

Moving Together: Sameness, Difference, and Ownership in the Seattle-Guinean Drum and  
Dance Scene

James Byron Morford

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Shannon Dudley, Chair

Patricia Shehan Campbell

Christina Sunardi

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University of Washington

**Abstract**

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James Byron Morford

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Associate Professor Shannon Dudley

Ethnomusicology

In this dissertation, I use interpretive lenses from ethnomusicology, as well as from tourism and ritual studies, to analyze data derived from two years of ethnographic research in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and in Guinea, West Africa, principally in two contexts of participation: weekly dance classes in Seattle and multi-week drum and dance camps in Guinea. This dissertation seeks to address controversies, understood to mean those aspects about which broad interest exists among participants, but not broad consensus. Such controversies include: romantic relationships between foreign tourists and tour staff in camps in Guinea; the generation of community in dance classes in Seattle; musical authenticity and authority in Seattle;

segregation, control, and the manipulation of interpretation during tourism in Guinea; and the touristification of an ethically-problematized ritual in rural Guinea. In proximity to these contested people, practices, and processes, I frame the scene in terms of sameness and difference, following participants in foregrounding issues surrounding ownership, identity, power, agency, and belonging. I find that, while difference appeared to dominate many aspects of the scene, it was the interaction between sameness and difference that bound the scene together across geographies and infused it with value and risk for participants. This interaction between sameness and difference generated the terms and conditions under which participation in drum and dance practice could lead to personal transformation and social cohesion.

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## Introduction

### Background

In this dissertation, I present the findings of more than two years of ethnographic research in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and in the Republic of Guinea, focused on the study of people, practices, and processes in what I call the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene. I generate arguments based on a central assertion that the Seattle-Guinean scene comprised multiple interrelated forms of tourism centered on music and dance in Seattle and in Guinea. Seattle-Guinean music and dance events included a repertoire derived largely from liminal rites of passage. Furthermore, as forms of tourism, the events were liminal experiences in and of themselves. The liminality of these events and referents facilitated the emergence of community, established behavioral norms, and led to transgressions of those norms.

Participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene contributed, not merely to the reproduction of real or imagined practices in Guinea, but to the growth and maintenance of a distinct and viable transnational tourism culture that was permeated by concerns with sameness, difference, and ownership. Here, I use the word “ownership” in a number of different senses. First, I refer to ownership in the sense that participants in the scene concerned themselves over who could own music and dance, typically understood as belonging to a culture. Participants, while producing their own culture, operated with different definitions of the “culture” to which performance practices belonged, variously attributing ownership according to nationality, continental origin, race, or ethnicity. I also refer to ownership in the sense of personal confidence with respect to performance practices. That is, successful drum and dance required participants to own their performance. Finally, I refer to ownership in terms of assuming responsibility for one’s own practices, activities, and impacts. For example, non-Guinean tour facilitators “owned” their

contributions to the perceived negative impacts of the Westernization of Guinean culture as they brought consuming tourists into contact with Guinean artists and families.

In this introduction, I provide background to the study, including information regarding the demographics of the scene, especially as it manifests in Seattle. I include existing scholarship on Guinean drum and dance, both in Guinea and elsewhere. I address terminology used throughout the dissertation, and review relevant literature regarding music and dance from Guinea in Guinean and international contexts, and from tourism studies and ritual theory to define and elaborate the central concepts for my theoretical framework and identify emergent themes. I continue with a discussion of my research methodology, and conclude with outlines of the chapters that follow.

## **Demographics**

The Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene comprised a leaky network of social actors, and individuals entered and exited the scene throughout my fieldwork. Single people sometimes impacted the nature of musical performance and the participation of others in profound ways through their presence or absence, making the scene somewhat volatile. Class size typically dwindled seasonally as participants, especially teachers, traveled to Guinea for three months or more each winter. Younger participants often exited the scene after attending only one or two classes. Furthermore, fresh Guinean expatriate artists arrived in Seattle at a rate of at least one per year. Even with this high turnover rate, there was a core of about twenty-five participants who remained active in the scene throughout my fieldwork.

All of the Guinean-born participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene were men between the ages of twenty-five and sixty, and all worked as professional musicians or dancers in Guinea

before migrating to the United States. In Seattle, however, all but one generated their primary incomes in other industries, including service, construction, retail sales, or commercial processing. These expatriates all had experiences within private or national ballets prior to emigrating, and all worked in some capacity with foreign tourists in Guinea. Outside of these professional artists, no Guinean expatriates in the Seattle area were active in the Seattle-Guinean scene. However, expatriate artists sometimes provided music for events hosted by the *Association des Guinéen(es) de Washington State - Seattle*, a group of Guinean expatriates living in Seattle and the surrounding area.

Non-Guinean participation in the Seattle Guinean scene was diverse with respect to economic status, age, race, and national origin. Participants included tech workers and baristas, medical doctors and massage therapists, undergraduate students and college professors. During my fieldwork, regular participants ranged in age from teenagers to those in their seventies, with the majority being between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five. Non-Guinean participants in the scene identified racially as White, Black, Latina, Asian, Alaskan Native, bi-racial, and mixed-race. While the majority were born in locations around the United States, non-Guinean participants came to Seattle from Canada and Mexico, the Caribbean, South America, and South and East Asia.

Dance classes in Seattle typically displayed overwhelming and sometimes absolute differentiation of participation mode by gender. Women danced and men drummed. While two men regularly danced in Manimou Camara's Wednesday evening classes, most men in the scene, whether Guinean or non-Guinean, did not dance. Furthermore, one woman intermittently participated through drumming at Manimou's Sunday morning dance class. This is not to say that none of the women in the scene played drums. Many women who participated as dancers in

dance classes regularly attended a women-only weekly drumming class and weekend retreats hosted by Katia Roberts. While my gender precluded me from participating or observing these events, several of my collaborators did participate. They characterized these women-only spaces as safe, comfortable, and fulfilling environments for learning and community bonding. Furthermore, they typically contrasted those environments with drumming in the context of dance classes, which many perceived as testosterone-driven, competitive, intimidating, and prohibitively difficult.

The demographics of students and drumming participants in most class settings mirrored the demographics of the neighborhoods in city of Seattle. Abdoulaye Sylla consistently attracted the smallest class sizes of any in Seattle, typically with fewer than five students in attendance, most of whom were Black women over forty years old. The location for Abdoulaye's weekly classes changed twice during my fieldwork, moving from the Seven Stars Women's Kung Fu studio to Washington Hall and, finally, to the Spring Street Center. Each location was within the Central District, the hub for Black American community activity and activism in Seattle beginning in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Abdoulaye's was the only weekly class in Seattle during my fieldwork to regularly attract more Black than non-Black students, with most participants living in the Central district or traveling there from neighborhoods further south in the city. There were typically three or fewer drumming participants at each of Abdoulaye's classes, including myself. I was usually the only non-Guinean drummer present at these classes, playing with one or two Guinean-born expatriates.

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<sup>1</sup> The Central District—also called the Central Area—transformed into a majority Black community beginning in the mid-1940s as Black Americans replaced Japanese-American residents who were interned during World War II. By the 1970s, the Central District population was more than eighty percent Black. As of 2010, the Black population in the Central District had fallen to under twenty-five percent (US Census 2010).

Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré's weekly classes occurred at two venues during my fieldwork. One class was offered at the Velocity Dance Center in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle, while the other was offered at Balance Studio in the Fremont neighborhood of Seattle. Sarah Lee's Velocity classes typically attracted between ten and twenty dancers, while the Balance classes hosted between five and ten dancers. The overwhelming majority of students in both classes were White women.<sup>2</sup> The Velocity classes attracted students between twenty and thirty-five years old, with a significant amount of single-class drop-ins and high turnover from week to week. These drop-in students were often women living in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, as well as those who had purchased class cards allowing them drop in to any of the classes offered at Velocity. The Balance Studio classes typically hosted an older demographic, with dancers between thirty and forty-five years old. Classes at Balance Studio also attracted a more stable group of students, with many attending most or every week for months at a time. Drummers at both the Velocity and Balance studio classes were almost always exclusively non-Guineans, with the exception of Sarah Lee's husband, Mamady, who played djembe accompaniment on occasions when there were too few drummers in attendance to perform all of the required parts.

Manimou Camara taught weekly dance classes at SHIFT Movement Center in the Fremont neighborhood and the Union Cultural Center (UCC) in Seattle's International District. Both of these classes ranged widely in the number of dance students who attended, having a core group of approximately five dancers and between five and ten others who attended intermittently. Both the SHIFT and UCC classes were populated with regular attendees, consistently representing the most diverse racial participation of any classes in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Interestingly, none of the regular participants in the UCC classes lived locally in the

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<sup>2</sup> This aligns with the population demographics of the Capitol Hill and Fremont neighborhoods. Fremont's population was whiter than the Seattle average, while Capitol Hill's was both younger and whiter than the Seattle average (US Census 2010).

neighborhood. The drumming ensemble for Manimou's classes typically included approximately equal numbers of Guinean-born and non-Guinean musicians.

## **Terminology**

I use particular and specific terminology throughout this dissertation, especially in reference to identity. In direct quotations from interviews, personal communications, and written materials, I retain the original terminology of the speaker or author. When doing so conflicts with my own preferred usage in a way that potentially alters meanings, I provide clarifications in the running prose, or in a footnote.

I use the term *Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene*—shortened to *Seattle-Guinean scene*, or simply *scene*—as a representation of the constellation of people, events, and practices centered on drum and dance performance and pedagogy in the Seattle area that form the subject of this dissertation. My use of “scene” here is influenced by the interest in music scenes beginning in the early 1990s in academic studies of popular music, especially the work of Bennett and Peterson (2004). Bennett and Peterson offer three general categories of scenes based on spatial considerations: local scenes, translocal scenes, and virtual scenes, and the Seattle-Guinean scene emerged as a blend of all three categories. They define a “local scene” as:

“a focused activity that takes place in a delimited space and over a specific span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realize their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from others by using music and cultural signs often appropriated from other places, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene” (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 8).

The Seattle-Guinean scene coalesced in the early 2000s around common musical tastes and the arrival of Guinean-born expatriates in Seattle. Local scenes are often linked with others in distant locations, forming what Bennett and Peterson call “translocal scenes” (Bennett and

Peterson 2004: 8-10). The Seattle-Guinean scene was translocal in this sense, as people and practices connected it with distinct but similar scenes across North America (see Chapter 2).

The Seattle-Guinean scene overlapped partially with a larger cohort of West African drum and dance participants in Seattle. However, any semblance of cohesion within that larger cohort emerged principally from crossover by dancing participants. Some dancers who participated in the Seattle-Guinean scene also participated in a variety of classes or performance groups explicitly associated with Africa or the African Diaspora. Drummers, however, rarely participated in both the Seattle-Guinean scene and in classes or performance ensemble associated with other African countries. This was especially true of African-born artists. During my fieldwork, non-Guinean African-born expatriate artists did not participate in classes or performance events centered on Guinean drum and dance, and vice versa. Furthermore, this segregation of African-born artists appeared to be Guinea-specific. That is, while artists from Senegal, Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Nigeria frequently performed with one another in a variety of settings, Guinean-born artists performed almost exclusively with one another. While I remain uncertain as to why, the Seattle-Guinean scene existed independently from an otherwise connected West African musical subculture in Seattle.

By using the hyphenated identifier “Seattle-Guinean” I aim to emphasize the two predominant spatial components of the scene: Seattle and Guinea. Furthermore, this formulation communicates the interdependence of practices in Seattle and in Guinea, which I view as contributing to an emergent branch of performance occurring both in Seattle and in Guinea. With the hyphenated reference, I mean to differentiate my conception of “Seattle-Guinean drum and dance” from the potential “Guinean drum and dance in Seattle”. That is, even as some of my collaborators in Seattle understand themselves as experiencing or sharing Guinean culture

through music and dance, I interpret the scene as emergent, a vibrant and dynamic site centered around a living and evolving practice that is continuously influenced and transformed through the interactions of individuals.

In identifying subject positions within the Seattle-Guinean scene, qualifying adjectives become gnarled and messy. I have elected to use particular identity-based terminology throughout, prioritizing consistency and clarity. I use the term *non-Guinean* to refer to any person or group of people not born and raised in Guinea, while the term *Guinean-born* refers to any person or group of people born and raised in Guinea. This formulation avoids the complications that I confronted as, for example, Guinean expatriates in the Seattle-Guinean scene became naturalized citizens of the United States. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this is inadequate as a description for first-generation immigrants who left Guinea as infants or small children. Although persons belonging to this subset are present in the Seattle-Guinean scene, I do not include them in my analysis.

I recognize that the selection and use of particular racial qualifiers is unavoidably political when writing about phenomena in the United States, and have nevertheless imposed my own judgment by narrowing racial categories in an effort to achieve clarity and consistency. For example, I use the term *White* to describe persons who self-identify or are identified by others as White, Caucasian, or European-American. I use the term *Black* to describe persons who self-identify racially as Black or African-American. There are participants within the Seattle-Guinean scene who refer to themselves or others as “African American” or “African in America”, and I do not mean to contest or undermine any of my collaborators’ personal identities. I impose the referent “Black American” as an admittedly imperfect solution to the puzzle of maintaining the useful distinction between continentally-born Africans living in the United States and

individuals who identify principally with African ancestry and cultural heritage but were born in the United States.

I proceed with many naming and spelling conventions according to the norms within the Seattle-Guinean scene, despite concerns about political overtones. While I will not address all of my choices here, I find it important to establish my position regarding the djembe, a goblet-shaped single-headed drum played with the hands that, along with the *dunduns*, was central to ensembles in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Although taking into account ethnomusicologist Eric Charry's (1996) advocacy for the spelling "*jembe*" as a way to decolonize writing about Francophone West African music, I maintain the spelling "djembe" and present it without italics. I do so in recognition that the word "djembe", while not disassociated from its origins, has emerged in the time since Charry's publication as a word and instrument that is familiar across the United States. I consider it to have entered the English lexicon, and the spelling "djembe" was overwhelmingly used by participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, regardless of their national origin.

## **Related Literature**

This dissertation joins a stream of scholarly ethnographic literature on African drum and dance addressing Guinea-centric practices in contexts outside of Guinea. This literature includes books, articles, and theses by scholars in a variety of disciplines, including anthropology (Sullivan 2012; Gaudette 2013; Bizas 2014), folklore studies (Sandri 2012), musicology and ethnomusicology (Flaig 2010; Kelley 2013; Sunkett 1995), Diaspora studies (Johnson 2012), art history (Cohen 2012), and arts education (Davis-Craig 2009). My work also relates to a larger body of literature that exists in studies of non-Guinean Francophone West African drum and

dance practices in international contexts in the United States (Castaldi 2006; Polak 2000; Reed 2016), France (Noé and Crosetto 2006; Raout 2009), and Sweden (Sawyer 2014).

Mark Sunkett blazed the trail for ethnomusicological study of Guinea-centric drum and dance in the United States with *Mandiani* (1995). Sunkett examines the aesthetic views of Black Americans with regard to drum and dance in order to develop and support an understanding of a globally African aesthetic. While I concur with the criticism that transcriptions in *Mandiani* display misunderstandings of fundamental musical structure (Flaig 2010: 304-305), Sunkett's work remains valuable for its inclusion of historical information on the integration of Guinean repertoire and performance practices into the US context through Black American community centers and groups.

In addition to international and diasporic studies of Guinean drum and dance, my work also intersects with and builds from scholarship on drum and dance practices in Guinea. Eric Charry's *Mande Music* (2000) offers substantial historical, organological, and musical perspectives on djembe and dundun music in Guinea, synthesizing information from ethnographic work as well as colonial, independence-era, and contemporary sources. While I do not cite his work at length in this dissertation, Charry's monograph helped to form the foundation of much of my understanding of relevant music and its place in relation to the broader field of Mandé musical culture.

Within the field of ethnomusicology, my work builds on arguments offered by Vera Flaig in her 2010 dissertation concerning the politics of transmission in the globalization of the djembe and djembe performance. Flaig presents a multi-sited study conducted in Guinea, Germany, Canada, and the United States, providing historical analysis of the formation of the national ballets of Guinea and their place within state cultural policy during and after the socialist era of

the Guinean First Republic under President Sekou Touré from 1958 to 1984. Throughout the work, Flaig emphasizes the centrality of Famoudou Konaté and Mamady Keïta on the globalization of djembe music from Guinea. She asserts that Keïta and Konaté establish their authority through the construction of a dichotomy between the creation of the ballet and the tradition of village-style performance, arguing that negotiations between renowned Guinean artists and international consumers introduce changes to djembe music. This argument was particularly influential in shaping the direction of Chapter 3 of my dissertation, in which I examine the impacts of non-Guinean drummers who authenticated performance practices according to aesthetic parameters that closely align with those advocated by Konaté.

My participant observation was highly influenced by my growing practical understanding and application of music theoretical concepts. Published analyses of djembe-based drumming from a robust music theory perspective are rare, but growing in number. Rainer Polak's groundbreaking work on djembe and *dundun* performance in Mali is especially relevant, and his writings on non-isochronous beat subdivision had at least superficial influence on non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, many of whom echoed his term "microtiming" (Polak 1999). A growing collection of musical analyses of Guinean djembe and *dundun* music exists on the website [djembefola.com](http://djembefola.com). The website contains message boards in which members offer up and debate a wide range of theoretical ideas and concerns, including computer-based analyses of recordings to analyze both sound production and timing. Those posting to the site included not only their own theoretical ideas, but also referenced the information that they gained from teachers and other students. Based on my survey of the website, all active members who post to the message boards are non-Guinean.

I recognize the value of including native scholarship in ethnomusicological analyses. While I conceptualize the “natives” of the Seattle-Guinean scene and related scenes outside of Guinea as including persons from a variety of nationalities, it remains the case that all of the scholarly literature related to these scenes has been produced by non-Guineans. Furthermore, few Guinean scholars have authored contemporary publications dedicated to drum and dance in Guinea. Important contributions from Guinean authors include anthropologist Abdoulaye Sayon Fofana’s monograph, *Le Kania Soli* (2015), an essay by musician Sekou Fofana in David C. Conrad’s, *Somono Bala of the Upper Niger* (2002), and historian Lansiné Kaba’s article on *Mamaya*, co-authored with Eric Charry (2002).

## **Tourism**

I frame the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene as a cluster of activities and interactions that produce an emergent touristic culture, with nodes both in Guinea and in Seattle. By using the term “touristic”, I do not mean to imply a sense of artificiality of experience. For tourism scholars Rojek and Urry, contemporary mobility results in cultures that are more fragmented, hybrid, and disjointed than conventional accounts of Western culture have recognized (1997). They assert that “the ‘culture’ which gets produced and consumed by tourists may not be as obviously artificial or contrived as once was thought. It should not receive the denigration that tourism typically receives since all cultures are authentic and contrived” (Rojek and Urry 1997: 11). My own thinking parallels that offered by Rojek and Urry, and I find that the culture produced in the Seattle-Guinean scene is one that is both as authentic and as contrived as non-touristic cultures, all of which “get remade as a result of the flows of peoples, objects and images” across national, regional, experiential, and virtual borders (Ibid.).

Anthropologist Eleni Bizas (2014) refrains from characterizing participants in the transnational network linking Sabar and Djembé dance in New York and Dakar as metaphorical tourists, arguing that “the length of their stay often renders the place visited into a place of residence” (Bizas 2014: 77). In spite of Bizas’ characterization of non-African participants in drum and dance as being more akin to anthropologists, I remain comfortable identifying them as tourists. This decision is buttressed by Rojek and Urry’s (1997) argument against the usefulness of “positive operationalism” that defines tourism according to length of stay. While many participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene have stayed in the “place visited” for years or even decades, the establishment of residency was non-universal and contested. Many non-Guinean participants who had drummed or danced for years or even decades continued to distance themselves from claims of cultural ownership, explaining that drum and dance were not part of “our culture”, but a part of “their culture”. Guinean-born participants reiterated this notion, claiming drum and dance as exclusively a part of “our culture”. Furthermore, even those Guinean-born participants who earned citizenship in the United States characterized themselves as Guinean.

Ethnomusicological studies of tourism typically fall into one of two categories, reminiscent of foundational debates in the field regarding the relationships between music and culture: music *in* tourism or music *as* tourism. In studies of music *in* tourism, ethnomusicologists tend to analyze music that occurs in touristic places. Notable examples include the majority of contributions to a 1999 issue of *Worlds of Music* devoted to tourism, as well as Rommen and Neeley’s 2014 edited collection, *Sun, Sea, and Sound: Music and Tourism in the Circum-Caribbean*. Rommen and Neely cluster their collection around the concept of “music touristics”, which focuses their scope on “the dynamics attendant to music prepared for

the purpose of performance or sale within tourist networks and, by extension, on the musicians, audiences, communities, and media involved in these networks” (2014: 6-7) . Katherine Hagedorn’s contribution to *Sun, Sea, and Sound* is especially relevant to my work, as she highlights the active religious participation of tourists in her essay on Afro-Cuban *Regla de Ocha*.

Throughout this dissertation, I aim to contribute to an understanding of music-making both as motivating and as constituting touristic practices. In this respect, I build on the work of cultural geographers Chris Gibson and John Connell (2005), who briefly highlight drum and dance tourism in Guinea among similar examples of active musical study and practice by tourists in the Gambia, Cuba, India, and Brazil. Ethnomusicologists interested in tourism have offered relatively little attention to music *as* tourism, and I focus on examples from this body of literature in Chapter 2 where I frame dance classes in Seattle as a kind of tourism “at home”.

The Seattle-Guinean scene represents an extension of the emergence of cultural tourism in the 1990s. Tourism scholar Jennifer Craik (1997) describes this process as a return of the intentionally educational and self-cultivating “Grand Tour” tourism in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries among England’s social elite. For Craik, travel was intentionalized as a means to facilitate national and international relations through language learning and cross-cultural debate. Gradually, the dominance of the tourism industry by the elite and educated who wanted to gain historical insights and new aesthetic tastes gave way to the dominance of the visual, and of pleasure in tourism in the form of sight-seeing. This shift from educational and cultivating to prosaic pleasure-seeking is epitomized, for Craik, by the twentieth-century popularity of sun and sea tourism.

Craik argues further that, despite the enormous jump in the reported importance of understanding culture between the 1980s and 1990s, engagement with cultural attractions

remains low among tourists. This situates drum and dance tourists in the minority (Craik suggests about 5 percent) of those tourists who chose a holiday primarily because of its cultural opportunities. It also positions drum and dance tourists within what Craik considers to be the “‘ideal’ cultural tourist who is highly motivated to consume culture and possess a high level of cultural capital” (1997: 120). Furthermore, participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene were among the increasing number of tourists who seek out active and experiential tourism experiences, traveling in order to actively participate in culture through drum and dance performance.

Emergent theoretical trends in sociological studies of tourism include a “change of emphasis from permanence to flux, from being to doing, from structure to agency, from sedimented social patterns to the process of their emergence, and from a focus on the more stable fixtures of social life to the mobilities linking them” (Cohen and Cohen 2012: 2180). Throughout this dissertation, I sustain attention to changes, mobilities, and processes in the Seattle-Guinean scene, including the process of becoming that occurs through ritualized practice.

## **Liminality**

In the chapters that follow, I apply a ritual lens to the Seattle-Guinean scene, analyzing processes, transformations, and interpersonal relationships in relation to liminality. The concept of the liminal was first introduced by Arnold van Gennep in *Les Rites de Passage* (1909) to describe the central phase of rites of passage in which initiates existed in a state between childhood and adulthood. Following the 1960 publication of an English translation of the book, van Gennep’s interest in the liminal was taken up in earnest by British anthropologist Victor Turner. Both Turner and van Gennep principally used the concept of liminality to analyze pre-

industrial small-scale tribal societies. While some anthropologists have claimed that liminality should only be used in reference to such societies, sociologist Árpád Szokolczai argues that these restrictions are unacceptable, asserting, “Concepts are tools for research; they cannot be copyrighted by the discipline in which they were developed” (Szokolczai 2015: 34). I follow Szokolczai in this regard, employing liminality as an analytical tool in ways that extend beyond its original applications.

I align my understanding of the concept of liminality most squarely with the work of ritual theorist Bjørn Thomassen (2009; 2014; 2015). Building from the foundation laid by van Gennep and Turner, Thomassen divorces liminality from its pre-modern origins, defining it as “something very simple and universal: the experience of finding oneself at a boundary or an in-between position, either spatially or temporally” (2015: 40). People tend to afford exceptional amounts of emotional attention and symbolic importance to these marginal or interstitial events.

Thomassen conceptualizes through a model of experience along the dimensions of subjecthood, time, and space, each of which are further subdivided into three groups or levels. Experiences of liminality can be understood to “relate to three different types of subjecthood: single individuals; social groups (e.g. cohorts, minorities); and whole societies, entire populations, or ‘civilizations’” (Thomassen 2014: 90). The temporal dimension of liminality can relate to “three different levels: moments (sudden events); periods (weeks, months, years); and epochs (decades, generations, arguably even centuries)” (Ibid.). The spatial dimension, which Thomassen considers to be the essential nature of liminality, can relate to: specific places and thresholds (a doorway in a house, a line that separates holy from sacred in a ritual, specific objects, in-between items in a classificatory scheme, parts or openings of the human body); areas, zones, and “closed institutions” (border areas between nations, monasteries, prisons, sea resorts,

airports); and countries or larger regions, continents (meso-potamia, medi-terranean; Ancient Palestine, in between Mesopotamia and Egypt; Ionia in Ancient Greece, in between Near East and Europe) (adapted from Thomassen 2014: 91). Thomassen stresses that the distinctions between levels in the temporal and spatial dimensions of liminal experiences are somewhat arbitrary, and that they should be thought of in terms of a continuum. He further clarifies that his model identifies types of liminal experiences, it does not imply that each of these experiences is accompanied by a clearly identifiable and institutionalized rite of passage as studied by van Genneep.

I add further nuance to my own conception of liminality in analyzing and interpreting aspects of the Seattle-Guinean scene in each chapter of this dissertation, especially in terms of distinctions between what ritual theorists typically consider the pre-modern, compulsory, and society-wide “liminal” and the modern, optional, and individual “liminoid”. For now, it is useful to frame aspects of the scene in terms of Thomassen’s model in a few general terms as they apply to the two primary sites under analysis: dance classes in Seattle, and drum and dance camps in Guinea. In both dance classes and camps in Guinea, the subjecthood of liminal experiences involved small social groups or cohorts, existing between the level of the single individual and the society at large.

In temporal terms, experiences in dance camps in Guinea typically lasted for three weeks, although they sometimes extended for months at a time as participants left their homes and quotidian lives to exist with one another as tourists and tour facilitators. Participation at dance classes in Seattle existed at temporal levels that are not so clear cut. While single classes typically lasted for only ninety minutes, participants returned to those classes week after week for years. In Chapter 2, I argue that this iterative and repetitive temporality generated

experiences of “cumulative liminality” as it extended over time, fostering aggregate personal and social transformations.

In terms of their spatial component, I argue in Chapter 2 that dance classes in Seattle generated a distributed sense of place, whereby participants occupied immediate physical space in Seattle and simultaneously embodied an imagined or virtual Guinea marked by music and dance, modes of dress, bodies, and rhetoric. The spatiality of liminal experience in drum and dance camps in Guinea, like that of dance classes, was blended. In a general sense, camps represented travel “away” to the extreme geographic and experiential margin for non-Black participants and “home” to the ancestral and cultural center for Black American participants; both “home” and “away” existed at the level of the country and continent. And yet, as I explore in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5, liminal experiences often occurred within confined and limited spaces for all touring participants.

Outside of those non-Guineans who reflected on travel in drum and dance camps in Guinea, few in the Seattle-Guinean scene identified their participation in ways that communicated a self-awareness of liminality. However, in conversations with my collaborators in which we discussed the scene as a cluster of liminal events, most recognized and acknowledged that they experienced liminality as I framed the concept. Ritual theorist and theology scholar Sang Hyun Lee (2010) argues that people are not always personally aware that they are experiencing liminality because they “may be refusing to face up to it and thus denying it, or his or her personal circumstances may be such that he or she is kept away from becoming personally aware of it” (Lee 2010: 64). My sense is that participants in the scene typically fell into the latter camp. Rather than denying their liminality, some participants were not in a position to perceive their own experiences as liminal.

## Liminality of Repertoire

The core repertoire of the Seattle-Guinean scene comprised approximately thirty-two named musics and dances.<sup>3</sup> The approximate nature of this count results from the fluid nature of naming practices, with some names referring to clusters of rhythms or dances that participants called “families”. I acknowledge that some drumming participants in the scene would insist on considering the constituent parts as distinct in the cases of *Dundunba*, *Kassa*, and, to a lesser extent, *Mendiani* and *Djaa*. Nevertheless, for my purposes I elect to represent them with the families intact (see Table 1). Though there are at least ten rhythms within the *Kassa* family that are named and distinguished by drummers, they are typically treated simply as variations in Seattle-based dance classes and performances. Participants also typically considered *Dundunba* as a family with as many as thirty constituent rhythms. Unlike *Kassa*, teachers and performers often sited *Dundunba* rhythms by name and performed idiomatic movements to each (e.g. *Dundungbé*, *Bolokonondo*, *N’fa Kaba*, *Denmusoni Kelen*). However, in the overwhelming majority of cases, these distinct rhythms and dances emerged as musical and choreographic medleys that were subsumed under the general title of “*Dundunba*”.

I drew inspiration regarding the potential usefulness of liminality as an analytical tool when I recognized that the core repertoire of the scene was dominated by pieces that participants in the scene understood as referencing liminality or liminal events of the pre-modern sort centered in the work of van Gennep and Turner. In Table 1, I provide the name of each rhythm/dance in the core repertoire, identifying those pieces that represent performances of liminality through their association with historically-occurring or extant rituals in Guinea. Of the

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<sup>3</sup> I include in this repertoire only musics that I witnessed performed at least twice in settings that included both drumming and dancing. This excludes music taught only in one-time drumming classes by guest artists, as well as that performed only by drumming participants at jam sessions without accompanying dance.

thirty-two pieces of repertoire, nineteen can be understood as liminal. These pieces include representations of dance and drum associated with rituals attached to initiations into adulthood or social groupings, marriage, masks, calendrical events, war, and conflict resolution.

Rhythm/Dance Name in Seattle <sup>4</sup>	Liminal Status	Perceived Associated Ritual Type
Baho	Liminal	Initiation
Djaa	Liminal	Pre-Marriage
Djagbé	Non-liminal	N/A
Djagba	Non-liminal	N/A
Djole	Liminal	Mask
Dundunba	Liminal	Initiation and resolution or reenactment of conflict
Gumbe	Non-liminal	N/A
Kassa	Liminal	Harvest
Kakilambe	Liminal	Mask
Kawa	Liminal	Mask
Komodenu	Liminal	Mask
Konkoba	Liminal	Harvest
Kuku	Non-liminal	N/A
Lamban	Non-liminal	N/A
Leela	Non-liminal	N/A
Liberté	Non-liminal	N/A
Maané	Liminal	Marriage
Makru	Non-liminal	N/A
Mamaya	Non-liminal	N/A
Mendiani	Non-liminal	N/A
Sinte	Liminal	Initiation
Soboninkun	Liminal	Calendrical
Sofa	Liminal	War
Soko	Liminal	Initiation
Soli	Liminal	Initiation
Sorsornet	Non-liminal	N/A
Sunu	Liminal	Harvest
Tiriba	Liminal	Mask/Initiation
Yamama	Liminal	Harvest
Yankadi	Non-liminal	N/A
Yolelé	Liminal	Naming
Yoqui	Liminal	Marriage

Table 1: Liminal Associations in the Core Repertoire of the Seattle-Guinean Scene.

<sup>4</sup> A variety of alternative names and spellings exist for some of the repertoire listed in this table. Rather than offering all variations of each, I have elected to include those versions used most commonly by participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, and which I find to be consistent with usage elsewhere in the global discourse on Guinean drum and dance.

## *Communitas*

Among the most crucial aspects of liminality as it manifested in the Seattle-Guinean scene was the emergence of *communitas*. For Turner, *communitas* represents the intense social cohesion that occurs between liminal initiates (1969; 1974), and the communal experience of liminality through participation in the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene generated this bonding. In Chapters 2 and 3, I explore the formation, boundaries, and interruptions of *communitas* in the scene, instigated principally through differentiated participant identities and divergent parameters of authentication.

Turner further defines three forms of *communitas*: spontaneous, ideological, and normative. The first two of these forms, spontaneous and ideological, manifested in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Spontaneous *communitas* constitutes a “moment when compatible people...obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level, when they feel all problems could be resolved...if only the group...could sustain its inter-subjective illumination” (Turner 1974: 79). In spontaneous *communitas*, people relate to one another as they exist in the moment, valuing honesty, openness, and a lack of pretension. In this state, individuals “become totally absorbed into a single, synchronized, fluid event” (Ibid.). Spontaneous *communitas* emerged in the scene through drum and dance in both classes in Seattle and camps in Guinea. Furthermore, tourists in Guinea experienced intense bonding and a sense of unity with one another through shared experiences, exemplified by a rite of passage that I examine in depth in Chapter 5.

For Turner, ideological *communitas* involves retrospective consideration of instances of spontaneous *communitas*. In ideological *communitas*, “the experiencer has already come to look to language and culture to mediate the former immediacies...an interruption of that experience of

merging action and awareness (and centering of attention) which characterizes the supreme ‘pay-off’” (Turner 1974: 80). I observed ideological *communitas* in the relations between participants both inside and outside of class and camp environments as they discussed and recalled moments of collective experiences just after the fact or at later reunions.

Turner articulates that *communitas* exists as a contrasting alternative to normative hierarchical social structures, a “more ‘liberated’ way of being socially human, a way both of being detached from social structure...and also of a ‘distanced’ or ‘marginal’ person's being more attached to *other* disengaged persons” (1974: 82, emphasis in original). I build on Turner’s idea of attachment through shared marginality especially at the end of Chapter 2, where I introduce the concept of *same difference* as a way to analyze and interpret the ways that perceptions of mutual non-ownership influence social cohesion and community belonging.

### **Sameness and Difference**

At its heart, this dissertation is a consideration of sameness and difference. In framing the Seattle-Guinean scene according to sameness and difference, I am especially influenced by the work of musicologist Kofi Agawu. Agawu argues that the field of ethnomusicology is founded on difference, contributing to “the production of cultural difference and notions of otherness” (2003: 153). He shows that ethnomusicologists have consistently approached African music with a presumption of difference, especially from Western Art Music, impacting analysis and representation in ways that reinforce the marginality of African music in the academy. Agawu acknowledges that differences exist, and that, from a semiotic perspective, differentiation is the only way to approach meaning. However, he urges ethnomusicologists to resist the dominance of difference by initiating musical study with a presumption of sameness.

I applied a presumption of sameness in my participant observation, both in the Pacific Northwest and in Guinea. During my fieldwork, as I became familiar with the core repertoire, I attempted to look for connections between the various styles and interpretations of musicians. This proved to be fruitful in that it allowed me to quickly integrate into a wide variety of performance contexts, including jam sessions in Seattle populated by non-Guineans interested in preserving and replicating historical practices as well as all-Guinean contemporary professional ensembles hired to perform at events in Conakry.

Motivated by Agawu, my attention to sameness led me to recognize that participants overwhelmingly approached the Seattle-Guinean scene from a framework of difference. Participants referred to “the way they do it over there” or “the way it’s really done”, differentiating dance classes in Seattle from imagined, witnessed, or experienced practices in Guinea. They did not acknowledge the striking similarities between, for example, the procedures of weekly dance classes in Seattle and daily rehearsals of private ballets in Conakry. Further, during camps in Guinea, tourists, staff, and facilitators almost universally emphasized the difference of experiences in Guinea from those in the tourists’ homelands.

Given the centrality of difference in the Seattle-Guinean scene, I found it both impractical and undesirable to altogether avoid considerations of difference in my analysis and representation. Instead, I emphasize both sameness and difference in considerations of identity, practice, and perception. With respect to the ways that sameness and difference interrelate, I take considerable influence from Michel Foucault’s (1977; 1994) conceptualizations of power and knowledge in the constitution of the Self through representations of the Other, as well Edward Said’s (1979) articulation of the ways that those representations can be wide-reaching, unrealistic, negative, and persistent.

Sociologist Thomas Inglis argues that the “desire to be the same as but different from others is, like the desire to bond and belong, a universal feature of human society” (Inglis 2007: 2). Inglis aligns himself with Durkheim, asserting that the most fundamental interrelations between sameness and difference begin with “seeing and understanding ourselves and other members of our family, clan, group, community or nation as similar, and others as different” (Inglis 2007: 5). Inglis identifies an important difficulty with studying similarity, identification, and belonging: they are variously permanent or fleeting. I emphasize that these aspects of sameness are also sometimes partial and contested.

