because it is an ingredient used to ‘fix’ dye to cloth. The type of mordant used depends on the dye and the material to be dyed. Alum, lye, potash, vinegar, urine, and iron are a few examples of materials that might be employed as a mordant.

Reducing agent- An ingredient added to the indigo vat that converts the water-insoluble indigo into water-soluble “indigo white” which can successfully permeate and dye fabric and fiber. Traditionally, such an agent was not used and reduction was achieved by fermentation of the indigo leaves. Today, many dyers use thiourea dioxide (thiox) as a reducing agent, cutting out the lengthy fermentation process.

Resist- Anything that is used to prevent dye from reaching an area of cloth.

Scattered candle- see broom-style candle

Seti/siti- Mandinka word for sewing, the term is used to refer to stitched resists.

Spindle- A stick used in the spinning process. Usually a whorl is attached for weight, momentum, and speed of the spin. Finished thread is wound around the spindle. Usually made of perishable material such as wood or reed, ancient spindles rarely survive to the present day.

Spindle whorl(s) - A disc or bead attached to a spindle to aid in spinning fiber into yarn. Usually the only portion of a spindle found in archaeological digs because they were frequently made of baked clay, recycled fragments of pots, and other durable materials. The weight of a spindle whorl can indicate what fiber was being spun. Cotton requires a very light spindle whorl because the fibers are so short. When wool is spun, a much heavier whorl is needed to draw out the longer fibers.

Stamped candle- The application of melted wax to cloth using carved wooden stamps before the cloth is immersed in dye. The wax keeps dye from reaching the cloth. The wax is removed after dying by immersing the material in boiling water. See also candle.

Vine Indigo- See gara or Yoruba Indigo.

Yoruba Indigo- Another name for *Philenoptera cyanescens*, the plant native to West Africa and the source of indigo dye used in Sierra Leone. The term is not used as commonly as 'Gara'.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Indigo, one of the most well-known dyes world-wide, has a history that seems to touch every inhabited area of the globe. The dye has become so ubiquitous in modern life that most people consider it commonplace, if they think about it at all. Few realize that it still plays a major role in the economies and cultures of West African countries and those living there. Most of the artists in these communities remain anonymous outside of them. However, a few exceptionally talented individuals have achieved recognition on a national and even international level. One such individual is Hajjah Kadiatu Kamara, (1930-2003) often called “Mama Kaday.”

In her native Sierra Leone, indigo dyeing was (and is) called *gara*.¹ Taught by her mother and grandmother, Khadijatu created work highlighted by traditional dye processes and design techniques of the Mende and Temne cultures that were an influential part of her life. As the granddaughter of a Temne paramount chief, she might have had the opportunity to experience firsthand the special designs reserved exclusively for chiefs. She has been mentioned in few published works, including *Contemporary African Arts* by Maude Wahlman and an article by Christina Kessler in the November/December 1984 issue of *Fiber Arts*, and her textiles were included in gallery shows at several major museums while she was alive. Yet little detailed information is

¹ The word *gara* is also used to refer to the dye and the plant (*Lonchocarpus cyanensis*) from which it is derived. The plant is also called vine indigo and Yoruba indigo, and is indigenous to West Africa. Reinhardt, “Mrs Kadiatu Kamara” in *Fieldana: Anthropology* (June 1976); P. Jansen and D. Cardon, *Dyes and Tannins* (Backhuys Publishers, 2005).

available about her life. I am very grateful to the many people who helped me in my research and who shared their personal experiences with Khadijatu Kamara. I would first like to thank my advisor and mentor Dr. Maude Wahlman for sharing a plethora of information and images, and for her indispensable help and support throughout this project. I am especially indebted to Khadijatu's sons Mohamed Adams and Saiid Tejan Kamara who shared anecdotes and important information that I could not have gotten anywhere else. In addition, I would like to thank the woman who put me in touch with Mohamed, Dr. Rosalind Shaw. A professor of anthropology at Tufts University, Dr. Shaw made time to share memories of her days spent living with Mama Kaday while completing her field work in Sierra Leone. In addition, I would like to thank Barbara McCann and Duncan Clarke for sharing images and information from their experiences and research in Sierra Leone. The information gleaned from these first-hand accounts, combined with additional background research allowed me to add to the information available about Khadijatu Kamara and to present the artist and her innovative textiles in their cultural and historical contexts. Familiarity with traditional designs and methods, along with complete mastery of the complex and difficult indigo dye process, allowed her to improvise, creating new compositions and designs informed by tradition.

METHODOLOGY

A contextual, art-historical approach forms the backbone of this work. But, a complete exploration will also require a multidisciplinary strategy that includes archaeological, anthropological, and historical methods. Art history as a field has been

somewhat reticent to accept textiles as a legitimate medium.² Far more research has been done by anthropologists on African art because it is an integral part of both culture and day-to-day life. Unlike many other world cultures, art is not traditionally a separate discipline in Africa. Because of this, most of the published information available about this exceptional woman was gathered and interpreted by anthropologists, whose methodologies must be considered in any further investigation. Not surprisingly, many of these researchers' areas of interest and/or expertise were neither textiles nor dyeing. As a result, accounts of Hajjah Kadiatu Kamara's processes and the materials/ingredients of the dyes are incomplete or unclear. In an attempt to clarify and better understand these descriptions, I found it necessary to compare them to the processes utilized by other West African textile artists and recorded by scholars focused on and familiar with dyes and dye processes. Thus, descriptions of processes and ingredients included herein are extrapolations based on the overlap of information from all sources.

Anthropological explorations of art resemble that of art historians and consider the importance of the society and culture in which the art is produced, as well as a work's religious and social symbolism. Cultural relativism, an important element of the art historical and anthropological approaches, strives to minimize ethnocentrism. In the introduction to Melville Herskovits book, *Cultural Relativism*, Donald Campbell describes ethnocentrism as an inescapable bias---whether conscious or unconscious---towards the belief that one's own cultural categories are universal.³ Therefore, a culture

² E.J.W Barber *Prehistoric Textiles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Claire Polakoff, *Into Indigo* (New York: Anchor Books, 1980).

³ Melville Herskovits, *Cultural Relativism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) xiii.

and all aspects thereof must be considered in its own context, without reference to another's standards and definitions.

Archaeological approaches form a minor but necessary part of the methodologies used here, as some information regarding the origins and evolutions of textiles in Africa predate written records. Thus, some basic familiarity with archaeological methods and practices are essential in integrating such information.

Historical approaches complement anthropological, archaeological, and contextual art-historical methods. The symbiotic relationship of each method with the others resembles holism, an approach in which each component's significance is dependent upon the contribution of each other component. Although the holistic approach was originally described by Jan Smuts in his 1926 book *Holism and Evolution*,⁴ the concept continues to be applied to many other disciplines, including textile art history.

⁴ Oxford University, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY & TRADITION

West African textile history likely goes back as far as human occupation of the area does, as archaeological records in many other parts of the world suggest. The making of textiles, whether woven, knotted, twined or plaited, often appears before ceramics in archaeological excavations.¹ As with the investigation of any topic whose origins predate written records, archaeological evidence is indispensable.

The textile traditions of Sierra Leone, and indeed of greater West Africa, go back long before written accounts begin, though the equatorial climate of heat and moisture makes archaeological evidence scarce. The artifacts that have survived are those made of durable materials such as clay and stone. When combined with objects found in adjacent drier areas—such as Jenne-jenno in Mali—and the first available written accounts (1068 CE,) provides a basis for speculation.² The history and importance of *gara* dye in West Africa, the dye used by Hajjah Khadijatu Kamara to create her work, provides important context when considering the culture and traditions pertinent to the artist and her textiles.

Cotton in West Africa

Many of the plants cultivated throughout the tropical regions of Africa were originally indigenous to the savannah. But with the advent of agriculture, people began to bring seeds with them when they migrated. According to information presented in *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, there is archaeological evidence to suggest that African cotton was important enough to be included among the cereal and tubers which early

¹ Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*.

