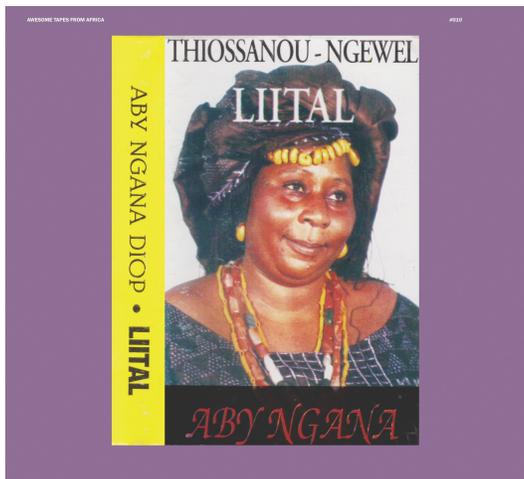


Aby Ngana Diop *Liital*



Senegalese griot **Aby Ngana Diop** was famous for her *taasu*, a form of oral poetry spoken to the rhythmic accompaniment of sabar and tama drums. *Taasu* is typically created and performed by griot women (a class of poets, storytellers and/or musicians), with a lead *taasukat* (practitioner of *taasu*) performing her distinct style of heightened, rhythmically declaimed

speech in call-and-response with a small chorus of female vocalists. (*Taasu* is seen by some to be a predecessor to rap.) Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Diop developed a reputation for being one of the most sought-after *taasukats* in Dakar, performing with her backup singers, dancers and drummers at parties, weddings and baptisms of the Dakar elite, including government officials and dignitaries. Aby Ngana Diop was undisputedly the best *taasukat* of her generation.

In 1994, the Dakar diva released her one and only studio cassette recording, *Liital*, to the Senegalese market. *Liital* was groundbreaking in the history of Senegalese music because it was the first commercial recording to feature a traditional female *taasukat* performing to the modern accompaniment of *mbalax*, Senegal's quintessential pop genre. The combination of Diop and her backup vocalists with their powerful *taasu*, along with the driving, complex rhythms of the sabar and tama drums, mixed with key elements of *mbalax* (such as the syncopated, polyphonic marimba sounds played on the Yamaha DX7 keyboard) was something the Senegalese public had never heard before. But it wasn't only because of the fusion of *taasu* with *mbalax*; unlike in other *mbalax* tunes, the musical arrangements on this cassette are instead peculiarly minimalist and almost trance-like, with static harmonies and melodic figures playing more of an atmospheric role. The cassette became a huge hit, propelling Diop to a new level of superstardom. It could be heard blasting from taxis and from loudspeakers at house parties, weddings and baptisms for years to come. *Liital* bridged the gap between the more traditional *taasu* and the modern *mbalax* sound, thus appealing to all generations of the Senegalese public – and they simply couldn't get enough of it.

When Aby Ngana Diop died unexpectedly on July 4, 1997, the country mourned her passing, but continued to celebrate her music. Other artists such as Cheikh Lô, Thio Mbaye and Lamine Touré released recordings based on some of Diop's *taasu* and accompanying drum phrases, paying further tribute to her musical legacy. Although this cassette has caught the attention of some African music aficionados who have stumbled upon it in recent years, it remains largely unknown to the wider world. Hopefully this re-release from Awesome Tapes From Africa will change that.

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01. Dieuleul-Dieuleul 04:37
02. Ndamé 06:36
03. Yaye Penda Mbaye 05:31
04. Liital 05:01
05. Sapaly 05:00
06. Ndadje 05:16

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Selling Points:

- *Appeals to world, experimental and electronic listeners
- *Precursor to Senegalese rap, related to *mbalax* (Youssou N'Dour)
- *First release of its kind in Senegal
- *Hugely popular among ATFA blog visitors



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