While derived independently, my conception of “same difference” includes some parallels with that of Inglis. When Inglis refers to “same difference”, he is fundamentally interested in the tension between identity as part of social groups and the desire for distinctiveness among members of those groups, scaling that tension from the level of the individual to that of the nation. In my usage, “same difference” refers both to people and practices, focusing on interactions of sameness and difference in the establishment of ownership and community cohesion (see Chapter 2). I include in the term “same difference” a sense of mutual different-ness in relation to a specific Other, variously constructed in terms of race, ethnicity, or national origin. In essence, this manifestation of same difference constituted the interaction of boundaries of social belonging. This inverts Inglis’ usage in the sense that the primary tension emerged between identity as a member of social groups and the imposition of distinctiveness by other members of those groups.

## Methods

In preparing this dissertation, I employed methodological choices informed by Luke Eric Lassiter's collaborative approach to ethnography (1998; 2005). Lassiter defines collaborative ethnography as a model related to the dialogical or reciprocal approach that "fully embraces dialogue in both ethnographic process *and* ethnographic writing" (1998: 10). Lassiter differentiates collaborative ethnography from traditional ethnography in two ways. First, collaborative ethnography focuses on "developing interpretations that are collaboratively derived and writing descriptions that are multivocal" (1998: 11). Second, the ethnographer and consultants construct and rework the text through dialogues. Lassiter uses the ethnographic text as a "centerpiece for evolving conversation", allowing contributors to develop deep interpretations that maintain relevance for both academia and consultants (1998: 11). Folklorist Elaine Lawless influenced Lassiter in her "reciprocal ethnography", in which "[t]he scholar presents her interpretations, the native responds to that interpretation; the scholar then has to adjust her lens and determine why the interpretations are so different and in what ways and why they are and are not compatible" (1992: 310). I applied Lawless' strategy throughout my fieldwork, collecting data on my collaborators' reactions to my interpretations of events and actions.

Lassiter argues for a reciprocal or collaborative ethnographic methodology that "moves control of textual representation away from the lone ethnographer and toward the dialogue between ethnographer and consultants" (1998: 11). In the course of crafting this dissertation, I stopped short of relinquishing control of the writing process to my collaborators. I developed first drafts of some chapters from papers written for examinations and conference presentations. A handful of participants read and commented on those papers, and I revised content according

to their feedback. I also instigated informal conversations about the issues I raise in this dissertation, especially following the completions of first drafts of each chapter. I address my dialogic process in more detail later in this chapter.

I am further influenced by Lassiter's advocacy for a move away from an ethnographic position of "participant observation" and toward a critical "observation of participation" (1998: 13). Here, he refers to a methodological approach in which the ethnographer participates actively throughout, observing along the way rather than shifting to a position of disengaged or emotionally cool observer/researcher. Lassiter's approach compliments that of anthropologist Yvonne Daniel (1995), who categorizes herself as an "observing participant" to highlight the dancing body as a site of ethnographic research. Like both Lassiter and Daniel, I maintained active participation throughout my fieldwork, principally through drumming; the overwhelming majority of my observation of others occurred as I was actively participating musically and socially. Furthermore, I follow Lassiter in the desire to emphasize activity rather than identity.

I have elected to write this dissertation in the past tense. Even in light of more recent arguments supporting writing in the ethnographic present (Hastrup 1990), I retain anthropologist Johannes Fabian's concern that doing so imposes artificial timelessness (1983). While my writing is almost wholly concerned with issues emerging during the time of my research, I have little doubt that the scene will change radically, and in ways that I am unable to predict. Writing in the ethnographic past, I sacrifice communicating a sense of immediacy to my readers in order to emphasize the churning and dynamic nature of the Seattle-Guinean scene, and the temporal specificity of my research (Murchison 2010). I intentionally restrict my analyses, interpretations, and evaluations to the scene as it existed during my fieldwork, framing it according to the scene's "current history" (Moore 1983).

## Fieldwork

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork between 2014 and 2016, although I participated in the Seattle-Guinean scene regularly beginning in the autumn of 2011. During the time of my fieldwork, I played drums to accompany dance classes in Seattle, participated in weekend-long conferences and retreats hosted in the Pacific Northwest, and attended in countless jam sessions, life events, and celebrations with musicians and dancers in and around the Seattle area. I traveled throughout the Pacific Northwest of the United States, performing and accompanying dance classes taught by artists from Seattle across parts of Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Idaho. I also became a regular performer with Manimou Camara's *Denbaya*, a group populated primarily by non-Guinean dancers and musicians who were Manimou's students, or who played for his dance classes.<sup>5</sup> In Guinea, I conducted fieldwork in three tourism camps between December 2015 and March 2016, playing for tourists' dance classes, taking group and individual drumming lessons, and performing with camp staff at local ceremonies.

In Seattle, the bulk of my musical participation during fieldwork consisted of accompanying dance classes playing djembe or *dundun*. I played for every weekly dance class offered in Seattle that featured music and dance associated with Guinea. These classes included between two and four per week taught by Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré, two dance classes per week with Manimou Camara, and, prior to his passing in August 2015, one class per week with Abdoulaye "Jimmy" Sylla. I also accompanied intermittent classes taught by Frank Anderson and Afua Kouyate. In total, I played for more than three hundred classes in Seattle during my fieldwork, not including those that were a part of festivals, retreats, or workshops.

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<sup>5</sup> *Denbaya* sometimes included local Guinean-born musicians in performances, but not during rehearsals.

While I participated in many drum classes during my fieldwork, they were not a central part of my participant observation with the exception of my time in Guinea.<sup>6</sup> Both Guinean-born Manimou Camara and non-Guinean Katia Roberts offered weekly drumming classes during my fieldwork. Both Katia and Manimou offered classes that coincided with weekly dance classes during my fieldwork. As a general rule, I prioritized dance classes attending drum classes only on the rare occasions when dance teachers canceled their classes. At regional weekend-long workshops or conferences, I participated in both drum and dance classes as an accompanying musician, dancing only occasionally. I consistently participated in one-time drum classes offered by Guinean-born artists visiting from outside of Seattle, as facilitators scheduled them at times that did not coincide with dance classes.

I prioritized dance classes over drumming classes during my fieldwork for three principal reasons. First, dance classes provided opportunities for me to interact regularly with a much larger cross-section of participants. Weekly drum classes that I did attend never attracted more than three students, most of whom were beginners. Second, drumming for dance classes allowed me to learn about the local repertoire and style in an immersive way, divorced from extended pedagogy. That is, I favored situations featuring opportunities to learn without being taught. Finally, dance classes allowed me the opportunity to experience connections between music and dance, which were almost always entirely absent from drum classes. This connection proved to be crucial in improving my technical facility and functional musical knowledge.

In Guinea, the musical dimension of my participant observation differed based on the camps in which I was situated. Traveling with Manimou Camara's Dounia Djembe camps, both

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<sup>6</sup> I did participate in a handful of drumming classes prior to my fieldwork, but most of my initial learning in Seattle occurred in informal lessons taught by Tyler Richart. Equally instructive were many early immersive experiences playing in dance classes, beginning with those taught by Frank Anderson. For the first two years of my involvement in the scene, I almost never played anything other than *kenkeni* (high dundun) or *sangban* (medium dundun). During my fieldwork, I regularly played all of the dundun parts and both accompanying and solo djembe, depending on the other drummers present.

music and dance classes occurred twice a day, Monday through Friday, for ninety minutes. I was the only student in the music classes, which amounted to private lessons taught by Sorel “Soriba” Diabaté and accompanied by Ousmane “Koiman” Sylla, Oumar “Mario” Keïta, and sometimes Alhassane Bangoura, who was hired as one of the two dance instructors. While Soriba taught me *dundun* parts for all of the repertoire that we covered in lessons, he focused overwhelmingly on modeling increasingly long solo djembe phrases, which I memorized and performed both along with him and alone for assessment. In dance classes, I joined the ensemble, usually playing djembe accompanying parts while Soriba marked the dance steps and choreographic changes. Depending on the dance repertoire being taught, I sometimes played one of the *dundun* parts, while in others I took over the solo djembe duties from Soriba. Between dance classes and drum lessons, I typically played djembe for six hours per weekday at the Dounia Djembe camp.

My musical participation differed radically in the two One World Dance and Drum camps facilitated by Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré and Mamady Mansaré. In the Conakry-based “coastal” camp, I played for one or two dance classes and one drum class per weekday. When the drum classes first started, I played along with the tourists under the instruction of Koungbana Conde. After the first ten days of the camp, it became apparent that Koungbana had suffered an injury to his finger that rendered him unable to successfully teach. Sarah Lee and Mamady arranged to bring in Mohamed Bangoura to teach in his place. At Mamady and Sarah Lee’s request, Mohamed split his daily classes, working with me alone for the first half and all of the tourists together for the second half. Similar to my lessons with Soriba in the Dounia Djembe camp, Mohamed focused entirely on teaching me sequences of solo djembe phrases to a variety of musics, linking all of them together into a medley arrangement. Mohamed only participated

in the camp during drum classes, and did play to accompany dance classes. Instead, a group of five live-in accompanying musicians played for dance classes, along with me and between one and four additional non-musical tour staff and family members in the Mansaré compound where the camp took place. I also participated along with tourists in song classes on most weekdays, typically taught by facilitator Mamady Mansaré. On weekend evenings and nights, I typically played with members of the camp staff at a variety of celebratory fetes in Conakry.

During the One World Dance and Drum Inland camp, neither Koungbana nor Mohamed were capable of traveling with the group on the trip from Conakry to Kissidougou and back. The facilitators shifted drum teaching duties to their five full-time accompanying musicians: Facinet “Foté” Bangoura, Mohamed “Boy” Camara, Sékou “Bobo” Doumbouya, Mohamed Kouyaté, and Ibrahima Sory “Sombory” Touré. Dance and drum classes happened irregularly during this inland camp, at most one time per day. In addition to playing along with the tourists in the drum classes, I played for all dance classes. I also played for any events that occurred featuring live drumming music, including welcoming celebrations in the area near the city of Kissidougou, and, as I expound upon in Chapter 5, a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood in the village of Sundiya.

My participation in classes in Seattle included important limitations regarding data collection. Specifically, teachers in Seattle universally declined my request to make video recordings of their classes, offering several reasons. First, teachers in the scene refused any requests to videotape based on ideas about their choreographies as a proprietary economic product. If a person videotaped a class, teachers argued, then the student would learn from that recording and be less likely to return to another class. Similarly, teachers worried that students would share videos through social media, making it more difficult to offer new and desirable

choreography when traveling to teach in different communities. Teachers in the Seattle-Guinean scene cited both of these reasons in discussions about the possibility of videotaping as a part of my data collection. They remained unconvinced by my assurances that I would continue playing for all classes and would not share the videos with anyone, preferring to uphold a general ban on recording with a handful of exceptions. These policies were not exclusive to teachers in the Seattle-Guinean scene; they were typical across the United States. One teacher had a different kind of economically-driven objection to my filming classes, extending the restriction to both video and still photography. She asserted that her business model depended in part upon students feeling uninhibited and emotionally open during classes. For her, a camera could potentially generate self-consciousness among students, resulting in diminished buy-in and subsequent drop out. I adhered to teachers' wishes and did not videotape classes. Instead, I relied upon my notes, audio recordings, and the still and video photography produced and shared publicly by or on behalf of the teachers themselves.

In Guinea, I was far less restricted in terms of facilitators imposing limitations on field recordings and data collection. With Dounia Djembe, Manimou gave me blanket permission to make video or audio recordings of any music-making that occurred within the tour group. In cases when the tour group attended performances by other musicians, I consistently asked Manimou to request permission from hosts to be sure that recording was appropriate. In every case, I was given full permission to record all events. In addition, Manimou assisted me in organizing interviews, acting as interpreter in some cases. Data collection in the One World Dance and Drum camps was similar, though with a few more restrictions. Part of the agreement that I made with the One World facilitators regarding my including their camps in my research was that I would abstain from inundating tourists with questions about their experience and from

formally interviewing the tourists and tour staff during the course of the camp. Additionally, the One World tour group visited *Les Ballets Africains* rehearsals and an open dance class taught by Youssouf Koumbassa where video recording was prohibited. Otherwise, I was free to record, and often encouraged to capture particular people or events to share with the facilitators.

## **Interviews**

I conducted forty-four formal semi-structured interviews in the Pacific Northwest and in Guinea. The majority of these interviews were individual, while two were conducted with husband and wife couples, and one interview in Guinea was conducted with a group of ten dancers and musicians. I conducted interviews in English and in French, as well in Sosoxui with the aid of Manimou Camara as an interpreter. Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and three hours in duration, with most lasting approximately ninety minutes. I recorded all interviews and transcribed them in full. My concern for accurately representing the Seattle-Guinean scene led me to check and re-check concepts and ideas with a variety of participants. In an attempt to ensure the validity of the observations and analysis, minimize any potential harm, and add depth, I encouraged participants with whom I have conducted interviews to read and provide feedback on any passages in which I centered their voices. I gave all interview participants assurance that I would not include their names in quotations from interviews without their permission. I have changed some interviewees names to provide them anonymity when requested. I also altered the ages, genders, and locations of some individuals to provide additional anonymity when those details were not pertinent to immediate or generalized analysis. In addition to formal interviews, I engaged in countless informal conversations with participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene about my thoughts and findings regarding the scene. These

conversations strongly shaped my thinking, leading to analytical refinements and prioritization of particular issues.

In the United States, I interviewed people who had been a part of the Seattle-Guinean scene since the time that it coalesced, those who had once been a part of the scene and no longer participated, and those who joined the scene during my research. I provided all of my interview participants in the US with a written list of open-ended interview items intended as launching points for personalized discussions. I began each interview by encouraging the participant and prompting further discussion in a conversational style. This proved to be a useful way for me to understand the scene through the aspects of participation that individuals chose to highlight and upon which they elaborated. In my later interviews, I often supplemented the pre-composed interview items by prompting interviewees to discuss issues that emerged during previous conversations with that interviewee, or that arose in interviews with other participants.<sup>7</sup>

In interviews with Guinean-born participants, with few exceptions, I found that a semi-structured interview style based on a set of open-ended items was unproductive. My Guinean-born interviewees typically gave very brief responses in formal settings. Further, when I asked questions regarding opinions or personal interpretations during formal interviews, Guinean-born participants sometimes gave responses that were obviously inconsistent with—and, occasionally, directly contradictory to—those offered during informal discussions. This was especially the case when a Guinean-born man older than the interviewee came within earshot. Furthermore, I found it challenging to conduct formal interviews with individuals in Guinea in absolute privacy with my collaborators. If an older man was nearby, it was common for them to interject and speak first, and then for the younger interviewee to simply agree with that elder. This was the

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<sup>7</sup> When integrating information or issues that had arisen during previous interviews, I consistently maintained the anonymity of previous interviewees.

case, even when the statements of the elder man directly opposed those previously stated to me by younger interviewees. One of my Seattle-born collaborators, Mamady Mansaré, asserted that Mandé culture dictates that older men speak first, and speak for, both women and younger men. This resonated with the overwhelming majority of public speaking that I witnessed among Guineans, both in the US and in Guinea. As such, I do not interpret the contradictions between the statements of interviewees during informal and formal settings as deceptions, but as examples of culturally appropriate dishonesty or partiality.

Based on trial and error, I found it more effective to mobilize a different tactic when interviewing some Guinean-born participants. Rather than framing interview items as topics to discuss, I began by asserting a claim and then asking the interviewee to confirm that claim. In doing so, I was conscious of the fact that some interviewees, especially in Guinea, might agree with something that I suggested based on our disparate economic resources and the associated power differential. Nevertheless, I found that my interviewees openly disagreed with my assertions, or provided qualifying details when they agreed with my statements in a general sense.

Aiming toward a dialogic ethnography, I communicated with most interviewees multiple times in order to clarify my interpretation of statements that they made or concerns that they raised. In most cases, interviewees elected to respond briefly through in-person or telephone conversations. Other interviewees requested that I send them electronically written requests for clarification, and they responded through email with additional information or corrections. In a handful of cases, my requests for clarification from individuals resulted in second and even third interviews. These additional interviews sometimes included responses to my interpretations from previous interview sessions. In other instances, interviewees found that the process of the interview led them to reflect on their experiences in new ways, resulting in a change or

crystallization of perspective. This extended dialogue was productive in that it allowed me to better understand and represent the perspectives of my interviewees, and to revisit topics about which I had developed new perspectives. In addition to these advantages, my methodology also introduced serious challenges.

### **Challenges in the dialogue**

Unlike some ethnomusicologists, I dissolved easily into the “field” in Seattle. I was unremarkable in the scene in most ways, including my race (White), age (thirties), and gender (man). Most of the regular participants in the scene knew me and my interests prior to my beginning the official period of my fieldwork, as I had participated in these classes for more than two years. However, some dance classes had exceptionally high student turnover, and many new regulars came into the scene as I collected data. Because my research activity was not obvious by my presence, I intentionally spoke about my work upon meeting new participants. I also consistently brought up my research with long-time participants, not only to receive feedback, but also to remind others of my position. Although I distanced myself from others as I characterized my participation as distinct, I invested myself emotionally in developing personal relationships. I interacted with scene participants most often through music and dance, but I also shared and laughed with some of them over food and drinks after classes at least once each week. I attended weddings, funerals, birthdays, naming ceremonies, and other life events. Some participants welcomed me into their homes for holidays, introducing me to their friends and families. Others regularly called me to vent about their professional or interpersonal problems. Over time, I opened up more and more about my own thoughts and feelings, both professional and personal. In short, I developed friendships.

In my dissertation, I aim toward an “objective” account of the Seattle-Guinean scene in the sense presented by sociologist Bruno Latour in his work on actor-network theory (ANT). For Latour, “[t]he word does not refer to the traditional sense of matters of fact—with their cold, disinterested claims to ‘objectification’—but to the warm, interested, controversial building sites of matters of concern” (2005: 125). Objectivity is achieved “either by an objectivist style...or by the presence of many objectors” (Latour 2005: 125). In my fieldwork, I strove toward objectivity by the second of these two means. That is, I intentionally investigated controversies: concepts and practices for which interest—but not consensus—existed among my collaborators. I did not undergo this effort as a way to verify any particular truth claim. Neither did I seek out controversy in order to “air dirty laundry”, nor even principally to critique. Instead, I followed Latour in approaching controversies and their connections as a strategy to trace out vectors of meaning and potential directions of change in a music- and dance-centered social practice.

By writing about controversies, I risk souring personal relationships. I understand part of my task, then, as working to avoid amplifying or generating personal attacks while allowing for intra-scene critiques. In writing, I attempt to characterize critiques in a way that centers the controversial practice or perspective while depersonalizing it, even as I acknowledge that such an attempt is doomed to fall short. Even as I refer to “participants” or “collaborators”, I studied and wrote about real people who I know, and who know me and one another. I can anonymize all parties in such a way that a reader unfamiliar with the scene would be unable to identify any of the participants. However, the Seattle-Guinean scene is sufficiently small that, without abstracting descriptions to a meaningless level, I am left unable to definitively disable participants from potentially identifying one another in my work. For this reason, I sought feedback from those most likely to be at risk of harm or to have objections to particular

arguments or interpretations. Claims of offense alone did not preclude inclusion of ideas or interpretations provided by other interviewees. However, I took seriously any such claims, engaging in additional dialogue and altering some passages.

Many of the participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene talked to me informally about potentially sensitive events or ideas in ways that suggested a tacit agreement of confidentiality. That is, I believe that some individuals in the scene said and did things in my presence that they presumed I would not share, even if such an agreement was never explicitly verbalized and they knew that I was involved in ethnographic research. Occasionally, I privately asked individuals for “on the record” versions of statements that they had made pertaining to potentially sensitive topics. Many declined, and I always followed their decision regarding the inclusion of their words and perspectives. These events shaped my thinking about the Seattle-Guinean scene, and I have used my best judgment in electing what details to share from conversations that occurred outside of formal interview settings, erring on the side of excluding material in cases that I interpret as ethically gray.

Participants typically engaged me in dialogue about my writing in similar ways. Whenever I shared passages foregrounding anonymized direct quotations from other scene participants, my collaborators began by guessing the source of the quote.<sup>8</sup> This was especially the case when they disagreed with the content of the quote. My collaborators proceeded with this game of “guess who” directly and specifically. They asked, “Is that Person X?”, or wagered, “I bet that was Person Y.” Most collaborators expressed high confidence in their ability to guess an anonymous source. They rarely guessed correctly. I maintained a commitment to the anonymity of my sources according to their wishes, and made it a policy to neither confirm nor

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<sup>8</sup> I maintained a commitment to the anonymity of my sources according to their wishes, and made it an explicit policy to neither confirm nor deny the accuracy of a collaborator’s guess.

deny the accuracy of a collaborator's guess. Other participants read themselves into quotations, believing themselves to be the subject of an anonymous source's comments. Again, this was almost never the case. I initially experienced frustration at these guessing procedures, as they generated unproductive attention to interpersonal problems. Upon further reflection, the "guess who" games proved to be fruitful, allowing me to identify potential connections between controversies, better understand the social landscape of the scene, and identify new avenues of inquiry.

My collaborators reacted most strongly after I shared a draft of a conference paper that would eventually serve as the seed material for Chapter 1 of this dissertation, which explores romantic relationships between tour staff and tourists during drum and dance camps in Guinea. Some voiced concerns over content and terminology that they interpreted as characterizing themselves, their businesses, or their personal relationships in a negative light. I engaged in dozens of conversations to find better ways to represent my own interpretations and those of my collaborators. As in other contexts, I altered language, changed emphases, deleted passages, and added clarifying content in response to these dialogues. One non-Guinean collaborator had a particularly negative reaction to the draft. This collaborator presented me with an unambiguous ultimatum, insisting that I change the text so that it better aligned with his perspective. He threatened to cancel an upcoming interview if I refused to do so, and suggested that Guinean-born participants in the scene would ostracize me if they found out what I had written. This would have effectively brought my fieldwork to an end. I had, at this point, interviewed Guinean-born participants in the scene, and featured anonymized quotations drawn from those interviews in my paper. I had checked with the individuals whose quotations I featured in the paper to allow for rephrasing, anonymity, augmentation, or redaction. While I found much of

this collaborator's critique valuable and made subsequent changes that improved my analysis, I also felt that he misinterpreted some of the piece, inferring conclusions or motivations that reflected neither my intentions nor the content of my paper. I worried that if this collaborator shared his own personal interpretation, and not my actual work, he would compel Guinean-born participants in the scene to end participation in my research. The collaborator argued that my work lacked transparency, and demanded that I speak again to the Guinean-born participants in the scene to be sure that they understood my perspective. I did so, telling them what I had written and asking them to suggest how I might acceptably characterize sensitive material. In the end, they made few suggestions; and, as in other contexts, I integrated changes into the chapter.

I struggled most when collaborators attempted to silence one another's voices in my work. Though few in number, some collaborators either requested or demanded that I remove—or qualify as inaccurate—quotations from interview statements made by others in the scene. In some cases, the objecting collaborator helpfully clarified a potential for harm that I had not previously considered, prompting me to remove those quotations. In other cases, I generated alternative ways to address the objecting collaborator's perspectives that eliminated potentially problematic aspects. After careful reflection, I retained only a handful of quotations to which any of my collaborators explicitly objected. I have intentionally avoided marking those particular viewpoints as especially contested, although I highlight when ideas or perspectives are atypical.

The ability to critique is predicated upon privilege, and I have worked to strike a balance between my desire to avoid using that privilege in a way that upsets any of my collaborators and my belief in the value of adhering to a presumption of sameness. Several of my collaborators

brought to my attention that publishing statements that could be read as casting Guinea, Guineans, or Guinean culture in a negative light might result in me or my collaborators being ostracized from the Seattle-Guinean scene and even the broader Guinean artist community. During follow-up dialogues, some of my collaborators elected to soften quotes about sensitive issues involving Guinea or Guineans. I empathize with these decisions, especially in light of the general asymmetry of economic power between Guinean-born and non-Guinean participants.

Although I have edited my collaborators' statements according to their wishes to avoid engaging in sensitive issues surrounding Guinea and Guineans, I do not similarly edit my own statements in every instance. Based on my desire to prioritize sameness, I apply the same degree of rigour to my analysis and critique of the practices of Guineans as for anyone else. In doing so, I decline the opportunity to engage in the soft bigotry of alternative expectations inherent in altogether excluding Guinea and Guineans from analysis that presents or affirms critical perspectives. I include this detail here, not to position myself above the fray of any dissent, but to clarify my motivations.

I take full responsibility for the final decision to include particular viewpoints or quotes in this dissertation. Although I have adapted the work substantially based on changes suggested by participants in the scene, I acknowledge the possibility that I have misinterpreted someone's perspective or inadequately accounted for the personal ramifications of including a particular passage. Building from a methodology centered on musical participation, interviews, and extended dialogue, the chapters of this dissertation represent close looks at those processes, people, and events that I and my collaborators found to be fundamental aspects of the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene.

## Chapter Summaries

This dissertation addresses interrelated themes of power, agency, authenticity, and community in the touristic Seattle-Guinean scene, where controversies spiraled around notions of sameness, difference, and ownership. Even as social cohesion in the scene was partial and disjointed, participants derived joy and pleasure from drumming, dancing, and one another. Throughout, I consider people engaged in motion, both physically in the sense of (inter-)personal transformation and becoming. I highlight the locomotion of tourists and migrating Guinean artists, the rotation of dance students returning to weekly classes, the flexion and extension of body parts in the process of realizing choreographies and rhythms, and the adduction and abduction of individuals in relation to the churning center of activity of an emergent cultural cohort.

Chapter 1 examines romance that emerged through interactions between non-Guinean female tourists and Guinean male tour staff during drum and dance camps in Guinea. I find that romantic relations were a widespread phenomenon, and were central to the growth and maintenance of the Seattle-Guinean scene. Here, I contribute to existing scholarship on romantic relationships between foreign women and West African men in touristic and artistic contexts (Bizas 2014; Castaldi 2006; Ebron 2001; Noé and Crosetto 2006; Raout 2009). Amplifying the voices of both Guinean-born men and non-Guinean women, I explore the motivations and intents of non-Guinean tourists, Guinean tour staff, and facilitators, finding that liminality was a condition of possibility for the manifestation of these relationships. I argue that the power inherent in romantic relationships was dynamic; and, while all parties exercised agency, control rested asymmetrically with the non-Guinean women. Finally, I examine the impacts of these

relationships in Seattle, and the potential risks and rewards of romantic relationships for those involved.

Chapter 2 examines dance classes in Seattle as ritualized practices in which participation generated particular kinds of social cohesion as they cultivated their cultural Selves in experiences of “cumulative liminality”. This cumulative liminality depended upon the production of a distributed sense of place, both in the “here” of Seattle and the “there” of Guinea, emergent in promotional rhetoric and through embodied practices of music, dance, and costuming. Embodiment rendered participants as distributed subjects who simultaneously produced and consumed the emplaced dancing and drumming. The liminality produced in dance classes generated community that was partial and exclusive, emerging from desires for “same difference” that manifests along translational, racial, and national lines.

In Chapter 3, I remain focused primarily on events in Seattle, pushing forward the impact of expectations of same difference on community formation and disruption. I examine the various parameters that participants used to authenticate practices in the scene, giving emphasis to a small group of the most experienced non-Guinean musicians, who I call the “Malinké police”. While the majority of participants elevated Guinean-ness as the principal marker of authentic performance, the Malinké police developed more specific alternative aesthetic preferences that coincided with a three-part rubric for authenticity braiding rurality, the past, and Maninka ethnicity. This rubric emerged from discourse produced by high-profile Guinean teachers outside of the Seattle-Guinean scene. I argue that, in explicitly and implicitly advocating for their aesthetic preferences and parameters of authentication, these experienced non-Guineans disrupted social cohesion in two ways. First, they inadvertently transposed historical streams of ethnicism from Guinea into the Seattle context. Second, the Malinké police

sometimes prioritized musical integrity over adherence to interpersonal norms in efforts to ensure successful performance and to demonstrate respect for performance practices. In doing so they demonstrated different difference, acting as proxies for distant Guinean authorities rather than differing to any local Guinean, as was typical among other non-Guineans in the scene. Throughout this chapter, I gesture toward the irony that, while among the most deeply invested in showing respect for what they learned from renowned teachers in Guinea, the Malinké police were often perceived by some in the scene as exceptionally disrespectful by those who authenticated performance according to different criteria.

Chapter 4 continues my discussion of authenticity in an analysis of the facilitation of drum and dance camps in Guinea. I show that facilitators catered to tourists' desires for difference, and that these desires dovetailed with the touristic nature of camps and the control exerted by facilitators in a way that produced various forms of segregation. This segregation magnified and shaped the liminality experienced by tourists. I argue that drum and dance camp facilitators successfully curated poverty and joy in camps in a way that triggered the transformational potential of the liminal experience and provided avenues for tourists to untangle their happiness from their wealth. Finally, I examine the ways that the structure and style of cultural mediation amplified tourists' experiences of reverse culture shock upon their return home after camps.

In the final chapter, I provide a close analysis of a single event during a drum and dance camp in Guinea, framing it in terms of similarity of experience despite its extraordinary nature and conspicuous displays of difference. The *soli ci* was a rite marking the passage from childhood to adulthood for three girls in a rural village in the Kissidougou Prefecture of Guinea. I assert that the One World facilitators commodified liminality as a tourism product by enabling

visitation of the tour group with a group of initiates. This touristification re-configured the *fáfa* (ritual space) into a site of mirrored liminalities, including the local women and the tour group. The initiates at the ritual space underwent a genital cutting procedure in the hours prior to the tour group's visit, and I situate the shared experience in relation to other tourism of genital cutting and academic conceptions of "dark tourism". I highlight tourist interpretations of their experiences in order to demonstrate that, despite differences in interpretations, each one approached the event with sensitivity, participated successfully in their own way, and emerged transformed. Widening my scope to consider performance at the *solí ci*, I emphasize that, despite apparent differences of identity, procedure, and execution, experiences with music dance in rural Guinea and in Seattle were essentially similar. I close with an epilogue including some final thoughts on the themes, contributions, and concerns that emerge throughout the chapters of this dissertation, beginning with Chapter 1 on romance and mobility in the Seattle-Guinean scene.

## Chapter 1: Romance and Mobility

At the first interview that I conducted during my fieldwork, one Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene participant remarked with wonder at romantic relationships that developed during drum and dance camps in Guinea:

People come home after a two-week trip, a six-week trip, a three-month trip, and like, "I'm in love and going to get married to this person from another country." ...It's so amazing to me that that happens with such frequency in the community that I know. I've just watched it, this cycle, again and again" (2014: Personal Interview).

The frequency and speed with which tourists fell in love and pursued marriages with Guineans while attending drum and dance camps served as a source of surprise for this participant. Tourists typically stayed in drum and dance camps in Guinea for three weeks. Although a handful of relationships evolved gradually over the course of several tourism seasons, the overwhelming majority developed romantic or sexual elements within days-to-weeks after the first meeting. Like the participant quoted above, many in the Seattle-Guinean scene were surprised and critical of relationships that developed so frequently and so quickly in the absence of a shared language, and in the face of apparent cultural differences. Nonetheless, romantic relationships between female foreign drum and dance tourists and male Guinean tour staff bubbled to the surface as being critical to understanding the formation and maintenance of the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene as well as power dynamics within it.

This chapter begins by addressing the scope and frequency of romantic relationships in drum and dance camps, as evidenced by interview statements given by participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene as well as my own observations during fieldwork in Guinea and the United States. I then demonstrate the commodification of male Guinean bodies and female foreign bodies at drum and dance camps, and examine the ways that liminality acted as a catalyst

for the romantic relationships. I argue that, although the power and agency in romantic relationships were dynamic, they were also asymmetric, and control existed primarily in the hands of the female foreign tourists. Finally, I examine impacts, both musical and non-musical, of these relationships in Seattle and the surrounding region of the Pacific Northwest. I conclude by considering how the centrality of romance as a migratory mechanism has introduced expatriate artists who, while not always perceived as elite performers and teachers upon arrival, have been well-suited to act as the gravitational center of the community.

Seattle-Guinean dancers provided evidence regarding the scope and frequency of romantic relationships at drum and dance camps in Guinea. Dancer Nikki Fleming traveled to Guinea in 2012 with a group of ten European and American female tourists. By Nikki's accounting, at least half of the women, including herself, became romantically involved with Guinean men during this three-week camp. Three entered into long-term engagements or marriages with Guinean men that they met during that trip, and with whom they now live in their home countries. Nikki expressed personal uncertainty as to whether the high level of incidence on her trip was indicative of tours in general. However, she noted that at least two other men who were working as artists during her trip had since emigrated from Guinea to live with women in Europe and the United States.

Komala Martin, a long-time dancer in the scene, observed the formation of romantic relationships between female foreign tourists and male Guinean tour staff at each of the five camps that she attended in Guinea: "It just seems to happen. Pretty much every year" (2014: Personal Interview). Another dancer, Sharon, traveled to Guinea as a dance tourist for the first time in 2007, on what became known to her and her fellow tourists as the "love camp". Of the nine female tourists at the camp, five engaged in some sort of romantic relationship with a

Guinean tour staff member. Sharon also recalled a woman who attended a camp in 2008 and married the brother of the Guinean tour facilitator, who migrated to live with her, first in the Pacific Northwest, and then in the Mid-West. Shaniece, a participant in the Seattle-Guinean scene who traveled to Guinea for a camp in 2011, observed that she and all of her fellow tourists became romantically involved with tour staff while in Guinea, and that one had maintained that relationship through marriage. A co-facilitator for that camp characterized the ubiquitous pairing-off of tourists and staff as unique.

These were only a handful among the dozens of similar stories that female tourists in the Seattle-Guinean scene told me of their experiences in drum and dance camps in Guinea. Four of the seven female tourists with whom I spent extended time during camps in Guinea in 2015 and 2016 engaged in some form of romantic relationship with staff members, two of which resulted in marriages. More than two-thirds of my female collaborators who had traveled to Guinea as part of drum and dance camps became romantically involved with a Guinean tour staff member at least once. All of my collaborators knew of other tourists who entered into a romantic relationship while in Guinea.

Based on interviews, informal conversations, and personal observations in Guinea, I estimate that between five and ten percent of female tourists who traveled to Guinea for dance and drum camps became engaged to or marry tour staff. These tourists represented diverse racial and national identities, including Black, White, Latina, Asian, and Indigenous (US) Americans, as well as women from across Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. Eight women in the Seattle-Guinean scene married Guinean men who they met initially through participation in drum and dance camps in Guinea, and also constituted a racially diverse cohort. All of the active dance teachers and performance company leaders in Seattle were either Guinean men married to

American women, or American women married to Guinean men. Furthermore, while I knew of more than a dozen engagements and marriages resulting from meetings at drum and dance camps facilitated by participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, I suspect that there were additional long-term relationships about which I remained unaware. Given my observations and those of my collaborators, romantic relationships emerged as central to the scene and deserving of deeper analysis.

### **Analytical Framework**

Despite the scope and frequency of romantic relationships at drum and dance camps, scholars writing on transnational mobilities and djembe music typically make brief if any mention of them. Within a comparative analysis of interpersonal relationships in three djembe camps in Guinea, Vera Flaig refers only to “attachments that invariably form between students and their new African friends” (Flaig 2010: 55). Likewise, when theorizing geographic mobility as status for Guinean djembe players, Pascal Gaudette describes what he calls “strategic alliances” (2013: 308), which he restricts to platonic connections between male djembe tourists and male camp staff.

My consideration of the impact of romance on the Seattle-Guinean scene extends the work of two notable exceptions to the dearth of analysis of romantic relationships in drum and dance tourism. Julien Raout (2009) and Eleni Bizas (2014) directly examine intersections between romantic relationships and Guinean drum and dance. Raout applies Tom Selwyn’s (1996) model of “hot” and “cool” authenticity in his analysis of drum and dance tourism in Guinea, asserting foreign tourists engage in romantic relationships to satisfy their desires for authentic relationships to themselves and to others. Bizas analyzes relationships that arise

between non-Black foreign female dance students and West African men, especially from Senegal, arguing against homogenized readings of the women's perspectives and understandings.

I have chosen to include a sex/romance tourism framework in analyzing romantic relationships between Guinean men and foreign female tourists, partly because it was suggested by several of my interviewees, who characterized relationships between foreign female tourists and Guinean drum and dance tour staff either as having commonalities with sex work, or explicitly as a kind of sex tourism. Tourism scholars Pruitt and LaFont argue of relationships between foreign tourists and local men in Jamaica that, "neither actor considers their interaction to be prostitution, even while others may label it so. The actors place an emphasis on courtship rather than the exchange of sex for money" (1995: 423). Similarly, even as my collaborators acknowledged the existence of a sex/romance tourism industry embedded within drum and dance camps in Guinea, those individuals who become romantically involved did not typically perceive their relationships in terms of exchange.