² John Reader, *Africa: Biography of a Continent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 234.

agricultural societies chose to carry with them as they migrated.³ Colonizing Europeans later introduced different species of cotton plants in an effort to increase production.⁴ Estimates as to when cotton was first cultivated in West Africa vary considerably. Linguistic analysis, that is, analysis of word origins and evolution, suggests that “the dissemination of cotton cultivation followed a southward movement with the dispersal of Mande-speakers...”⁵ Archaeological evidence in the form of seeds and spindle-whorls excavated along the upper Niger River dates to 900 CE. The first written description of cotton textile production dates to 1068 CE.⁶ This document, written in Arabic by geographer al-Bakri, also mentions that a typical family often had its own “cotton tree” growing beside the house. This indicates that the plant was both widely cultivated and grown as a perennial.⁷ Unfortunately, as Elizabeth Barber points out in *Prehistoric Textiles*, “cloth seldom survives the millennia. Where it does, it has had the advantage of unusual conditions such as freezing, or anaerobic water logging, or...desiccation.”⁸

European Effect

While few fragments of woven cotton have survived the West African climate, written accounts from outsiders are numerous. Thus, we know that in the 15th century, Portuguese seafarers landed in the Senegal-Gambia area where they encountered (and

³ Reader, *Africa: Biography of a Continent*, 251.

⁴ It should be noted that a number of species of cotton exist and have been cultivated for their fiber throughout the world. In this context however, the main concern is with the fiber and its use; the botanical and genetic specifics will not be addressed.

⁵ Colleen Kriger, *Cloth in West African History* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2006), 95.

⁶ Colleen Kriger, “Mapping the History of Cotton Textile Production” in *African Economic History* 33 (2005): 87-116.

⁷ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*.

⁸ Barber *Prehistoric Textiles*, 3.

subsequently exploited) an indigenous cotton-weaving industry.⁹ In 1462, two years after discovering the Cape Verde islands in 1460, (Figure 1) Portuguese traders began planting cotton there for export to Europe and for trading with mainland West Africa.¹⁰



Figure 1

Map of West Africa Including Cape Verde Islands

http://mapsof.net/uploads/static-maps/lage_kapverde.png accessed 11/11/2011

Around 1525, the Portuguese added weaving to the production of raw cotton in response to the high demand for cheap woven goods¹¹ both in Africa and abroad.¹² This operation came to supply markets in much of coastal West Africa, including those in

⁹ The specific group is not mentioned, though it is unlikely to have been Temne because their territory was further south.

¹⁰ Karl-Ferdinand Schaedler, *Weaving in Africa South of the Sahara* (Munich: Panterra Verlag, 1987), 23.

¹¹ Manufactured textiles have long been universally desirable commodities because of the amount of time required to create an adequate amount of cloth for even the simplest garments. See Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles* and Elizabeth Barber, *Women's Work* (New York: W.W Norton & Co, Inc., 1994).

¹² Schaedler, *Weaving In Africa*, 29.

Sierra Leone, with cloth.¹³ Most traders on their way to the West African coast stopped first at Cape Verde for cotton cloth which was often the only merchandise Africans accepted as barter.¹⁴

Within a century of their first landfall, the Portuguese had a thriving trade relationship with the Temne people. The Temne supplied commodities such as gold, ivory, pepper, ginger and slaves. The Portuguese brought in cotton cloth (European imports initially, and later from their manufactory in Cape Verde), tools, knives, rum, tobacco and weapons.¹⁵ Trade routes of the Temne (as well as their political relationships) penetrated deep into the country, providing European goods to people quite far from Port Loko, where the most trading took place¹⁶ (Figure 2).

Beginning in 1564 with the arrival of slave trader Sir John Hawkins,¹⁷ British interest in the area was based primarily upon trade and the maintenance of trade-routes. Chiefs were presented with gifts of the commodities they most valued—tobacco, pistols and cloth.¹⁸ While the British did encourage (directly and indirectly, largely through trade) industries related to spices and slaves, they had no real interest in local manufacturing. What impact this might have had on the local supply and demand of cloth

¹³ Polakoff, *Into Indigo*, 15.

¹⁴ Schaedler, *Weaving in Africa*, 30.

¹⁵ Reader, *Africa: Biography of a Continent*.

¹⁶ Wylie, *Political Kingdoms of the Temne* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1977), 71-73.

¹⁷ L.P. Jackson, "Elizabeth Seaman and the African Slave Trade" in *The Journal of Negro History* January (1924): 1-17.

¹⁸ Wylie, *Political Kingdoms*, 74, 91.

is not obvious, though cloth is mentioned repeatedly in travel logs and letters by visiting Europeans as a “temptation” or a “commodity of desire.”¹⁹



Figure 2
Map of Sierra Leone

http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/sierra_leone_map2.htm accessed 11/11/2011

¹⁹ Wylie, *Political Kingdoms*, 91.; Ann B. Stahl, *African Archaeology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 292.

Colonization, as well as a long trading history, introduced wider cloth to the area which had a tradition of narrow strip weaving. While the modern textile industry has standard-production widths for yard goods, pre-industrial fabrics were not so uniform. These fabrics averaged between 63 cm and 1 meter in width, or 25 to 40 inches.²⁰ These broader fabrics largely replaced the use of strip-woven or country cloth common to Sierra Leone and other West African nations. Country cloth is traditionally woven by men²¹ on portable two-harness tripod looms (figure 3) “in two distinct widths, about four inches and about eight inches wide.”²² To get a piece of cloth the same width as even the narrowest of European imports, three eight-inch wide strips would have to be sewn together selvedge-to-selvedge.²³ To create a piece wide enough to make a *lappa*, which is a traditional women’s wrapped garment, six eight-inch-wide strips would have to be sewn together to achieve the standard forty-eight-inch width needed.

²⁰ Munro, “Medieval Woollens” in *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles*, ed. D. Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1:312-13.

²¹ According to Duncan Clarke’s firsthand observations, in the wake of Sierra Leone’s civil war women in refugee camps have been encouraged by aid workers to take up weaving as a source of income. Prior to the early years of the last decade, though, there is no evidence of women weavers. (personal correspondence)

²² John Picton and John Mack, *African Textiles* (London: British Museum Press, 1989), 98.

²³ “Selvedge” (from self-edge) is the finished edge of a cloth formed by the weft thread as it begins the next pass or shot through the warp.



Figure 3

Contemporary Narrow Strip Weaving on a Tripod Loom in Sierra Leone

Photo © 2011 Duncan Clarke, used with permission.

<http://adireafricantextiles.blogspot.com/2011/06/tripod-loom-in-sierra-leone.html>

Accessed 11/10/2011



Figure 4

Pounding Dyed Cloth with Clubs

Photo published in *African Textiles* by John Picton and John Mack, p158.

Indigo: Ubiquity, History, and Quality

Indigo's reputation as a high-quality dye with exceptional permanence is well founded and long-lived, as the dye is among the oldest known. Many cultures have a tradition of indigo dyeing using any one of the myriad indigo-producing plants to color textiles or create designs on the skin, as the Celts did. While it is impossible to know when people first discovered its use, the earliest archaeological evidence comes from

indigo-dyed textiles found among the grave goods inside Egyptian tombs dated to 2400 BCE.²⁴ Although the oldest extant examples may be North African, it was West Africa that offered the most suitable field for technical development, almost to the exclusion of every other region of the continent.²⁵ The tropical climate is ideal for the two most potent indigo sources: common indigo, native to India but introduced to Africa by Europeans, and Yoruba indigo or *Gara*, which is native to West Africa. *Philenoptera cyanescens* (*gara*) (Figure 5), *Isatis tinctoria* (woad), and *Indigofera tinctoria* (common/Indian indigo) are some of the many known sources of indican, the pre-cursor to indigo. Correct processing of any of these plants is essential, and it takes time to master the intricacies.



Figure 5

Philenoptera cyanescens (*gara*)

<http://database.prota.org/dbtw-wpd/protabase/Photfile%20Images%5CLinedrawing%20Philenoptera%20cyanescens.gif>

²⁴ Prideaux, *A Handbook of Indigo Dyeing* (Kent: Search Press Ltd., 2003), 8.

²⁵ Boser-Sarivaxévanis, *Recherche sur l'histoire des Textiles Traditionnels* (Basel: Naurforschende Geselleschaft, 1975), 319.

While every West African dyer has her/his own method of preparing an indigo vat, they all follow the same general process. After harvesting, the leaves are soaked and then pounded into a pulp, transforming indican into indigotin, or indigo blue.²⁶ This compound is not soluble in water, and therefore cannot bond with cloth. To change the compound so that it is water soluble, the pulp is added to water with some kind of alkali, traditionally wood ash, and left to ferment for a number of days. The fermentation process removes oxygen from the solution, transforming indigo blue to “indigo white,” which is water soluble and capable of bonding with fiber. Cloth or yarn submerged in this solution will emerge yellow-green at first, but the indigo white soon oxidizes and it becomes indigo blue once again. When done properly, fabric dyed with indigo will maintain its color regardless of washing because the dye is no longer water-soluble. When a cloth is immersed repeatedly for a moderate duration of time into a correctly prepared indigo vat, the dye permeates the material more thoroughly and the color becomes deeper with each subsequent immersion. A cloth dyed in this manner will be far more lightfast than one of a paler shade, which has been dipped fewer times or for a shorter duration of time.²⁷

²⁶ Prideaux, *A Handbook of Indigo Dyeing*, 8.

²⁷ J. N. Liles, *The Art and Craft of Natural Dyeing* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 100-102.

Gara

The Mandinka word *gara* is the common name for *Philanoptera cyanescens*, also called Yoruba indigo.²⁸ Because the leaves of the *gara* plant are the main ingredient in indigo vats, the dye process and its product have also become known as *gara*. Usually, but not exclusively, *gara* dyers are women. Cultural tradition in this part of West Africa including Sierra Leone and its neighbors categorizes weaving as men's work and dyeing as women's work. But in recent years, more men have begun taking up *gara* because of its profitability.²⁹ One account states that the practice of *gara* was introduced to Temne women in the nineteenth century by Susu and Mandinka traders who moved south from Guinea.³⁰ The presence of these groups in the area predates the nineteenth century, though. Traces of indigo have been found on potsherds uncovered at prehistoric archaeological sites throughout the continent. It seems far more likely that it was simply the term '*gara*' that was introduced in the nineteenth century, perhaps along with some new stylistic or procedural elements. The Temne are nothing if not osmotic, according to Kenneth Wylie. His extensive research illustrates a theme of selective adoption of other cultures' ideas and practices to augment or improve the Temne people's own traditions.³¹ The incorporation of Mandinka and Susu *gara* with preexisting dye practices fits the cultural personality of the Temne far better than the rather simple theory that indigo

²⁸ Maude S. Wahlman, *Contemporary African Arts* (Chicago: The Field Museum of Natural History, 1974).

²⁹ Polakoff, *Into Indigo*.

³⁰ Jansen and Cardon, *Dyes and Tannins*, 116.

³¹ Wylie, *Political Kingdoms of the Temne*.

dyeing did not exist in the area until the aforementioned nineteenth century introduction by traders.

Development and practice of *gara*, whatever its method of introduction, has traditionally been the purview of women.³² Frequently, a woman will delegate stitching or stamp-carving to a man, and children often help their mother gather and prepare ingredients for the dye pot, regardless of gender.³³ The freshness of a dye batch is crucial to *gara* dyers because it affects the quality of the finished product and thus, its salability.³⁴

The quality of the dye job is of the utmost importance. In Nigerian markets, customers purchasing dyed cloth believe that the quality of dye made with imported *gara* leaves surpasses that of locally cultivated *Indigofera tinctoria* leaves, and *gara* cloth imported from Sierra Leone commands much higher prices.³⁵ A laboratory comparison of *gara* and *Indigofera* found a 15.5% difference in indigotin content,³⁶ but upon closer inspection, the test was fundamentally flawed. The comparison was made between fresh *gara* leaves and a purchased ball of indigo leaves. (Figure 6) These commercially available “prepared dyestuffs” (as they were called in the study) are notorious for their poor quality, regardless of the species of plant they contain, since they have a lot of sand and weeds mixed in for bulk.³⁷

³² Polakoff, *Into Indigo*. Reinhardt, *Mrs Kadiatu Kamara*.

³³ Mohamed Adams, Personal letter, 2011. Reinhardt, *Mrs Kadiatu Kamara*. Wahlman, *Contemporary African Arts*.

³⁴ Reinhardt, *Mrs Kadiatu Kamara*.

³⁵ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, 123.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 123-4.

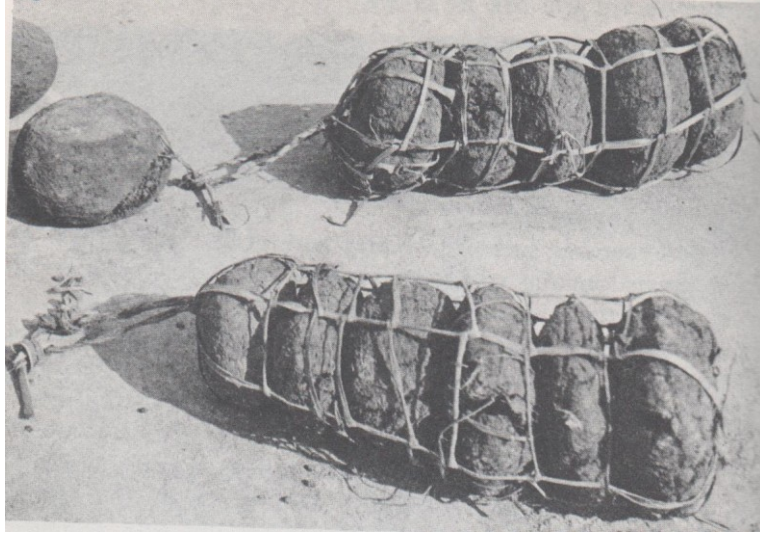


Figure 6
Prepared Dyestuff (Indigo)
Photo © Claire Polakoff, *Into Indigo*, p30

Due to the uncertain quality of purchased preparations of *gara* leaves, like those used in the aforementioned laboratory comparison, dyers prefer to use *gara* they have prepared themselves. The quality of the dyestuff will be reflected in the quality of the final product, and local consumers recognize the difference.³⁸

Dye

In the 1960s, synthetic (aniline³⁹) dyes started being imported to Sierra Leone and became available to local dyers for the first time.⁴⁰ They quickly became popular for a number of reasons, both technical and aesthetic, despite their higher cost. Synthetic dyes produced more consistent results with better wash- and light-fastness. Plus, the new dyes

³⁸ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, 123-4.

³⁹ Aniline dyes (derived from coal-tar) were invented in 1856. Cyrus MacFoy, “Ethnobotany and Sustainable Utilization of Natural Dye Plants” in *Economic Botany* (Supplement, 2004), S67.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, S68-S69.

did not require mastering a difficult and lengthy process to achieve the desired results. From an aesthetic standpoint, synthetic dyes provided a wider range of colors than those achieved using natural dyes. Indigo survived this introduction despite the difficult nature of its processing because customers recognized and preferred indigo's unique qualities which synthetic dyes are unable to duplicate.

Indigo's chief advantage is the metallic sheen of excess dye that comes from the process of laying the un-rinsed, dyed fabric over a plank or log and pounding it with wooden clubs (Figure 4). Sometimes, powdered indigo is added to enhance this highly desirable effect.⁴¹ The material loses this sheen when it is washed, but the metallic surface indicates to the buyer of the fabric that the material was well-dyed, and that the dyer did not skimp on materials by watering down the dye vat. Consumer perception was—and continues to be—in favor of indigo-dyed material which is considered to be higher quality than synthetic alternatives to indigo.⁴²

Mende, Temne, Mandinka, and Susu: Culture and Tradition

The cultures of Sierra Leone (Figure 7) and its neighbors are due to centuries of interaction between several groups. Chief among these are the Mende, Mandinka, Susu and the Temne. The Mende, Mandinka and Susu people are often lumped together as “Mande,”⁴³ a term that refers to language but can also be used to describe cultural aspects or political practices associated with some or all of the groups in this language

⁴¹ Polakoff, *Into Indigo*.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Henceforth the term “Mande” will be used as a general term. When referring to specific subsets, the appropriate ‘tribal’ name will be used.

category.⁴⁴ The Temne, however, speak a language categorized as “West Atlantic,” which has helped them to maintain an identity separate from that of their neighbors. In his book *The Political Kingdoms of the Temne*, Kenneth C. Wylie describes the Temne as “complex and heterogeneous,” the result of hundreds of years of cultural intermingling.⁴⁵



Figure 7

Map of Sierra Leone Showing Approximate Locations of Ethnic/Tribal Groups as of 1969

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/sierra_leone_ethnic_1969.jpg accessed 11/10/2011

⁴⁴ Wylie, *Political Kingdoms*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, xiii.