Through repeated and extended dialogues with tourists, tour staff, and tour facilitators, a central concern arose around the definition of the concept "sex tourism". Most scene participants associated the term "sex tourism" only with male tourists who traveled to developing countries with the explicit purpose of paying money to engage in sexual activity with a local person. Scholarly consensus differs from this understanding. In a meta-analysis of existing scholarship, travel health scholar Irmgard Bauer finds that "the criteria commonly used to describe sex tourists apply equally to men and women" (2014: 25). Despite the beliefs of the general public, data do not support the common moralistic distinction made between so-called "good female romance tourism and bad male sex tourism" (Ibid.). Further, Bauer notes that contemporary feminist tourism scholars object to the distinction of male sex tourism and female

romance tourism on the grounds that doing so imposes restrictions on the possibility of female agency.

My own analysis takes Bauer’s findings into account and builds from the work of tourism scholar Martin Opperman. Oppermann promotes a “holistic approach to coming to terms with what constitutes sex tourism” (1999: 252). Rather than simply sex-for-money that occurs in tourist settings, Oppermann argues that “the field of sex tourism goes beyond the traditional norm of prostitution...and has a wider meaning than a financial transaction” (Oppermann 1999: 256). Oppermann utilizes a set of seven parameters to describe sex tourism, each of which exists along a continuum (Figure 1). I use Oppermann’s framework as a lens to refract the perspectives of participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, as well as my own observations in the United States and in Guinea. In doing so, I tease out issues of agency and power in order to analyze the impacts of these relationships on the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene.

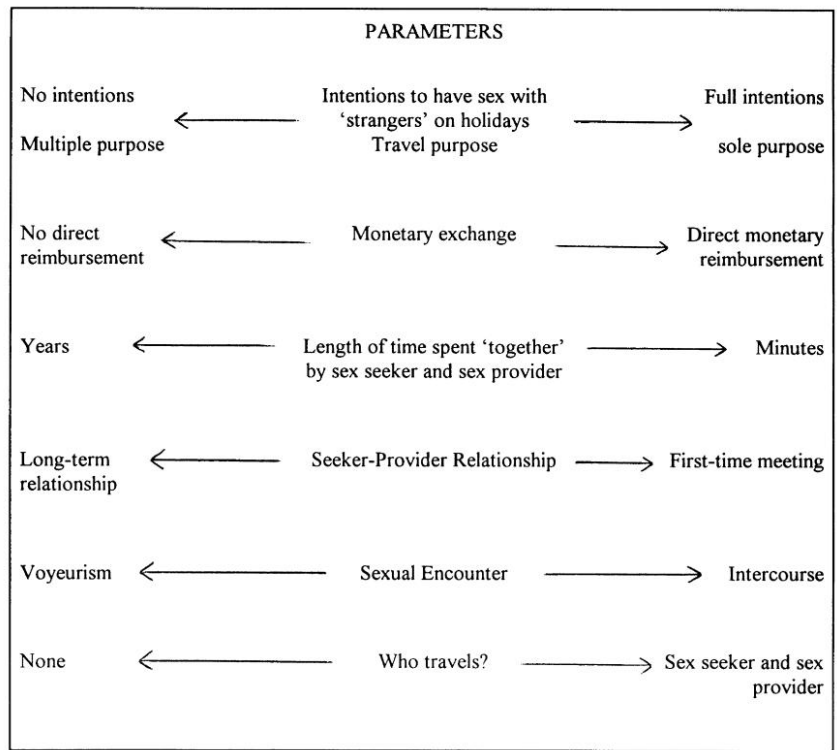


Figure 1: Continuum of Sex Tourism Parameters (Oppermann 1999: 255).

I acknowledge the highly sensitive nature of this phenomenon. I also recognize that participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene experienced genuine love in their relationships. Further, I explicitly attempt to avoid moral evaluation of romantic relations between foreign female tourists and Guinean tour staff and do not intend to act as the arbiter of what is right and good, or of what is wrong and bad. Instead, I aim to generate and continue dialogue within and beyond the Seattle-Guinean scene, and to increase transparency around and add nuance to understandings of the phenomenon.

### **Intentions and Exchange**

While some female drum and dance tourists occupied the center of Opperman's spectrum of intent, fitting into the category of what sociologist Klaus De Albuquerque (1998) calls "situational sex tourists" who are open to the experience should opportunity arise, the majority intended to resist romantic advances. Dancer Nikki Fleming stated:

"I didn't go in having any sense that that was what was going to happen. I thought that I was really clear about not going down that road. Even if I was interested, I wouldn't go down that road with a Guinean. And then, lo and behold, it happened" (Nikki Fleming 2014: Personal Interview).

As was typical of other first-time tourists, Nikki was unaware of the high frequency of romantic relationships between foreign women and Guinean tour staff at camps, and had made up her mind to avoid them. In this respect, her experience was representative of the majority of the female drum and dance tourists with whom I collaborated.

While returning tourists were universally aware that romance figured centrally into camp experiences, some entered into relationships even after expressing a desire to avoid them.

Dancer Sara relayed a story about a fellow tourist who had engaged in a relationship with a man in Guinea during a previous camp:

“She was like, ‘Well, I need to be really careful, because, last time I was in Guinea, I fell in love and all this stuff. I’m just going to be a single woman by myself.’ (...) Within four days of her being there, she was all over one of the drummers there. You just said that you didn’t want to hook up with anyone. Here you are, going with someone who’s half your age.<sup>9</sup> I’m trying not to be judgmental about it. I’m trying to be an empathetic person, and to understand” (Sara 2015: Personal Interview).

Sara noted the contradiction between her fellow tourist’s words and actions, but tried to approach the situation with empathy and understanding. Like Sara, others in the Seattle-Guinean scene desired to better understand romantic relationships in Guinea as they related to the intentions and actions of the tourists.

Other female drum and dance tourists embarked on missions to ensnare a lover or a mate while in Guinea. One Guinean-born tour facilitator described women who participated in drum and dance camps in Guinea with clear intentions of finding a Guinean man to marry and take home with them: “I saw some women who left United States or Europe to be at my camp with their decision...to get a young Black man in Guinea. (...) They said, ‘I need a young Black man.’ Yes. I know maybe four women who have been in Guinea for that. They found them! And they brought them to their country” (2014: Personal Interview).<sup>10</sup> In addition to those women who traveled with the intention of finding a husband, I met a handful of female tourists who sought out purely sexual relationships with Guinean tour staff.

Without exception, Guinean expatriates with whom I spoke, and who migrated through marriage or engagement to female drum and dance tourists, asserted that they had no intention to initiate a romantic relationship with a tourist. Many of those same expatriates, however,

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<sup>9</sup> Most relationships involved tour staff who were substantially younger than the tourists. I address the ramifications of this age differential later in this chapter.

<sup>10</sup> Here, the term “Black” served as a shorthand for “Guinean”, and my collaborator indicated that this intent existed among women of varying races.

characterized tour staff in Guinea as universally wanting to establish relationships with a foreigner. One Guinean-born artist in Seattle stated, “Every time, in their mind, is: ‘Yes. I want to make the relation.’” (2014: Personal Interview). The majority of male Guinean musicians and dancers working as tour staff intended to establish a romantic relationship with a female tourist; or, at the very least, were open to such a possibility. Many of the tour staff with whom I spoke in Guinea confirmed that they had actively pursued more than one tourist, and some had romantic relationships with multiple tourists. I did come into contact with some tour staff who did not display any interest in instigating romantic relationships with female tourists, and who reported never having engaged in romance with a tourist; however, these men represented the overwhelming minority.

I encountered no evidence of women who went to Guinea on cultural drum and dance tours and provided direct payment for sex with Guinean tour staff members.<sup>11</sup> However, romantic relationships resulted in a variety of indirect forms of monetary exchange. Among these exchanges, international mobility was the most valued, and had the strongest impact on the Seattle-Guinean scene. The scene thus represented an exception to travel medicine scholar Irmgard L. Bauer’s conclusion that local men who engage as providers in sex/romance tourism with foreign women are not motivated by opportunities to obtain visas and emigrate (2014: 24).

In all cases in Seattle, when relationships evolved into engagement, the Guinean man, and not the foreign woman, emigrated.<sup>12</sup> This was in part because of the overwhelming financial asymmetries that existed between people in Guinea and the United States. In 2016, the Guinean GNI (PPP) per capita was \$1200, among the lowest in the world and considered by my

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<sup>11</sup> Some of my collaborators reported that male tourists who traveled to Guinea to study drum and dance sometimes paid for sex with Guinean women, although I did not observe this during my fieldwork, either.

<sup>12</sup> I am aware of one woman in the Pacific Northwest who moved to Guinea for multiple years to live with her Guinean-born husband, reversing the nearly-universal trend in migratory direction.

collaborators to be an overestimate (World Bank 2016). By contrast, the United States GNI (PPP) per capita was \$57,436 (Ibid.). Couples typically traveled to Dakar, Senegal for a month in order to complete the paperwork and interview necessary to obtain the K-1 “fiancé” visa required for travel to the US. A K-1 “fiancé” visa granted the Guinean man legal status in the US for up to 90 days. If the couple married within this 90-day window, then he could apply for a green card to become a lawful permanent resident.

Emigration was a strong motivator for Guinean tour staff who engaged in romantic relationships with female tourists. One Guinean-born musician and tour facilitator now living in Seattle stated, “All the artists, their decision, their mind is to get the White woman, because the White woman can bring him in Europe, America, or Asia” (2014: Personal Interview). Here, the meaning of “White” elided with the Sosoxui (Susu language) identity category, “*Foté*”, which extended to include all extra-continental foreigners, regardless of race. Furthermore, Guinean-born artists in the Seattle-Guinean scene believed that young men in Guinea were increasingly drawn to identify themselves as artists due to a dearth of urban employment opportunities and the emergent perception that music and dance provided a pathway to international mobility that was less difficult or risky than other options.

One Guinean-born tour facilitator in Seattle suggested that young Guineans perceived foreign women as easily seduced, and used the “artist identity” as a strategy to attract foreign women who would provide them with luxury and, hopefully, mobility.<sup>13</sup> Young Guineans constructed an artist identity that was visually evidenced by dreadlocks or other long hairstyles with twists or braids. This dovetailed with the findings of scholars connecting long male hairstyles to sex/romance tourism environments in the Gambia (Ebron 1997; 2001; Nyanzi et al.

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<sup>13</sup> In sosoxui (Susu language), this artist identity is sometimes referred to as “*artistya*”.

2005; Mitchell and Fall 2007). Indeed, the only men I observed wearing long hairstyles in Guinea were musicians, dancers, and other tourism camp staff.

Some participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene suggested that the opportunity for money and mobility was such that Guinean artists bounced from one camp to the next, attempting to attract the romantic interests of tourists even if they were not hired as staff. An American musician, reflecting on his first trip to Guinea in 2002, recalled seeing a number of men marketing themselves directly to women at multiple compounds: “If you spend a couple of months there, you can see. There are guys who are visiting each camp each day, trying to see which people might be interested in them” (2014: Personal Interview). This musician further observed that many of those men successfully initiated romantic relationships and moved to Europe or the United States with foreign brides.

### **The Body and Desire**

In analyzing why American women marry Senegalese drummers and dancers, Eleni Bizas (2014) identifies five motivating factors, each of which is consistent with my interpretation of relationships that emerge in drum and dance camps in Guinea. First, as a drummer or dancer, the man practices an occupation that is understood as “truly African”, in contrast to working in construction or as doctor. Bizas fits this into a narrative of “the significant Other”, whereby the American woman perceives the Senegalese man’s life as more humane, simple, and communal than her own (2014: 80). Second, Senegalese men as well as their families, the government, and the general culture actively promote a sense of hospitality, or *teranga*. Third, an American woman may be motivated by a sense of philanthropic responsibility, a calling to help the Senegalese man. Fourth, American women perceive that, unlike American men, the Senegalese

man does not have “commitment issues”, and will profess love and inquire about marriage without delay. Finally, the Senegalese man provides evidence of the positive morality of the woman, showing that she is racially open-minded and politically correct (Bizas 2014: 81). Each of these motivating factors was consistent with relationships in the Seattle-Guinean scene. However, I find it necessary to supplement Bizas’ factors with a consideration of the ways that bodies themselves worked as motivation for marriage.

Most female tourists who traveled to Guinea objectified Guinean men’s bodies in a straightforward and open way during drum and dance camps. Women consistently referred to men in Guinea as “muscled”, “chiseled”, “without an ounce of fat”, “beautiful”, or “really attractive”. This objectification carried over into Seattle, where the body continued to dominate descriptions of Guinean men by women. Some participants noted that not all Guinean men’s bodies exhibited these properties; however, the bodies of all of the Guinean tour staff members who entered into romantic relationships with drum and dance tourists were described in these ways.

In addition to commenting on the Guinean male body, participants fixated on Guinean men as desiring particular types of foreign women’s bodies. Non-Guinean women consistently re-articulated the stereotypical notion that Guineans prefer “bigger girls” with “some extra meat” or “pear-shaped” figures.<sup>14</sup> When doing so, women often referred to themselves or to others in the scene who exhibited these qualities. In addition, some women in the scene asserted that, because female genital cutting was practiced almost universally in Guinea, foreign women’s intact-ness represented an exotic sexual opportunity.

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<sup>14</sup> For rebuttals of the dominant stereotypes regarding Black men’s body preferences, see Freedman et al. (2007) on African Americans and Coatsee et al. (2012) on Sub-Saharan Africans.

While many Guinean tour staff made remarks about the attractiveness of female tourists, such remarks were rarely body-centric. Instead, comments addressed the comportment and friendliness of the tourists, as well as their openness to be in a relationship with an African.<sup>15</sup> Further, most male Guinean tour staff indicated a preference for body-types that were common to the Guinean women of their own age-group, and with whom they interacted regularly: athletic and petite. This ran counter to non-Guinean women's assertions regarding Guinean men's preferences for larger body types, which my Guinean collaborators identified as appropriate for a mother, rather than a potential lover.

The only body-centric comments Guinean tour staff made about female tourists involved the potential for having mixed-race children. They deemed foreign partners desirable, not due to the attractiveness of their bodies, but because they valued “mélange” babies. Bizas (2014) finds that, for Senegalese artists, the light skin of a child signals status because other successful artists—those who have moved to Europe—have light-skinned children. My Guinean collaborators suggested that mixed-race children symbolized the positive and productive intermingling of cultures, providing a pathway toward the interconnection and betterment of global society.<sup>16</sup> Despite the explicit racial component of this discourse, my Guinean collaborators considered both cultural and skin-tone differences sufficient to include Black Americans in the category of person with whom a “mélange” baby was possible.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Guineans referred to the continental geographic identity marker, “African”, when discussing relationships with foreign drum and dance tourists, and not a more specific marker, such as “Guinean”. On rare occasions during my fieldwork, Guineans used racial identifiers when talking to me about relationships.

<sup>16</sup> This perspective applied equally in consideration of the positive aspects of marriage between male foreigners and Guinean women.

<sup>17</sup> Although outside the scope of this dissertation, future research might examine gender and child-rearing in relationships between tour staff and tourists vis-à-vis anthropologist Erin Kenny's (2005) findings that multi-ethnic children (French: *métisse*; Maninkakan: *diatar* or *diatarasinani*) complicate ideologies of patrilineal essentialism among Maninka people in Upper Guinea.

Most participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene were skeptical that a “genuine” romance could possibly develop over the course of a few days between two people who could not communicate verbally. Furthermore, tour participant Sara, who did not engage in a romantic relationship during her time in Guinea, observed that language and cultural barriers necessitated that relationships be primarily physical (2016: Personal Interview). With few exceptions, female foreign tourists and male Guinean tour staff who entered into romantic relationships during camps in Guinea did not share a common language. Female tourists in the Seattle-Guinean scene who traveled to Guinea usually did not speak a local language, and most spoke little or no French. Likewise, it was unusual for tour staff members to speak much, if any English.

Women participated in a body-centered discourse that de-emphasized the economic motivations of Guinean men. While female tourists openly characterized male Guinean bodies as objects of desire, male Guinean staff members did not necessarily experience reciprocal physical attraction, and language limitations restricted relationships to being primarily physical in most cases. Foreign women’s narrative about the attraction of Guinean men to large American female bodies operated within this context in two ways. First, it whitewashed the potential negativity associated with their objectification of men’s bodies by suggesting that the objectification was mutual. Second, it buttressed against tourists’ concerns that the Guinean men might be interested in them solely for their money and the opportunity for mobility that they represented. Thus, the discourse of mutual physical attraction guarded women against the possibility that their relationships with Guinean men constituted an exchange of love for money and mobility.

## Facilitator Roles and Intentions

Julien Raout (2009) demonstrates that Gigla Sylla, founder of the Conakry-based Ballet Saâmato, articulates the success of his group in terms of the international migration of its members.<sup>18</sup> Sixteen members of Ballet Saâmato had emigrated abroad by 2005, primarily through marriage to drum and dance tourists.<sup>19</sup> Raout shows that, beginning in 1992, these marriages both resulted from and perpetuated migratory patterns of Saâmato artists into a single expatriate community in Clermont-Ferrand, France. Sylla praises this migration and connection because it allows artists to earn money, provide for their families in Guinea, and, sometimes, contribute material resources back to the ballet (Raout 2009: 193-194).

Ballet Saâmato extended its “passeuse interculturelle”<sup>20</sup> (Noé and Crosetto 2006) or “loop” (Bizas 2014) into the Pacific Northwest during my fieldwork, with romantic relationships operating as the driving mechanism. Manimou Camara performed with Ballet Saâmato and worked in tourism camps for foreigners from North America, Europe, and Asia. He migrated to the Seattle area on a K-1 “fiancé” visa gained through his engagement to Jessica Towns-Camara, who he met while she was traveling in Guinea as a dance tourist. Now married, the couple has facilitated group tourism as well as individual drum or dance study in Guinea for ten individuals from the United States and Canada.<sup>21</sup> Through dance and drum tourism, Manimou and Jessica catalyzed economic, artistic, and interpersonal relationships between tourists and members of Ballet Saâmato. Manimou staffed tourism camps primarily with current or former Ballet Saâmato artists, many of whom were his friends or family members. These camps facilitated

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<sup>18</sup> Ballet Saâmato was a private ballet located in the Gbessia neighborhood of the Matam sub-prefecture of Conakry.

<sup>19</sup> As of 2005, there were approximately 1250 artists performing in the 48 ballets in Conakry (Raout 2009: 193). Membership numbers varied within and between ballets, and Saâmato was slightly smaller than the average, consisting of approximately twenty members at any one time.

<sup>20</sup> Trans.: “intercultural conveyor”.

<sup>21</sup> One tourist who had planned to travel to Conakry was compelled to travel to Dakar instead, due to unrest in Guinea (Jessica Towns-Camara 2016: Personal Communication) This is the only example of which I am aware of tourists working primarily with staff unconnected to Ballet Saâmato in camps facilitated by the Camaras.

more romantic relationships between female tourists and male Guinean tour staff, and two additional Ballet Saâmato artists subsequently migrated to North America. Furthermore, Manimou and Jessica have fulfilled director Gigla Sylla's hope that emigrating artists would continue to support the ballet company (Raout 2009) by organizing a successful fundraising campaign to rebuild Saâmato's dance floor and constructing a website to establish a digital presence for the organization.

Some Guinean-born tour facilitators commodified access to foreign women as compensation for musicians who worked in their camps as soloists and accompanists. Since 1990, Youssouf Koumbassa has facilitated the most popular dance-centered tours in Guinea. Residing in the United States, Koumbassa was connected to the Seattle-Guinean scene since the early 2000s. His US-based tour manager lived in Seattle, and he frequently worked as a featured instructor at regional workshops in the Pacific Northwest and specially organized one-time classes in Seattle. Four women who were active in the Seattle-Guinean scene during my fieldwork married Guinean men that they met through Koumbassa's dance camps. Those marriages initiated spin-off camps that resulted in additional marriages between female tourists and camp staff, including Koumbassa's relatives.

Some participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene recognized that Guineans who worked in Koumbassa's camps did so with the hope of meeting a foreign woman. Komala Martin characterized this hope among Guinean musicians as "a plus for Youssouf, 'cause I'm sure he probably doesn't have to pay them much" (Komala Martin 2014: Personal Interview). Other participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene supported Komala's suggestion that Koumbassa did not have to pay musicians much money to retain their services.

Corinne, an American dancer and teacher described the experiences of her Guinean-born husband, Aguibou, who Koumbassa employed as a musician: “Aguibou used to work for Youssouf’s camp. He never got a cent. Ever. Once” (Corinne 2015: Interview). These camps occurred during the dry months of the year, when urban musicians had the best opportunity to make money playing for ceremonies around Conakry. Corinne suggested that, even without monetary pay, Aguibou was lucky in that working in a tourism camp presented him with unusual opportunities: “He won the lottery...meaning, he has access to a lot of other options and choices of producing money and opening up things for several dozen people in his family” (Corrine 2015: Personal Interview). Corrine’s formulation of the opportunities presented by employment in a drum and dance camp extended beyond romantic relationships to include instrument sales and private lessons. She did not consider herself to have been the lottery prize. Other non-Guineans echoed Corrine’s assertion that the access to foreigners in drum and dance camps represented broad opportunities for Guineans, based on the generosity and relative wealth of tourists.

The perceptions of tourists notwithstanding, some musicians who worked in Koumbassa’s camps understood that access to foreign women was the intended remuneration for their labor. According to Naby, Koumbassa explicitly cited the potential for marriage and migration as sufficient payment for his services as a djembe soloist and accompanist. For Naby, working in Koumbassa’s camps was a gamble in which marriage to and migration through a foreign woman was the prize, with lost wages from working at ceremonies being the ante. Working in Koumbassa’s camps, Naby met and eventually married an American woman, but was denied a visa to enter the US. Naby also had a young child in Guinea, and felt responsible to support that child financially. For Naby, a pre-existing international marriage and a local child meant that access to foreign women was no longer an adequate form of reimbursement.

Following his visa denial, Naby approached Koumbassa: “I told him I have a family here and I need money for them. I cannot work for nothing” (2016: Personal Communication). Koumbassa denied his request, and Naby was compelled to leave the camp to find other work.

Koumbassa was highly influential in the evolution of dance tourism in Conakry. Other facilitators emulated his teaching style, his tour structure, and his strategy of minimizing costs by highlighting access to foreigners. One Seattle-based participant stated: “I find that to be unconscionable. I get that people do it....they just feed them, and then pay them in the opportunity to possibly sleep with these people and go with them” (2015: Personal Interview). The emulation of these practices created an economic environment in which much of the drum and dance tourism industry in Guinea financially benefited a handful of individuals, doing so at the expense of the free labor of Guinean men who had not yet married and migrated with a foreign tourist.

Dance and drum tourism facilitators living in Seattle prided themselves on being among the few who paid their staff members generously. Jessica Towns-Camara asserted that she and her husband paid their tour staff exceptional amounts of money in comparison to other camps, and that part of the expectation of employment was that staff members would not aggressively pursue romantic relationships with tourists. While Jessica insisted that, for the safety of female tourists, Guinean tour staff wait for tourists to make the first move, she stressed that this did not eliminate the opportunity for Guinean tour staff to engage in romantic relationships with tourists: “The opportunity is still there. One of our trips, someone totally came here, from that trip” (2015: Personal Interview). Jessica continued, “That was a case where he knew not to pursue. But...that woman was hot-to-trot for him. She pursued the heck out of him” (2015: Personal Interview). Although Jessica and others in the Seattle-Guinean scene who are married to

Guineans worked to quell romantic gestures by tour staff toward tourists, I and my interviewees witnessed or experienced aggressive pursuit in all drum and dance camps.

While some camp staff might prefer access over direct compensation, this was not universally true, as evidenced by the case of Naby, above. Furthermore, Jessica recalled a musician who was fired after being paid for services rendered when he ignored her demand to refrain from actively pursuing tourists. The musician subsequently contacted Jessica to apologize, and pleaded to be rehired because she and her husband paid him so well. Their policy was strict, and although they valued this musician as a player and teacher, they did not reinstate him.

The majority of the women in the Seattle-Guinean scene who were married to Guinean men and helped facilitate drum and dance tours in Guinea urged caution to tourists regarding romantic relationships for a variety of reasons. Laurie Sylla observed that tourists who became romantic with tour staff sometimes spoke casually about bringing their new lovers to live with them abroad:

People are adults and don't always listen to the advice you give them. We can encourage people to not sleep with the artists and promise them they're bringing them back to the States. But, we can't keep people from doing that. (...) I think Americans don't always realize what the possibility of getting out means to somebody, and how important it is to be careful about not startin' off with that. (Laurie Sylla 2014: Personal Interview).

Here, Laurie expressed frustration that tourists, apparently ignorant of the desire to migrate, frequently raised the expectations of Guinean men and then, often, dashed their hopes.

Other women married to Guineans relayed stories about reacting negatively to relationships that they perceived to be driven, for the Guinean, solely by a desire to emigrate. Jessica Towns-Camara advised against a relationship because she perceived it as romantically driven by the woman and financially driven by the man:

I actively discouraged it because he actively said that he didn't find her attractive. I told her so. He was just interested because of that [the opportunity to get a visa]. She would not hear it. Then, he got there [migrated to live with her], and she found out exactly what I said was true, and then they got divorced six months later" (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

Jessica attempted to disrupt the relationship, sensing that it would fail because of conflicting motivations. Like Laurie, she found that, while she could suggest caution to tourists, they often dismissed her concerns and became hurt in the process.

Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré, who co-facilitated camps for more than 140 tourists since 2006, voiced multiple concerns about her camps being perceived as places where romantic and sexual relationships formed. For Sarah Lee, when a tourist engaged in a romantic relationship while in Guinea, their entire experience became focused on that relationship. She believed that tourists who restricted their relationships to friendships had broader and better experiences in Guinea. Sarah Lee began to vigorously incorporate her reservations about tourists getting romantically involved with Guineans during her opening conversation on the day after tour groups arrive:

"In past years I pretty much was like: 'Oh yeah. It might be romantic, but really, we don't recommend it.' This year was like: 'Don't do it. Do not get in a relationship with one of these people. Don't do it.' It was that clear" (2014: Personal Interview).

Sarah Lee shifted from softly recommending against relationships to adamantly arguing against it. She found that some tourists reacted strongly to her statements, either because they were unaware of the phenomenon, or because she had been married to two Guineans:

"I said, 'I know this is weird. You just got here. You don't know these people. I know that if you get to know me, I've not only done it once, I've done it twice. Pot calling the kettle black, or what have you. But, don't do it. Don't do it. And, if you do it, come talk to me because there's some reality conversations I need to have with you about it. There's a whole lot more here than you would ever imagine'" (Sarah Lee Parker Mansare 2014: Personal Interview).

Even as Sarah Lee strenuously argued against tourists becoming romantically involved with the camp staff, she recognized that her advice sometimes went unheeded, and tried to encourage women to approach her for consultation.

Sarah Lee's husband, Guinean-born facilitator Mamady Mansare, found similar resistance from some of the tourists and tour staff when he tried to discourage romantic relationships in his camps. He found that tourists often made the reasonable claim that, as adults who had paid for the experience, they should be left to do as they pleased:

“It's true! Because, she paid her money. Me, I'm doing my business. She didn't hurt anybody. She didn't do any bad things to anybody. So, that is not my problem. And, it's good! It's good to relate to someone. So, I saw that. I said, okay. I can't stop that” (Mamady Mansare 2014: Personal Interview).

Mamady realized that, while he could not realistically prevent paying tourists from engaging in romantic relationships, he could attempt to regulate the behavior of the camp staff, as his employees:

“I tried there. How? I said, ‘Please. I know it is very hard. I cannot stop [them or you]. But, what [do] I want? Do not be first to say to them: I love you. Do not write any love writings to them. No. Do not touch their breasts, do not touch their butt, and do not touch here [rubs upper inner thighs]. No. Please try to talk to them. You take your responsibility because you are a normal person. You are good person. Please. My camp is not only to do loving, loving, loving. No’” (Mamady Mansare 2014: Personal Interview).

Mamady encouraged the camp staff to talk to and get to know tourists, and to refrain from instigating romantic dialogue or sexual physical contact. The Mansaré's found some success in their efforts, although neither believed that it was possible to stop relationships altogether.

While most tour facilitators in Seattle-Guinean scene warned tourists against the pitfalls incorporating a sexual or romantic component within their tourism experience, others promoted and encouraged it. Some unmarried female tourists remarked that, before traveling, a tour facilitator lightheartedly advised them to “be sure and bring plenty of condoms, because you'll

need them!” This advice spoke to the facilitator’s previous experiences, and normalized the Guinean male body as a sexual object to be consumed by the female tourist. Furthermore, travel health scholarship suggests that those who bring condoms were more likely to engage in sexual activity (Ryan and Hall 2001). Some of my collaborators expressed dissatisfaction at having been explicitly advised to bring condoms, interpreting it as cheapening what should have been an important cultural experience.

### **Pursuit of the Liminal Tourist**

Some Guinean men, recognizing an opportunity for travel, prestige, and economic stability, relentlessly attempted to instigate romantic relationships. Tour staff members overwhelmed female tourists with romantic inquiries, often within a few days. According to women in the Seattle-Guinean scene, Guinean tour staff were very forward in expressing romantic interest, even from the first meeting. These expressions typically included flirting, hand-holding, verbal compliments, professions of love, unanticipated visitation with families, and marriage proposals.

The persistence of tour staff extended beyond the tourist’s time in Guinea. Pascal Gaudette reveals that he helped one Guinean drummer to write “pleading, romantic emails to two different women—one Japanese and one American—whom he had met during workshops the previous year” (2013: 303). Email contact seemed to have dropped off in favor of social media messaging during my fieldwork, and several of the Guinean tour staff with whom I came into extended contact asked me to help them in similar ways. Female tourists in the Seattle-Guinean scene confirmed that, upon returning home, they regularly received messages professing love, even from tour staff who expressed no interest in them while they were in contact in Guinea.

Female tourists typically attributed the forwardness of Guinean men, as they do the time compression of personal relationships, to a general openness of Guinean culture. Often prompted by stories from former tourists or grooming from tour facilitators, foreign women in Guinea found people warm and welcoming, especially when juxtaposed against a perceived coldness and closed-ness in Western societies. While in Guinea, many women did not consider the possibility that the warmth and welcome that they felt might have derived from Guinean tour staff catering to the expectations of tourists, and doing so according to their own economic interests or those of their employers. In most cases, women who eventually acknowledged that possibility did so only upon reflection after having returned home.

Seattle dancer Pauline represented an exception as a female tourist who interpreted romantic gestures toward her and other tourists at camps as manifestations, not of the openness of Guinean culture, but of practiced strategies to obtain resources:

“I’m sure that I’m definitely making a generalization, here. But, my perception was that nobody had any time to know even who the hell I was, obviously. What they [(the tour staff)] did know was that, season after season, people came to their house and brought all of these resources. They [(the tourists)] were totally knocked off of their feet by culture shock, didn’t know what was going on, and...[were] emotionally vulnerable. In my kind of jaded perspective...I saw, happening around me, these men working whatever angle they could get to get resources from these tourists...it was just so overt.” (Pauline 2014: Personal Interview).

Here, Pauline identified in the tourists an emotional vulnerability that resulted from culture shock, a state attributable to the liminal nature of tourism settings (Pearce 2005: 26). Further, she suggested that Guinean tourism staff members were aware of tourists’ fragility based on previous patterns of experience, and that they and acted according to this awareness. This dovetailed with Julien Raout’s (2009) findings that young Guinean artists acted with strategic extroversion in order to capitalize on the vulnerability of tourists.

As detailed above, some women in the Seattle-Guinean scene who were married to Guinean men actively warned others against romantic relationships. Further, many tourists intended to avoid romantic relationships while in Guinea. And yet, romantic relationships occurred with a high frequency in spite of these actions and intentions. Raout (2009) attributes the success of Guinean men's pursuit of foreign tourists to the tourists' interests in hot authenticity, experiences of the real and embodied culture. I supplement this perspective by positing that the liminality of dance and drum tourism in Guinea exerted a strong influence.

Drum and dance tourism camps in Guinea featured what geographer Jasper Balduk calls "cultural-geographical liminality" (2008: 31). It is important, here, to recall that liminal experiences are often, but not necessarily, demarcated by transitional rites (Thomassen 2014: 90). Women traveled geographically far from their homes, temporarily disengaging from their daily lives. In Guinea, they entered into a hybrid social structure including elements of Guinean professional performing artist culture that were manipulated to cater to tourists' needs and wants.

Female drum and dance tourists often traveled to Guinea at times coinciding with transitional periods in their lives. Many were about to get married or plan to begin having children. Just as common were examples of women who were considering separation, or who have recently separated from their intimate partners. Travel to Guinea as part of an organized camp required a substantial sacrifice of time, money, and energy; many women participated in camps either as a kind of last hurrah before settling into family life, or as a jolt of energy to get themselves out of a lifestyle rut. Such existing transitional periods amplified the likelihood that tourists, regardless of intentions, would "play" or "act out sexually" in a performance of the "carnavalesque" during travel (Weichselbaumer 2012). However, the sexual playfulness that

emerges from the liminality of tourism does not adequately explain why, in the case of drum and dance camps in Guinea, relationships so frequently developed into long-term commitments.

One explanation for the high frequency of these long-term relationships is that the liminal nature of drum and dance tours in Guinea generated a “time compression” that in turn accelerated the pace of romantic engagement (Thomas 2005: 56). Female tourists and non-Guinean facilitators in the Seattle-Guinean scene understood this time compression as coupled with the perceived openness of tour staff members, an openness that they attributed to the hospitality of Guinean culture. Ethnomusicologist Ryan Skinner (2015) frames the Mandé conception of hospitality, or *jatigiya*, within a larger framework of *badenya*, which he defines as familial intimacy. Whereas Skinner postulates that this hospitality changes and strengthens gradually as people evolve from strangers to familiars, participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene perceived closeness and inclusion immediately. The apparent impact of the liminal time compression was profound, such that some women took pride in having waited for two weeks to profess their love and suggest the possibility of helping a man to immigrate to the United States, rather than doing so within a day or two of meeting.

Some tour facilitators in the Seattle-Guinean scene actively encouraged and amplified the liminal nature of tourism in Guinea. As discussed more extensively in Chapter 4, Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré envisioned her One World Dance and Drum tours as vehicles for large-scale transformational change in tourists’ lives. She encouraged tourists to be open, to let go of their preconceived ideas about the world, and to question their own suppositions about the structures of social life and the priorities produced through those structures.

Strong parallels existed between Sarah Lee’s efforts to open tourists to new ways of being and the erasure of the individual that occurs during the liminal phase of rites of passage

into adulthood. Social theorist Árpád Szakolczai (2009) argues that the liminality in such rites of passage coincides with the emergence of danger, necessitating a precise sequence of events and authoritative control by a ritual master of ceremonies. Drum and dance camps in Guinea included a prescribed sequence of events, with some allowance for variation and play within that sequence. This sequence included controlled arrival and departure dates and times, travel itinerary, dining, daily class and recreation schedule, and sleeping arrangements.

Tour facilitators acted as ritual emcees, exerting control over tourist behavior and interpreting unfamiliar experiences. However, Guinean-born tour facilitators were often away from camps during their time in Guinea, making them unavailable to tourists. In these cases, tourists turned to the facilitators' wives for advice and cultural mediation. When these women were unable or unwilling to provide guidance, or tourists rejected their authority, then the Guinean man who expressed romantic interest in the woman sometimes assumed the position of the ritual emcee. Guinean tour staff with experience interacting with tourists, season after season, predicted and catered to the expectations and desires of the foreign female tourists. They sharpened their ability to act as the ritual emcee. In addition to fulfilling the "libidinal attraction" and "hot authenticity" sought by the tourist (Raout 2009), the Guinean tour staff member became the trusted guide, providing a lens through which the tourist interpreted experiences.

This substitution of the personally-motivated tour staff stepping into the tour facilitator's position as the ritual emcee parallels Ebron's Jungian "African trickster" (2002: 183). Ebron asserts that "[s]cholars and activists are often better at pointing to victims than seeing complex negotiations," deploying the allegorical figures of the "unruly Western women" and the "African trickster men" to "challenge the common presumption that power structures allow us to easily

separate oppressor and oppressed” (Ibid.). While Ebron acknowledges the economic asymmetries inherent in relationships between Western tourists and African locals, by recasting the actors as archetypes, she emphasizes that theorizations of African locals as the oppressed and Western tourists as the oppressors underestimates the agency involved on both sides. In the case of drum and dance camps in Guinea, it is possible to recontextualize these allegorical figures while retaining the framework of liminality in order to better understand agency exercised in the formation and evolution of romantic relationships.