The migration path of the Temne people began north of present-day Sierra Leone, among the Malinka, and terminated between the Susu and Mende groups sometime before the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century.⁴⁶ After settling among these coastal groups, the area was invaded and conquered by an unspecified Mande-speaking group that Kenneth Wylie indicates probably originated in Mali.⁴⁷ This event coincided with the increase of European presence in the area and was recorded both in written accounts by visiting Europeans and in local oral history. Despite the invasion, each Temne village remained a self-sufficient entity. Groups of migrating traders settled in these villages soon after the first European arrivals and established an extensive trade monopoly with the outsiders.⁴⁸ Originally from areas north of the Temne, these Mandinka clans are probably the “outside traders” who have been given credit for introducing *gara* to Temne women. If this is the case, their fifteenth century arrival certainly predates estimated *gara* introduction. Portuguese traders noted the existence of indigo dyeing as a cottage industry in their earliest accounts, which in combination with Wylie’s research, suggests a much earlier *terminus a quo* than the mid-nineteenth century date asserted by M.A. Tunis at the ministry of trade in Freetown, referenced by Enyinna Chuta in *Employment and Growth of Small-Scale Industry* (1978) and in a chapter co-written by Maude Wahlman published in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and*

⁴⁶ Kenneth Wylie, “The Influence of the Mande on Temne Political Institutions” in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* (1974): 255-271.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 261-2.

Dress (1979). Indeed, in their first encounters with the Temne, the Portuguese noted that many were dressed in clothing that was either copied from or inspired by Mande styles.⁴⁹

It seems reasonable to say that the Temne were heavily influenced by the Mande groups they encountered; and it may well be that the tradition of *gara* originated with the Mande. However, documentation of this influence goes back to the earliest of outside accounts; and it likely extends even further back to the Mande/Temne coexistence north of present-day Sierra Leone. This history of cultural give-and-take led to the amalgamation that characterizes modern Temne society, and thus the environment in which Hajjah Khadijatu lived and worked.

⁴⁹ Wylie, “The Influence of the Mande on Temne.”

CHAPTER 3

“MAMA KADAY”

By the time of Hajjah Khadijatu Kamara’s birth as the granddaughter of a Temne paramount chief (a position named by colonizing British), the customs and traditions of the Temne had become so entwined with those of the Mande that the two now blend and merge seamlessly. Born in Makeni¹ on September 9, 1932, Khadijatu Turay was an only child. She lost her father, Pa Saidu Turay, at a young age and was raised by her mother, Ya Rukoh. To keep Khadijatu from becoming lonely, her mother took in and raised her siblings’ children. Khadijatu learned to trade as a child, selling homemade soap with some of her friends in the nearby villages.²

Education

Khadijatu had a traditional education, which resembled an apprenticeship more than a “Western” educational structure set in a classroom. The process of *gara* dying is regarded as a secret to be passed from grandmother to mother to daughter. Khadijatu’s maternal grandmother, Ya Farah Mariama,³ (d1969) was the “mother of the arts work,”⁴ which she taught her daughter, Ya Rukoh (d1987).⁵ Ya Rukoh then taught Khadijatu the secrets of *gara*. In a 1997 interview with then doctoral candidate Malcolm Coker, Khadijatu said that she began her training in childhood (under the tutelage of her mother and grandmother) by doing “simple tasks using raffia, rope, or thread to tie designs on

¹ Makeni is considered significant in the production of *gara*. It is located in the Port Loko district of the Northern Province of Sierra Leone (see map).

² Adams, Personal letter 2011.

³ Her name means ‘white lady,’ because of her complexion.

⁴ Adams, Personal letter 2011.

⁵ Mohamed Adams, Text Message 2012.

cloth that had been worked out by my instructor.”⁶ As she grew up and her skill increased, so too did the difficulty of the tasks.⁷ She was encouraged to ask questions so that she would fully understand all aspects of the process. Once Ya Rukoh was sure that her daughter had completely mastered the tying and knotting techniques, Khadijatu was allowed to begin assisting with the preparation of dye. The process of preparing dye is the most difficult skill to master, as well as the most critical. If the dye is not prepared just right, it may not bond with the fabric.

Once she became adept at dye preparation, Khadijatu then learned the “basic forms of dyeing.” She told Malcolm Coker, “As my skills improved, she taught me how to create special effects in dyeing. I later moved on to drying, undoing thread and pressing.”⁸ After she had mastered all aspects of *gara* dying, she continued to work and live with her mother and grandmother until she married.⁹

Husbands and Children

Khadijatu married a contractor named Collins Sanusi Kalokoh in 1950. The couple lived in Guinea where Mama Kaday¹⁰ learned to sew and began selling her work to neighbors and in nearby villages. On October 13, 1951, she gave birth to her first child,

⁶ Caesar A. M. Coker, *The Contribution of Traditional Schooling* (Quebec: Concordia University, 2001), 278.

⁷ Mohamed Adams, Telephone Interview (March 1, 2011).

⁸ Coker, *Traditional Schooling*, 278.

⁹ *Ibid*, 279.

¹⁰ The names Khadijatu and Mama Kaday are used interchangeably to refer to the artist.

Michael Senusi Kalokoh. On July 2, 1953, she had another son, John Ibrahim Kalokoh.¹¹ Shortly thereafter, her husband died and she moved back to Makeni with her family.

In 1954, Mama Kaday married a wealthy contractor, Alhaji Sampha Adams, and moved to Magburaka where he owned a large hotel. Their marriage lasted almost fifteen years. After she gave birth to his seventh child in 1968, Pa Adams divorced Khadijatu because “she was having too many children.”¹² By 1970, Mama Kaday and her children had moved to Freetown, where she married Bai Suba Gbassi Tejan Kamara. A “thoroughly unpleasant man,” Pa Kamara was resentful towards his wife’s children from earlier marriages and refused to acknowledge them.¹³ It is unclear exactly why she chose to remarry, but it was likely influenced by Khadijatu’s devout Muslim faith and perhaps the social standards of her community. It is a measure of her success as a business woman, as well as her artistic talents, that she was able to provide for her first nine children, educate them, and still set aside enough money to open a shop of her own along the beach road in Free Town.¹⁴ She had two children with Pa Kamara, Zaniab (her second daughter) and Mohamed Saheed.¹⁵

¹¹ Adams, Personal Letter.

¹² Adams, Telephone Interview.

¹³ Rosalind Shaw, Telephone Interview (December 12, 2010).

¹⁴ Adams, Personal Letter. Shaw, Telephone Interview.

¹⁵ Adams, Personal letter.

CHAPTER 4

HER WORK

During her 30 years in Freetown, Mama Kaday became very well known locally. She also garnered international accolades for her textiles, which were collected and admired by people visiting Sierra Leone from Britain, America and Holland. According to her sons, this group included the wives of ambassadors and diplomats, and these women asked Khadijatu to present her work to a variety of organizations, although her sons could not recall any names.

Dyes

Resisting the trend toward Western “just-add-water” dye processes, the majority of Mama Kaday’s textiles were dyed using traditional, natural dyes made from *gara* leaves or Kola nuts (Figure 8). Used alone, the nuts yield a medium brown. When a cloth is immersed in kola and then over-dyed with *gara*, the color ranges from a dark green to a greenish black (Figure 9). Unlike the processing of *gara* leaves to produce indigo dye, the preparation of kola requires a considerable amount of physical strength and stamina.



Figure 8
Kola Nuts

<http://www.21food.com/products/kola-nuts-44852.html> accessed 11/1/2011



Figure 9

Gara over Kola, Candle-Stamped Lappa

Photo © 1973 Barbara McCann, used with permission.

Once several gallons of the nuts are gathered, they are placed in a large mortar and finely crushed using a heavy wooden pestle, (Figure 10) and then added to water with wood ashes which serve as a mordant or fixative.¹ When Mama Kaday made a kola-nut dye bath, she made sure she was getting as much color from the nuts as possible by sifting through the crushed pieces and removing and further pounding any pieces that were not small enough.² Besides being tedious to make, the kola-nut dye bath does not remain usable for long. Because of this, the cloths to be dyed were planned and prepared well ahead of time, with as many pieces as possible sharing the vat.



Figure 10
Khadijatu Kamara Crushing Kola Nuts
Photo © Christina Kessler, *Fiber Arts* magazine Nov/Dec 1984 p51.

¹ Cristina Kessler, “An African Artist in a Dying Trade” in *Fiber Arts* (November/December 1984): 51-53.

² Ibid.



Figure 11
Kola and *Gara* Combined in a Seti and Taka design
Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1976.

Designs

A cheerful spirit of enquiry and a desire to explore new ways of using old techniques and traditional materials were two of the things that set Mama Kaday apart from other *gara* dyers. She was inspired to combine brown kola dye with indigo blue *gara* by first dyeing a cloth in the kola, and then binding parts of it so that when it was immersed in the indigo, the dye could not access some areas. Khadijatu told photo-journalist Cristina Kessler, “One day I decided to try an idea that I had never seen before. Then I tried combining kola and indigo with my own designs”³ (Figure 11). The implication here is that the combination of kola and indigo was a new one, though it may

³ Kessler, “An African Artist”, 51.

be that this technique was developed simultaneously elsewhere, or copied. There is no information or evidence upon which to base a conclusion one way or the other.

Bound and Stitched Resists

When her grandmother taught her to dye, she used just a few tied or stitched designs and did not deviate from tradition.⁴ Once she began working independently, Khadijatu was able to improvise upon this tradition. “To get an idea, I just lie down and let my mind wander. When something good pops up, I quickly begin work on figuring out the stitch for the new design.”⁵ Each thread-bound design is made up of the combination of two techniques. *Taka* (Figure 11, 12) is the Mandinka word for tying. *Taka* also refers to the practice of folding cloth into pleats, which are then bound with a cord to hold them together. The pleated and bound material is then immersed in dye, resulting in a striped design. The Mandinka word *siti* means sewing (Figure 13) and is used by *gara* dyers to refer to a technique in which cloth is stitched and the thread is then pulled tight before the piece goes into the dye pot. The effects of this technique depend upon the pattern of stitching and vary widely. (Figure 14 & 15) The two techniques (*taka* and *siti*) may be combined to produce a pattern called “envelope,”⁶ (Figure 16 & 17).

Mama Kaday’s children often helped with the stitching. “When we would get home from school, we helped to sew designs for the dyeing,” explained Mohamed⁷ (Figure 18). While she favored stitched resists, Khadijatu did not limit herself to them.

⁴ There is no further information about what these designs looked like or were called.

⁵ Kessler, “An African Artist”, 51.

⁶ Wahlman, *Contemporary African Arts*.

⁷ Adams, Telephone Interview.

The application of wax as a resist was also part of her repertoire, as was the use of cassava starch paste.

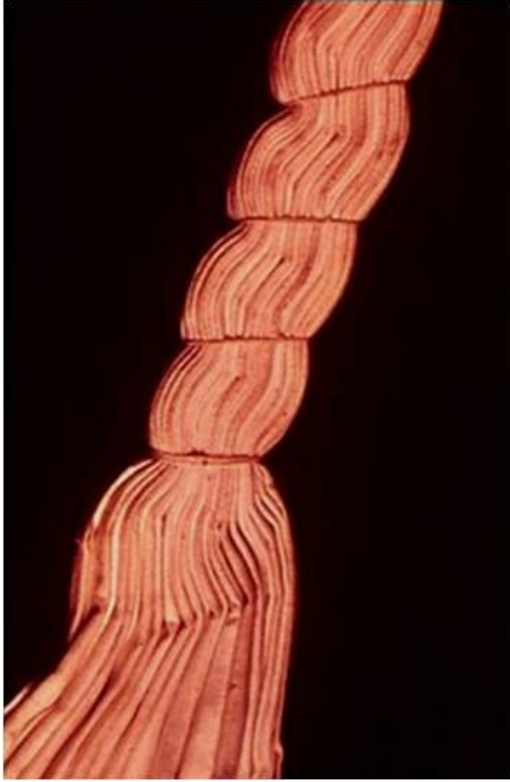


Figure 12

Taka Before Dyeing
Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1970.

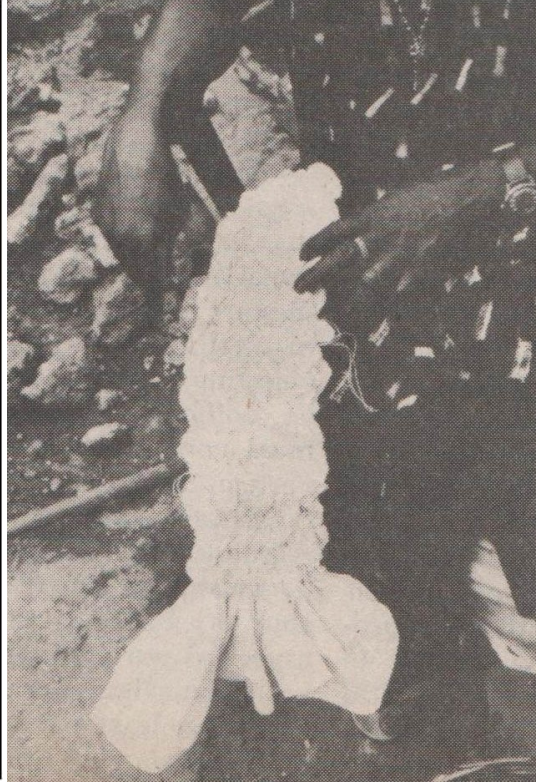


Figure 13

Siti Before Dyeing
Photo © Christina Kessler, *Fiber Arts* Nov/Dec 1984, p51.

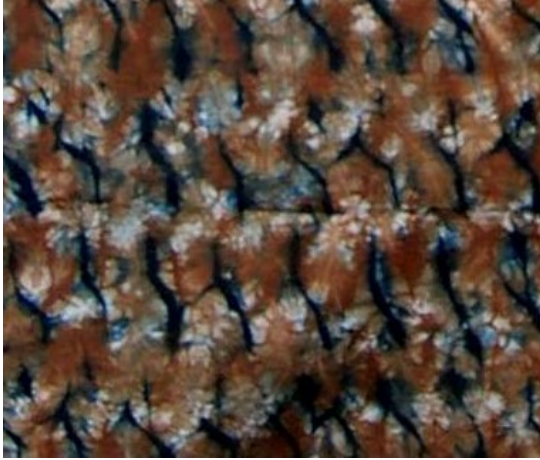


Figure 14

Busy Day Siti

Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1976.



Figure 15

Fish Bone Siti

Photo © Kathryn Catalano-Knaack, 2010.



Figure 16

Envelope pattern before dyeing
Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1973.



Figure 17

Envelope Pattern after dyeing in both
Kola and *Gara*
Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1973.



Figure 18
Michael sewing siti; photo © Loretta
Reinhardt, 1976.

Wax Resists

While the technique is often known by the Indonesian word batik, *gara* dyers in Sierra Leone were more likely to refer to wax resists as candle, since melted candles were the primary source of the wax. According to her son Mohamed, Khadijatu did not like using wax at first, though it is unclear what she disliked about it. However, she was a pragmatic businesswoman, and after seeing that her eldest son, Michael, was able to charge a higher price for the cloths he made using wax resist, she began to use the technique with greater frequency. In fact, Michael was so successful that he was able to pay for his college education using the money he earned making and selling wax-resist *gara*.⁸ To make such cloths, wax was applied in a few different ways. The bristles of a small whisk broom

⁸ Adams, Telephone Interview.

were dipped in the melted wax which was dripped and spattered over the cloth to create a random design called “broom-style candle” or “scattered candle”⁹ (Figure 19). To create a repeating pattern over the material, a carved wooden stamp¹⁰ (Figure 20) would be dipped into the hot wax and then pressed onto the cloth in what was called “stamped candle,” (Figure 21). Both types of wax resists were also combined. (Figure 22) Neither wax nor cassava starch were applied by painting it on freehand. The fact that designs were not painted by hand on any of Mama Kaday’s pieces separates them from the Yoruba tradition of *adire* cloth on which cassava paste is hand-painted to create lavish designs.



Figure 19
Mama Khaday wearing scattered
candle head wrap and holding
freshly dyed example of a stamped
cloth.
Photo © James Wahlman, 1973

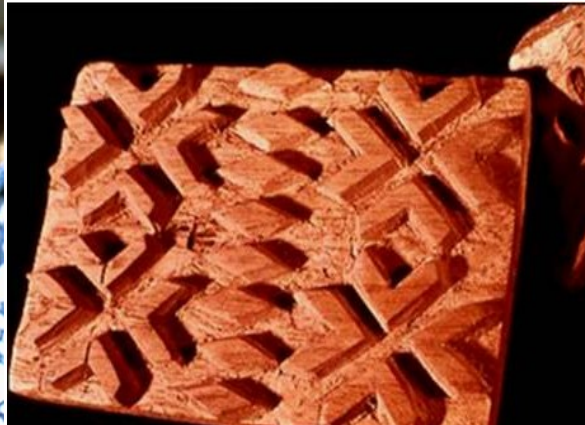


Figure 20
Wooden stamps carved for Khadijatu
Kamara
Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1973

⁹ Reinhardt, “Mrs Kadiatu Kamara”.