### **Agency**

Tourists responded in a variety of ways to romantic pursuit by staff members, and this variety marks a distinction in the ways that foreigners and Guineans exercised agency with respect to romantic relationships. Some women in the Seattle-Guinean scene expressed disinterest and rejected romantic advances from tour staff members. When rejected, Guinean tour staff commonly expressed agency by selecting another woman toward whom they directed their romantic advances. None of the Guinean tour staff with whom I came into contact, however, rejected the advances of a foreign woman. One American participant in the Seattle-Guinean scene remarked upon the asymmetry in these expressions of agency, speculating that Guineans involved in repeated attempts at performing attraction to foreign tourists were in a dangerous position:

“What I’m talking about isn’t as much about sexual attraction, as it is *emotional* attachment and attraction. Even if somebody has done this dozens of times, you’re still investing so much. (...) A person would have to wall off part of their heart that’s even bigger than...they’d need to wall off in order to have sex with strangers a lot. That’s what I mean by dangerous” (2014: Personal Interview).

This American perceived that the damage accrued during failed attempts to instigate romantic relationships could cause them to close themselves off emotionally.

Kaba, a musician who worked as a tour staff member at many different Conakry-based drum and dance camps, substantiated this perspective. Kaba entered into romantic relationships with a number of different tourists during drum and dance camps. Several professed their love for him, leading him to believe that they wanted him to live with them in their home countries. In each case, the women changed her mind after returning home and broke off the relationship. As a result, Kaba felt jaded toward the idea of finding love, and became highly guarded when meeting tourists.

While agency existed for all actors in romantic relationships in drum and dance camps in Guinea, control resided primarily in the hands of the female tourists. One Seattle-Guinean participant described choosing to end a relationship when she left Guinea:

“The drummer who was interested in me still contacts me every once in a while. When we left, we left, I thought, on terms of friends. He said, ‘Inchallah, we’ll see what happens in the future’. I think he had hope that I would come back to Guinea, or that it would flourish into something more...[but] that wasn’t something I was interested in pursuing: having a relationship with someone from another country” (Shaniece 2015: Personal Interview).

This asymmetric control paralleled female sex/romance tourism elsewhere in the world, in which women, though they sometimes deny it, control their time of arrival, length of stay, compensation, and whether or not they will return (Bauer 2014: 23). In Guinea, the female drum and dance tourist, and not the male tour staff, chose when she would arrive. She, not he, decided if she would leave at the scheduled end of the camp or change her flight to a later date to remain for an extra week with her new lover. It was she, and not he, who decided if and when money or gifts were exchanged. It was the female tourist, and not the Guinean man, who decided if and when she wanted to return, and if she would rekindle that relationship.

Relationships between Guinean tour staff and drum and dance tourists reversed Guinean gender norms with respect to age and agency. Among Guineans, women are typically younger than the men that they marry.<sup>22</sup> This tendency toward marriages involving a younger wife and older husband existed within the broader expatriate community of Guineans in Seattle, sometimes with age differentials of two decades or more. Participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene often remarked on the relative youth of the men with whom they and other tourists become romantically involved. This inverted age differential persisted in relationships that proceeded to engagement, marriage, and migration of the Guinean man. With few exceptions, Guinean-born artists in the Seattle-Guinean scene, and in scenes in the surrounding region of the United States and Canada, were typically between five and twenty years younger than their wives. The Seattle-Guinean scene was thus an exception to Julien Raout's findings that relationships between tourists and camp staff in Guinea occur between individuals of the same age class (2009: 190-191).

The inversion of age/gender norms in marriages between foreign female tourists and Guinean male tour staff coexisted with an inversion in financially-derived agency. Jessica Towns-Camara recognized a pattern between the age of Guinean men getting married and their financial stability: "Men wait until they're older and have money and accomplishments. Marriage is a deal, more so, that's brokered there" (2015: Personal Interview). In relationships between foreign female tourists and Guinean male tour staff, financial privilege often worked to flip this gendered pattern.

Writing on Mande people across sub-Saharan West Africa, anthropologist milou niëns (2010) argues that men feminize themselves as they strive toward relationships featuring this

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<sup>22</sup> The mean age at first marriage in Guinea is 19.4 for females and 26.8 for males, a gendered differential of 7.4 years. By comparison, the mean age at first marriage in the US is 26.9 for females and 28.2 for males, a difference of 1.3 years (World Bank 2016).

reversal of age relative to gender. She finds that men who attempt but fail to establish long-term relationships with foreign tourists are sometimes remain perpetually unmarried as communities denounce their behaviors and subsequently disqualify them as viable husbands. In the Guinean urban artist context, some men who entered into relationships with foreign tourists were already married to a Guinean woman, mitigating the vulnerability attributed to feminization.

Furthermore, my Guinean-born interviewees suggested that the extreme nature of poverty and male unemployment in urban Guinea worked to partially mute the stigma attached to men romantically marketing themselves to foreign tourists.

## **Impacts**

In her study of Sabar and Djembé dance in New York and Dakar, Eleni Bizas states that American women who marry West African men later discover that “marriage does not have similar connotations in his culture” (Bizas 2014: 81). She constructs a narrative in which a West African man’s conception of marriage does not require love. Female participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene who were married to Guinean men complicated this narrative, arguing that the concept of “love” has a greater number of potential meanings for Guineans than is typical in Western society. Jessica Towns-Camara found that, in addition to love based on shared appreciation, mutual respect, and compatible personalities, Guineans understood love based on the potential usefulness of a partner:

“Guineans will tell you that there are many different kinds of love. They’ll openly be like: ‘I love you. I love you.’ You’ll say, “Yeah, but why do you say you love me?” They’ll be like, ‘I love what you do for me.’ To them, that’s a completely legitimate form of love. They love you, sometimes not only for what you do or have done for them, but for the potential that they see you could do for them (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

For Jessica, love based on a partner's potential utility, though not universal, was common within Guinean social relationships. Jessica asserted the importance that women who travel to Guinea should be cautious and selective about the people with whom they interact:

“I think you have to be really careful. You want those people who really love you. Just like here. You want those people who have really gotten to know you, and appreciate you...not just: ‘I love you for the potential factor of what you can for for me’” (Jessica Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

Here, she established that the love she associated with Guinean people was not merely something about which tourists should be aware, but something that they should take caution against. She advised tourists to delay romantic relationships until they became confident in the motivations of the people who they met in order to avoid heartbreak.

Experienced non-Guinean participants recognized that Guinean tour staff sometimes withheld, hid, or lied about details of their lives in order to avoid jeopardizing a romantic relationship with a foreign woman. Laurie Sylla, herself married to a Guinean dancer for two decades, knew of an artist who lived with a woman in the United States for several years before acknowledging that he had a wife and child in Guinea. She recognized the friction caused by differing societal attitudes in Guinea and the United States with respect to polygamy, and attributed the omission or denial of existing relationships in part to fear by Guinean men that full disclosure might risk the opportunity for mobility: “Because there's this hunger and this hope to be able to get out, there's sometimes dishonesty at the beginning of the relationship. (...) Women often find out long after they're married that there's some kid they didn't know about” (Laurie Sylla 2014: Personal Interview). Some women sustained their relationships after finding out about their husbands' existing wives and children, while others chose to divorce because of the deception.

One participant in the Seattle-Guinean scene who married a Guinean suggested that dishonesty should be expected in interactions with Guineans, saying, “they all lie, because it’s a part of Guinea culture to lie. Lying is not a big deal” (2015: Personal Interview). Another non-Guinean who typically lives in Guinea for between three and four months each year also recognized a culture-wide tendency toward dishonesty, framing it in relation to values adopted from Islam. It is the case that verses from the Quran, the Hadith, and the Sira have been interpreted as allowing for lies and deceit when directed toward non-Muslims, or even between Muslims if for a greater good. Furthermore, it seems reasonable that the opportunity to feed and purchase healthcare for your family might be considered as a greater good that justified lying to a potential romantic partner. However, no Guinean expressed to me that dishonesty was an acceptable or expected practice, whether among strangers or familiars.

Most female tourists recognized, if only upon reflection after returning home, that migration was a motivation for Guinean men to enter into relationships. Many also acknowledged their inability to communicate verbally in a way that enabled appreciation of the subtleties, or even general features, of a Guinean man’s personality, and vice versa. Furthermore, they observed dishonesty and infidelity in Guinean men who married foreign women. However, even as female tourists problematized the idea that “genuine” love existed in other relationships, in almost all cases, they saw themselves, and, perhaps a handful of others, as exceptions to that rule.

In addition to the personal emotional damage done by repeated attempts at bonding with tourists, as in the case of Kaba in the previous section of this chapter, Guinean artists also faced challenges and dangers that arose later, even when relationships were initially successful.

Mamady Mansaré described his first extended stay in the United States in 2012:

“That first time was very difficult for me. All the time, I am with my wife. At home, I am with my wife. Anywhere, I am with her. In Guinea, every morning, when you wake up, you can see all your neighbors. Maybe five or seven who can come to your home say: ‘Good morning. Good morning. I’m here only to understand how you are. How are you doing? Are you okay?’ (...) My family is big in my compound. But here, if I am outside, I cannot see anybody who can say: ‘Hello.’ I was only watching the TV; listening to the radio. After that, I am in the car to go where we have to go” (Mamady Mansare 2014: Personal Interview).

After first migrating, Mamady struggled with isolation, loneliness, and boredom. Without a driver’s license or the ability to work legally, he remained tethered to his wife and their house, homesick for the socially active life that he experienced in Guinea.

The majority of my Guinean-born collaborators living in the US shared Mamady’s difficulties. Some eventually applied for and obtained US citizenship, though few considered the United States as their home in anything other than a legal sense. Instead, the touristic host-guest relationship reversed, and most artistic expatriates found themselves as foreigners continually struggling to construct viable local lifestyles. Expatriates who lived outside of Seattle, especially in cities or regions without significant Franco-phone West African populations, experienced these difficulties most acutely, and for longer periods of time. Improved internet connectivity and telephone service in both the US and Guinea allowed Guinean expatriates to maintain contact with friends and family. Still, this did little to dampen frustrations that arose among Guinean migrants, especially during the initial period of work restriction and associated dependency upon their fiancées or spouses.

One of my collaborators relayed to me the case of Souleymane, presenting an extreme example of the struggles faced by Guinean expatriates who migrated by way of relationships with drum and dance tourists. Like most other artist expatriates, Souleymane relied heavily upon the financial well-being of his American wife, who also handled all of his business and transportation arrangements. Living on the east coast of the US, Souleymane arranged to bring

his Guinean-born daughter to live with them so that she could receive an education. After four years of marriage, Souleymane came home to find that his wife had unexpectedly thrown all of his and his daughter's belongings on the sidewalk. His wife served him with divorce papers, and he and his daughter were expected to leave. Because of his previous dependence on his American wife, he was unable to provide for himself or his daughter. The first week after she evicted them, Souleymane found temporary sleeping arrangements for his daughter, but not for himself. He slept on the street for nearly a week.

Souleymane could not read in English or in French, and his illiteracy had severe ramifications. He was unable to understand the conditions of the divorce, or to recognize the unmet responsibilities of his ex-wife as residency card sponsor for himself and his daughter. Without the ability or funds to set up housing and employment for himself, Souleymane was forced to choose between traveling back to Guinea, where the Ebola epidemic had added stress to an already difficult economic environment, and risking homelessness in the United States so that his daughter could continue to receive an education.

While Souleymane's experience represented an extreme among expatriate artists, many of my Guinean-born collaborators shared stories of the difficulties that they or their friends faced as relationships ended. Guinean artists who migrated to the US through marriage found it difficult to navigate the organizational requirements necessary to support themselves and manage their own performance and teaching schedules if their relationships ended.<sup>23</sup> With the exception of a small number of artists who were capable of establishing independent stability, Guineans who separated from their wives found support from drum and dance scene participants before

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<sup>23</sup> The ramifications of divorce on the legal status of Guinean expatriates was time-dependent. Under 2017 US law, permanent residents married to US citizens for three years became eligible for naturalization.

establishing relationships with another woman. Those Guineans who failed to do so typically returned to Guinea permanently.

Jessica Towns-Camara distinguished her relationship with her husband from other marriages between Guineans and Americans in that she intentionally worked to undermine her husband's dependency. While some other women maintained full financial control, she created a joint bank account with her husband:

“I said, ‘Okay. We have a joint bank account. You could take all the money out of this bank account, because you have the power to do that. You could leave. Any time.’ He knows that still. He’s always had that power. Any money that he makes, it goes into this bank account, and he can take it out if he wants to” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

Jessica found that lifting the shadow of financial control allowed she and her husband to be open with one another and to more easily and honestly make decisions and work through stressful issues.

Furthermore, Jessica insisted to her husband, both before and after he traveled to the US, that, were their marriage to dissolve, she would help to file the paperwork that would ensure that he and his daughter could remain in the country and eventually gain citizenship if that was what they wanted to do: “I reiterated many times. Many times. Even when we would argue, I reiterated that there’s no power here. I’m not holding that power over you. I gave that power up” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview). While not legally binding, she discovered that this assurance reinforced their mutual trust. Jessica found that, while some women married to Guinean men questioned her judgment, most eventually recognized the value of acknowledging and working to undermine privilege and control.

In addition to the risks to men and women directly involved in romantic relationships, some participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene expressed concerned with the potential impacts of

migration on those who remained in Guinea. Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré recognized the potentially negative impact that romantic relationships had on the well-being of families in Guinea as men left their communities. She cited her own experiences with her husband's family:

“I spend a lot of time thinking about the consequences of all of this. The brain drain. Mamady's younger brother is married and in Finland because of a girl coming to our camp. Now, Mamady's family doesn't have Mamady there, and doesn't have Mamady's brother there. The brain drain. Those are the two that got to go to school. There's more now that got to go. But, are we raping and pillaging like the pirates of the US reputation? That's the opposite of my intention. It makes me nauseous when I think about: 'Are my actions leading to us just taking what we want and leaving the rest?' I hate that. (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré Personal Interview: 2014).

Sarah Lee identified and struggled with her own responsibility in what she called the “brain drain”, through which the most educated and organized men, often those who bore the responsibility for family members' well-being left to live abroad.

While not universally true, it was often the case that the Guinean men who emigrated through romantic relationships formed during drum and dance camps had attained the highest level of education among their peers.<sup>24</sup> They were often best able to converse in French, and increasingly had informal training in German, Spanish, or English. This allowed for relatively advanced verbal communication with tourists, facilitating a higher probability for romantic coupling. Further, these men were best equipped to study and learn the primary language of the tourist with whom they became romantically involved, and to communicate through social media, further increasing their chances to maintain and develop a protracted relationship. In order to better provide for their families in Guinea, men left formidable vacuums of organization and support in their wakes as they migrated abroad.

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<sup>24</sup> This is not to say that men who emigrated through romantic relationships with tourists are among the most educated Guineans, but only among their artistic peer group. Urban Guineans have increasingly attended secondary and post-secondary education. Professional artists and other tour staff were rarely among those with access or interest in pursuing careers that required schooling beyond the seven compulsory years for Guinean children.

The musical impacts of transnational marriages on local music and dance practices in Seattle and the surrounding areas were profound. As Guinean artists arrived and became active teachers and performers, they brought with them particular styles and repertoires that permeated the Seattle-Guinean scene through both classes and performances. In Seattle, these artists were frequently hired by drumming and dance teachers and students in a network of neighboring communities that did not include resident Guinean teachers, such as Boise, ID, Missoula, MT, Ashland, OR, and Salt Lake City, UT. As women in the Pacific Northwest traveled to Guinea and enter into relationships that result in marriages, the men who they brought home often belonged to the same artistic pedigree as the tour facilitators, generating a regionally-specific canonization of musical and dance practice in the United States.

Many Guinean expatriate artists expressed frustration at being restricted to musical performance primarily with relative amateurs. One non-Guinean perceived drumming in the United States as a poor approximation of practices in Guinea, and observed disappointment among Guinean expatriate artists upon encountering the relatively low-energy performance:

I can't imagine how hard it is for somebody who grew up in that to be here and not be able to have access to that. (...) Ibrahim is a good example of somebody who craves that intensity and doesn't know how to communicate that and bring it out of their students, and then gets frustrated and nearly turns his back on them because he can't get what he wants out of the music. (...) One person can't generate all the energy that comes out of an ensemble that goes back generations and is embedded culturally. To just come here as a single ex-pat, you can't." (2015: Personal Interview)

This statement resonated with my own observations insofar as Guinean expatriates became frustrated with musical performance and were typically able to identify but not effectively correct musical errors that they perceived. Furthermore, upon migration, Guinean-born artists lost access to an expressive outlet that was integral to their lives, especially if they moved to a region not already populated by Guinean artists.

The international conveyor belt driven by romance initiated during tours in Guinea facilitated growth of the Seattle-Guinean scene by including additional Guinean-born artists as teachers and performers. This process was such that, even as it generated isolation among recent Guinean migrants in the United States, it worked over time to mitigate that isolation. When expatriates who migrated through marriage began to host their own tourism camps, they frequently hired friends and family members as staff. These expatriates typically attracted tour participants from within the local scene, or from the nearby region where they performed and taught workshops. Thus, when expatriates hosted tours in Guinea the romantic relationships that occurred facilitated the migration of their friends and family into their own cities or the surrounding regions.

Most non-Guinean enthusiasts and participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene celebrated the influx of new Guinean-born artists into the region, as their arrival contributed to community formation and maintenance. When Guinean expatriate artists arrived in Seattle, they refreshed the scene with energy by performing, accompanying existing dance classes, and offering their own drum or dance classes. Those Guinean artists who moved elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest facilitated the growth of satellite scenes that connected to Seattle during weekend workshops and for special performances.

Just as some Guinean expatriates became frustrated by the small number of dedicated and high-achieving drummers and dancers that they found upon migrating, some experienced non-Guinean musicians expressed little enthusiasm at the arrival of Guinean-born artists. These non-Guineans perceived that, because marriage was the specific mechanism for mobility, the individual artists entering the scene were competent and knowledgeable, but rarely exceptional. Drummer Tyler Richart articulated the issue as one that extended beyond just the local scene

“Frequently, the people that come, not just to Seattle but all over the country, are people that are very, very beautiful, and frequently not actually that good at the djembe. I meet people over there [(in Guinea)] all the time who I think are much better players, and I think part of the reason that they’re not here is because they’re not outstandingly attractive (Tyler Richart 2014: Personal Interview).

Tyler found that, while the artists who migrated were often steeped in musical performance, they sometimes lacked excellence in execution because the driving force behind the selection of male Guinean tour staff as mates by foreign female tourists was an attraction to something other than exceptional musical talent.

Supporting Tyler’s claim, in interviews and casual conversations, female non-Guineans in the Seattle-Guinean scene rarely cited artistic excellence as a motivating factor for their romantic engagement with Guinean tour staff members. Here, I do not wish to imply an absence of musicianship or skill in any particular musicians or dancers within or beyond the Seattle-Guinean scene, only to point out the absence of this quality in descriptions by women. Women in the Seattle-Guinean scene married to Guinean-born drummers or dancers universally considered their husbands to be masterful artists and referred to artistic excellence in promotional materials, but rarely in the context of their relationships.

Regardless of their performance abilities relative to other Guinean artists, the men who migrated to the US by way of romantic relationships were often particularly well-suited to scene construction and maintenance. These men worked as staff members for drum and dance tours, developing a sense of foreigners’ perceptions and desires. Women in the Seattle-Guinean scene cited beauty, confidence, a caring nature, kindness, openness, and an inclusive outlook as traits that first drew them to their Guinean-born husbands. Paired with adequate performance ability and the authority afforded by racial, national, and continental identity, these traits generated the charisma necessary to retain regular students and participants. While exceptional artistry alone

might attract small numbers of highly discriminating and dedicated students, to support an active drum and dance scene that generated a sense of community among participants, Guinean expatriates had to stand as charismatic synecdoches for non-Guineans' romantic imaginations of Guinea and of Africa.

In addition to those traits necessary to act as gravitational centers for the coalescence of a coherent scene, Guineans also had to be highly flexible in order to survive and flourish as artist expatriates. Experience in drum and dance tourism camps not only prompted men to develop strategies for attracting and appeasing foreigners, it also fostered familiarity and tolerance to the attitudes and behaviors of people from all over the world. Even as tourists behave differently in tourism environments than they do in their quotidian lives, some cultural norms transpose (Thomas 2005; Weichselbaumer 2012). This exposure contributed to an openness and curiosity in the expatriates who formed the core of the Seattle-Guinean scene, preparing them to adjust to life, and to thrive, in Seattle.

Women in the Seattle-Guinean scene who married Guinean expatriates included those from a variety of racial identities, and diaspora scholar Jasmine Johnson (2012) characterizes relationships between West African drum and dance artists and American women differently based on the race of the woman involved. She writes: "Black American women in particular who were teaching and invested in West African dance provided a social and financial cushion for recently immigrated West Africans. They offered opportunities to guest teach, homes to live in, food to eat, professional networks to tap into, a student base, and sometimes citizenship" (Johnson 2012: 49). She frames this support of African expatriate men by Black American women as part of a larger effort to center Black Americans, and Black American women in particular, in African drum and dance in Oakland in the 1970s and 1980s. In contrast, she

characterizes White women who provided identical support to continental Africans in the 1990s as having entered into a transaction:

“West African instructors in the 1990s mobilized the desires of non-black people to participate in the practice for their own financial security. Offering West African teachers free rehearsal space, room and board, food, and transportation, and working as de facto personal assistants allowed white Americans to enter and feel comfortable at the Malonga Center in ways previously unavailable to them” (Jasmine Johnson 2012: 52).

Johnson observes that marriage and other financial support of African expatriates by White people enabled access to a practice that was previously exclusive along racial lines. In the Seattle-Guinean scene, White women who married Guinean-born men and supported them in their careers did not have the same need to enter into an exclusive practice. Furthermore, they voiced concerns suggesting that Johnson’s findings are not easily mapped onto the Seattle-Guinean scene.

One White woman in Seattle, Molly, reflected on how being married to a Guinean artist changed her role in the scene in a way that introduced a limiting factor to her participation:

“Suddenly, I’m involved, not in the moment of dance, or the excitement of, ‘Oh! I got that rhythm!’ Now, I’m involved in the business end. Now, I’m involved in administration” (2014: Personal Interview). Molly found that, while she gained greater access to the art form and the culture through association with her husband, because of the responsibilities that she took on to support him, she was no longer able to tap into a practice that provided balance to her life:

“I really lost something that was really working for me. As an escape. As a spiritual feed. It became something that I had to tend to in a whole other way. Before, if I had a thousand bucks in my pocket, I could go to Africa and just dance. I can’t go to Guinea [(now)] and not take care of the family. Going to Guinea, for me, is not a vacation. It’s a responsibility. (...) So, some of the joy that was there isn’t there in the same way for me. (...) It’s much rarer for me to have those moments of release and surrender to the drum that I used to feel more” (Molly 2014: Personal Interview).

For Molly, closer proximity to Guinean performance arts came at the price of sacrificing the benefits that had drawn her to it in the first place. Rather than basking in the joyful refreshment offered by dancing and drumming, she more often found herself addressing concerns regarding space rental, instrument transportation, and personnel.

## **Closing**

Romantic relationships were central both to drum and dance camps in Guinea and to the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene in general, offering opportunities and risks to all involved. This centrality was accompanied by a high degree of skepticism and critique within the scene. Participants who questioned the genuine nature of romance between Guinean men and non-Guinean women typically interpreted relationships as working principally to meet the financial needs of the man and the carnal desires of the woman. Most relationships began with Guineans exchanging romance for the opportunity to migrate, regardless of tourists' intentions. Nevertheless, this paints an incomplete picture of the cases of many relationships in the Seattle-Guinean scene.

Women had a variety of motivations for entering into romantic relationships, of which sexual desire was only one. Anthropologist Eleni Bizas asserts that relationships between West African artists and American women can be thought of as partnerships (2014: 82-84). Indeed, women in Seattle who taught or performed African music and dance benefited from marrying Guinean-born artists. Regardless of the race of the woman, Guinean-born husbands buttressed their wives' positions as interpreters of tradition, if not actually tradition bearers (Titon 2012: 228). Women quickly changed their last names to match their husbands' in promotional materials, sometimes even before they were legally wed in the United States. Further, women

encouraged their husbands to abandon any “non-African” nicknames, emphasizing relatively exotic-sounding names, both in promotional materials and in person. Guinean-born men, again, as synecdoches of Guinea (and Africa), became marketing resources. In addition to whatever music or dance abilities that these men had to offer, they also provided cultural validation for their wives and contributed to the acquisition and success of their wives’ workshops, paid performances, and teaching jobs.

Looking back, non-Guinean dancer and teacher Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré characterized her first romantic relationship with a Guinean tour staff member as relating to her more general interests in and appreciation for Africa:

“While, yeah, I fell in love with [him]. I don’t know if hindsight is 20/20 or I’m telling myself this or whatever; but, I feel like I needed to have more. It wasn’t going to work for me just to have three, four, five weeks of Africa in my life. I think I wanted to lock that into my life. I had already been teaching something that had a flavor of it. I had already been dating an African man. At the time, I fell in love with Africa. I fell in love with Africans. I fell in love with an African” (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2014: Personal Interview).

For Sarah Lee, her husband embodied her romantic idea of Guinea and Guineans, itself distilled from a more general Afrophilia. She interpreted her relationship as having been an opportunity to incorporate Africa more fully into her life. Interpersonal love and marriage extended access to the Other, fulfilling desires that included and extended beyond the individual and the body.

I have identified a number of risks associated with relationships between tourists and tour staff in drum and dance camps based on the asymmetric agency inherent in the economic discrepancies as well as the liminality of the experience. It is crucial, though, to emphasize that, despite these risks, there are relationships that flourished. These couples shared lives and built families together. In their interactions, I witnessed them support one another through difficulties that occurred on both sides of the Atlantic, and rejoice together in triumphs. Just as in

relationships between people who do not confront the challenges of creating a bond across geographic, cultural and linguistic divides, these couples demonstrated patience, understanding, dedication, and love. It was upon this foundation that the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene emerged, coalescing around participation in ritualistic dance classes in Seattle.

## Chapter 2: Seeking Same Difference

### *Separation*

*It's 7:25 pm as I walk through the door of the Union Cultural Center, a capoeira studio in Seattle's Chinatown-International District where Manimou Camara hosts his weekly Wednesday night dance class. I remove my shoes and lengthen the line of sandals and boots already positioned near the entrance. Manimou is in the back behind the drummers, folding the jeans and sweatshirt that he just changed out of in favor of a tank top and wax fabric patchwork pants. He smiles broadly and gives me a hug. I set down my djembe and walk over toward the sangban, exchanging handshakes and greetings with the other drummers along the way. Dancers, all with familiar faces, emerge from the bathroom and broom closet having changed from their work attire into athletic clothing and t-shirts. They finish their preparation by tying lapas around their waists. Manimou calls out to us: "Let's start the warmup! Wongai, Wongai!"*

### *Liminal*

*We play Kassa. I'm on sangban, and Maxx and Levin fill out the rest of the dundun section on dundunba and kenkeni, respectively. Greg, Boka, and Naby play djembes. Boka leads the ensemble, improvising solo phrases and signaling movement changes for the dancers. After several minutes, he raises his eyebrows toward Greg, mimicking Greg's accompaniment pattern. Greg takes over the solo role, improvising and signaling for changes. Naby asserts himself as a soloist, interrupting Greg mid-phrase and pushing the tempo. After only a few seconds, Naby returns to playing his accompaniment part. Boka pauses for a moment, then takes back the solo role as Manimou leads the dancers through a six-movement choreography. The tempo rises*

*gradually until, as Manimou shifts to a highly energetic and repetitive movement, Boka unleashes a steady stream of tones and slaps, the échauffement. I respond by increasing the rhythmic density of my part on the sangban. Manimou raises his hand in the air and Boka plays the final break, bringing the warmup to a close.*

*As the dancers drink water, Manimou approaches the drummers:*

*“Wongai, Hamanaka. Wongai, dundunba.”*

*We play Dundungbé, and Manimou leads the dancers through dozens of movements, chaining them together into an increasingly long sequence. Occasionally, he stops and shakes his head, then models a single movement in slow motion exaggerating his body’s articulation. Manimou changes movements and I adjust the sangban part to play G’bada. Later, we switch seamlessly into Bolokonondo, another Dundunba family rhythm. The tempo and volume of the music continuously and gradually increases as time progresses. Sweat streams down my face and soaks through my shirt. Manimou holds his hands up to form a letter “T”, and Boka responds by initiating an échauffement, stopping the music. Manimou calls out to the dancers:*

*“Okay. Let’s do the lines.”*

*All of the dancers gather together at the far end of the room, facing us. Although varying in age, height, race, and ethnicity, their bare feet and colorful cloth wraps render them a unified assemblage. Manimou isolates each of the Dundunba steps, leading dancers across the floor, three at a time. Following completion of all of the steps, Manimou motions for the dancers to form a block facing the drummers. He performs muted gestures marking each each movement to remind the students of the order. Boka plays the break and the dancers perform the entire sequence with Manimou watching. He joins them for the final échauffement, ending the class.*

### ***Reintegration***

*After the class, Manimou leads the dancers in a procession in front of the drummers. Each dancer smiles, places a hand over their heart, or bends down to touch the ground in front of the drummers as shows of thanks. We play Kassa again, this time at a moderate tempo and low volume, and the dancers grab dollar bills to throw on top of those that Manimou leaves in a djembe bag as a tip for the drummers. We stop playing, pack up our instruments, and store away chairs, benches, and mats. The dancers remove their lapas. Conversations break out in English, French, and Susu, sometimes switching between all three. I carry my drum through the door to the street, and the steamy and sweaty air gives way to a cool breeze carrying the smells of star anise and dried seafood from the markets up the road. A few of us head down the street to have a beer and some food, saying goodbye to those who are headed home instead.*

In the Seattle-Guinean scene, dance classes were highly ritualized. Each week during my fieldwork, I attended and played for classes that were consistent in form, comprising three distinct phases that corresponded with those in rites of passage: the separation phase, the liminal phase, and the reintegration phase. In this chapter, I argue that dance classes were sites at which Seattle-Guinean scene participants produced a new and emergent touristic culture through ritualized practice that, while functioning as transitory and transformational, also established, affirmed, and challenged assertions of ownership and belonging. I begin by situating classes in Seattle between liminal and liminoid poles in order to establish their potential for community formation, finding that the regularly intervallic and non-continuous nature of dance classes generated what I call *cumulative liminality*. I assert that dance classes constituted a kind of tourism without travel, rendering participants as self-consumers of senses of place generated by

the presence of Guinean bodies, advertising language, and through clothing choices. Finally, I land squarely on issues of community formation, introducing the concept of *same difference* to explain elements of partiality and exclusivity in social cohesion.

### **Cumulative Liminality**

Turner (1969) asserts that the liminality of rituals generates *communitas*: non-hierarchical interpersonal comradeship between liminars. This *communitas* in turn leads to social bonding and a sense of interpersonal belonging that extends beyond the ritual event. According to Turner's (1974) categorical distinctions, dance classes in Seattle should be limited in their potential to generate *communitas* because they are liminoid (individual and optional) rather than liminal (collective and obligatory) events. However, I extend anthropologist Anthony Speigal's (2011) concern that analysis based on categorical liminal-liminoid binarism mistakenly assumes a bright line between the pre-modern and the modern, acknowledging the cultural, racial, and geographic essentializations that tend to accompany characterizations of phenomena in the West as liminoid (read: modern) and in Africa as liminal (read: pre-modern). Speigal reformulates Turner's categorical distinction between the liminal and the liminoid in terms of an ideal-pole continuum. Crucially, Speigal insists that events can never accurately be situated at either the liminal or liminoid ideal pole, even though such poles can be articulated theoretically, as elements of both always manifest in real world examples.

I adopt Speigal's approach, aiming to avoid the pitfalls of Turner's categorical binary while retaining the usefulness of the liminoid-liminal distinction for understanding how and to what extent drum and dance classes in Seattle generated a sense of community among participants. My central point here is to highlight the blended and blurry nature of liminality in

Seattle-Guinean dance classes and the potential for community formation within them. Rather than trying to characterize dance classes in Seattle as either liminal or liminoid, it is more useful to situate classes with reference to the proximity of particular traits to distinguishing features of the liminal and liminal ideal poles. These features include association of the obligatory, society-wide, work-oriented, and cyclical with the liminal. Likewise, the optional, individual, nonwork-oriented, and intermittent are associated with the liminoid.

At first glance, participation in dance classes was both optional and individual, marking the practice near the liminoid ideal pole. However, this interpretation can be called into question by taking into account Foucault's concept of the cultivation of the self. The cultivation of the self is a phenomenon existing since antiquity "wherein the relations of oneself to oneself were intensified and valorized" (Foucault 1986: 43). Foucault argues that the cultivation of the self "came to constitute a social practice" through its evolution into "procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught" (1986: 39-45). Exercise and regulation of diet join sexual austerity as activities that, while undertaken in the process of bettering oneself, simultaneously carry the weight of social responsibility. Similarly, I interpret non-Guinean participation as embodiment of the contemporary multiculturalist ideal of respecting the beliefs and practices of all people, especially those perceived as belonging to marginalized segments of the population. These participants showed to themselves and others that they were continuously putting forward the effort to become better Selves by coming closer to the Other.<sup>25</sup> This cultivation of the cultural self, while optional in its specific form, fulfilled an increasingly necessary part of maintaining a connection to the mainstream of Seattle's progressive political and social landscape. Dance classes were an individualized manifestation

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<sup>25</sup> I distinguish the cultivation of the cultural self from the concept "virtue signaling", in that the latter connotes disingenuous intent.

of a society-wide phenomenon. Participation was at once entirely optional, and yet was compelled by society. Neither the individual nor the optional nature of participation in dance classes was particularly clear cut, leaving open the possibility for the generation of *communitas*.

While Black Americans in the scene cultivated their cultural selves, some did so in a distinctive way. These Black Americans understood drum and dance as a way to reconnect with cultural ancestry that was taken from them as a result of the Atlantic slave trade. As such, whereas non-Black participants demonstrated their social responsibility by approaching the cultural Other, Black American participants did so by reclaiming the cultural Self.

Rowe's (2008) analysis of modern sports is particularly useful in looking at the distinction between liminal-as-work and liminoid-as-nonwork. Rowe argues that modern sports, if they are liminoid as Turner (1974) suggests, should exhibit aspects of play and not of work. However, Rowe finds in sports a blending of work and nonwork, both in that professional athletes "combine a sense of contractual obligation and professional preparation with a spirit of fun and relaxation that draws forward the spontaneity, creativity, and joy that make them entertaining and exciting to watch", as well as the fact that "serious 'weekend athletes' bring to their leisure pursuit of sport a kind of intensity of purpose, competition and goal orientation more expected in the domain of work" (Rowe 2008: 142-143). This blending was the case with Seattle-Guinean dance classes, as well. Both drummers and dance students displayed seriousness and a sense of urgency in learning and performing. Further, while only one of the musicians in the Seattle-Guinean scene (a Guinean) was professional in the sense that music performance represented his central employment, those for whom drumming constituted paid work were typically joyful, jovial, and relaxed. Seattle-Guinean dance classes were thus simultaneously liminal and liminoid phenomena in terms of the distinction between nonwork and

work opposition. The persistence of both work and non-work sustained liminality in a superficially liminoid activity, maintaining the potential for transformation and social bonding through class participation.

Finally, Turner argues that, whereas liminal phenomena are cyclical, liminoid phenomena are intermittent, “generated often in times and places assigned to the leisure sphere” (1977: 51). Seattle-Guinean dance classes were cyclical in the regularity of the weekly intervals at which they occurred. The annual meta-organization of dance classes also operated cyclically, as instructors took advantage of the dry season in Guinea to host tourism camps or visit friends and family, usually from December through March. In their absence, guest teachers filled in the regular slots, typically offering classes in dances associated with parts of Africa other than Guinea. This aspect of Seattle-Guinean dance classes was thus closer to the liminal than the liminoid pole, again suggesting the potential for community formation and social cohesion.