¹⁰ After drawing out a design, Mama Khaday would have a local wood-worker carve the stamp for her. Reinhardt, “Mrs Kadiatu Kamara”.



Figure 21
Mama Khaday with candle stamped *Lappa*.
Photo © 1973 Barbara McCann, used with permission.

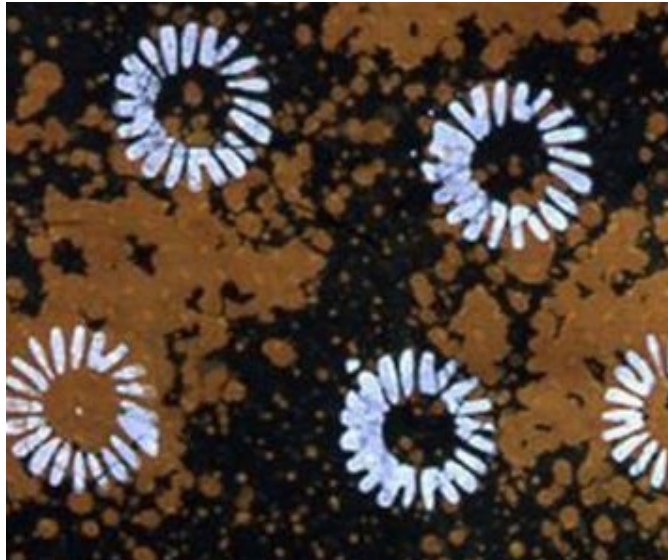


Figure 22
Scattered Candle over stamped candle. Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1973.

Starch Resist

When Mama Kaday created designs using cassava starch, she first spread the cloth out flat on a smooth surface and then covered it from edge to edge with a thick, even coat of cassava starch paste. While it was still wet, she dragged a comb through the paste to create patterns. Although other items, including fingers, might be used as well, the technique is known as *kolinge*, (Figure 23) the Mandinka word for comb, which is traditionally the tool most often used for creating patterns in the starch. As with wax resists, Mama Kaday also combined *kolinge* with other resist techniques, such as *taka* (Figure 24).



Figure 23
Kolinge Starch Resist
Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1973.

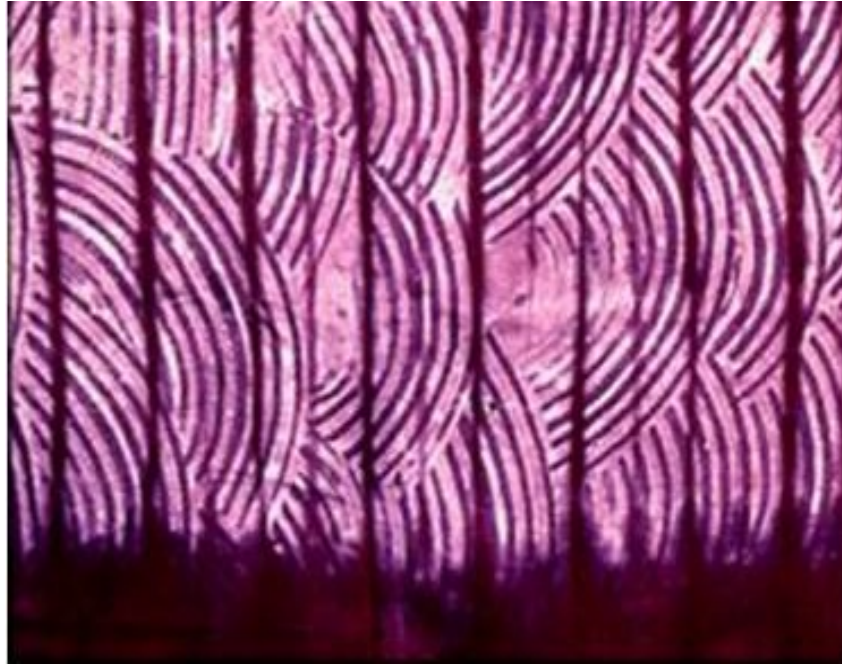


Figure 24
Koline with Taka Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1973.

Fabric

When it comes to choosing which fabric to use, several things must to be taken into account. One of the most basic factors influencing any dyer's purchase of fabric must be whether or not the material will accept dye. Polyester, for example, will not accept indigo dye. Cotton and rayon, on the other hand, readily accept indigo dye and therefore are excellent options. Although Mama Kaday often used cloth that was plain white or ivory, occasionally pre-dyed fabric was used, producing unusual colors when over dyed with *gara* or kola (Figure 25). When choosing what cloth to buy, Khadijatu always considered the kind of material her customers most liked. Lightweight cotton was

not popular because it was viewed as cheap and inferior. Heavy cotton sateen, cotton damask and heavy rayon satin were viewed much more favorably because of their expense. Of these, damask was by far the most desirable material because the characteristic patterned weave-structure gave the final product a texture-based pattern in addition to the dyed pattern.¹¹ Damask was also seen as indicative of quality, and as a way of proving that the goods were not imported imitations often referred to as “Holland cloth.”¹²



Figure 25
Purple and green synthetic dyes over pre-dyed orange rayon satin
Photo © Maude Wahlman, 1973.

¹¹ Maude Wahlman and Enyinna Chuta, “Sierra Leone Resist Dyed Textiles” in *Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed: J. Cordwell and R. Schwarz (Mouton, 1979): 448-466.

¹² “Holland cloth” is so named because the textile mills that originally made the imitations were located in Holland.

Because of the high quality of the cloth used for her designs, as well as the quality of her workmanship, Khadijatu’s customers were often of a higher than average socio-economic class and her products were worn as a display of wealth and status.¹³ Her cloth was also purchased for special-occasion or ceremonial garments. Traditionally, specific *gara* designs would be sewn into garments before being further ornamented with *Fula* embroidery¹⁴ (Figure 26) and worn exclusively by Paramount chiefs, like Khadijatu’s grandfather. This tradition of exclusivity changed in 1970, and embroidery has since been applied to fancy clothing for women.



Figure 26
Fula Embroidery at Neckline of Finished Garment
Cloth dyed by Khadijatu Kamara for Maude S. Wahlman
Photo © 2011 Kate Catalano-Knaack.

¹³ Kessler, “An African Artist”.

¹⁴ That is, embroidery in the style particular to the Fula culture.

CHAPTER 5

LEGACY

In 1999, Khadijatu came to the United States to escape the political upheaval in Sierra Leone. During her time in the United States, she was diagnosed with colon cancer. Because of the language barrier, she did not understand the recommendation of her doctors. By the time she did understand and consent to the surgery she needed, it was too late.¹ Mama Khaday died in 2003 at a hospital near her son Mohamed's North Carolina home, leaving behind a significant legacy as a talented artist and kind human being.

The quality of her work combined with her innovative designs allowed her to win the British Commonwealth Exhibition Award in 1972.² In 1996, she was named "woman of the year" in Sierra Leone, and received a position with the YWCA's Freetown Vocational Institute. Besides these official honors, every student of Mama Kaday's with whom I have been able to correspond hold her in the highest regard and felt privileged to have known her.³ Her youngest son, Saiid, said that his mother wanted girls and women to be successful and productive "so that their husbands are not disdainful to them."⁴ Mohamed believed that his mother was the glue that held the family together despite the political upheaval and civil war that displaced them.⁵ Mama Kaday's character was described in my phone interview with Dr. Rosalind Shaw, professor of anthropology at Tufts University. She said, "In a place where people are not particularly kind to animals,

¹ Adams, Personal letter.

² Adams, Personal letter.

³ These included Dr. Rosalind Shaw, Vera Viditz-Ward, and Barbara McCann.

⁴ Saiid Tejan-Kamara, First Telephone Interview (March 20, 2010).

⁵ Adams, Telephone Interview.

Mama Kaday told her children stories from the point of view of a dog, so that they would learn empathy and compassion.”⁶ Her children returned her body to her home town of Makeni in Sierra Leone for burial.

Conclusions

Although the textiles that garnered so much attention were modern in their design and color combinations, they sprang from the mind of an artist whose foundation was decidedly traditional. Innovation was possible for Khadijatu Kamara as a result of her complete familiarity with traditional designs, methods and materials. Textiles and *gara* dyeing were part of her daily life from birth. Mastery of traditional designs under the tutelage of her mother and grandmother allowed her a complete understanding of how each method of tying, stitching and folding influenced the final result. This experience allowed her to produce designs on cloth that came from imagination and speculation, and gave her complete control over the outcome.

The opportunity to teach others the skills and techniques passed down through history was a way of preserving that knowledge for future generations. A successful businesswoman, she recognized the role that art could play in women’s independence both financially and psychologically. Most important to her was the preservation of a traditional art form in a world that often relies on ready-made products and shortcuts. If her art had only one theme to convey, it might well be the importance of history and tradition as a foundation for future endeavors.

⁶ Shaw, Telephone Interview.

Thanks in part to the attention her work garnered, as well as her work with organizations like the Freetown Vocational school, Mama Kaday succeeded in raising awareness about and interest in the tradition of *gara*. The YWCA vocational school in Freetown now offers *gara* dyeing as one of the fields of study available to its students. In conjunction with nonprofit micro-loan organizations like Kiva, women in Sierra Leone are able to start successful businesses making and selling *gara*, just as Khadijatu Kamara did.

APPENDIX A

Letter from Hajja Khadijatu Kamara's sons Mohamed Adams and Said Kamara, with a note by Mohamed's daughter Ashia Adams, answering a list of questions I sent in August of 2011.

Dated September 5, 2011

I have transcribed this letter as accurately as possible, meaning that no changes have been made in spelling, grammar, usage, or punctuation. Anything I have added –notes and clarifications, for instance- is italicized in red.

1. What was your mother's name before she married?

Khadijatu Turay commonly known as Mama Kaday

2. Can you tell me the full names of each of her husbands and when she married each?

Collins Sanusi Kalokoh 1950

Alhaji Sampha Adams 1954

Bai Suba Gbassi Tejan Kamara 1970

3. Can you tell me anything about her childhood, and stories she might have told you about when she was growing up?

Khadijatu was born on September 9th 1930 at Makeni a town in the northern part of Sierra Leone. As an only child she grew up with a lot of other children her mother adopted (*sic*) so she don't feel only. She use to sell home made soap with some of her friends to the nearby villages. She learnt to trade since she was a child. Khadijatu had a very strange life when growing up except that her mother Ya Rukoh had to raise children of other siblings to enable her only child to have company. Khadijatu lost her father Pa Saidu at an early age so she was raised by her mother alone. Ya Farrah-her grandmother was abducted by a stranger to a nearby country (Guinea) for years and the family thought she was dead but she ended up comming(*sic*) back home when Khadijatu was almost 12 yrs old. Ya Farah Mariama- meaning white lady because of her complexion (*sic*) was a devoted Catholic lived for 105 yrs before she passed away in 1969. She was the mother of the arts work and also a store owner she past the arts of dyeing (Gara) to her daughter Ya Rukoh and then to Khadijatu. Basically they use natural roots and leaves (indigo) and kola nuts which gives the rust colours or brown. The indigo leaves and roots (yanda

maybe wanda, I can't tell which) are fermented or placed in a drum for days to achieve the colour blue which does not wash off the cloth after being dyed. (Gara) Indigo dye and kola nuts is a process that last for days and can be reprocessed to dye more clothes. Mama Kaday also does stamp work with wooden sticks carved in different patterns to create a design or symbol on the cloth with wax which is later dyed and dried. After the cloth or clothes will be washed in hot water to get the wax off and then rinsed in cold water and then finally dried. She use wood stick and a wooden plank to beat on the clothes which is a form of ironing to give the cloth a shinning (*sic*) look and then folded.

4. Do you know anything about her family's history? (Names, where and when they lived, family stories, etc.)

Her mother's name was Ya Rukoh and her grandmother was Ya Farah she was a 105 yrs old when she passed away. Her father's name was pa Saidu Turay and her grandfather's was pa Sathra. The whole family was in to trade and craft.

5. What are the full names, genders, and aprox. Birth dates of each of your sisters & brothers including you. If any have passed away, when and where? (Please include your half brothers and sisters!)

Micheal (*sic*) Senusi Kalokoh- Oct. 13, 1951 (deceased)

John Ibrahim Kalokoh- July 2, 1953

Afisa Adams Nov 15, 1955 (deceased)

Isatu Adams December 19, 1957

Mohamed Adams Nov. 27, 1959

Khadija Adams June 17, 1961 deceased

Osman Adams August 17 1964

Alpha Magai Adams January 20, 1966

Saidu Adams April 3 1968 deceased

Zaniab Tejan-Kamara Jan 28 1972

Mohamed Saheed Tejan-Kamara August 15 1974

6. Which of your siblings have married, which have children, where do they live now and what do you know about each one's education and career. Did they move to the US or any other county, when and why?

Isatu Adams- Richmond, VA—not married

Saiid Tejan-Kamara- Married, one child, lives in Delaware

Micheal (*sic*) S. Kalokoh – 1st son deceased in Africa after he came back from England London. He has one child Micheal Jr he lives in Freetown, Sierra Leone with relatives. Micheal studied political science but on his return he work with our mother to build a store along the beach road. There he showed his talent on the art of batik and painting including most of Mama Kaday's work in the store. Micheal was a very hard working young man and talented but he passed away shortly after mother in 2007. He loved to play the guitar. He was commonly known as daddy mike. John Ibrahim Kalokoh commonly known as Johnny finished high school and wanted to be a sailor. He joined the marine and went to sea at a very early age of 21 years he travelled to different part of the world as a sailor bring many things home and helping the family. He finally resided in the United States in 1976. He lived in the South at first Fayetteville North Carolina and went to an art school for designing. He later relocated to Philadelphia to work and continue his education. John likes music and cooking as well which he does for part time work. He is marriage with six children and these include three boys and three girls. John lives in Philadelphia with his family.

Isatu Adams was the only daughter of our mother for a long time before we had another sister called Zainab. Isatu was born at Magburaka in the northern part of Sierra-Leone when Khadijatu (mama Kaday) was married to a wealthy local contractor who own a magnificent hotel Adams. Called Alhaji Sampha Adams. Mama Kaday had five more other children with pa Adams commonly called. Isatu Adams went to the Mathora girls school at Magburaka and later the YWCA in Free Town the capital city of Sierra Leone. After completion of her high school she work at the ministry of education

7. Did any of your brothers and sisters take up dying cloth ever, even temporarily? Why, who, and what did they do to sell it- did they have a store or what? How did your mom market and sell her cloth throughout her life?

Presently none of us are doing the dying in the United States. Unless our younger brother in Sierra Leone Alpha and Osman are doing tye dyeing and Batik, but due to the high cost of materials it seems very difficult to expand on the work. Khadijatu did open a store at home and sold and teach other interested people the art of tye dying and stamp. Before then she use to travel to other towns and sell them by letting them keep the clothes for a month and (...)

8. Do you know when she began selling her work?

She started selling her work since she was in her twenties and she was also doing sewing and teaching young girls how to sew which was her passion and learnt in Guinea (country)

9. What effect did the political situation and wars have on your family?

The political situation and wars in our country has a devastating effect on the family as a whole. Mon and the rest of the children at home had to flee to the near by country Guinea for refuge. We had to work more to support her and the rest of the family there before she finally came to the United States in 1999

10. What awards did your mother win and when?

In 1996 she won the woman of the year in Sierra Leone

In 1972 she won the common wealth exhibition award in England (London)

In 1996 she won the vocational Institute for Young Women in Sierra Leone to be the *(can't make this out for sure, sent an email to the vocational institute for further info)*

She held and invited to many seminars in Sierra Leone and abroad by the wives of Americans ambassadors and officials and wivies of diplomats as well from other countries

11. Do you know where your mom got ideas for her stamp designs? (Was she influenced by other people's work, tradition, nature, religion, symbols, or pictures, for example?)

She was very competent and had being exposed to art since she was young. During her stay in Guinea on her first marriage she learnt a lot of techniques and patterns from friends and associates, by communication and religious relations she was influenced and do learn from each other.

12. Did your mom have any favorite books or photos?

She did has a lot of photos and albums of her work which were mostly displaced during the war. She loves to keep all documents and important papers, our school reports from 1st grade on to high school for reference.

13. I know she was a devout Muslim. Did she have any favorite passages or stories that you know of, and what were they?

Yes she was growing up as a Muslim she prayed five times a day in between work. One of her favorite sayings was you should work as if you will never die and at the same time pray as if you are dying the next day.