In arguing that dance classes foster community based on their liminality, it is necessary to address the apparent absence of social transit that is central to both van Gennep’s and Turner’s formulations of rites of passage (Balduk 2008). When participants emerged from dance classes, they reintegrated, not into a new social status, but into the same structural relationship from which they separated. Each week, participants took time “away” to join in ritualized performance before returning to their family and work lives. The liminality of dance classes in Seattle worked along “iterative and extended temporal planes” (McCadden 1997: 242). While operating across extended temporalities, the non-continuous nature of dance classes distinguished them from the protracted liminality that occurs in the case of society-wide events

such as wars.<sup>26</sup> It is useful, then, to look for interpretations of liminality operating over extended yet interrupted time frames.

Geographer Dominique Moran (2013) provides a useful direction toward understanding intervallic liminality in her analysis of prison visitation. Moran argues that prison visitations generate liminality, not as a single stage in a linear transformation, but through repeated and distinct bursts that create a “temporary, transient transformation” (2013: 343). The liminality of prison visitations is followed by reintegration into the initial social state, rather than to a new and different status as is expected in typical rites of passage. Moran argues, however, that the temporary and transitive liminality of prison visitation is nevertheless transformative because its effects aggregate over time rather than through a single event.

I interpret the liminality of Seattle-Guinean dance classes as working similarly. Transformation occurred by way of *cumulative liminality* generated through regularly repeated quasi-transitive rituals. By qualifying them as quasi-transitive, I mean to draw attention to the fact that the mobility or travel involved is at once corporeal travel to an evident and present place—the dance space—and simultaneously virtual travel to an Other place through the production and consumption of, among other things, music and dance. Traveling together, week after week, participants generated a sense of local community.

### **Tourism without Travel**

Ethnomusicology and tourism studies scholarship inspired me to frame Seattle-Guinean dance classes as touristic phenomena, helping me to understand the “where” of immediate and distant places that were constructed, imagined and represented. Dance classes in Seattle featured

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<sup>26</sup> Turner classifies such protracted liminality as “cunicular”, relating to an extended tunnel rather than a narrow threshold (Turner 1974: 72).

what Bærenholdt et al. call “corporeal and social performances” (2004: 2) that rendered them as touristic places without the need for physical travel. In framing dance classes in Seattle as a kind of tourism, I follow tourism scholar Erik Cohen (1995) who argues that there is not a clear distinction between leisure and tourism as both represent the search for rejuvenation in difference, leisure through playful activities and tourism through travel. Dance classes in the Seattle-Guinean scene were particularly apt examples of this blurring between leisure and tourism, because the classes were emplaced through the objects, discourses, and practices in the scene.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have suggested the existence of place-centered tourism that does not require corporeal travel. Cultural theorist Sarah Gibson (2007) articulates that food and eating can generate “imaginative mobilities” through dining at restaurants, ordering takeout, or cooking at home. In a specific case, social scientist Mark McGovern (2003) argues that Irish-themed bars provide tourism without travel to a notional Ireland for drinkers and diners across the globe. Similarly, sociologist Lisa Smith (2016) argues that yoga studios in Montreal are sites of engagement with other places, and that these journeys emerge through the consumption of exotic cultural artifacts by middle-class North Americans.

Ethnomusicologists have considered the potential for music and dance, specifically, to generate place. Mark DeWitt (1999) enlists Valene Smith’s (1977) definition of tourism as he calls on us to consider zydeco events in the San Francisco Bay area as a form of tourism, in part because of music’s power to imaginatively transport a listener. DeWitt expresses that the “illusion of a virtual time and place appears” when adequate attention is given to the quality of food preparation, decoration, dance style, and musical performance practice (1999: 73). In a 2002 article on Balinese performance, ethnomusicologist Henry Johnson argues that cultural

production such as music and dance performance enables people to conceptualize place in a way that is geographically referential, yet unbounded. Johnson applies the notion of “tourism at home” primarily to his theorization of the world music market. Timothy Taylor’s characterization of World Music listening practices as “sonic tourism” (1997: 19) inform both Johnson’s and DeWitt’s theories of music’s role in tourism without corporeal travel.<sup>27</sup>

The music and dance that occurs in dance classes in the Seattle-Guinean scene differed from Taylor’s sonic tourism in a crucial way. Taylor’s sonic tourism identifies tourism as a consumptive process. World Music recordings are intentionally, if sometimes multiply-placed products to be purchased by the sonic tourist. The sound becomes a vehicle for imagined mobility: travel through listening.<sup>28</sup> However, in the case of the Seattle-Guinean scene, performance itself constituted place within the bodies of the “touring” drummers and dancers. That is, the participants simultaneously produced *and* consumed the touristic product. Embodiment of the performance rendered the dancer- and drummer-as-tourist as practitioners of self-consumption. Seattle-Guinean dance classes were “corporeal practices” (Stokes 1994) that imbued cultural expressions with a sense of place, and the tourist’s body was the locus of the transformation and constitution of that place.

DeWitt articulates that, “even as they are ‘traveling,’ the bodily practices of music and dance tend to evoke some kind of place. The appearance of stability, at least, remains important. Indeed, as music and dance travel elsewhere from where they are created, their powers as signifiers of place have the greatest potential to intensify” (DeWitt 1999: 77). Seattle-Guinean dance classes both evoked and constructed an imagined Guinea through music and dance

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<sup>27</sup> Although frequently cited, Taylor includes the term “sonic tourism” only as a subtitle. Taylor echoes Peter Spencer (1992) in the main body text to position the emphasis on travel in World Music discourse as catering to consumer interest in novel multicultural encounters, rather than interests in specific locales or distinct traditions.

<sup>28</sup> Cultural geographers Gibson and Connell (2005) similarly focus on recorded music and its accompanying promotions as a means of virtual tourism.

performance that remained stable with the use of emplaced instruments and repertoire. However, the process of embodiment jeopardized this stability, as the acts of drumming and dancing necessarily tethered the imagined or virtual “there” of Guinea to the corporeal “here” of Seattle.

Teachers maintained their dance and music products as “placed objects” (Gibson 2007), and thus as viable tourism commodities, in identity-dependent ways. Anthropologist Wozenyelesh Mekuria (2006) argues that, as African artists migrate to New York City, they situate the exotic within the familiar, removing the necessity of physical travel for encounters with an exotic Other. I perceive the situation in Seattle slightly differently, viewing Guinean expatriates as facilitating virtual travel. This helps to explain some of the differences between typical dance classes taught by Guineans and non-Guineans. The Guinean body itself retained sufficient signifying power to facilitate imaginative contextualization of drum and dance practices as placed activities. Non-Guinean teachers made up for their inability to emplace classes through their bodies alone by verbally emphasizing the “context” of their music and dance product, by especially highlighting any Guinean-born individuals in the room, and by verbally providing their own credentials. Unlike non-Guineans, Guinean-born teachers rarely if ever offered explanatory material regarding themselves or the class content unless explicitly asked to do so. Furthermore, whereas non-Guinean teachers consistently referenced their own teachers in Guinea as the source for their movements and choreographies, Guinean-born teachers almost never did so.

The emplacement of dance classes emerged explicitly in advertising and promotional materials. Teachers in the Seattle-Guinean scene situated their classes alternatively as “African”, “West African” and “Guinean” in both digital and physical advertising, including posters and postcards. For example, on the One World Dance and Drum website, Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré

and Mamady Mansaré advertised both dance and flute classes as being “West African”, yet added geographic specificity by characterizing themselves as “ambassadors for the beautiful, rich and infectious music, dance, and culture of Guinea, West Africa”. Similarly, the website for the organization Dounia Djembe, built to support the business of Manimou Camara, included the prominent descriptor “West African Arts” in the titles and banners for each page, while the prose described “African Dance” classes featuring “dances, music, and culture of Guinea, West Africa”.

The differentiation between “African”, “West African”, and “Guinean” in the placing of commodified products was principally the result of intentional advertising strategies. Promotional content designers recognized that newcomers to the scene, those who had not previously participated in any classes, or those who previously danced in pan-African ensembles or classes were likely to seek out dance that was “African” or “West African” in online searches. Likewise, experienced non-teaching participants commonly emplaced classes and performances as “African” or “West African” when communicating with people who were not involved in the scene.

Experienced participants in the scene also emplaced performance practices when speaking with one another, but at the level of the country.<sup>29</sup> This extended to discussions of dance forms outside of the core repertoire of the scene. People spoke of “Mali dance” or “Ghana dance” or “Congolese dance” in the same way that they spoke of “Guinea dance”. Further more, even as some experienced non-Guinean drummers generated discourse dominated by references to ethnicity, these references entangled with notions of specific geographic regions such as

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<sup>29</sup> The genesis of this characterization of dance and music (as opposed to, for example genre-based descriptions) emerged primarily from the post-independence nationalization of ballets in Guinea, Mali, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and Ghana.

Hamana. The discourses surrounding traditions associated with Africa were overwhelmingly dominated by the placed-ness or “where” of music and dance.

One example of emplacement can be observed in the use of a traveling metaphor in the description of dance classes on the Kouyaté Arts company website. In promoting weekly dance classes taught by American-born Afua Kouyaté, the Kouyaté Arts website invited readers: “Come weekly to take a trip to Africa on the dance floor”. This defined the destination of dance-based travel at the level of the continent: Africa. Elsewhere, the website characterized dance classes regionally as “West African Dance”. Afua’s Guinean-born husband, Aboubacar “Boka” Kouyaté, acted as musical director for these classes, though the dances taught extended beyond those that participants, teachers, and scholars associated with Guinea to include Nigeria, Senegal, and Mali.

Clothing was also critical for the emplacement of Seattle-Guinean dance classes.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, teachers insisted that student participation did not merely consist of music and dance performance, but of wearing clothing associated with the culture that was to be embodied. One former dance participant reflected on the importance a teacher gave to clothing:

“I walk into this class and all of the dancers are *decked out*. Starched head wraps. It’s not just some kind of white girl head-band style. All super done up. Full on outfits and jewelry. I forget what those cool little waist necklace things are called, but those things. It was like a requirement in there. Even that made me feel uncomfortable, and I don’t know why, really. That was way before I started thinking about any of the appropriative stuff. But, it was also amazing to see. That was [the teacher’s] style and that’s how she taught her students. ‘You’re going to do this’, ‘you’re going to embody this’, and ‘this beautiful culture is represented as much by clothes as it is by the dance that you’re doing’. So that experience informed my perception a lot” (2014: Personal Interview)

This participant’s perception of dance classes was strongly informed by an insistence from the teacher that her students “embody” a culture through style of dress. While most teachers in the

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<sup>30</sup> In this section, I do not include a lengthy discussion of clothing worn by non-Guinean drummers in the Seattle-Guinean scene, as they almost never wore clothes that I perceive to be especially or distinctly “African” in style, cut, or fabric design except as costumes in staged performances.

Seattle-Guinean scene did not typically use such blatant and literal references to embodying culture through clothing during my fieldwork, the importance of sartorial choices persisted.

Michael Hunter, a long-time participant in the Seattle-Guinean scene, observed a trend in the clothing choices of new non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene: “When people first get into this, there’s a lot of African print everything. With most people it kind of mellows out to more like sports pants, bras, shorts—that kind of stuff—with a little African flair in there” (Michael Hunter 2014: Personal Interview). Among those pieces of “African flair” that had the most staying power in the Seattle-Guinean scene, and that contributed to the emplacement of dance classes in the Seattle-Guinean scene, was the *lapa*, a piece of fabric that female dancers wrapped around their waists when they danced.

The presence of *lapas* not only facilitated emplacement through the “exoticism” of the patterns on wax-printed fabrics, but also through the function of the wrap and its relationship to the body. Fabric was perhaps the souvenir most commonly purchased by female dance tourists in Guinea, and many dancers wore *lapas* tailored either in Guinea or by Guineans in Seattle. Still, Jessica Towns-Camara found that the fabric used for wraps in Seattle were just as often not of Guinean or even African origin. Dancer Komala Martin indicated that she wore *sarongs* when she first began participating in African dance classes, switching over to *lapas* as they became available to her from teachers who sold them at conferences held throughout the United States.

The word “*lapa*” entered into the Seattle-Guinean scene as a remnant of the language used in earlier pan-African dance classes and performance companies, bringing with it a broad geographic symbolism. Dance scholar Kariamuwelsh identifies “*lapa*” as a Liberian pidgin-English word, most likely related to the English word “lap” and sometimes called a “wrappa”

(Davis 2005).<sup>31</sup> Eleni Bizas points out that the word “*lapa*” has become standardized to designate a wrapped skirt in any West African dance classes in the US, despite its Liberian origins (2014: 65). The influx of Guinean-born artists and teachers and the growth and flourishing of the Seattle-Guinean scene did not coincide with the introduction of Guinea-specific terminology, including, potentially, the Maninkakan “*taafé*”. Moreover, many Guinean-born participants used the word *lapa*, as well. This persistence of the word *lapa* in the Seattle-Guinean scene signaled the absorption of generalized “African” practices into one that was more specifically defined as “Guinean”.

Jessica Towns-Camara wore a *lapa* in dance classes in Seattle in order to align herself with norms of practice regarding modesty and the female body that she perceived while in Guinea:

“In order to be correct, the form of your sex can’t show...in order to be respectful. If you were showing that to someone, you’re being overtly provocative. Sexually alluring. Or showing that you’re available for sex” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

She found that the *lapa* functioned as a form of modesty. Jessica continued, elaborating on the options that were available to professional dancers in Guinea, and that she adopted as a personal practice:

“When you go to Guinea and you watch a ballet, you may think that they just wear spandex. Or, if you watch YouTube videos, you may think that they’re just wearing spandex and a swimsuit. (...) What the girls do there, is they wear their pants really low and baggy in the crotch. (...) It’s either pull your pants down until the crotch of your pants is way down, or pull them up and cover it with something else so that the form of your sex isn’t showing.

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<sup>31</sup> I suspect that the word “*lapa*”—often also spelled “*lappa*” in both scholarly and non-scholarly writing—is likely to be a *Kreyol* portmanteau of the English words “lap” and “wrapper”. More detailed research would be necessary to confirm or deny this.

Here, Jessica gestured to the fact that many non-Guineans misunderstood the absence of a *lapa* among professional dancers in Guinea. She asserted that these dancers often retained the function of sexual modesty through sagged pants.

Jessica emphasized that, while her Guinean-born husband preferred for her to wear a *lapa*, he did not ask her to do so. She wore a wrap of her own volition. She observed that, like herself, women who were married to Guinean-born men wore the *lapa* as a gesture toward cultural norms in Guinea, and to avoid being perceived as disrespectful to any Guineans present:

“I think, we think, as facilitators, or maybe as people who are perceived as closer to the culture, that’s why we do it. (...) Then, you have these people setting the example and other people mimicking. I think someone who is brand new would walk in, and it starts as mimicry. Then it starts progressing as they know more. Then it gets to a [more advanced] level, where it’s just “*tsk*” at you when you ask about it. Especially once you’re in it for longer. You know. You get it” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

For Jessica, personal observations in Guinea as well as experiences with and around her Guinean-born husband deepened her perspective on the importance of wearing a *lapa* in dance classes. She found she and other women married to Guineans were relative cultural insiders, and collectively served as models for newcomers to the scene who emulated their practices. Dancer Sara suggested that, while initially done to conform to class norms, wearing a *lapa* became “this thing of habit. Part of getting myself mentally ready for dance class is putting on my *lapa*” (Sara 2015: Personal Interview). The *lapa* came to serve as a ritual object, preparing Sara for class participation.

Some non-Black participants racialized their unease with wearing *lapas*. They commonly connected this unease to assumed objections or hostility from Black American participants or onlookers, though never from Guineans. None of the Black Americans who collaborated with me expressed objections to non-Black participants wearing *lapas* in class, instead characterizing it as appropriate dress. However, some Black American participants

shared or commented on social media posts that characterized White women dressed in African-style clothing as “culture vultures”.

Even as some women wore the *lapa* because they wanted to re-perform perceived expectations regarding women’s bodies in Guinea as a show of respect and appropriate behavior, others resisted wearing the *lapa* out of unease regarding cultural appropriation. Dancer Melissa succinctly expressed this ambivalence toward the *lapa*: “Sometimes I’ll wear it. I guess it’s part of the costume, but I don’t feel like *I* should wear it” (2015: Personal Interview). Melissa’s hesitance regarding the *lapa* emerged from her desire to avoid appropriating Guinean culture, especially as a non-Black person.

Other non-Guinean participants adjusted their clothing choices based on their evolving perspectives on cultural appropriation. Non-Guinean participant Lisa Duncan had engaged in discussions and personal reflection on the ways that her participation constitutes cultural appropriation, which led her to temporarily abandon the practice of wearing a *lapa*:

“I feel like I’ve worked through this, and it’s only kept me from doing what I really want to be doing. (...) [I’ve said to myself that] this isn’t my culture. I can’t do it. I can’t wear a *lapa*, because I’m having these conflicts in my mind” (Lisa Duncan 2015: Personal Interview).

Over time, Lisa’s perspective changed, and she began wearing a *lapa* again during dance classes despite her previous and ongoing concerns with performing the culture of an Other.

Even as wearing the *lapa* was a performance of a “there” that is Africa, West Africa or Guinea, the skirt was equally a performance of “here” for others. Many dancers wore *lapas*, not as a way to emulate practices in an imagined Africa or Guinea, but in order to assimilate into the culture of the dance class. Komala Martin put it simply, saying of her first dance classes: “It seems like that was *the* wear. That was *the* dress” (Komala Martin 2014: Personal Interview). Jessica Towns-Camara further suggested that, like Komala, most new students emulate the

locally-produced norms without necessarily understanding the relationship between those norms and Guinean or African culture.

The performance of “here” through the *lapa* can also be understood through particular styles of *lapas*. Jessica Towns-Camara commented on distinctions between the *lapas* in the Seattle-Guinean scene and those that are used in Guinea, finding that the most popular style in some classes was one invented by a Guinean-born musician and tailor who lived in Seattle: “Those beautiful little short skirts that Mamady created for here are not a style you would see worn in a rehearsal or in everyday life in Guinea, but you might see something like them worn on stage as costumes” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview). These short and ruffled *lapas* were designed by a Guinean-born tailor, made from wax-printed fabric that is popular among Guineans, and sewn by Guineans in Guinea. In one sense, dancers partially standardized these “Mansaré-style” *lapas* as a representative performance of a Guinean “there”. Their popularity grew as young dancers entered the scene and mimicked the styles of those around them, especially in classes taught by Mamady’s wife, Sarah Lee. And yet, as a non-Guinean with extensive experience observing professional dancers in Guinea, Jessica identified these *lapas* with non-Guineans in a non-Guinean context. My own observations in Guinea were consistent with Jessica’s: no Guineans wore this style of skirt in Guinea, dancing or otherwise. In this sense, the style of wrap worn in Seattle performed a sense of “here”.

The act of wearing a *lapa* in dance classes in Seattle performed both local and distant cultures, an emergent hybridity, not simply of practices or objects, but of the places produced through those practices and objects. Like cooking and eating “Virginia ham” in Delaware, embodied practices in dance classes were “not only placed cultural artifacts, but also dis-placed, inhabiting many times and spaces which, far from being neatly bounded, bleed into and indeed

mutually constitute each other” (Cook and Crang 1996: 132-133). Kassabian (2004) emphasizes a similar phenomenon in the World Music market, characterizing the simultaneous production of multiple places as a kind of “distributed tourism”. He finds that “Distributed tourism, as a postmodern cultural activity, depends on maintaining the difference between ‘here’ and ‘there’ while making it possible to inhabit both spaces simultaneously” (Kassabian 2004: 219). This distributed tourism constitutes the listener, not as a subject who is “there” instead of “here”, and not in a neither/nor situation, but as a distributed subject who is both “here” and “there”, or “t/here”.

The embodied practices in dance classes produced distributed subjects whose performances evolved through negotiations between participants. One Seattle-Guinean participant who consistently wore a “Mansaré-style” *lapa* in spite of concerns regarding cultural appropriation, provided evidence of the distributed subjectivity produced through participation in dance classes:

“At one point, I was so uncomfortable wearing the *lapa*. Now, I’ve gotten to this point where I’m so uncomfortable *not* wearing it. I would get self-conscious not wearing it. It has translated into me feeling self-conscious at other dance classes that are not West African dance. Just going in dance pants or dance shorts, I feel self-conscious not having something around my waist.” (Sara 2015: Personal Interview).

For Sara, wearing a *lapa* established a performative feedback loop. By wearing a *lapa* as a performance of mimicry and assimilation with the perceived expectations t/here, Sara unintentionally generated a self-conscious modesty that inverted her previous discomfort regarding cultural appropriation.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the impact of distributed tourism extended beyond the specific touristic event as this modesty translated across dance class genres.

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<sup>32</sup> During the last stages of preparing this dissertation, Sara communicated to me that, based on emergent public discussions around race in the scene, she began to re-interrogate the interpersonal impacts of her wearing a *lapa* as a White-presenting latina participant.

## Community Construction

Ethnomusicologist Mark DeWitt extends his discussion of music and dance tourism along the Louisiana-California axis, pointing to song lyrics that describe a kind of touristic event at which “the roles of host and guest have been reversed: the representatives of the culture being visited (the band) have traveled afar while the tourists (the dancers) have stayed close to home” (DeWitt 2008: 5). In this sense, the reversal of the guest-as-traveler and host-as-dweller was typical in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Guinean-born migrant hosts made the embodiment of Guinean culture available to non-Guinean guests in Seattle. However, as tourism scholars Rojek and Urry argue, contemporary hybridity “exposes the conventional division between home and abroad as over-simplistic” (1997: 4). Further consideration suggests that, just as the “home” and “away” of Seattle-Guinean dance classes could be reversed, so too were the roles of “host” and “guest” blurry, plural, and continuously changing.

The relationship between who was the tourist/guest and who was the culture bearer/host depended on the culture to which you referred. In the most obvious sense, “the culture” was “Guinean”, sold and shared by Guineans or their (sometimes self-appointed) ambassadors to non-Guinean dancing tourists. However, rather than simply being virtual tourism of a culture, I argue that Seattle-Guinean dance classes constituted a tourism culture in and of itself. If we consider “the culture” in question as an emergent ‘Seattle-Guinean culture’, then the set of practices and meanings associated with dance classes can be understood as a touristic culture that continuously shifted under the pressure of changes in participants, their expectations, and their experiences. Here, as in the emulation of the practice of wearing a *lapa*, long-time dance students in the scene acted as “culture bearers” and “hosts” for newly-arrived participants, both Guinean and non-Guinean, introducing them to the norms and practices in Seattle.

## Same Difference

Influential tourism scholars including John Urry (2002) argue that tourists are essentially looking for difference when they travel. Recalling Cohen's (2012) elision of tourism and leisure, dance classes were certainly touristic spaces as forms of place-oriented leisure. Participation in dance classes in Seattle emerged as touristic behavior striving, not simply for difference, but for *same difference*. Here, I use the term "same difference" to identify relationships in which similarities between individuals, groups, or activities accrue value by virtue of their relationship to a mutual Other. I have identified three senses in which participation in the Seattle-Guinean scene fulfilled touristic desires for same difference.

## Translatable Same Difference

First, dance classes facilitated same difference in the sense that they offered access to practices of difference that were largely standardized.<sup>33</sup> Participation provided access to the cultivation of the cultural self through transitive embodiment of the Other or the ancestral Self, a different mode of being than existed for participants in the rest of their quotidian lives. Although movements, choreography, music, and repertoire were not identical from one teacher to another, nor even from one week to the next in a single teacher's regular class, there were predictable components common to each. There were thirty-two pieces in the repertoire presented in dance classes, most of which were variations on the choreographies developed by current or former members of the national ballets in Guinea. Instrumentation was nearly universal, consisting of

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<sup>33</sup> While beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is potentially useful to consider the ways that this standardization stands in relation to the "McDonaldization" of contemporary society, which sociologist George Ritzer (2015) defines as "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world" (2015: 1). Ritzer identifies four dimensions leading to the success and propagation of the McDonald's model: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Each of these four dimensions of McDonaldization applied to dance classes across the United States.

djembes and *dunduns*. Musical arrangements and orchestration were generally consistent, and most evolved from versions generated for national ballet performances or for teaching in tourism settings in Guinea. Perhaps most importantly, the format of classes was nearly identical in all cases. With a limited number of variations, the ritualized procedure of dance classes depicted earlier in this chapter was essentially the same in almost every class that I attended, both in and beyond Seattle.

The standardization of dance classes within the scene and across the United States rendered the difference that they offered to be the same everywhere. This led to a geographic translatability, even in the face of cosmopolitan particularities, and enhanced the potential for community construction. Seattle-Guinean scene participant Lisa Duncan found that dancing enabled her to integrate into existing social groups in different US cities, including Albuquerque, Houston, Eugene and Seattle:

“I’d always looked for African dancing in the communities in which I live. In Houston, when I was there, that was awesome. Finding that...for someone moving to a new place, it’s kind of an instant community. It becomes more of an instant community the longer I’m in it, and the more comfortable I am, dancing” (Lisa Duncan 2015: Personal Interview).

Lisa and others in the Seattle-Guinean scene who were mobile due to career, family, or lifestyle choices found that African dance worked as a social icebreaker in new locations. It brought them in contact with like-minded and similarly-interested people: other tourists with whom they could experience imagined Guinean culture through embodied performance. Further, Lisa noted that the skills and subsequent confidence that she developed helped to accelerate her social connections in various locations. The same difference of dance classes fostered translatability of experiences and skills across diverse geographies, facilitating “instant community” for those on

the move, as well as periodic community growth and rejuvenation for those who remained in Seattle.

### **Racial Same Difference**

Same difference also emerged as a small number of Black American participants asserted ownership of drum and dance in private conversations, during speeches at events, and on social media platforms. These Black Americans linked themselves to Guineans through pan-Africanist or Black Nationalist perspectives that emphasized shared African cultural ancestry. On the occasions when this discourse emerged publicly, Black Americans typically placed themselves in opposition to Whiteness and White participation, but rarely to other non-Black participation. Participation in dance classes thus ideally afforded a racial same difference for Black Americans who grouped themselves with Guinean-born artists through shared cultural ancestry and Blackness in mutual opposition to Whiteness.

A disconnect between Guinean-born and Black American perceptions of the boundaries of cultural belonging interrupted the articulation of racial same difference in many cases. Guinean-born participants contested both claims of ownership based on Blackness and antagonistic stances toward White participation, instead advocating an inclusive philosophy. The late Abdoulaye Sylla consistently ended all of his dance classes in a call-and-response chant consisting of a series of shouted words and phrases:

Peace!

Love!

Respect!

And harmony for everyone!

Unity!

Together!

One!

This chant, while not initiated in response to calls for Black ownership or White exclusion, nevertheless disrupted such sentiments as it compelled participants to make audible Abdoulaye's inclusive policy. It is important to reiterate that not all Black American participants claimed proprietary ownership of the practices occurring in dance classes. Furthermore, Black American women who were married to Guinean-born men typically highlighted the difference and not the sameness of Black American and Guinean culture(s).

Some Black Americans reacted to the contestation of racial same difference by emphasizing the financial motivations of Guinean-born artists, suggesting that advocacy for universal racial access to music and dance (especially including White participants) was a compromise based on either greed or desperation. This sentiment extended beyond participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, having been remarked upon in journalism (Jacobs 2008) and in academic scholarship (Flaig 2010; Johnson 2012). My experiences in Seattle complicated this notion, as even those Guinean-born musicians who did not regularly commodify their artistic performance through teaching or ensemble direction also emphasized inclusivity. Furthermore, Guinean-born artists living elsewhere in the United States advised Seattle-based expatriates to restrict their performance groups to Black members in order to make more money, having observed racially-driven interests among of paying customers. Seattle-based directors confirmed that clients interested in hiring drum and dance performance ensembles often requested that most

or all performers be visibly Black.<sup>34</sup> This inverts the standard narrative around race and the commodification of drum and dance performance in Seattle and the broader field of drum and dance practice. Thus, financial motivations existed for both including and excluding non-Black participants in some aspects of the scene, there were also financial

### **Same Difference of Mutual non-Ownership**

The final same difference in the Seattle-Guinean scene manifested in the sense that most non-Guinean participants perceived themselves and other non-Guineans as sharing subjectivity in their non-Guineanness. Even as non-Guinean participants recognized differentiation based on skill and experience, they came to the space with the expectation of an equal absence of ownership with respect to the music, dance, and culture. This sense of same difference applied to nearly all participants, and generally across racial lines, notwithstanding the claims to ownership of Guinean-derived practices as expressions and constructions of Diaspora by some Black Americans in seeking racial same difference as described above.

According to Turner (1967), the equality of social status between liminal initiates is a hallmark of *communitas*, and was thus critical to the ways that community manifested in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Participation acted as a social equalizer for people occupying a wide variety of economic positions relative to one another, from high-salaried workers in the technology industry to minimum-wage day laborers. Furthermore, many non-Guinean participants occupied marginal positions with respect to what might be called “mainstream” culture in the United States. They were often unmarried late into adulthood, on the far left of the political spectrum, engaged in atypical spiritual practices, and participated or worked in fields of

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<sup>34</sup> Ethnomusicologist Daniel Reed (2016: 86) finds that Ivorian ensemble leaders living in the United States experience similar racialized hiring pressures, noting that clients negotiate in terms of Black/non-Black and not Ivorian/non-Ivorian or African/non-African.

alternative healthcare. Participation represented a community and cultural center for many of these individuals. Furthermore, there were several first- and second-generation non-Guinean immigrants to the United States from, among other places, Chile, India, Korea Mexico, and Taiwan. Ideally, participation in Seattle-Guinean dance classes situated these ‘other-Others’ and American-born citizens on equal footing, working to equalize social status and foster a sense of community.

The potential for social cohesion through liminal events requires that initiates “submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders” (1967: 96). In the case of the Seattle-Guinean scene, participants did not universally agree on who qualifies as an authority, or ritual elder. While most participants afforded authority to any Guineans in the dance class space (see Chapter 3), a small number of exceptionally dedicated non-Guinean drummers broke the ideal horizontal relationship of same difference with other non-Guineans. This disrupted *communitas*, limiting the potential for social bonding through participation in dance classes in Seattle.

Tourism scholar Wang Ning argues that “toured objects or tourism can be just a means or medium by which tourists are called together, and then, an authentic inter-personal relationship between themselves is experienced subsequently” (Ning 1999: 364). Prior to the fieldwork phase of my time in the Seattle-Guinean scene, I considered music and dance as special categories of activities, modes of being together that are exceptionally capable of generating community. It surprised me to learn, then, that individuals in Seattle qualified their characterizations of the sense of community derived from participation in the scene as being related to something other than strictly dance or music. Furthermore, the social cohesion that developed outside of performance contexts impacted participation in classes. One example of this impact can be observed in the solo circle.

The solo circle was a phase of dance classes that occurred only intermittently in Seattle, and generated high levels of stress among some participants.<sup>35</sup> Prior to the final run-through of the learned material, dancers formed a horseshoe to create a space closed off by the drummers. Dancers, sometimes at the behest of the teacher and sometimes voluntarily, entered the circle, repeating movements taught during the class or improvising new or altered movements. Many dancers refused to enter the solo circle, or would do so with clear reluctance.

Dancer Lisa Duncan articulated the way that bonding outside of the drum and dance context impacted her confidence in solo circles when she lived in Eugene, Oregon:

“When they become your friends and you trust them, then I think the solo circle becomes much easier. I don’t know. It was because we became friends. We partied together. We hung out. We did things that weren’t just African dancing related. Although that clearly was the glue, initially, and continues to be a glue in a way. But, that’s when it becomes easy. Getting to know those people. *Really engaging in that community*. That’s when you feel comfortable in the solo circle” (Lisa Duncan 2015: Personal Interview, emphasis added).

Lisa noted that the sense of community that she found in Eugene was precisely because she and the other participants came together and did things outside of drum and dance learning or performance. For Lisa, even as music and dance were the “glue” that bonded her with other participants, outside activities not only helped to create a sense of community, but also represented more meaningful interactions in terms of generating trust and confidence. Especially significant in this regard, and in relation to the importance of the same difference of mutual non-ownership, is that social bonding involving non-Guineans outside of class contexts occurred in environments that were usually exclusively non-Guinean.

With the exception of women who were married to Guinean-born men, non-Guinean scene participants articulated having more in common with one another than with Guinean-born

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<sup>35</sup> This phase of a dance class played a more prominent role elsewhere in the United States than in the Seattle-Guinean scene. See Johnson (2012: 60-61) for an analysis of the solo circle with regard to interracial dynamics in classes in the San Francisco Bay Area.

participants based on education, language, and interests. Ning argues that *communitas* develops through simultaneous experience by tourists, as “the pleasure of tourism exists not only in seeing exotic things, but also in sharing and communicating this pleasure with other tourists who are seeing the same sights together” (1999: 365). The importance of sharing and communicating with other tourists is useful in understanding why non-Guinean drummers in the scene so often engaged in extended discussions about music. These discussions occurred frequently, both face-to-face and online through Facebook or on message boards. They were heated and often nuanced, as participants collectively shared and debated various aspects of performance practices.

The same difference of common non-Guinean identity also impacted the generation of a sense of community and belonging in that it largely excluded Guinean-born participants. As is the case with tourists of all kinds, the relationships that materialized through participation in dance classes did so most commonly and most strongly between fellow sojourners. The social distance generated through the non-Guinean *communitas* of dance classes in Seattle constructed community and social bonds in a way that isolated Guineans and non-Guineans from one another. Guinean expatriates typically bonded with one another and non-Guineans did the same. Whereas non-Guinean drummers often bonded with one another through experimentation with or discussion of theoretical concepts about djembe and dundun playing, Guinean-born drummers did not include themselves, and were not invited into these discussions. On the rare occasions when Guineans took part, they generally did so in a way that was not dialogue-oriented. Instead, they dismissed non-Guinean participants as attempting to position themselves as experts on “Guinean culture”. In doing so, Guinean-born participants re-asserted their own positions as the insiders and authorities, reinforcing the social gap between themselves and non-Guinean participants.

Language differences exacerbated ruptures in community formation between Guinean-born and non-Guinean participants. Guinean-born participants often took advantage of the opportunity that dance classes provided to have discussions with one another in Sosoxui, the first language of many Guinean-born participants in Seattle, and the one universally understood by all. None of the non-Guinean participants in Seattle were fluent Sosoxui speakers (most did not understand any of the language), and were thus excluded from those conversations. Likewise, when Guinean-born participants joined non-Guineans after class at a bar or restaurant, non-Guineans typically spoke with one another at a tempo that made it difficult for Guineans to follow the conversation. Unless addressed directly, many Guineans altogether refrained from engaging in conversations with non-Guineans in these contexts.

The isolation of Guineans sometimes resulted in the simultaneous exclusion of their wives. When I mentioned to one of these wives that I thought of the Seattle-Guinean scene as a kind tourism, she supplemented my thinking by characterizing herself and her husband, not as being hosts or guests, but as toured objects. She observed that people gathered for parties or other social events outside of class times, but that she and her husband were rarely included in these events. Guinean-born participants functioned as objects that facilitated the production of place in dance spaces, but their American wives could not operate similarly. The wives of Guineans perceived themselves, and were perceived by most others, as having a particular closeness to and familiarity with the toured “Guinean culture”. This relative closeness ruptured non-Guinean same difference, interrupting *communitas* in a way that left some American wives of Guineans feeling isolated within the community as they were excluded from events that occurred outside of drum and dance.

## CLOSING

Dance classes in Seattle, as touristic events exhibiting properties along the liminal-liminal spectrum and generating *communitas*, offered potential for “social solidarity building and maintenance” (Spiegel 2011: 19). Participants and practices in dance classes in Seattle variously represented “home” and “away”, generating an emergent cultural formation in which the roles of cultural host and guest were fluid. This distinct culture, as a touristic culture, contributed to the formation of community that integrated dancing, drumming, and Guinean individuals as objects, enabling the simultaneous production and consumption of placed and Othered Selves. While the liminality of dance classes facilitated community growth and cohesion dependent on the perception of same differences, the resulting community was partial and exclusive. In Chapter 3, I demonstrate how the interactions of diverging parameters of authenticity disrupted the same difference of mutual non-ownership, leading to social disunity.

### Chapter 3: The Malinké Police

*“Paul was playing lead djembe, and I think Ibrahima sat down to play djembe as well. I remember, as soon as he sat down to play, Paul very loudly told him what part to play. Corrected him. (...) To me, that was disrespectful...because Ibrahima knows music. The way he dances, the dude knows music. And, if he sits down to a drum...to play music that’s from his culture, any White guy that’s gonna tell him what to do in a way that’s not invited? If he asks him what he should play? Okay. That’s one thing. But, for any White guy to tell him to do something different than he’s doing, just by sitting down and doing what he feels like doing? I didn’t appreciate that. But, again, Paul knows his shit, so maybe I’m wrong” (Todd 2015: Personal Interview).*

In the above interview statement, Todd, a relatively inexperienced drummer and dancer, reflected on Paul, a non-Guinean drummer, correcting the performance of Ibrahima, a Guinean non-drummer. Todd reacted negatively to Paul’s actions based purely on aspects of identity. Todd recognized Paul’s excellence as a djembe and *dundun* player. Furthermore, he acknowledged that Ibrahima, while musically-inclined, was not an accomplished drummer. For Todd, Paul’s identity as a White non-Guinean made his uninvited correction of any Guinean disrespectful and unacceptable.

Todd’s discomfort with Paul in this situation reminds me of Kofi Agawu’s observation of “a retreat from critical evaluation of African musical practice” among African musicologists (2003: 61). Agawu positions uncritical considerations of African performance by music scholars as deliberate acts intended to undermine the status of African music:

“The pious dignifying of all performances as if they were equally good, of all instruments as if they were tuned in an ‘interesting’ way rather than simply being out of tune, of all informants as if a number of them did not practice systematic deception, and of the missed entries and resulting heterophony in dirge singing as if they did not result from inattentiveness or drunkenness: these are acts of mystification designed to ensure that the discourse about African music continues to lack the one thing that would give it scientific and hence universal status, namely, a critical element” (Ibid.).

I am not similarly prepared to assert that my non-Guinean collaborators deliberately worked to undermine the status of African performance as they uncritically authorized Guinean-ness.

Nonetheless, some non-Guineans intentionally retreated from critical evaluation in a way that, though driven by a desire to demonstrate respect, mystified and Othered Guinean performances and people. Paul represented a minority of highly competent non-Guineans in the scene whose exceptional dedication and investment in learning intersected with adherence to an alternative framework for authenticity and enabled critical evaluation of performances by Guinean-born drummers. This evaluation, while valuable in ensuring the success of musical performance in the immediate, also incurred a social cost.

Participants in the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene implemented a variety of processes when authenticating music practices. In this chapter, I explore the impacts resulting from the interaction of those processes. I identify the boundaries of authenticity for a variety of stakeholders in the Seattle-Guinean scene, affording particular attention to the most experienced non-Guinean drummers, who I call the “Malinké police”. I find that, while most participants authenticated performance based on Guinean identity, these experienced drummers did so according to an aesthetic rubric that emphasized rurality, the distant past, and Maninka ethnicity. Authenticating according to this rubric undermined the authority of Guinean-born artists in Seattle and inadvertently extended ethnic discrimination from Guinea. With the concept of “same difference” in mind, philosopher Jacques Derrida’s term *differance* becomes useful for understanding this mechanism and how it impacts social cohesion.<sup>36</sup>

Derrida frames “differance” as including elements of both the verbs “to differ” and “to defer” (2004). While Derrida’s concern is primarily with the emergence of meaning in language,

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<sup>36</sup> The 2004 edited collection from which I cite Derrida uses the anglicized “differance” and not the original French “*différance*”.

I apply the term here toward understanding interactions between individuals with divergent relationships to authority in musical practice. I find the plurality of “difference” useful for thinking about the mechanisms underlying controversial actions of experienced non-Guinean musicians in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Rather than adhering to a posture of “same difference” required to enable community stability, they acted according to what I think of as a “different difference”. Here, I follow Derrida, embedding within the verb “to defer” the double sense of putting off to another time, as well as yielding to authority or judgment. While all non-Guineans deferred to a Guinean authority, the Malinké police exhibited a “different difference” relative to other non-Guineans, deferring to different and distant Guineans rather than those present in Seattle. In doing so, these drummers disrupted social cohesion and were perceived as among the most controversial and divisive participants in the scene. I highlight the irony of this social positioning, pointing to the fact that the most experienced non-Guinean drummers worked from a desire to show respect both for the integrity of precise qualities of musical performance and for their Guinean-born teachers.

Dean McCannell’s (1973; 1976) trailblazing sociological work linking tourism and modernity initiated decades of academic debate on the centrality of “authenticity” within tourism.<sup>37</sup> The concept of authenticity as an objective and apolitical trait has been dissected, and in many cases, cast aside in light of influential work by critical theorists and postmodernist interpretations of the self (Titon 2012). Furthermore, even as tourism scholars have increasingly rejected the notion that all tourism can be understood as being fundamentally a search for authenticity, most agree that “authenticity is relevant to some kinds of tourism such as ethnic, history or culture tourism, which involve the representation of the Other or of the past” (Wang

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<sup>37</sup> For discussion of this debate, see, for example: Buchmann, Moore, and Fisher (2009); Frisvoll (2013); Olsen (2002); Reisinger and Steiner (2006); Robinson and Clifford (2012); Wang (1999); Xie (2011); and Zhu (2012).

1999: 350). The Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene was a touristic environment that involved the representation and embodied performance of the Other and of the past, and the issue of authenticity remained a potent concern for participants. In this chapter, I follow the increasing interest of tourism scholars who advocate analysis, not of authenticity as a trait, but of authentication as a social process by which authenticity is confirmed (Jackson 1999; Noy 2009; Xie 2011; Cohen and Cohen 2012; Frisvoll 2013).

Tourism scholar Philip Xie (2011) argues for the importance of “a shifting of emphasis away from authenticity of ethnic culture, an issue widely discussed by tourism researchers, to the processes of authenticating ethnic culture” (Xie 2011: xii-xiv). Xie asserts that emphasizing authentication allows the scholar to clarify different stakeholders’ perspectives, pushing interpretation away from personal evaluative judgments while allowing for consideration of permutations of authenticity that emerge in ongoing discourse. Rather than engage in attempts to verify truth claims about the origins or histories of musical performance practice, I call attention to the boundaries of authenticity constructed by participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene.

While I reference authentication of and by a variety of stakeholders in the scene, I emphasize two broad categories: Guinean-born participants and non-Guinean participants. Guinean-born participants and most non-Guineans prioritized national identity, authenticating according to Guinean origin or experience. The most experienced and influential non-Guinean drummers in the Seattle-Guinean scene, however, authenticated in a way that prioritized Maninka ethnicity. I call this subset of non-Guineans the “Malinké police”.<sup>38</sup> Here, I adapt the practices of my non-Guinean collaborators, who sometimes used the term “Malinké police” to denote snobbishness and inflexibility among other non-Guineans. I use the term in a different

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<sup>38</sup> “Malinké” is the French term for the Maninka ethnicity, and both Guineans and non-Guineans have adopted it widely. I follow Charry (2000) in retaining the term “Maninka” to identify ethnicity, even as the majority of my collaborators used “Malinké”.

sense, following anthropologist Michelle Bigenho's concept of the "authenticity police" (2002: 4) and dance ethnographer Anthony Shay's concept of the "ethnic police" (2008: 25, 34).

Working in the context of Bolivian performance arts, Bigenho defines the "authenticity police" as "people who, from a position of relative power...critiqued as inauthentic the cultural performance of others, applying some individually determined criteria of what was authentic" (Bigenho 2002: 4).<sup>39</sup> Shay, examining the ways that Americans shape their identities through participation in forms of dance considered exotic, criticizes several categories of people who police performance, especially the "ethnic police" (2008: 25, 34). In Shay's analysis, these police—often folklorists or anthropologists—appoint themselves as the arbiters of what is authentic performance. He argues that their interest and insistence on authenticity and preservation are as much about explaining and validating their own participation as about performance practice (Shay 2008: 34).

The Malinké police were non-Guinean participants whose authority—though sometimes contested—emanated from their extensive experience, knowledge, or technical facility relative to other non-Guineans and some Guineans in the scene. The Malinké police developed and advocated for increasingly specific aesthetic preferences, deriving criteria from internationally-famous Guinean-born drummers. Despite the fact that the Malinké police attempted to decouple their aesthetic preferences from notions of authenticity, their preferences existed in a feedback loop with boundaries of spatial, temporal, and ethnic authenticity. Aesthetic preferences and boundaries of authenticity co-evolved with and reinforced one another. The Malinké police assessed performance practices that fell outside of their aesthetic preferences, not merely as alternative possibilities, but as newer, contrived, and inauthentic practices that should be avoided.

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<sup>39</sup> Other scholars preceded Bigenho in the use of the term "authenticity police" in the context of musical performance, include Gagné (1996) and Fayaz (1998).

Unlike Shay's ethnic police, the Malinké police did not object to participation by Americans or other non-Maninka people. However, within the Seattle-Guinean scene, an overwhelming number of participants authenticated themselves and others based on national identity. The Malinké police made up a tiny cohort—only a handful of non-Guinean individuals—who were as likely to judge the authenticity of the performance practices of Guineans as those of non-Guineans. From the perspective of some in the scene, this amounted to cultural outsiders attempting to authenticate cultural insiders, and was seen as foolhardy, disrespectful, and worthy of reproach.

As the Malinké police authenticated performance practices and people, they sometimes contested the authority of other participants, including Guineans. When doing so publicly, they sent disruptive shockwaves through the Seattle-Guinean scene. Ironically, the Malinké police, as non-Guineans who perceived themselves—and were perceived by many others—as exceptionally concerned with and successful in honoring Guinean culture, invalidated and jeopardized the economic viability of professional Guinean-born musicians and dancers in Seattle through their aesthetic preferences and authenticating procedures.

### **Authentication Parameters**

Anthropologist Pascal Gaudette argues that musicians in Guinea invoke a “triad of oppositions” to position themselves as authorities relative to one another in competition for student-tourist dollars. This triad includes spatial, temporal, and ethnic components, which Gaudette frames as the following binaries: 1) Urban-Rural; 2) Young-Old; 3) Susu-Maninka. Gaudette shows that drummers in Guinea openly discredit other Guinean drummers by describing them as being “young” “Susus” who play in a “Conakry style” and “mix up

everything” (2009: 94-95, trans. by author). In the Seattle-Guinean scene, the Malinké police re-deployed Gaudette’s oppositions, doing so in intermingling discourses on aesthetics and authenticity in which the spatial, temporal, and ethnic components evolved and transformed.

Participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene authenticated according to what Hitchcock (1999) calls a “primordial” understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and culture, viewing ethnic culture as static. A primordial understanding emphasizes the importance of geographic and historic isolation, as well as the maintenance of cultural differences in creating and sustaining ethnic identities. This perspective stresses the endurance of ethnic identities and distinctive traditions, even within multicultural states. Both non-Guinean and Guinean-born participants in the scene articulated the endurance of regional and ethnic identities in a larger multi-ethnic Guinean national framework. However, only non-Guinean participants who engaged in long-term and dedicated study developed aesthetic interests that narrowed along ethnic and geographic lines to the point of becoming exclusive.

## **Ethnicity**

The Malinké police extended a historical narrative that privileged Maninka people in representations of Guinean music and dance performance. Ethnocentrism permeated their aesthetic choices, which were influenced by the boundaries of authenticity that they employed. The Malinké police adopted these boundaries from the most successful Guinean-born musicians, as well as from other experienced non-Guineans. Ethnicity remains an important aspect of perceptions of musical competence in Guinea, especially among musicians competing for the financial resources of tourists (Gaudette 2009). By adhering to a Maninka-centric perspective,

the Malinké police not only repeated divisive histories, but contributed to their continuance into the present and future.

As non-Guineans in the Seattle-Guinean scene privileged Maninka instruments, nomenclature, repertoire, and performance styles, they entered into a stream of preexisting and politically-driven ethnic discourse in Guinea. Since at least the late 1950s, Guinean political authorities used music and dance as part of a cultural policy designed to generate national identity while simultaneously controlling against the possibility for resistance or insurrection against the centralized government by already-marginalized ethnic groups (Cohen 2012).

The nationalization of *Les Ballets Africains* (LBA) germinated the globalization of Maninka dance-drumming (e.g., Zanetti 1996; Charry 2000; Flaig 2010; Gaudette 2013). The move to nationalize LBA in 1960 was part of an extensive revolutionary cultural policy that was initiated by President Sékou Touré, who assumed the position of presidency of the Republic of Guinea upon its independence from France in 1958. Touré unveiled his new cultural policy on the heels of declaring that his Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG) was the only legal political party in Guinea (Ministry of Education and Culture 1979). As LBA was folded into Touré's nation-building project, the company shifted from a pan-Africanist aesthetic toward a Guinea-centric aesthetic with preferential status given to Maninka dance-drumming, in part because of Touré's identity as a member of the Maninka ethnic group (Cohen 2012).<sup>40</sup>

Joshua Cohen (2012) connects the selection of repertoire in the national ballets of independence-era Guinea with an effort by the Touré-led PDG to devalue the local practices of minority ethnicities that were antithetical to the establishment of centralized national power in Conakry. The Touré administration's project, called "Demystification", was asymmetric in terms

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<sup>40</sup> Sékou Touré's identity as being a part of the "Horon" or patrilineal free/ruling class in historical Maninka society also provided him with support from the Maninka *djeli*, who Touré asymmetrically promoted as being representative of Guinea culture within the newly-independent nation (Counsel 2004).

of its application to people of different ethnicities (McGovern 2013), and this asymmetry was replicated through music and dance in the national ballets. Cohen provides an example of this asymmetry in the staging of masks. While the first directors of LBA staged masks indigenous to many ethnicities in Guinea, they selected the most secret and sacred masks from the same marginalized ethnic groups who were uncooperative with efforts to centralize economic and legislative control. Cohen argues that the staging of the most important masks effectively rendered those masks, as well as the local ritual authorities associated with them, impotent. In the case of the Maninka, however, LBA staged less sacred masks primarily associated with children (e.g. *Kawa*, *Konden*, *Soliwoulen*).

As the First Republic came to an end at Sekou Touré's death in 1984, Lansana Conté took control of Guinea, ushering in a post-socialist era that included drastic cuts in the state support for the national ballet system and prompted the emergence of private ballets. Conté, a Susu, excluded both Peul and Maninka politicians from the executive branch of the federal government.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the Second Republic, the Conté administration violently repressed resistance to political exclusion, especially by Maninka people (Rørbæk and Knudsen 2015). In one sense, Conté's practices simply refocused the ethnicity-based discriminatory practices back toward the Maninka who dominated the Guinean political landscape during the Touré administration. However, the transparency of Conté's rhetoric represented a marked change from previous policy. The first Guinean constitution criminalized ethnic discrimination and propaganda, while Conté's administration promoted ethnic identification and division in public addresses (Sarró 2008: 141).

Ethnic tension in Guinea continued following the military coup led by President Moussa "Dadis" Camara in 2008, this time with state-related discrimination focused principally against

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<sup>41</sup> Peul, Maninka, and Susu people made up forty, thirty, and twenty percent of the Guinean population, respectively.

the ethnic Peul people. Guinean state ethnicism came to the attention of the international political community after the 2009 “Bloody Monday” massacre beginning at the *Stade du 28 Septembre* soccer stadium in Conakry. This attack by members of the Guinean military against political protesters, most of whom were Peul, extended from the stadium into surrounding neighborhoods, leaving at least 150 dead and many others physically or sexually assaulted (Dufka 2009).

Inter-ethnic discomfort remained extant in Guinea into the Alpha Conde administration, which assumed executive control in 2010. Seattle-Guinean participant Greg Evans observed ethnic stereotyping and discrimination in Guinea that he considered to be more blatant, overt, and widespread than racial or ethnic tensions anywhere else that he has traveled:

“I’ve never seen what we can call ethnic prejudice to the extent that I saw while I was in Guinea. Anywhere in the world that I have been, any culture that I’ve been a part of, I’ve never seen how blindly one ethnic group absolutely defines what another ethnic group is, and will not budge on their thinking of that person because of the ethnic group that they’re genetically a part of. Outwardly. From every ethnic group. (...) Everywhere. Every direction” (Greg Evans 2015: Personal Interview).

Evans’ experiences in Guinea were primarily among post-socialist drummers and dancers in a private neighborhood ballet, and not the political elite. Ethnicism in Guinea existed, not only at the crowning apex of the controlling political structure, but in the grainy particulate of the nation, exposing what Foucault (1980) calls the “capillary” nature of modern power.

Participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene observed that, in Guinea, ethnicism surrounding djembe and dundun performance did not restrict non-Maninka musicians from performing at Maninka celebrations. Greg Evans noted that, in Conakry, “Malinké fetes are the thing. Even though all these guys aren’t Malinké, they get hired for Malinké fetes” (2015: Personal Interview). This was consistent with my experiences attending and playing for celebrations in

Conakry, where at least one non-Maninka musician (in addition to myself) performed in every case.

Even as they were hired to play for fetes, non-Maninka artists in Guinea were often critiqued by Maninka artists. Seattle-Guinean participant Frank Anderson attended a *dundunba* fete in Conakry while taking part in a drum and dance camp hosted by Famoudou Konaté. There, he observed that individuals brought from the Hamana region to Conakry to work at Konaté's camp were openly critical of dancers and drummers who were born and raised in Conakry:

“I remember this one guy got out and danced, and there was a guy there that I knew who was from the village, Sangbarala. He said, ‘*Ca c’est pas danser.*’ ‘That’s not dancing.’ But, meanwhile, all the foreigners were wowed by this Conakry guy dancing. They thought that was so cool. But, sometimes I would see some of the Hamana drummers and dancers be real snobs. They would say, ‘Nah. That’s not dancing’” (Frank Anderson 2015: Personal Interview).

In Frank's telling, this criticism existed primarily at the level of the urban-rural. However, embedded within this spatial opposition was an ethnic opposition set up in the specification of Conakry and Hamana. Conakry, the coastal capital, was associated with the Susu ethnicity. Sangbarala, as Famoudou Konaté's natal village in Hamana, was associated with Maninka ethnicity, especially as it related to the repertoire and instruments of globalized djembe practice.

Jessica Towns-Camara perceived Maninka-centric stereotypes regarding musical performance in Guinea, and lamented the fact that some people in the United States took up these same stereotypes:

“Some people fully believe that you can't do it [(play djembe music)] unless you're Malinké. They believe that you can't do it. This is Guineans. And, I think that there are some Americans who believe it too” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

She observed that her husband, Manimou Camara, whose patrilineal heritage was Maninka, intentionally avoided revealing his ancestry in Guinea in order to work against stereotypes linking musical proficiency and ethnicity among musicians in Guinea. Manimou publicly

identified as Guerze (Kpelle), a minority ethnic group living primarily in the Forest region and representing approximately five percent of the Guinean population. Jessica further asserted that Maninka-centric stereotypes about musicianship in Guinea extended to the expatriate artist community in the United States. She suggested that these stereotypes influenced the repertoire that her husband opted to teach when other Guinean artists were present for regional workshops:

“He still experiences that here. You’ll notice that, when he’s in those big group situations and settings teaching...he sticks with Forest stuff. He doesn’t teach anything that’s not Forest, because he doesn’t want to deal with it” (Jessica Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

Here, the word “Forest” connects to the French *forestier*, used in Guinea to represent a constellation of people and practices associated with southeastern Guinea.<sup>42</sup> Jessica asserted that he taught dances associated with the Forest region to preempt any challenges of cultural ownership.

Manimou avoided perpetuating ethnic tensions among expatriates that he meets in the United States:

“Everybody fights. Everybody’s culture. You fight, or madness comes up. It happens. But, for me, there’s some stuff I don’t talk about. If you start talking about that with some people, it can be a problem. For me, I’m just looking ahead. I don’t want to be thinking back. I’m going ahead” (Manimou Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

Here, Manimou articulated an ideology of sameness, noting that ethnicity-based oppositions in Guinea were similar to intra-cultural tensions that existed elsewhere in the world. In “looking ahead”, he strove toward a unity that might disentangle personal relationships from ethnic conflicts, especially among expatriates. Manimou avoided conversations about events that were likely to incite those perspectives, but also actively extended hospitality to other expatriates: “For me, anybody, if I see you here, we talk. Everybody. (...) We’re all from Guinea. We’re family.

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<sup>42</sup> Southeastern Guinea first became established as a distinct geographic region in the 1920s, and the *forestiers* came to be considered a connected ethnicity cluster by the 1930s. The French colonial mechanism based in Conakry produced both the geographic and ethnic categorization of the region (Goerg 2011).

To me, anyone who's from Guinea, you're family. You're welcome any time" (Manimou Camara 2015: Personal Interview). Manimou emphasized a conception of family that extended beyond ethnicity to include all Guineans. He found that, even as he could not be sure how people felt or what they said when they were not in his presence, Guinean expatriates, and artists in particular, tended to behave and converse in a way that suggested transcendence of interpersonal ethnic division.

Expatriate Guineans such as Manimou promoted nationalistic understandings of music and dance as a way to connect them with their home country, to pass on the knowledge they gained from their teachers, and also as a way to diffuse ethnic tensions that, during their formative years, resulted in violent political and military repression. The majority of Guinean-born artists in Seattle, while born during the last decade of the Touré administration, began their musical careers after Conté assumed control in the 1980s. They bore witness to the lifting of opacity around ethnic discrimination in the country, coinciding with the privatization of drum and dance following state divestment from the national ballets (Cohen 2016). Guineans in Seattle, while acknowledging the problems of Sekou Toure's administration, valued what they perceived as his dedication to preserving and showcasing the artistic folklore of the Guinean nation. Furthermore, they worked to re-establish the anti-ethnicism promoted, if not realized, during Touré's First Guinean Republic.

### **Meaning in Absence**

The category "Malinké" generated meaning in the Seattle-Guinean scene, not only as a historically-grounded way to classify particular instruments and musical performance practices according to the ethnicity of the people with whom they were most commonly associated, but

also because it marked and was marked by a number of absent Others. In highlighting the absences embedded in the use of “Malinké” as an identifying category, I am influenced by Derrida’s concept of the “trace” (Derrida and Spivak 2016). For Derrida, the trace is “a metaphor for the effect of the opposite concept, which is no longer present but has left its mark on the concept we are now considering” (Balkin 1987: 752).

Use of “Malinké” as a signifier generated meaning in absence in two ways. First, “Malinké” distinguished some musical performance practices from those of other ethnic groups. Consistent with Gaudette’s (2009) findings, music that was “Malinké” was principally “not Susu”. However, “Malinké” extended beyond a singular dichotomy at the level of ethnicity; it was also “not Peul”, “not *Forestier*”, “not Baga”, and “not” any other of the smaller ethnic groups that constitute the Guinean nation.

“Malinké” also generated meaning through absence in that it privileged ethnicity over alternative possibilities as a grouping category. When people used “Malinké”, they dissociated tendencies that existed across ethnicities and undermined the potential viability of classifying music and dance according to larger potential groupings, including language families and nations. Understood in terms of languages, “Malinké” music is “not Mandé” music. The Malinké police typically extended the category “Malinké” beyond Maninka people to include only a handful of ethnicities considered to be part of the umbrella Northern Mandé language group. The most glaring exclusion introduced when privileging a blurred concept of ethnicity (Malinké) over language group (Mandé) was, again, that of the Susu people. Perhaps most significantly in relation to the scene in Seattle, “Malinké” signified “not Guinean” in a way that resisted the unifying nationalist perspectives that were associated with socialist-era cultural policies in Guinea and espoused by Guinean-born expatriate artists.

## “The Village”

Geographers provide guidance in trying to understand the ways that rurality and authenticity interacted in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Beyond spatial notions of place, it is important to think in terms of social relations that exist in “specific envelopes of space-time” (Massey 1995: 189-190). Perkins (2006) asserts that local and global interests competitively and cooperatively construct an emergent place as it and its people are commercialized in increasing and new ways. Furthermore, Svein Frisvoll (2013) argues that, in rural tourism, ideas, locality, and human practice interact in the contestation, negotiation, commercialization, and consumption of space. Considered in these ways, the Village can be understood as constantly re-articulated through evolving commodification by and for non-Guineans who looked to djembe and dundun performance as a well-spring for spiritual and cultural sustenance. Much as other kinds of tourists use photography to extend their experiences through space and time (Urry 2003), the Malinké police attempted to extend the imagined rural past-ness of the Village to the urban present of Seattle through music.

Among Seattle-Guinean participants, ideas about tradition, history, ethnicity, and authenticity were intimately connected to rurality through the concept of “the Village”.<sup>43</sup> All participants used “the Village” as both a type and token noun, referring variously to specific locations that they had visited or to general rurality. Participants always referred to “the Village” and not “a village”, infusing it with the sense of a proper noun. They also used “Village” as an adjective to describe types of drum or dance. I capitalize “Village” to encourage simultaneous

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<sup>43</sup> This conceptualization of “the Village” in Guinea as a non-specific source for authentic performance practices existed at least as far back as the early post-independence writings of Sekou Touré (Touré 1963 trans. 1971: 9). Touré codified the cultural policy of *authenticité* in 1968 as a part of the Guinean Cultural Revolution (Counsel 2010).

tracking of these interrelated meanings. Most scene participants discursively constructed the Village in a manner combining spatial and temporal ambiguities. They located the Village in an indistinctly distant rurality. This rurality coincided with a perception of indefinite oldness, like a geometric ray extending back in time. Combining blurry remoteness and timelessness, the Village emerged as an imagined site that stood immune to change initiated through Western imposition, regional influence, or local innovation.<sup>44</sup>

Although the bulk of Seattle-Guinean scene participants retained an abstract conception of the Village, the Malinké police increasingly localized their point of reference in Hamana, a historical name for part of the Kouroussa region along the Niger River in Upper Guinea. Martin Stokes argues that people engaged in musical tourism often “acquire languages of spirituality in which they come to interpret their own acts as acts of devotion and pilgrimage” (Stokes 1999: 151). Participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene constructed Hamana as a kind of Mecca for musical practice among many participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Frank Anderson, a drummer, dancer, and teacher, characterized Hamana as the “homeland” of a specific practice and repertoire:

“That’s the homeland: Hamana. The homeland of *Kassa*. The homeland of what we call “*Dundunba*”. They’re great dancers. Some of the greatest dancers and drummers that I ever saw in my life were right there in Sangbarala” (Frank Anderson 2015: Personal Interview).<sup>45</sup>

Here, Frank referred to two clusters of music and dance performance, *Dundunba* and *Kassa*, that were part of the core repertoire of the Seattle-Guinean scene, the urban professional drum and dance circuit in Guinea, and the global djembe industry (Charry 2000).

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<sup>44</sup> The Village did not function as a metaphor for collective responsibility, as in the proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child”. Non-Guineans tended to map this sense of Village onto Guinean culture more generally.

<sup>45</sup> Sangbarala was Famoudou Konaté’s natal village, located in Hamana.

In re-imagining Hamana as the Village, the homeland, and the source for authentic and aesthetically superior musical practices, non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene extended an international narrative generated by Guineans since at least the early 1950s. Camara Laye's novel, *L'Enfant Noir*, published in 1952, positioned the Kouroussa region, of which Hamana is a part, in the global consciousness as a cultural home for the Maninka, for Guinea, and for Francophone West Africa. Striving to produce and represent a unified Guinean nation in international stagings beginning in the late 1950s, *Les Ballets Africains* directors privileged practices associated with Hamana through ensemble instrumentation and repertoire. The Guinean Ministry of Culture refreshed this narrative stream in the early 2000s, placing the Gberedu/Hamana region on its tentative list for consideration as one of three UNESCO World Heritage sites in Guinea based in part on local music (UNESCO 2016).<sup>46</sup>

Seattle-based drum and dance tourism facilitators reinforced the narrative of Hamana as a homeland and heartland. The One World Dance and Drum website promoted the company's inland tour with reference to the "ancient villages in the Hamanah region" (One World Dance and Drum 2016).<sup>47</sup> The website framed Hamana in the past as part of a larger promotional framework connecting the ancient with the authentic, and the authentic, in turn, with practices understood as static due to a perceived lack of Western influence. Evidence of this connection existed in the description of a festival in Faranah on the One World website:

"The 'Festival de Musiques Traditionnelles et de Contes' is a special and unparalleled opportunity to witness a wide range of ancient, authentic and sacred African tradition, ceremonies, rituals, folklore and art intact and unaltered by western development" (One World Dance and Drum 2016).

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<sup>46</sup> It is interesting to observe that, concurrent with the Guinean state government's efforts to highlight Hamana, the authors of the Scarecrow Press *Historical Dictionary of Guinea* removed the entry for the region when changing from the fourth edition to the fifth (O'Toole and Baker 2005; Camara et al 2013).

<sup>47</sup> The spelling "Hamanah" is a less-frequent but still common alternative spelling of "Hamana".

This statement aligned with ethnomusicologist Sarah Weiss' (2014) evidence that non-Africans tend to interpret conspicuous Western influences in African musics as introducing impurities. Conversely, any music that does not bear markers of "the West" is considered to be pure and authentic, regardless of evidence for other kinds of local, regional, ethnic or international borrowings or influences (Weiss 2014: 508).

Cultural geographers Gibson and Connell observe that "the lack of substantial earlier tourism to rural Guinea suggests that modification of local musical styles and practices, in the light of tourism, had been limited" (2005: 176). While I found during my fieldwork that local musical styles in some remote areas remained largely uninfluenced by tourism, changes were readily apparent in those rural areas visited regularly by drum and dance tourists, especially Hamana. This suggests that a shift occurred in the decade following Gibson and Connell's publication, as many specialized inland drum and dance tours included travel to the Hamana region. Facilitators promoted these tours as journeys "home", drawing interest and funding from drumming tourists living all over the world. Previous tourists in the area created paths that the Malinké police followed. Even as they fell "into grooves already well-worn by tourists" (MacCannell 2001: 382), the Malinké police continued to characterize music and dance in Hamana as though it were unchanged through the negotiations that inevitably arose in processes of transmission and commodification (Flaig 2010), failing to perceive their own role in the continual re-creation of tradition.

As they authenticated according to a primordial understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and culture, buttressed in the promotional materials of tourism businesses, the Malinké police tethered music and dance practices in Hamana to an indeterminate history. In doing so, they denied the agency of individuals who influenced and transformed local

performance practices prior to the introduction of music and dance tourism to Hamana in the 1990s.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the Malinké police also relegated contemporary Hamana musicians to a perpetually pre-modern “timeless past still among us” (Wirtz 2011).

The Malinké police treated spatial boundaries of authenticity in one way and temporal boundaries in another. They developed increasing interest in rural geographic specificity, but not in uncovering detailed temporal information. I observed direct evidence for the differing interest in spatial and temporal information in the kinds of questions that experienced non-Guineans asked when presented with new music or a novel variation. In almost every case, they asked the question: “Where is this from?” Conversely, they almost never asked the question: “When was this created?” While most held Hamana in especially high regard, they also showed a degree of spatial flexibility for authentic performance, acknowledging the existence of inter-regional and inter-village variation. This flexibility ended, however, at the level of intra-village variation.

The Malinké police limited their consideration of temporal variations of performance practices such that they typically related to one of two events: 1) the perceived break or fissure in tradition introduced during the stagings of music and dance by national ballets beginning at independence; and, 2) the modernization of music and dance in urban centers, especially in post-socialist Conakry. They characterized both the national stagings and urban modernization of drumming and dancing in Guinea as corrupting forces, understanding them as the adaptation of participatory musical practices for presentational settings (in the case of stagings for national ballets) and commercialization of performance (in the case of urban professionalization) as disconnecting drum and dance from natural cultural streams of activity, introducing artifice, and diluting expression. At the same time, the Malinké police did not interpret the negotiated

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<sup>48</sup> Participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene did not express an interest in or knowledge of the impact of particular individuals on performance practices in rural Guinea. To my knowledge, no systematic study of individual innovation in drumming performance in Guinea exists.

processes involved in transmitting music and dance to foreigners as inherently introducing similar inauthenticity.

As the Malinké police advocated for the “traditional” and “authentic” over the “modern” and “contrived”, they discriminated against and invalidated contemporary urban and non-Maninka Guinean performers, including many of those who immigrated to Seattle. The attention and dollars that accompanied this advocacy also compelled rural artists to commit time and resources to revive, revisit, represent, and re-center practices that no longer held value for local people. It may be the case that local people have or will come to re-value neo-traditional performance practices prioritized for the sake of touristic commodification, as has been noted in other dance-centered touristic contexts (Neveu Kringelbach and Skinner 2012). A potentially fruitful avenue of further research exists in exploring specific transformations of musical practices and associated attitudes, especially among non-artists in the villages in and near the djembe Mecca of Hamana.

### **Stylistic Binary**

Vera Flaig identifies a division in the United States between what she calls “concert djembé” and “ballet-style” performance (2010: 303). In Seattle, people did not use the term “concert” to denote a performance style, even if they did learn and replicate some of the arrangements that constituted the core of the concert style as taught by Mamady Keita, Famoudou Konate, and their apprentices. Instead, Seattle-Guinean scene participants set “ballet” styles of performance in opposition to “traditional” or “Village” styles.

It is difficult to determine precisely where or when the traditional-ballet binary first came into use, but its widespread diffusion has made this characterization the prominent distinction in

djembe styles by ethnomusicologists, teachers, and performers across the globe.<sup>49</sup>

Ethnomusicologist Eric Charry recognizes the existence of a village-ballet dichotomy in djembe performance. He describes village practice as one including relatively few rhythms played for long stretches during which “solo singing, group singing, and group dancing alternate with frenetic, fast-paced solo dancing, all within the unbroken circle of participants” (2000: 225). Charry contrasts this with ballet performance, which is “more choreographed, with many more rhythms played in rapid succession for short periods” (Ibid.).

Seattle-Guinean participants associated ballet-style performance with the modern and urban, and traditional-style performance with the Village, and therefore with the rural and ancient. The Malinké police supplemented this oppositional understanding, equating ballet-style with artificial and traditional-style with authentic. The Malinké police used the term “ballet-style” unequivocally as a pejorative reference, at times using “Conakry” as a similarly pejorative synonym. Flaig notes that ex-ballet drummers, including Famoudou Konaté, “often speak negatively of the national ballet as a non-tradition, ‘its [sic] just invented music; it is not based upon the real village tradition’” (Flaig 2010: 45). Flaig acknowledges the irony of these negative characterizations, as the most famous exponents of djembe drumming in the United States were responsible for generating and popularizing representations of a national Guinean culture in the ballets while simultaneously undermining those representations by claiming them inferior to the local traditions from which they were adapted. I observed Konaté’s influence on the scene in the growing tendency for non-Guinean drummers to authenticate Guinean music in terms of a traditional-ballet binary.

A number of different potential meanings of the term “traditional” existed in Guinean and non-Guinean contexts. My fieldwork supports the findings of anthropologist Adrienne Cohen

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Charry (2000), Flaig (2010), Raout (2009), and Zanetti (1996).

that, “[d]espite the reality of modification and creation at all levels over time, the repertoires that were staged in the socialist period have come to be described (always in French) as ‘traditional’ (*traditionnelle*) by Conakry artists across generations, while village dance is referred to as ‘original’ (*originale*)” (Cohen 2016: 654). Non-Guinean participants used the term “traditional” to refer to music and dance of the Village, corresponding with the Guinean “*originale*”. However, the music and dance that the Malinké police perceived as traditional was taught to them primarily by Famoudou Konaté, his Guinean-born apprentices, and those who followed in his footsteps as Maninka-centric camp hosts. Flaig asserts that this “traditional-style” music emerged in negotiations between ex-ballet drummers, the Guinean men who learn from them, and their foreign students, all of whom were “looking for some grounding in a tradition which no longer exists in its village context” (2010: 315). And yet, while perhaps collectively imagined and constructed, the music and dance posited as traditional by Konaté either continued to emerge in village contexts through the tourism industry that blossomed with the interest of foreign students including the Malinké police.

### **Sonic Markers**

Owing largely to the asymmetric representation of Maninka practices in the nationalization and later globalization of Guinean music (Flaig 2010), the djembe and dundun were privileged representatives of Guinean culture in the Seattle-Guinean scene. As with other aspects of musical performance in the scene, the Malinké police developed aesthetic preferences regarding instruments that authenticated the rural, the old, and the Maninka.

The widespread global interest in and use of the djembe, as well as the authentication of practices and people associated with that instrument, emerged from negotiations between high-

profile teaching musicians and their students (Flaig 2010). These negotiations contributed to the predominance of an ethnic classification of the djembe, which was universally characterized as a Maninka instrument. Guinean-born Manimou Camara recognized that the discourse around the djembe privileged Maninka music, attributing this to the narrow foci and perspectives of non-Guineans:

“There’s not one region in Guinea. There’s four regions.<sup>50</sup> You know? Each region has how many tribes? (...) Some people say that djembe comes from the Malinké people. The Fulani don’t have djembe? The Baga don’t have djembe? The Forest don’t have djembe? Everybody has djembe! Right? Everybody has djembe. If you go to the Susu people, they have their own djembe, their own cultural djembe.<sup>51</sup> If you go to the Baga people, they have djembe. If you go to the Fulani people, they have djembe. Every culture in Guinea has djembe” (Manimou Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

Here, Camara did not refer to the diffusion of the djembe across Guinea, which Charry argues was likely the result of the migration of Maninka *numu* (blacksmiths) in the first millennium AD (2000: 214). Instead, Camara highlighted similarities in instrumental design and performance that existed across ethnic lines, promoting a unifying nationalistic perspective. Camara distinguished himself in this regard from the overwhelming majority of artists who consistently emphasized the ethnic association of djembe with Maninka people in public speaking and promotional materials (Flaig 2010).