14. How did your mom's dyeing affect your life growing up?

This dyeing did us a lot of good by not just learning the work but also meeting her customers and students from all over the world. This also made us feel love for people and work at the same time. After school we help with ironing, folding, selling, and even hands on pounding the kola nut and taking the wax with the hot water and cold water after the clothes are dyed and dried. Our mother spent most of the money she made from her business feeding and educating us and other siblings. She saved money to buy lands and eventually able to build a store which was use as a boutique at the west end of Freetown along the beach where she sold and displayed most of her work. Despite her hard work, mama Kaday also find time to care and raised her grand children.

15. Can you tell me anything about your mom's pilgrimage to Mecca? When was it and how did she travel there?

Haja Khadijatu Tejan-Kamara was her name after she went to Mecca the June 1st 1989 and she believes that the pilgrimage had to be completed to be able to complete the five pillars of Islam. She flew from Sierra Leone to Jeddah, and whole pilgrimage last for a month and on her returned, there was celebration and joy from family and friends who came from all over to welcome her. <*The five pillars are: profession of faith (shahada), ritual prayer (salat), fasting during Ramadan (sawm), pilgrimmage to Mecca (hajj) and charity (zakat).*>

16. Do you know where your mom travelled? (Countries, cities, etc) and when?

She travelled a lot in her life time.

Guinea (country)

London (England)

USA- Philadelphia, Durham, Charlotte NC, NJ

Canada-Toronto

Mecca

17. What do you most want people to know about your mother, her life, her family, her work? And what is one of your fondest memories of her?

We just want people to know that our mother was a family loving and people in general, very creative and generous. She was a friend and respectable woman and mother to the world. She always loves singing very early in the mornings and waking everyone up. She would not let you sleep until the sun rises. She tell us stories about the times she spent with his grand mother how she used to go to the river to fetch water and reserve it for strangers that come from other villages just passing through. She would like a school of her work in her name or maybe a clinic or hospital to help women with colon cancer to be able to live and not die. Mama Kaday or Haja Khadijatu Tejan-Kamara a very famous (Gara dyer) loves unity for her family and the world. She told us a story of the man with many children on his death bed he asked each one to bring a stick of wood. He took the first stick and break it with his hands but after he collected all the sticks together, and bundles them he gave them to the first child to break but he couldn't but after the bundle

of sticks was passed to all of the children and they could not break them. Then the old man said if you stick together, no one can break you up but to be alone is breakable so I urge you to please stick together as one and be strong. Mama Kaday had always wanted us all to stick together and love one another. She was a very honest and truthful woman very likeable and respected by the community and students as well very kind and generous. Her house was always full with people of all nationality and race.

18. Can you tell me how your mom died and how old she was?

She died of colon cancer in charlotte North Carolina in April 13 2003 after battling cancer (colon) for three years. She was 67 years old. *<Note- if she was born in 1930, she would have been 67 in 1997.>* She could not do the surgery because she did not understand and by the time she agreed to do it, it was too late.

19. Do you remember the names of any of her students?

Miller Vesseo---? Holland now san Francisco USA

Rosalind Shaw Bath (England) now Boston MA

Loretta-Canada (Toronto)

Maude Wahlman- USA

Mrs. Gbabe from Nigeria

Kerren Kirby- USA

Holland + many more

20. What would you like me to know about Sierra Leone and what growing up there was like?

Sierra Leone is one of the most beautiful and friendly countries in the world. But the selfishness of the rulers has made it to a very hungry and angry place to live. Growing up in Sierra Leone was very wonderful and great until the war in 1991 in March.

She was a very loving and caring person. She treated strangers as if they were her own children. Also plenty of people were inspired by her dyeing as well as her words of wisdom. She was truly the most phenomenal person you would ever meet. She treated all of her children and grandchildren equally and with respect and she received great respect

from everyone who came across her. The people who knew lettered to her as “mom” because she truly showed people what a mother’s love is supposed to be like.

-this statement is from my daughter Ashia Munira Adams presently at Winston Salem state university, North Carolina.

Mama Kaday’s students also include the Peace Corps and Kalamaso <*Kalamazoo, MI*> that came to Sierra Leone on exchange programs most of them were introduced to her by a gentleman named Joe Opal (Sorrie his native sierra Leonean name.

Mama Kaday made different types of fabrics including ties, table clothes, dresses, shirts, tee-shirts, pants, window curtains, bedspreads, large fabrics, and old clothes being dyed to new.

Mohamed Adams was born at Magburaka in 1959 November 27. As a child he attended the Ahmadiyya primary school and later the Albert academy in free-town. After my completion of high school, I was awarded a scholarship to the Soviet Union (Russia) in 1970 to 1985. During my time in the USSR I was fortunate to travel to other countries on my vacation period which, includes, Germany, Holland, East Germany and England (London) on my completion in 1985 I was able to return home and work for the Fuland revenue department (IRS) as a collector of taxes. I was able to help and care for my grandmother Ya Rukoh and also helped my mother with sales and other activities I came to the United States in 1993 just before the war break in the city of Freetown on a siminar as an employer of the (IRS) in Philadelphia PA. I was very worried and concerned about my mother and the rest of the family at home because of the war. I had to find my a job so I can help get the family out of there including my mother. With the help of some of her friends and students aboard my mother and the rest of the family was able to flee to the nearest country (Guinea) after a few years, papers were filed and my mother was able to come to the united states and later that year most of the children and grandchildren were also able to come. I got married to my beautiful wife Erica Adkins-Adams in the 15th of April 94. Blessed with a son Elijah Mohamed Adams who is now 14 years old. I am presently separated from my wife since a year ago. I work as a certified nursing assistant with old and disabled people. This I develop love and interest for after I

cared for my grandmother and stepfather in Africa. I also have interest in the arts of tie dye which I wish to continue fir the interest and tradition of the family. I do make tee shirts and clothes. My other brothers at home still do work on batiks and other arts but due to the cost of production which is high, the could not do much. I try to assist them financially every now and again. Presently Alpha Adams and Osman Adams are home in Sierra Leone. Both are not marriage and are working on the traditional work of dyeing.

APPENDIX B

TIMELINE

- September 9, 1930 Khadijatu Turay (Khadijatu Kamara) born in Makeni, Sierra Leone.
- ~1942 Ya Farrah, Khadijatu's grandmother, returned home after having been missing for years. She was abducted by a stranger to Guinea.
- 1950 Khadijatu married Collins Sanusi Kalokoh, the couple move to Guinea.
- October 13, 1951 Michael Kalokoh born.
- July 2, 1953 John Ibrahim Kalokoh born.
- 1954 Khadijatu married Alhaji Sampha Adams, a contractor in Magburaka.
- November 15, 1955 Afisa Adams born.
- December 19, 1957 Isatu Adams born.
- November 27, 1959 Mohamed Adams born.
- June 17, 1961 Khadija Adams born.
- August 17, 1964 Osman Adams born.
- January 20, 1966 Alpha Magai Adams born.
- April 3, 1968 Saidu Adams born.
- 1970 Khadijatu married Bai Suba Gbassi Tejan Kamara.
- January 28, 1972 Zaniab Tejan-Kamara born.
- 1972 Won the British Commonwealth Exhibition Award in England .

August 15 1974 Mohamed Saheed Tejan-Kamara born.

1976 Johnny Kalokoh moved to the United States.

1996 Khadijatu is named woman of the year.

1996 Khadijatu gains a position at the Young Women's Vocational
Institute.

1999 Khadijatu Kamara comes to the United States to escape war and
political upheaval in Sierra Leone.

2003 Khadijatu Kamara dies of colon cancer, her body is returned to
Sierra Leone for burial.

VITA

Kathryn Elvira Catalano was born on February 17, 1983 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She attended Newtown Friends School until her family moved to Boulder, Colorado in 1993. From then on she attended local public schools and graduated from Boulder High School in 2001. She received a scholarship for Academic Excellence from the Kansas City Art Institute, where she graduated in 2006 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Fibers.

Ms Catalano worked as a tailor and custom dressmaker for four years following graduation. During this time she also married Ian Hunter Knaack and began working part time helping to manage rent and records at his family's business. In 2010, Kathryn began working towards a Master of Arts in Art History at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Upon the completion of her degree requirements, Ms Catalano-Knaack plans to teach art history while continuing her research on the history of Indigo and textile dyeing.

Kathryn Catalano-Knaack is a member of the Surface Design Association as well as the College Art Association.

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