While nearly all musicians in Seattle adhered to an ethnic conception of djembe, the Malinké police diverged from Guinean-born participants as well as other non-Guineans as they developed refined preferences regarding djembe tuning. Guinean-born musicians universally favored djembes mounted under extreme tension, producing pronounced slaps and high-pitched tones with a fast decay rate. Non-Guinean musicians developed tuning preferences that depended on their experience levels. As they achieved greater playing facility, especially the

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<sup>50</sup> Here, Manimou referenced the four geographic/ethnic regions of Guinea, which Goerg (2011) argues emerged as the result of French colonial interests in the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>51</sup> In Susuxui, any goblet-shaped drum played with two hands was called *sambanyi*.

ability to produce a clear and distinct slap, non-Guineans tended to prefer increasingly tight and high-pitched djembe tunings. This preference intensified for drummers who played as soloists in dance classes because higher tunings generate slaps that emerge from the texture of the ensemble, allowing a soloist to differentiate themselves and be clearly heard by dancers and other drummers. The Malinké police favored moderately- or low-tuned djembes, citing the importance of being able to produce rich open tones. By prioritizing open tones, the discerning non-Guinean participants placed themselves, either intentionally or not, in opposition to urban Guinean professional musicians and less-experienced non-Guineans who prioritized loud and crisp slaps. This opposition aligned with the perspective put forth by Famoudou Konaté and many of his apprentices, who consistently emphasized the importance of open tones in music as it was played in the Village.<sup>52</sup>

While the choice to tune a djembe with low tension coincided with an effort to emulate the perceived practices of older rural musicians, the Malinké police stopped short of extending their preference to materials and construction method. Regardless of their affinity for rural-old Maninka practice, all Seattle-Guinean scene participants used djembes constructed using an iron ring clamp system. This system of tuning likely emerged from innovations in the United States in the 1970s, spreading to and across West Africa and replacing leather-sewn construction methods as the standard practice in urban centers of Senegal, Mali, and Guinea by the 1980s (Polak 2000). In Guinea, all urban musicians who I observed during my fieldwork constructed

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<sup>52</sup> While I lack firm ethnographic evidence, I suspect that Konaté prioritized tones in his teaching as a pedagogical response to the tendency among non-Guinean musicians to treat slaps as accented notes and open tones as unaccented notes.

their djembes with this iron ring clamp system, as did players in rural areas that frequently attracted drum and dance tourists, including the Hamana region.<sup>53</sup>

Issues of authenticity and aesthetics around the *dunduns* (cylindrical bass drums) played out primarily with respect to the physical orientation of the instruments and related spatio-temporal cultural associations. In Seattle, the *dunduns* were played in sets of three, called *dundunba*, *sangban*, and *kenkeni*<sup>54</sup> (low, medium, and high), an instrumentation typical for global djembe performance and associated with drumming practices in the Hamana region. The pedagogical rhetoric of Guineans Famoudou Konaté and Mamady Keïta further codified the use of three *dunduns* as they developed pedagogies in the 1980s and 1990s.

Seattle musicians typically played *dunduns* in one of two arrangements. In the first arrangement, the three *dunduns* were placed in a transverse orientation, lined up front to back with the striking-side heads facing toward the dancers or audience. In this orientation, often called “traditional-style” or “Village-style”, each *dundun* included a clapperless iron bell affixed to the side. Players struck the head of their *dundun* with a wooden stick in their dominant hand, and used an iron rod or ring in their non-dominant hand to strike the affixed bell.

Musicians referred to the second typical arrangement for *dunduns* as “ballet-style”. In this arrangement, the three *dunduns* were oriented vertically with the striking-side heads facing straight up. The *dunduns* were sometimes attached directly to one another with hooks or with bungee cords, or were hung on a wooden stand. In this arrangement, the *dundunba* was always in the center with the *sangban* on the left and the *kenkeni* on the right, or vice-versa. A single drummer played all three ballet-style *dunduns* using two wooden sticks and no bells.

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<sup>53</sup> Polak (2000) asserts that older systems of djembe construction remain extant in rural Mali. This is consistent with my observations in Guinea, where, in rural areas rarely visited by drum and dance tourists, many djembes and other similar goblet-shaped drums played with two empty hands were constructed using sewn-on leather-ringed heads.

<sup>54</sup> There is a growing trend to refer to this instrument as “*kensedeni*”, reflecting terminology in the Hamana region. Here, I retained the term “*kenkeni*” to reflect typical usage by participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene.

It is uncertain when the single-player ballet-style *dundun* first emerged, although it is typically associated with the national ballets. Video footage from a 1968 production of *Les Ballets Africains* includes the “traditional-style” or “Village-style” *dundun* arrangement with one performer on each drum, and no evidence of the single-player arrangement. Seattle-Guinean participant Tyler Richart speculated that the development of ballet-style *dunduns* was a necessary response to the economic strains of staging productions for international tours, and the restrictions that these strains placed on the hiring of personnel:

“Part of it is that I do think that comes from logistics and necessity. The whole ballet style of turning *dunduns* up like that. And, that it was more like, ‘How do you get less people on the tour bus?’ This is a really poor country trying to expose the world to their music. They made some pretty heavy deals with the devil. ‘How do we change this music so we can [(possibly)] expose people to this music?’” (Tyler Richart 2014: Personal Interview).

Here, Tyler associated the changes in *dundun* orientation, not as positive elective progress, but as an unfortunate compromise made out of necessity.

In the context of dance classes in Seattle, the use of ballet-style *dunduns* also typically occurred only in response to personnel-based necessities. In cases when there were not enough musicians to occupy each of the *dunduns* separately—as when only two or three musicians attended—a single individual played all three drums. Alternatively, there were sometimes an adequate number of musicians (three to play the *dunduns* and at least one djembe player), and yet only one who was comfortable with or capable of performing the *dundun* parts.

Drummer Frank Anderson situated the emergence of Village-style *dundun* drumming in Seattle in the late 1990s:

“At first some of us were just messing around with the drums upright. Me playing the *dunduns* with a stick in each hand. So-called “ballet style.” Then, when I got a little more serious a couple of years later, I wanted to play the bell. Eventually, you would go to a class and find three *dunduns* with one person on each *dundun*. I can’t remember exactly when it was. By the time 1998 came around, the different ones of us in Seattle

would be trying to play our *dunduns* Hamana-style. Even if it wasn't a Hamana rhythm" (Frank Anderson 2015: Personal Interview).

For Frank, the move away from ballet-style to Village-style, which he called Hamana-style, coincided with his attempts to get "more serious" about the music. By the time I first engaged with the Seattle-Guinean scene in 2012, Village-style *dunduns* had become the norm and preferred orientation.

In Seattle, only non-Guinean drummers objected to ballet-style *dunduns*, and their manifested as an alignment with one's teachers. Tyler Richart asserted that Famoudou Konaté, who he identified as his primary teacher, was clearly and openly opposed to continuing the practice of arranging *dunduns* in the ballet style, stating, "I know the way that, for the most part, Famoudou feels about it now, is that it's just not an option. We don't do it; don't like it" (2014: Personal Interview). Richart operationalized this perspective on ballet-style *dunduns* when leading ensembles, preferring a single *sangban* with a bell instead of ballet-style *dunduns* in cases when too few players were available.

Entangled with their preferences for traditional-style or Village-style *dunduns*, some non-Guineans communicated a desire to replicate, maintain, or re-insert performance practices associated with the past, with the rural, and with Maninka artists. Tyler, for example, articulated his preference for the presence of bells and the ways that they communicated rhythmic subdivisions along with a djembe soloist:

"To me, when you're playing djembe like the traditional sort of masters play it, there's that playing out of the roll thing that happens where there's this big correlation between the groove of the djembe, the right-left-right-left-right-left-right-left, and how that bell is sort of carving in and out of those subdivisions. (...) As a djembe player, I feel more inspired to play pretty music when I hear that bell coming in and out of the time. It's just as simple as that. It's just beauty and aesthetics" (Tyler Richart 2014: Personal Interview).

Asserting his musical preferences as “just beauty and aesthetics”, Tyler nevertheless associated the style of playing that he found inspiring with that of “the traditional sort of masters”. His conception of traditional masters again placed older Maninka artists from rural Upper Guinea in opposition to those who stray from playing “out of the roll”, typically characterized as young Conakry-based musicians who were not of Maninka heritage.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, ethnomusicologists Charry (2000) and Polak (1996) support Tyler’s ethnic association of hand-to-hand phrasing with older and rural Maninka musicians. Some participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene have read parts or all of these works, and it is plausible that ethnomusicological studies contributed to, if not generated, binary opposition-based ethnic conceptions of hand-to-hand djembe phrasing.

A second opposition to ballet-style *dunduns* emerged—again, only among non-Guineans—from the fact that this arrangement allowed for faster ensemble tempos. One non-Guinean drummer found that the necessity of playing consecutive notes with one hand on transverse *dunduns*, especially on the bells, established an upper limit for tempos of repertoire that featured quaternary beat sub-divisions at approximately 150 beats per minute. He observed that the vertical orientation and two-stick playing of ballet-style arrangements allowed a *dundun* player to push past the physiologically-derived tempo ceiling. Furthermore, tempos higher than 150 beats per minute introduced limitations to the available expressive materials—specifically, the restriction of solo djembe phrasing options that include doublings of the beat sub-division. Non-Guineans also communicated another tempo-based opposition to ballet-style *dunduns*, referencing the disappearance of subtlety in performance and perception of the composite created by the *dundunba*, *sangban*, and *kenkeni*.

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<sup>55</sup> Here, “hand-to-hand” playing or playing “out of the roll” constitutes consistent performance of every other beat subdivision with the same hand.

Ethnomusicologist Rainer Polak identifies among professional musicians in Bamako, Mali at the end of the twentieth century a “style that presently gets drummers the most engagements—faster, louder and more notes” (Polak 1999). Polak is primarily interested in the diminishing role of microtiming as an expressive device, but his observation intersects with performance-related authenticating statements by the Malinké police in the Seattle-Guinean scene in two ways. First, non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene referred to tempo, volume, and rhythmic density in terms that normalized the past and relativized the present. Second, Polak’s statement associated those same comparative features with a professionalized, and, more importantly, commodified performance. This, too, was true of non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, who braided the present with professionalization and commodification, interpreting both as compromising traditional artistry.

Seattle writer Miro Lion (2016) published portions of an interview with a Seattle-Guinean scene participant as part of a blog introducing readers to “Ten Female Drummers not to miss in Seattle 2016”. Her interviewee’s responses included language consistent with authentication discourse produced by others in the scene, aligning personal aesthetics and performance practices with those perceived to be older, rural, and Maninka:

“I drum Malinke rhythms on dununs. The newer trend is to fill up lots of spaces and do fancy rolls, etc. But I love leaving space and hitting just that one sweet note, in just the right pocket, so I guess my style is more sparse than most” (Lion 2016).

When asked to describe her drumming style, this drummer specified ethnicity and instruments, then distinguished her own playing from that of others in terms of density, groove<sup>56</sup>, and a connection to the past. The interviewee emphasized the subtlety of her own performance style, connecting it to the past and disassociating herself from contemporary practices.

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<sup>56</sup> Here, the word “pocket” was used to indicate rhythmic precision.

This drummer further referenced temporal relativity, pointing toward a non-specific past in a way that integrated musical references to tempo and volume, stating, “The Malinke scene I’m in has grown but people are drumming faster and louder and that’s incredibly boring to me. I LOVE the build” (Lion 2016). Other participants reinforced this assertion of a transformation in the scene, and attributed it to the influx of Guinean-born participants. One non-Guinean dancer described the change in terms of the values of participants, placing newly-arrived Guineans in aesthetic opposition to the most experienced and influential non-Guineans in the scene. She described one Guinean who entered the scene in the 2000s:

“He wasn’t a delicate drummer. He was loud and intense. You know what I mean? And fast. Prior to that, what was valued was more definitely coming out of the...more delicate dundun conversation [(as played by experienced non-Guineans in Seattle)]. And that is, quite truthfully, my preference. So, it’s interesting, historically, to look back at that time and think that so much has changed” (Ellesa Hunter 2015: Personal Interview).

Both of these women noted a shift in the Seattle-Guinean scene toward faster and louder music, and described their aesthetic preference for norms of musical practice in the scene prior to the influx of Guinean-born artists.<sup>57</sup>

In pushing toward a Maninka-centric conception of authentic and traditional music and dance, the Malinké police adopted particular aesthetic preferences regarding instrumental tuning and orientation, sound production, repertoire, and tempo. All of these choices served to signal an adherence to faithful representation of authentic tradition steeped in romantic imaginations informed by notions of the Village and the past. Furthermore, the Malinké police distanced themselves from Guineans living locally in Seattle, most of whom they considered to be competent, but not masterful artists.

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<sup>57</sup> Many of those participants in the scene who communicated a distaste for performance at high tempos lacked the technical facility to perform at successfully at high tempos. While I lack sufficient evidence to comment definitively, my sense is that these participants’ aesthetic preferences and performance competencies reinforced one another.

## Authority

In addition to musical instruments and performance procedures, musicians in the Seattle-Guinean scene frequently authenticated one another according to a hierarchy that aligned and evolved with their own identity and experience.<sup>58</sup> Guinean-born participants co-existed in a hierarchy dominated first by generational age and then by perceived competence. While inexperienced non-Guineans drummers also authenticated according to perceived competence, they drew the brightest lines of authority with respect to either national or continental origin. They considered anyone born in Guinea (or, sometimes, Africa more generally) as authorities, and those born elsewhere as not authorities. Paul, a highly-experienced non-Guinean drummer, observed what he calls the “illusion of legitimacy”, connecting authentication to identity and pedigree, rather than to performance capability or knowledge:

“I think that a big part of the business model, and I think a lot of people understand this, is creating this illusion of—I want to be careful how I say this [(but)] I don’t know how—this sort of illusion of legitimacy based on where you grew up, or based on who you studied with. (...) The dynamic is such that there’s all this artist worship going on for Americans here who don’t know the difference between maybe who is a master and who’s not” (Paul 2014: Personal Interview).

Paul found that, because of a lack of competence, other non-Guineans often authenticated individuals based on Guinean identity alone. Further, he articulated that Guinean-born artists understandably encouraged this authentication because they were responsible for the financial well-being of large networks of friends and family in Guinea.

While Paul associated the “worship” of individuals with an inability among non-Guineans to discern masterful performance practice, other non-Guineans in the scene

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<sup>58</sup> This hierarchy does not appear to exist among dancers who are active in the scene. Instead, the hierarchies used by dancers tend to be more related to perceived identity and ability.

intentionally deferred to Guineans even when they recognized that those Guineans lacked competence. Non-Guinean participant Todd stated this perspective explicitly:

“I give authority to any—to Lamine, to Naby, to Manimou, to Mamady—who else is there? Ousmane. I’ve never drummed with Ousmane, but, probably, if he told me to do something, I would do it. Even though I don’t think he’s really a drummer. (...) Why? Because they’re African. Because they’re from Guinea. Because this is their culture, insofar as I understand it” (Nico Bell 2015: Personal Interview).

Todd questioned his own musical judgment, prioritizing identity over perceived competence in determining whether to adjust his own practice based on feedback. He further recalled playing in a dance class alongside a Guinean circus performer visiting Seattle: “I noticed, when he was playing, he was fucking it up. He couldn’t play the *dundunba* part for *Mendiani*. But, even if he told me what to do, I probably would do it” (Todd 2015: Personal Interview). Here, Todd delegated relative authority based on the perception that Guineans were likely to have access to immersion-based knowledge, but also as a gesture of respect and deference according to his own racial, national, and experiential identity. As he explained his identity-based deference, Todd decoupled Guinean identity from competence, but not from authority.

As non-Guineans gained more experience, their hierarchy of authority typically became increasingly specific and restrictive. The Malinké police, being among the most experienced musicians in the scene regardless of national origin, operationalized the most refined and exclusionary set of boundaries. For the Malinké police, a person who was born and raised in Hamana was considered to be the most valuable source of knowledge, and the ultimate authority on tradition. If a person resided their entire life in Conakry, their knowledge was less valued, though this value was influenced by the pedigree of study as well as the ethnicity of the Guinean. The Malinké police also tended to value and prioritize the knowledge of individuals who did not participate in contemporary ballets in Guinea.

Regardless of duration or type of experience, instrumental tuning choices, or knowledge of repertoire, Guineans and non-Guineans were typically perceived differently by the community with regard to the quality of their playing, their ownership of musical materials, and the respect and remuneration that they earn through playing. Accomplished and dedicated non-Guinean players sometimes found it difficult to accept the identity-based asymmetry in the treatment of musicians in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Non-Guinean drummer Paul found that, because he was able to assert his competence through performance, Guinean participants in the scene, as well as non-Guineans who authenticated based on identity, often responded to him with unease. He stated, “People frequently feel threatened by somebody who can easily express their legitimacy by the sound of their instrument alone” (Paul 2014: Personal Interview). Social dissonance emerged as individuals whose priorities and aesthetic preferences differed and interacted in dance class environments, manifesting most audibly in responses to performance errors.

Kofi Agawu (2003: 109-110) argues that a focus on the correction of performance errors can be potentially fruitful for scholars who are interested in identifying and understanding musical metalanguage. During my fieldwork, I intentionally heeded Agawu’s call, paying careful attention to the ways that participants addressed and corrected individual errors made by themselves or by others, as well as responses to more general ensemble discord. While this observation did yield insight into the ways that otherwise reticent participants conceptualized and talked about music and dance, it turned out to be more useful in helping me to better understand the connections between divergent authentication processes, musical performance, and interpersonal relationships.

When musical discord arose, the process for correction depended on culturally-specific hierarchies and behavioral norms, both of which were related to identity and boundaries of

authenticity. Seattle-based Guinean-born musicians frequently corrected the performance of non-Guineans, but generally abstained from correcting one another when musical discord occurred. Non-Guinean musicians regularly corrected other non-Guineans, although corrections were sometimes resisted or rejected due to pre-existing interpersonal tension or refusals to authorize the correcting musician as sufficiently competent.

A rare but important socio-musical situation arose when a non-Guinean drummer assumed a position of authority relative to a Guinean-born drummer in the presence of other non-Guineans. Most non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene intentionally abstained from addressing performance errors made by Guinean-born participants. Even in cases when a Guinean-born drummer participated in a way that was antithetical to the expectations and desires of the dance teacher, or outside the norms of performance within the community in a way that clearly signaled a lack of competence, most non-Guineans refrained from correcting or assisting them. This conscious abstention resulted in part from the authentication criteria used by most non-Guinean participants: any Guinean in the space acted as a cultural representative and thus as an unassailable authority.

On those occasions when expert non-Guinean drummers publicly contested the authority of local Guineans, they were met with hostility from both Guineans and non-Guineans. This hostility coincided with divergent authentication processes, and the way that ethnicity, race, and national origin figured into those processes. When non-Guinean drummers attempted to correct the playing of a Guinean-born drummer, they did so in response to musical errors that were commonly addressed and corrected when performed by a non-Guinean drummer. These corrections generated negative responses from other non-Guineans, regardless of the perceived performance abilities of the Guinean being corrected. When the Guinean being corrected was

not a professional drummer, other Guineans generally did not react in an openly negative way toward the action of correction. However, when a non-Guinean corrected the performance of a professional Guinean drummer, it set off disruptions that rippled through the class space and the larger scene.

At the fundraising event addressed in the quotation opening this chapter, the same non-Guinean drummer, Paul, again acted in opposition to the expectations of participation for a non-Guinean as we played *Mendiani*.<sup>59</sup> Todd relayed the details as follows:

“The first time you guys played it, it was nice and slow. For me, being a beginner dancer—that was nice. It was like, ‘Cool. I can follow this.’ Paul was playing *sangban*. Because then, somebody, I think probably Amadou, called it in. Again, nice and slow. He called it in, and Paul: boom! Started pushing the rhythm. Like *gro, ko-do, ko-do, ko*. And he goes *BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!* It was [(as if Paul were saying)], ‘This is the speed that we’re playing it at. I didn’t even hear what you just did.’ [Laughter] You know? That kind of thing. And that pissed me off because: number one, it meant that I couldn’t follow along any more. But, number two is like, ‘What?!’ He [Amadou] called it in. That’s not where he called it in.<sup>60</sup> To me, musically, that’s not how it works. Someone calls it in, and you play it there. Then, if you feel the need to increase the tempo or something, then you can do it some way. But, then again, Paul has been playing with Sarah Lee for a long time. I almost was going to say something to Paul about it afterwards, because it just struck me. It had this kind flavor to it” (Todd 2015: Personal Interview).

After the class, other non-Guineans voiced sentiments similar to Todd’s regarding Paul’s refusal to adhere to the expected protocols of performance.

In my observation, as an ensemble, we were playing the music in a way that was counterproductive for Sarah Lee, who was teaching the dance. Our starting tempo was far slower than was typical for *Mendiani* in any context. This made it necessary for us to increase the tempo. Sarah Lee pointed up with her right hand while holding the index finger and thumb of her left hand close together, providing a clear non-verbal cue to request a moderate increase in

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<sup>59</sup> *Mendiani* was a part of the core repertoire of the Seattle-Guinean scene, and is popular among djembe and dundun players across the world (Charry 2000).

<sup>60</sup> Here, Todd referred to the tempo of the music as dictated by an idiomatic opening phrase, often called a break.

tempo. Amadou responded by playing on the front of the beat, leading the ensemble to increase the tempo drastically. The dancers could no longer perform the steps that were being taught, and stood in their places, panting. Sarah Lee looked toward the drummers and signaled for us to stabilize the tempo and bring it back down so that the dancers could perform the steps. Instead of reducing the tempo and maintaining it at the speed that Sarah Lee clearly communicated by clapping her hands, the ensemble sped up until it could no longer play, and then Amadou stopped us with an ending break.

This sequence of events happened twice in a row, and Sarah Lee looked at us in desperation for a moderate and consistent tempo that would support her teaching, chopping her right hand against the palm of her left to emphasize the desired tempo. When Amadou, for the third time, played the opening break on the lead djembe at an extremely slow tempo, Paul jumped in with the *sangban* part at the tempo that Sarah Lee had indicated by clapping. This was the event to which Todd objected, as described above. In response, Amadou asked Paul to swap places with him. Paul took over the duties of lead djembe, while Amadou took over the *sangban*. Paul played the opening break and the music began. Almost immediately, the tempo rapidly increased.

At this point, Paul's defiance of Guinean authority at the event peaked; he brought the class to a halt when he stopped the music with an ending break and turned to face Amadou. Paul addressed Amadou in French, politely pleading for forgiveness and understanding. He then told Amadou that we needed to maintain a consistent tempo so that the dancers could continue and the class could be successful. Paul then turned back around to face the dancers and started the music. The interaction was no more than a few seconds in duration, but it silenced the room. It was extraordinarily unusual for any musician to stop the music in a dance class in Seattle to

verbally address other musicians about what they were playing. Further, in my experience in dance classes in Seattle, this was the only instance of a non-Guinean stopping the music to verbally address the playing of an experienced Guinean-born drummer. We played until Sarah Lee called for a stop to address the footwork of a step that was proving to be challenging for a number of dance students. As soon as the music stopped, Amadou called me to play the *sangban* part and quickly left the room.

In my accounting, Paul accurately assessed that the dance class was not successful. Furthermore, he correctly diagnosed that the increasing tempo of the music was the source of the difficulties for the dancers, and that Amadou was the catalyst for the increases in tempo. And yet, several of the musicians and dance students who were present remarked upon Paul's behavior, all characterizing it in a harshly negative light. It is important to acknowledge that most of the non-Guineans present at the dance class did not speak French, so they did not understand the exact content of Paul's statement to Amadou. Still, even among those who did speak French, and in spite of the fact that Paul was extremely polite and formal in the words that he chose, and not at all patronizing, he had committed an act worthy of condemnation.

Those who objected to Paul's behavior did so almost exclusively on the basis of racial and continental identity, and not because he was incorrect or because his words were rude. Some participants interpreted Paul's behavior toward Amadou as a White American correcting a Black African in the context of Black African performance as audacious and echoing colonialism. I understood these interpretations, and yet as a participating musician, I also sympathized with Paul.

Speaking with me after the event, Paul gravely acknowledged that other participants interpreted his behavior negatively. Still, he remained confident in his decision to trust his own

musical judgment, and to act in what he perceived to be the best interest of the music in service of the dancers. In doing so, he prioritized the sound and utility of the music in the moment over local cultural norms. Although objecting participants recognized that the tempo changes were occurring and were detrimental to the dance class, many did not exhibit the competence necessary to discern the driving force behind the tempo changes. Given their collective deference to Guinean-ness and the fact that Amadou was the only experienced Guinean drummer in the room at the time, if Paul had not spoken up, the dance class would have remained in shambles. While others interpreted Paul's actions as arrogant, I found them also to be, in a sense, self-sacrificial.

Paul was able to muster the confidence to speak up and be critical of Amadou in part because of a general certainty about his own musicality, and also because of the processes of authentication that he employed. Paul principally studied with and appropriated the aesthetic preferences of Famoudou Konaté, the most revered source among the Malinké police. As such, he developed a rubric for authenticating individuals and practices that magnified beyond Guinean-ness to the rural-old Maninka. By deferring differently, Paul freed himself from the restrictions of constraint and restraint self-imposed by most other non-Guineans, even as he asserted non-ownership of Guinean cultural expressions. He trusted his own application of the performance practices learned from his teacher, and was able to assess and resolve a musical emergency initiated by a Guinean. In this sense, he pledged allegiance to a higher power: the music-as-taught-by Famoudou Konaté.

Paul, like other Malinke police, treated the music that he authenticated with the utmost reverence. He dedicated exceptional amounts of time, money, and effort in order to learn and reproduce their aesthetic values and associated performance procedures. Whereas other non-

Guineans deferred to proximal and immediate Guinean-ness, Paul deferred to a conception of music developed in reference to the distant, old, rural, and Maninka, situating himself as an authority by proxy. This constituted a break with the same difference of mutual non-ownership assumed by most other non-Guineans in the scene. Ironically, he sacrificed being perceived as disrespectful in privileging absolute respect for a musical tradition. Understood in this way, Paul's was a different difference; a reverent irreverence.

### **Influence of the Malinké Police**

The Malinké police strongly influenced the authentication processes of some other non-Guinean musicians in the Seattle-Guinean scene. They served as mediators, or tour guides, and musician-tourists identified with them as trailblazing peers who had already approached the “inside” through performance, travel experience, or perceived cultural connection. The influence of experienced non-Guineans was largely due to three factors: they were better able to verbally communicate than Guineans; they were more likely than Guineans to refine and adjust their pedagogy according to student needs; and, most non-Guineans relied upon verbal clarification to clarify and correct performance. This created an interesting tension when juxtaposed with the disruptive influence of the Malinké police, as other non-Guineans appreciated their skills, knowledge, and teaching ability while simultaneously objecting to their posture toward Guinean-born participants.

In the Seattle-Guinean scene, musicians who studied and played music principally with the Malinké police valued the perceived integrity of their teachers, an integrity that linked to careful replication of particular performance styles. Dancer and drummer Blaire remarked upon her teacher, saying: “She respects the culture and wants to be authentic about it; I feel like she

tries really hard to be as accurate as possible to the specific village-style stuff that she plays” (Blair 2015: Personal Interview). In saying this to me during our interview, Blaire hesitated after using the word “authentic”, continuing on with a more detailed statement as a way of replacing this word. This subtle self-correction was one of many that occurred during my fieldwork, and I draw attention to it here as a way to demonstrate that non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean were generally aware that ideas of absolute objective authenticity have been problematized, and that yearning for the “real thing” betrayed essentialist desires for a primitive and true Africa.

The Malinké police influenced other non-Guineans through the aesthetic choices and the rhetoric that they employed in their classes and at informal jam sessions. This was most evident in the propagation of a discourse centered around an ideology of difference among the students of these non-Guineans that specified the existence of interchangeable categories of “traditional”, “Village-style”, “Malinké-style”, and “Hamana-style” performance practices. Participants placed these practices in opposition to “modern”, “ballet-style”, or “Conakry-style”, all of which were typically used as negative characterizations. Some of these students continued to participate in dance and drum classes taught by Guineans living in Seattle, most as dancers and not as drummers. Furthermore, when these students decided to travel to Guinea for three-week camps, accessibility to musicians from the Hamana region was among their top priorities. This was the case even among relatively inexperienced players who did not consider themselves able to discern differences in style and performance. They were interested in the place of “Hamana”, its associated rurality, past-ness, and Maninka-ness, and simultaneously sought to avoid young non-Maninka professional musicians in urban centers, especially Conakry.

When non-Guinean drummers in the scene played outside of dance class contexts, they typically did so only with other non-Guineans in jam sessions, they typically did so in jam sessions or classes organized by the Malinké police. In these contexts, drummers nearly always only played music that they associated with Maninka ethnicity. One Guinean expatriate artist considered the ethnically-specific preferences of non-Guinean drummers to be a function of the limited choices that they made when they chose to study djembe and dundun music. He believed that if they sought a broader understanding of music in Guinea, they would develop a more accurate and inclusive perspective, rather than a narrow view provided by the study of only Maninka music:

“That’s where they learn from. They never go to the different culture to learn the different ethnic group stuff. They only go to the Malinké people. If you go to the Forest region, and you just learn from the Forest people, and you come back here...you’ll be like, ‘Only the Forest people have djembe.’ They don’t know. They’re just talking about what they see when they went there” (2015: Personal Interview).

This artist attributed the privileging of Maninka music among non-Guineans to naiveté and ignorance on the part of some non-Guineans. However, the Malinké police were intentional in their choices. Though lacking extensive experience in the music emerging from the traditions of non-Maninka people in Guinea, they were aware that these musics existed. The Malinké police elected to restrict what they experienced, both in Seattle and in Guinea. Not only did the Malinké police often show disinterest in musical performance that they perceive as non-Maninka, they actively avoided musical participation including repertoire emerging from other ethnic groups in Guinea.

When the Malinké police acted as ensemble leaders for dance classes taught by non-Guinean dancers, they sometimes dictated the repertoire that was taught. In some cases, these drummers refused to play music that they did not learn from their primary teachers, citing a lack

of adequate knowledge or expressive functionality. Because the most accomplished non-Guinean drummers gravitated toward music that they associated with Maninka people, they restricted repertoire in these classes along ethnic lines. This generated animus from teachers and experienced dance students who were familiar with and interested in teaching and learning dances that were part of the core repertoire but associated with ethnicities other than the Maninka, such as *Yoqui*, *Sorsornet*, and *Sinté*.

The Malinké police in the Seattle-Guinean scene often chose to exclude themselves from study, performance, or participation with non-Maninka Guinean artists in Seattle. Some individuals went so far as to bypass direct engagement with Guineans in Seattle entirely. In an interview for an online blog, one non-Guinean drummer stated, “For the past 10 years, videos and recordings have been my main teachers” (Lion 2016). As opposed to participating with, learning from, and supporting the growing number of Guinean musicians living locally in Seattle, this drummer elected to study from audio recordings and video materials produced and uploaded to websites such as YouTube.<sup>61</sup> The increasing availability of videos of drumming and dance in Hamana (and elsewhere) allowed non-Guinean participants to exercise agency in choosing what and from whom they consumed drumming repertoire and styles. In exercising that agency, the Malinké police pushed forward an ethnic view of musical ownership and authenticity, and challenged the authority of Guinean-born artists living in Seattle in a way that negatively impacted their financial and artistic livelihood. In publicizing their aesthetic choices with respect to instrumental materials, designs, construction, and tuning, the Malinké police engaged in a process of authentication that streamed out into the rest of the scene. This had a cascading

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<sup>61</sup> During my fieldwork in Guinea, I observed Guineans filming events that included drumming and dancing, even in rural contexts. However, they rarely uploaded these videos to websites visited by participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Non-Guineans in Seattle typically did not watch, share, or “favorite” videos uploaded by Guineans.

economic impact that manifested in the devaluation of local Guinean-born artists in Seattle as drumming students flocked to non-Guinean teachers, and not to Guineans.

## **Closing**

This chapter has explored the impacts of authentication parameters held by stakeholders in the Seattle-Guinean scene. I have shown that, whereas the majority of participants authenticated according to Guinean-ness, the Malinké police authenticated according to aesthetic preferences that privileged Maninka ethnicity and a distant and pure rural-past in the place of Hamana. Through the promotion of “Malinké” music from the Village in Hamana, they undermined the validity and economic viability of Guinean expatriate artists in Seattle. Interactions between dissimilar authentication parameters impacted the scene in a number of ways that disrupted the community, but also allowed for successful performance in the service of dance classes.

Based on interviews and informal discussions, I believe that the Malinké police did not recognize many of the implications tied to the promulgation of their aesthetic preferences and boundaries of authenticity. Although I find that they reinforced ethnic separatist notions linked to violent repression at varying levels of transparency throughout Guinea’s modern history, I believe that they did so unintentionally. The Malinké police, working from a desire to show respect to their teachers and the music that they preferred, prioritized musical cohesion over social cohesion. It is ironic, then, that those individuals who focused most strenuously on the faithful representation of “Malinké culture”, while influential on some non-Guineans in the Seattle-Guinean scene, were perceived as the most disrespectful to “Guinea culture” in the

process. While assertions of difference generated friction in dance classes in Seattle, in Chapter 4, I demonstrate how difference also propelled participation in immersive camps in Guinea.

## Chapter 4: Immersive Camps and the Poor-but-Happy

Immersive camps formed an integral part of the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene, and the broader global drum and dance community. At its height from December to March, the music and dance tourism season brought tourists from North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. My fieldwork in Guinea included participant observation in three of these camps facilitated by participants in the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene. Manimou Camara facilitated one through his company, “Dounia Djembe”, while Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré and Mamady Mansaré of the “One World Dance and Drum” company facilitated the remaining two.<sup>62</sup>

I consider tourism camps in Guinea hosted by and for participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene in terms of the interests and intents of the camp facilitators, as well as the impacts of camps on tourists. I argue that facilitators represented Guineans, Guinea, and Africans in ways that generated interest in, and particular interpretations of, their tourism products. I begin by addressing the general scope of drum and dance tourism and its place within Guinean tourism more generally. I analyze promotional materials, comparing the One World Dance and Drum and Dounia Djembe camps in terms of the ways that facilitators catered to tourists’ desires for difference. I argue that these desires for difference generated segregation in distinct ways, sometimes exacerbated by the control that facilitators exerted over tourists. I then focus especially on facilitator mediation and intent in the One World Dance and Drum camps, showing that the facilitators intended their camps to generate self-reflection and transformation in the

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<sup>62</sup> These camps differed substantially from those analyzed by Flaig (2010) and Johnson (2012), in that they did not draw participants based on the opportunity to engage with a particular individual. Flaig (2010) considered camps for which the principal draw was the opportunity to study with specific musicians, and Johnson (2012) looked at a camp where a specific dance instructor was the feature.

tourists' lives. The facilitators curated experiences such that a transformational impulse nearly always arose with respect to material wealth, excess, and personal happiness. Further, the facilitators curated joy and poverty such that tourists retained the perception of a pressing need to help Guinean people, then provided outlets for tourists to direct money and effort. Finally, I examine the ways that the structure and style of cultural mediation amplified tourists' experiences of reverse culture shock upon return home after camps.

### **Tourism in Guinea**

As Julien Raout bluntly puts it: "*La Republique de Guinee n'est pas un pays touristique*" [the Republic of Guinea is not a touristic country] (2009: 175). As of this writing, Guinea is one of only six sovereign states in Africa and twenty one in the world without a Wikipedia website entry devoted to tourism. The 2010-2011 Guinea edition of *Le Petit Futé*, a series of tourism guides produced in France, characterizes tourism in Guinea as follows:

“Endowed by nature with a rich tourism potential - seaside tourism, short-term cultural tourism, leisure, and rest - Guinea takes advantage of the diversity of its landscapes and unsuspected striking contrasts. However, at the same time, the Guinean tourist industry is relatively young, with the state showing more or less zero interest. Regardless, tourism, consisting of about 30,000 visitors per year, makes up nearly 2.16% of its GDP” (Auzias and Lauberdette 2010: 36, trans. by author).

Raout similarly cites the absence of intentional discourse on the part of the Guinean government as contributing to regional disparity in tourism industry strength. He provides Senegal as an example of a country in the region with a tourism sector that is far more developed than that of Guinea. While Guinea and Senegal share a border, a French colonial history, comparable population sizes, climates, and linguistic and cultural diversity, Senegal has consistently hosted about twenty times the number of tourists per year that visit Guinea (World Bank 2016).

The available data suggests a steady increase in the number of international tourists in Guinea each year from 12,000 in 1996 to 46,000 in 2006 (World Bank 2016). In 2007, as protests by Guineans challenging the rule of President Lansana Conte led to a general strike and isolated violence across the country, tourist numbers fell by more than a third (Ibid.). International tourism continued to decline after the death of President Conte in late 2008, and all but evaporated following the subsequent military coup and installation of Mohammad “Dadis” Camara as President. Although no official tourism data exists for 2009, groups of music and dance tourists traveled to Guinea from the US that year, including one associated with Delta State University in Mississippi.<sup>63</sup> In early 2012, the Ministry of Tourism, Hospitality, and Handicraft (*le Ministère du Tourisme, de l'Hôtellerie et de l'Artisanat*, MTHA) credited the spike in international tourists in 2011—a growth of over 1000% from the previous year—to a tourism policy adopted by then newly-elected President Alpha Conde that included 200 million US dollars to develop infrastructure over five years (Xinhua 2012). The number of tourists for 2014 declined drastically because of the impacts of the local, national, and international responses to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease, although this fails to explain the downward swing in tourism since 2011.

Musicologist Vera Flaig suggests that, since the 1980s, drum and dance has increasingly become the “center of Guinea’s tourist industry” (2010: 147). This resonated with my observations in Guinea, as well as those of tourism guide authors who punctuate the importance of percussion music as a tourist draw (i.e. Auzias and Lauberdette 2010: 36). However, it remains difficult to determine the precise economic scale or growth of drum and dance tourism in Guinea. While the World Bank tracks incoming airline tickets as well as visa fees, both of

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<sup>63</sup> See <http://dsuguinea.blogspot.com/> for public blog postings from participants on this month-long trip, including general itinerary and experiences.

which apply to drum and dance tourists, they do not include tuition and housing fees, as camps are unregulated and occur without direct involvement from the MTHA or other government officials.

The quantity of individuals hosting annual tours in Guinea gradually increased following Famoudou Konaté's first drum camp for foreigners in 1986 (Raout 2009). And yet, the number of seasonal camps and tourists associated with each camp varied from year to year and from facilitator to facilitator. Further, some foreigners engaged in what Guinean authorities call "savage tourism" (Raout 2009: 188), bypassing packaged tourism and negotiating their own room, board, and study with musicians or dancers.

Based on my own observations as well as reports from tour facilitators and employees, I estimate that fifty facilitators hosted camps for 1000 drum and dance tourists during the 2015-2016 tourism season in Guinea. Some facilitators hosted a single tourist for a month or longer, while others hosted dozens of tourists in each of multiple three- or four-week camps. There were typically fewer than ten participants in any one camp, although this was facilitator-dependent. The average cost for camp tuition in the 2015-2016 season was roughly \$1500, suggesting that drum and dance camp tuition totaled 1.5 million US dollars.<sup>64</sup> While World Bank data on tourism-based income in Guinea show a high degree of inconsistency, they indicate that drum and dance camps represented at least 25% of the total annual tourism economy in Guinea. I base this proportion on a conservative estimate comparing the average cost of twenty five three-week camps during the 2015-2016 tourism season to the largest official annual total of tourism receipts

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<sup>64</sup> The camps hosted by Seattle-based companies were the most expensive of any that were publicly advertised for the 2015-2016 season, regardless of whether they were inland or coastal trips. Dounia Djembe offered a camp at \$2950 for a three-week inland camp followed by a week on Rhoume, an island off of the tip of the Conakry peninsula. One World Dance and Drum advertised coastal camps for \$2450 each (reduced to \$2150 with early registration) and a three-week inland camp for \$2750 (reduced to \$2450 with early registration).

since 1995. Even this conservative estimate yields support for Flaig's assertion of the centrality of drum and dance camps to the Guinean tourism industry.

All of the Guinean-born artists who were active in the Seattle-Guinean scene at the time of my fieldwork worked as tourism staff prior to their migration to the United States, and many continued that work after emigrating. With the exception of the 2014-2015 season, which was the height of the Ebola outbreak, individuals living in Seattle have hosted camps in Guinea every year since 2006. These included those facilitated by the companies One World Dance and Drum, Dounia Djembe, One World Arts Exchange, and Kouyaté Arts. Altogether, these companies hosted more than 200 tourists in Guinea between 2006 and 2016, with the bulk participating in One World Dance and Drum camps. During my fieldwork, only Dounia Djembe and One World Dance and Drum hosted camps in Guinea, and my existing relationship with the facilitators of these camps made them ideal for participant observation.

I participated in the single camp hosted by Dounia Djembe during the 2015-2016 tourist season, which I will refer to as the Dounia camp. Following the Dounia camp, I participated in two camps with One World Dance and Drum, which I will refer to as the One World camps. The Dounia camp, facilitated by Manimou Camara, hosted a single tourist in addition to myself. It included inland travel across the country with extended time spent in the city of Faranah, in the N'zérékoré Prefecture of Guinea's Forest Region, as well as on the island of Rhoume. I participated in both a coastal and an inland camp with One World, facilitated by Mamady and Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré. The coastal camp centered on experiences in Conakry, while the inland village trip that consisted of itinerant experiences during travel to and from extended stay in the Kissidougou Prefecture in Upper Guinea, with multi-day stops in Hamana and Faranah. All of the seven tourists with whom I spent substantial time in Guinea were North American

women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five whose primary performance interest was dance.

### **Promoting Difference**

The content and style of website descriptions included on the One World and Dounia websites provided insight useful for comparing the two tourist products and understanding the intentions of the facilitators. The One World website provided summaries, itineraries, as well as extended descriptions for both inland and coastal camps. The following brief excerpt from the One World coastal camp page demonstrated writing that immersed the reader through vivid descriptions of sensory experiences constructed as a second person singular narrative:

*Imagine your first day in Coastal Guinea...you wake up to the distant sacred call to prayer, chickens clucking and a warm breeze across your face.*

*First off, you eat some of Guinea's famous rice porridge with the best banana you have ever tasted, fueling your body for your first morning dance class.*

*Ahhh, African Dance ... IN AFRICA! After the more-extraordinary-than-you-have-ever-heard-before drumming and amazing personalized dance instruction stops, you catch your breath while meeting each of your new African family members, each one more beautiful, polite and excited to meet you than the last.*

Tourism scholars Urry and Larsen (2011) draw parallels between this style of writing and the ways that “commercial photographs are normally composed to make the viewer dream into the picture, which awaits the viewer’s desires and pleasures in order to be completed” (Urry and Larsen 2011: 144). Similarly, the One World website crafted what Baerenholdt et al. call “dreamscapes of anticipation”, extending the times and spaces of tourism beyond the travel duration and site through imaginative mobility that “intersects with the inert, troublesome and sometimes hazardous practices of tourism” (2004: 9). The language of the One World website

generated a sense of excitement that enticed tourists to participate while simultaneously shaping their perceptions of the upcoming experience.

The Dounia website provided the same kinds of general information for its camps, called “Experience Africa”, as found on the One World website. The descriptions of the Dounia camps featured language that, while relatively conservative, remained performative:

*Experience Africa offers a unique opportunity to receive an insider's look at the West African nation of Guinea. With our expert guides, visitors are encouraged to experience all aspects of Guinean life—from eating traditional foods to taking part in meaningful and vibrant ceremonies. It is our wish that by simply living and sharing amongst [sic] Guinean people, guests of Dounia Djembe will experience the genuine compassion and creative energy that is innate to this West African society. We are devoted to ensuring our guests the trip of a lifetime.*

This description introduced Guinean society as being creative and compassionate, an essentializing sentiment shared by most participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene. Like the One World website, it also included language that triggered and responded to interests in authenticity.

### **Authenticity and Difference**

Difference-seeking is a central pillar in theoretical understandings of tourist motivations, and tour promoters often cater directly to tourists’ desire to experience difference from their everyday lives (Williams and Lew 2015: 5-7). Further, music and dance can emerge centrally in what Agawu calls the “package of difference stories” shared by Westerners upon return from travel in Africa (2003: 158). Both the Dounia and One World facilitators appealed to tourists’ thirst for difference. The Dounia website excerpt above referenced difference in two ways, offering a “unique experience” that included an “insider’s look”. Similarly, the One World website description of their inland camp appealed to tourists’ desires to experience difference:

*you can see clearly that you are about to experience something amazing and rare that few others will ever have a chance to experience*

Elsewhere, the One World website imagines the reader into a festival in the inland city of

Faranah:

*you are surprised to find that you are one of the only foreigners in attendance and think to yourself that this festival is an unknown and hidden treasure*

These examples explicitly emphasized difference, not only from tourists' own typical experiences, but from the experiences of other tourists. Promotional materials presumed and produced customers who valued experiences with the exotic, the rare, and the exclusive.

Both the One World and Dounia websites played to the expectations of what anthropologist Robert Shepherd (2003) calls "anti-tourists". Among anti-tourists, there is "an always-present desire to not be a tourist, and the anxiety felt when the impossibility of this not-being is recognized, by both self and other(s)" (Shepherd 2003: 138). In the case of drum and dance camps, anti-tourist sentiments dovetailed with interests in the authenticity of experiences. The One World and Dounia websites catered to anti-tourist desires in part by altogether avoiding the words "tour", "tourist", and "tourism" in promotional materials describing their camp products. The One World website referred to camp participants as either "students" or "travelers", while the Dounia website referred to them as "guests". The promotional materials encouraged customers to perceive their experiences in Guinea as something other than tourism, downplaying concerns that the camps limited tourists' interactions primarily to those with professional artists and other tour staff hired to satisfy the tourists' needs.

### **Segregation and Difference**

The desire among tourists to experience difference from one another manifested especially at *dundunba* fetes during the tourism season in Conakry. These fetes operated as artist

showcases, wherein individual professional dancers improvised for audiences comprising other professional performers, ballet directors, tourists, and local neighborhood residents (Cohen 2016). I saw multiple tour groups at each of the *dundunbas* that I attended; in every case, I noted that tourist cohorts remained almost entirely segregated from one another. Many reacted with distant coldness when I introduced myself to them. While it is possible that I approached especially shy individuals, my sense is that tourists intentionally distanced themselves from all other foreigners outside of their own cohorts. Not only did tourists restrict their interactions to their own cohorts and staff members, most avoided eye-contact when walking past other foreigners. In doing so, tourists retained the possibility of perceiving their experiences in Guinea as unique and uncontrived.

Tourists interacted across groups more frequently and with greater warmth at drum and dance *spectacles* in Conakry than was the case at *dundunba fetes*. *Spectacles*, like *dundunba fetes*, featured professional artists in performance. However, while *dundunba fetes* centered on displays of individual dancers' mastery and creativity, *spectacles* highlighted full ballet and percussion ensembles performing choreographed and arranged programs. While some segregation remained, I witnessed more intermingling between tourist cohorts at *spectacles* and spoke at length with tourists from dozens of different camps.

I posit that the difference in inter-cohort segregation among drum and dance camp tourists at *dundunba fetes* and *spectacles* emerged because of the limitations of tourists' abilities to suspend disbelief regarding the staged and touristic nature of events. *Spectacles* were more obviously staged and touristic events than *dundunba fetes* for two reasons. First, the improvised individual dance performance and loosely arranged music at *dundunba fetes* distinguished them from the pre-rehearsed choreographies and tightly arranged music at *spectacles*. Second,

*spectacles* were ticketed events at which foreigners paid elevated prices, typically ten times the cost for Guinean attendees. *Dundunba* fetes, on the other hand, were free to attend, and carried with them the air of authenticity that accompanies apparent spontaneity and genuineness. Further, many tourists, especially those attending their first camps in Guinea, remained unaware that the Guinean attendees seated around the open spaces in the center of the fetes were all professional performers and not simply local residents.

*Dundunba* fetes were thus better suited than *spectacles* to fulfilling difference-seeking tourists' desires for "anti-tourist" experiences. The presence of other tourist cohorts works to dissolve the illusion that the *dundunba* fete is an experience unique to them and their own cohort. As such, I speculate that tourist cohorts avoid one another at *dundunba* fetes as a way to maintain immersion in their camp experience, and to retain the value of the imagined uniqueness of that experience. The conspicuous nature of the staging of *spectacles* precluded the possibility that these events could quench tourists' thirst for difference. However, it also relieved tourists from having to avoid one another in order to resist the breakdown of imagined uniqueness. Tourists could meet, mingle with, and enjoy the performances of the *spectacle* alongside the many other foreigners present who shared their interests in drum and dance.

### **Difference between Tourists and Locals**

The One World camps emphasized difference in a third way: between tourists and Guineans. I perceived this tourist-local difference most acutely in housing and dining arrangements. At the One World coastal camp in Conakry, Sarah Lee, Mamady, two of Mamady's brothers, and the tourists slept in the central building or "big house" of the Mansaré compound. The remaining permanent camp staff and host family slept in rooms that lined the

periphery of the compound, with the five accompanying musicians occupying a single room. Sarah Lee and Mamady explained that, with the exception of a caretaker and Mamady's mother, they restricted Guineans from entering the big house entirely as a way to avoid temptations of theft. To my knowledge, neither the camp staff nor the tourists voiced any complaints about the housing arrangements during my fieldwork, and none of my interviewees cited this segregation as a source of discomfort.

Segregation and the emphasis of difference was particularly palpable during the One World inland camp stay in Dembayara, the site of the longest segment of the itinerary. The One World promotional materials characterized tourists' experiences in Dembayara, again, in the second person singular, as follows:

*You are already eagerly prepared for this simple, fresh, and natural week of living in huts, drinking well water, dancing in the dirt, savoring village cuisine, connecting to local tradition, and delving into song, music, dance and joy as you have never experienced!*

This passage led potential customers into imagining themselves as integrating into rural life alongside local residents, and connecting that rurality to the past and the authentic. While I observed local traditions in Dembayara, much of the website description diverged from my own experiences. The tourists and tour staff lived, not in huts, but in a cluster of camping tents positioned on the opposite side of the village, blocked from vision by the new bakery building constructed through Mamady Mansaré's fundraising efforts in the United States.<sup>65</sup> All of the tourists and the tour staff drank water, not from the nearby well, but from small plastic bags purchased in nearby Kissidougou. The chef who traveled with the tour group acquired fruits and vegetables locally, but prepared meals that were identical to those she cooked in urban Conakry. Further, the overwhelming majority of music and dance participation by the tourists occurred in

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<sup>65</sup> Sarah Lee noted to me in a follow-up interview that, during the inland camp two years earlier, the tour group had set up their tents among local homes.

classes taught by the itinerant staff, and not by Dembayara residents. Rather than living with and as local residents, the One World camp exported the experience of their coastal camp into the rural setting.

The One World camps reinforced firm delineations between the tourists and the locals through food and dining. During the coastal camp, staff and family living at the compound ate outside from shared bowls, separated by gender and age as was typical among Guineans who I met outside of camp settings. Each day, the cook prepared special meals for the tourists, introducing greater variety and options, as well as removing unwanted ingredients. The tourists ate these meals off of individual plates, seated inside the house and away from the tour staff. Sarah Lee and Mamady asserted three reasons for their decision to provide tourist-only meals. First, they noted that Guineans in the compound preferred to eat rice with sauce for most if not every meal, while tourists generally preferred more variety. Second, they found that segregated eating prevented digestive illness that could sidetrack several days of what was already a brief stay for tourists. Finally, Sarah Lee valued that segregated eating provided her with opportunities to check in with tourists regarding their health and emotional well-being, and for the tourists to bond with one another.

Segregated eating practices persisted in times of travel during the One World inland village trip. Even when the group took meals on the side of a road during transit breaks, the tourists ate with Sarah Lee and Mamady, while the tour staff ate with one another. In Dembayara, the segregation of tourists from Guineans was just as pronounced. Local Guineans ate outside of their homes on the opposite side of the village. The Guinean tour staff and I ate together on the side of the bakery next to our tents. The tourists, along with Sarah Lee and sometimes Mamady, ate seated on chairs around a table positioned under a thatched-leaf awning

that had been constructed upon arrival of the tour group in order to provide shade. Each night, local children created a rectangular frame shaped and sized by the perimeter of the make-shift roof, watching as the foreigners, seated at the table engulfed in the glow of lights powered by a generator, ate at a leisurely pace. For the tourists, dinner in Dembayara, rather than an experience *of* Guinea, became an experience *in* Guinea, as well as cultural performance by the tourists for the locals.

I spoke at length with Sarah Lee and Mamady, as well as with the drummers and other tour staff at the One World compound regarding mealtime segregation. I had come to value the social bonding that accompanied eating from a shared bowl, which was the norm in the Dounia camp. I jumped at the opportunity to eat together with the accompanying musicians and other young men working and living at the Mansaré compound. Mamady echoed the statements of the staff, who expressed an appreciation that I elected to take my meals with them, rather than in the house with the (other) tourists. Sarah Lee, while maintaining her stance on the importance of segregated eating practices, raised no objections to my eating with the staff. Further, to my knowledge, none of the other tourists at the One World camps questioned the segregated eating practices or requested to eat together with the Guineans in the compound.

Unlike in One World camps, Manimou did not segregate the sleeping quarters for the Dounia camp, although arrangements varied by location. In Dubreka, the staging spot for inland travel, the staff and tourists (including me) stayed in a single building that provided separate rooms for each person. At itinerant stops, tourists and staff members shared rooms and beds in concrete buildings or huts. In the longer stays in Faranah and N'Zérékoré, I joined some of the staff in a room inside Manimou's brother's house, while the other tourist and one staff member set up tents nearby.

In the Dounia camp, segregation of tourists from tour staff during meal times was far less common than in the One World camps, but did occur in two different settings. While staying in Dubreka before and after traveling inland to N'Zérékoré, Manimou provided fresh bread, fruit, and instant coffee as a breakfast for tourists and staff. On a few mornings, however, Manimou's sister prepared eggs for Manimou, me, and the other tourist. While eggs were not particularly expensive, Manimou did not purchase them to supplement the staff breakfasts. The second example of segregated eating in the Dounia camp occurred in N'Zérékoré, where Manimou's family members prepared dishes made with pork. With the exception of Manimou and his sister, all of the Dounia tour staff identified as Muslim and cited this as a reason that they did not eat pork. Thus, they did not join us on those occasions, and some communicated a light sense of disgust at seeing us eat.

As was the case in the One World camps, Guineans eating together from shared bowls typically self-segregated according to both age and gender. The tourist and tour staff in the Dounia camp belonged to roughly the same age group. Except during travel, the female Dounia tour staff members ate together, away from the men. The female tourist, however, elected to eat from the same dish as the male tour staff, and not with the other women who were present. This was in part due to the tourist's desire to push back against what she perceived as sexist culture-wide segregation imposed on women by men. The camp staff were unsurprised by the tourist's insistence; and, as far as I am aware, they raised no objections to eating with her. Ironically, in protest to gendered segregation, the tourist contributed to the segregation of Guinean women at the camp as she exercised her privilege as a foreigner to cross gendered barriers in a way that local women could not.

## Segregation in Rural Contexts

Tourists remained segregated from locals as inland tour groups transitioned into rural contexts, but the identity of the “local” shifted during the journeys. In Conakry, the tour staff served as hosts representing the local. During travel, the tour groups were isolated in tightly-packed vans for entire days. Simultaneous conversations bubbled up in Sosoxui among the staff and in English among the tourists as the group lurched and bounded across Guinea’s pockmarked highways. The local-foreign relationship between staff and tourists remained clear and intact, with the tour facilitators acting as interpreters and mediators. However, once embedded in a rural context, the social position of staff members became more complicated because of physical and language-based segregation.

The tour staff in both the Dounia and One World inland camps were largely segregated from local residents during rural stays, though this produced isolation of the staff in different ways. The Dounia staff slept and ate with the tourists, nearby but not together with the locals in N’Zérékoré. The One World staff slept and ate separate from but nearby the tourists on the far west side of Dembayara, while the residents’ homes sat on the east side of the village. Only one of the Dounia tour staff members understood Guerze, the language spoken in the villages that the camp visited near N’Zérékoré. Similarly, most of the One World tour staff experienced linguistic isolation from locals in the Kissidougou region as they could not speak Maninkakan fluently. Linguistic barriers, coupled with differences in urban and rural lifestyles and straightforward interpersonal unfamiliarity, segregated and differentiated the tour staff from local residents.

The tour staff in both camps thus emerged as foreign relative to the residents in their respective villages. However, in the One World camp, dining and social segregation between

tourists and staff remained relatively strong, and the One World staff emerged as doubly foreign—to both the local residents and the tourists. In the case of the Dounia camp, close proximity and shared activity facilitated interpersonal bonding between tourists and staff such that the tour group stood relatively united in the face of shared foreignness to the local village society. The “us” and “them” in the Dounia camp remained binary, but transformed from being a relationship between the tourists and staff to one between the tour group and the local residents. In the One World camp, the “us” and “them” expanded into a three-way relationship including the tourists, the staff, and the local residents.

### **Mediation and Transformation**

The primary Guinean-born facilitators—Manimou with Dounia and Mamady with One World—spent much of their time away from the tour groups in their respective camps. In the case of Dounia Djembe, this left the tourists in charge of processing and interpreting experiences on their own or with the assistance of one of the staff members who spoke a few words of English. At the One World camps, Sarah Lee remained present throughout, providing near-constant preparation, mediation, and interpretation in Mamady’s absence. She actively engaged with the tourists in a way that did not occur during the Dounia camp, cementing her position as the principal experiential mediator for tourists.

The Dounia and One World facilitators expressed different motivations and intentions for facilitating camps in Guinea. Manimou hosted camps as a way to accomplish three central goals: share Guinean culture with others, generate income as a business, and facilitate his own travel to and from Guinea in order to spend time with friends and family. Sarah Lee articulated her motivations for producing drum and dance camps in Guinea in more sweeping terms, asserting

that she was “on the planet to create this bridge where people over here [in the West] wake up to something outside of their own world” (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2015: Personal Interview).

Sarah Lee continued, describing her efforts to generate an environment of inquiry through her camps:

“I feel like One World Dance really is about having Americans start asking more questions about life and start questioning their viewpoint. I think actually going to Guinea is a really, really good way to mix that pot up” (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2015: Personal Interview).

Sarah Lee intended for tourists who travel to Guinea with her company to ask big-picture questions regarding their own lives and societies. She found that, for many One World tourists, these questions result in large-scale personal transformation and life changes. This approach to using drum and dance camps in Guinea as a method for self-discovery and transformation resonates with trends in travel and tourism in other destinations, especially by people from the West, since the end of the twentieth century (Sarup 1996).

Sarah Lee consistently achieved success in her goal of transforming people’s lives through her camps. She found that all of the One World tourists characterized their experiences in Guinea as life-changing. This transformational impact on tourists represents a point of pride for Sarah Lee, as well as her central motivation for facilitating One World camps.

“There’s a reason I’m doing this. I’m not really interested in tourism. I want people to think and notice and observe. Some people are just on vacation, and that’s what they’re gonna do. I don’t know anyone who hasn’t been seriously impacted by their experience. But, I feel like I want to create an environment where people think. Where people ask questions about themselves. About their existence. About their own culture. About *this* culture” (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2014: Personal Interview).

Crucial in this statement was the direction of influence. While Sarah Lee communicated thoughtful concern that One World camps might negatively impact the lives of Guineans, the drive of impacting tourists’ lives drove her to continue.

For Sarah Lee, success depended upon facilitating an avenue for self reflection and change among foreign tourists in Guinea. She relayed one example of this change in a woman who traveled to Guinea as part of a One World camp in 2007:

“She had lost her mother and her life partner three years earlier. (...) She hated her job. She hated her life. She was miserable. She found some joy in drumming. (...) We had long conversations. I’ve been a life coach. I’ve been a personal trainer. I’ve been trained as a life coach, and some of these conversations start like that. Like, “My life sucks.” (...) I don’t know who started it, but it became obvious to talk about Guinea, and she was like: ‘Okay. I’m miserable.’ I saw her six months ago at this bank, and she was like: ‘You changed my whole life. That trip changed my whole life. I came back. I had the courage to quit my job. If these people can live on nothing, I can quit my job and go study. I took some risks...I found myself out of that trip.’ (...) I get a lot of that from people. It’s a way for people to—it’s transformation on some level. Like a weekend course could be, where you stop the action and look at your life” (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2015: Personal Interview).

Sarah Lee’s transformational aspirations developed as an extension of her life coaching career.

In the final line above, likening tourism in Guinea to a “weekend course”, Sarah Lee referred to Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT) programs. LGAT programs emerged from the Human Potential movement of the 1950s, and are exemplified in the corporate family tree of organizations beginning with “*est*” (Erhard Seminars Training) founded by Werner Erhard in 1971 (Melchior and Sharot 2010). Sarah Lee participated in, benefited from, and recommended LGATs.

In the mission statement published on the One World website, Sarah Lee adopted specialized terminology and language from LGATs for a list of “fundamental values”. The list included values including “integrity” and “contribution”, both of which figure centrally in LGATs. Further, it defined “responsibility” as “the willingness to be cause in the matter of life” and “transformation” as “the genesis of a new realm of possibilities. Making the impossible, possible”. These definitions identically matched those developed by Werner Erhard and were

used extensively in materials by later iterations of *est*, including Landmark Education and Landmark Forum.

Sarah Lee constructed the One World camps as an extension of her life coaching career, operating them in ways that paralleled LGATs. According to testimonials from those who have taken part in LGATs, facilitators intentionally try to induce transformation by undermining the subjectivity of participants through stress. Strategies reported to have been used in LGATs include the introduction of mild physical discomfort, the elimination of personal expression and options, group isolation, and the positioning of the individual participant as immoral in their actions and thoughts (Fisher et al. 1990).

Tourism camps in Guinea provided many of the stresses induced during LGATs due to the relatively high heat and humidity, unfamiliar sleeping and eating routines, and increased exercise regiment that accompany music and dance participation. The One World camp included additional controls that amplified their transformational potential in a way that was not present in other camps. Whereas Manimou encouraged and assisted efforts to communicate with family and friends in the United States while with the Dounia camp, Sarah Lee strongly advised One World tourists against phone and internet communication. When coupled with the nearly absolute control that she and Mamady exerted over scheduling and travel outside of the compound, as well as the limited linguistic abilities of many tourists, this isolated the group almost entirely from life outside of the Mansaré compound. This isolation enhanced the ability of One World facilitators to curate tourists' experiences and shape their interpretations.

Sarah Lee expressed concern that increased amenities sometimes became problematic, disrupting the transitional potential of the One World camps:

“I’m constantly asking the question: How Western should this camp be? Mamady got a refrigerator one year, and I was pissed! That’s too luxurious! (...) My perspective has

been: people need to be a certain level of safe and well and well-rested and well-nourished in order to, in three tiny little weeks, be able to see new things and have just enough impact to have them start asking more questions” (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2015: Personal Interview).

Sarah Lee thought it crucial to find a balance of comfort and stress so that tourists could, in a matter of three weeks, enter into a state of being that caused them to question social structures and their impacts.

### **Compound Culture**

While the majority of drum and dance tourists in Guinea expressed appreciation of the safety offered by the infrastructure of the formal camp model, tourists who spent time both in and beyond organized camps typically experienced discomfort as they began to recognize the controlled environment of the “tourist bubble” (Craik 1997) as a potential impediment to genuine or authentic experiences. Tourists in drum and dance camps in Guinea were tethered to the culture of the camp for at least three reasons. First, and most prominently, was language. Few Guineans spoke English. Likewise, while some tourists spoke French to a greater or lesser degree, most of those with whom I interacted in Guinea, as well as those from Seattle who had participated in camps in previous seasons, did not. Furthermore, even as French was officially the national language of Guinea, communication between Guineans rarely occurred in French. Instead, Guineans conversed primarily in Sosoxui, Maninkakan, and Pular. I did not meet any non-Guineans during my fieldwork who were conversational in these or any other non-European language in widespread use in Guinea.

The second reason that tourists were restricted to experiences of camp culture applied principally to inland camps, and related to the itinerant nature of those camps and the difficult nature of motor transportation. Travel from Conakry to Faranah—a driving distance (432 km)

that would be completed in less than five hours at the legal speed limit—took more than twelve hours due to road conditions and the frequent stops by military, police, and gendarmes at road blocks. Travel between locations accounted for the bulk of five days—nearly one quarter of the total duration of each of the inland camps that I attended. This travel restricted the possibility of social connections outside of the tour group; tourists only came into contact with one another, tour facilitators, and tour employees.

Finally, tourists experienced little more than the culture of the camp because of physical control exerted over them by facilitators. This was especially the case during the One World coastal camps, where Sarah Lee and Mamady prioritized tourist safety. In their drive for safety, the facilitators discouraged tourists from leaving the compound except during a handful of planned and highly-regulated group outings to a mosque, market, or ballet rehearsal. While some tourists did not express negative evaluations, others reacted to the restriction on movement with frustration and hostility. Two tourists expressed to me that they had failed to recognize how claustrophobic and cut off they were feeling until they joined one of the camp staff in an impromptu stop at a marketplace nearby the compound to purchase some produce. Following that experience, these tourists began to assert their own agency in a variety of ways, sometimes in direct opposition to the stated desires of the facilitators.

My own frustration at being restricted to the compound came to a crescendo one evening when I tried to leave to walk to a small kiosk to purchase a calling card for my phone. Not only did I have to request that the guard remove a padlock from the iron gate at the entrance to the compound, he insisted on accompanying me with his AK-47 rifle for a walk that amounted to about twenty yards each direction. While I recognized that the guard was doing the job for which he had been hired, and later joked about the incident with him and other camp employees,

I felt an intense and negative emotional surge reaction to being trapped and lacking control. After spending several weeks staying at the One World compound, I found myself yearning for the freedom to come and go as I pleased, not because I had a particular need to leave, but simply because my liberty was restricted by the security protocols of the camp.

### **Staging, Authenticity, and Spontaneity**

Tourism scholar Melanie K. Smith argues that cultural tourists tend to be on quests for one of two categories of authenticity, “either in terms of self-improvement or in terms of the sites, communities and activities that they engage with or in” (2003: 34). A fundamental distinction between the One World and Dounia camps was that they catered to these two categories, respectively. One World emphasized authenticity in terms of the self-improvement of tourist of the tourist. Dounia, in contrast, focused on providing tourists with experiences with authentic Guinean culture.

Ironically, even as the Dounia camp was focused on providing authenticity in terms of experiences with genuine Guinean practices, Manimou made no effort to hide the fact that many of the cultural displays encountered by the Dounia tour group were set up explicitly for the tourists. Manimou consistently informed the group about events that he set up along with local individuals during the journey to N’Zérékoré and back to the coast. A handful of events that the Dounia tour group visited would have occurred regardless of the presence of the tourists, including a *sabar* in Conakry and a *denbadon* in Faranah. Facilitators of camps that other participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene had attended downplayed or omitted the extent to which they staged events for the benefit of the tourists. I expected there to be disappointment at the conspicuous contrivance of many of the events connected to the Dounia camp. However,

neither the tourist nor the tour staff characterized the lack of spontaneity of the majority of the events as detrimental.

Jessica Towns-Camara generated the advertising and promotion for the Dounia camps that her husband, Manimou, hosted in Guinea. She expressed intentions to avoid romanticizing Guinean culture in her promotional materials:

“I’m not painting it as only rosy. I will straight up say: there are all these wonderful things and all of these imperfect things about this culture. People have this mythology about Guinea or Africa being some kind of mythos of perfection, [as though] everybody’s so happy and dancing and drumming. I think, in our community, it tends to be this highly romanticized thing” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

Jessica avoided characterizing Guinea and Guineans as universally involved in music and dance, and as joyful because she and Manimou hope to provide a realistic picture of Guinean life for tourists. She juxtaposed this with the rhetoric of other tour facilitators, which she believes misled tourists:

It’s not true. To me, that’s misleading people. It’s leading them to put on those glasses and that filter in that way, which is why [other camp hosts need] to have such complete control over what people see and do. It’s like Disneyland. They’re going to Disneyland, but it’s Guinea Disneyland. What our product is, is actually what is there. Beautiful and possibly imperfect” (Jessica Towns-Camara 2015: Personal Interview).

For Jessica, some camp facilitators shielded tourists from the parts of Guinean society that were not joyful, and that had nothing at all to do with music or dance, denying them access to a realistic experience of Guinean life.

At first glance, the One World camps appeared to serve as exemplars of the produced and staged “Disneyland” camps criticized by Jessica. As described above, the One World facilitators exerted a high degree of control over the experiences of tourists in their camp, even to the point of instigating conflict for some tourists. However, rather than hiding those features cited by Jessica, the One World camp facilitators carefully curated and presented poverty and

helplessness alongside joy. Furthermore, both the Dounia and One World camps provided access to almost purely touristic cultures, in which the tourists and tour staff dominated experiences (McCannell 1976).

### **Touring a Family**

The One World and Dounia camps displayed stark contrasts from one another in their treatment of family as a part of the tourism product. Mamady and Sarah Lee hosted the One World coastal camp at Mamady's father's compound in the Tomboliya neighborhood of Conakry, and encouraged tourists to treat it as their own home. In meetings between the tourists and the tour staff, Mamady adhered to a loose script which included telling tourists: "You have left your home, and you have arrived at your home". This intentional production of a home-away-from-home during the camp reinforced an emphasis on family on the One World website, which described tourists' "new African family members, each one more beautiful, polite, and excited to meet you than the last". The success of Sarah Lee's transformational intentions for the One World tourism product hinged in part on tourists understanding themselves as part of the Mansaré family.

In producing a family-oriented atmosphere, the One World facilitators de-emphasized the economic component of the relationship between the tourists and the Mansaré family, which emerged as a kind of tourist object unto itself. The facilitators encouraged tourists to imagine themselves as being a part of what was, on the surface, an idyllic family, centered especially on Mamady's mother as an exceptionally caring and loving matriarch. This tactic was effective, and returning tourists echoed Sarah Lee in framing her as a woman with unending kindness and

generosity. Even those tourists who spoke little or no French and did not communicate directly with Mamady's mother described her in glowing terms.

The website's description of the arrival of tourists for the One World inland camp produced differentiation of who was considered to be part of the family, and who was not:

*We greet you with warm hugs and whisk you off to the Mansare family compound, where your entire 25 member host team has been anxiously awaiting your arrival. You are lovingly greeted by members of your new family, your drum instructors, dance instructors, cooking team, neighbors, and neighborhood children, lots and lots of children!*

Here, the One World facilitators differentiated between the tour staff and the "members of your new family". The passage characterized Mamady's family as a kind of surrogate family, distinct from the staff including drum and dance teachers. This resonated with my experiences in the camp, where facilitators treated Mamady's family and the hired staff in distinct ways, even as everyone lived in the compound. While the tourists in the One World camps interacted daily with the dance instructor and sometimes with one or more of the drummers, their interactions with Mamady's family members living in the compound were minimal and mostly restricted to simple greetings and time with the children.

As in the One World camps, I spent substantial time with Manimou's immediate and extended family members while participating in the Dounia camp. However, while Manimou consistently told both me and the other tourist that we should "make ourselves at home", he never characterized his family members as *our* family members. Upon arriving in the rural villages in N'Zérékoré with the Dounia camp, Manimou included both the tourists and tour staff in ceremonies that featured extended speeches welcoming the group. In the One World inland camp, tour staff did not participate in ceremonial proceedings with Dembayara residents, most of which were designed to welcome the tourists and praise Mamady and Sarah Lee for the fund-raising work and tourism that brought money, opportunity, and honor to the village.

## **The Poor-but-Happy**

Sarah Lee perceived that, while having little wealth and economic opportunity relative to Western people, Guineans experienced joy and happiness in their lives in a way that is exceedingly rare in the West. She observed: “There’s a level of contentment. Even when I’ve been there when no other people are around. I’m there, and the dollars aren’t rolling in. There’s a level of contentment” (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2015: personal Interview). Sarah Lee did not claim to understand the precise source of the contentment that she observed among Guineans. Instead, she placed importance on remaining open and continuing to ask questions, speculating on a number of potential sources of contentment including resignation to fate, ignorance, and faith. Sarah Lee acknowledged that she overwhelmingly emphasized aspects of Guinean culture that she valued, even though she had witnessed a spectrum of personal behaviors among Guineans ranging from selfless generosity to outright cruelty. In doing so, she desired to provide a counter balance to stereotypical portrayals of Africa as a land of disease and warfare that she witnessed in mainstream US media.<sup>66</sup> Anthropologist Paulla Ebron argues, “[W]hen commentators try to eschew the other stereotype—Africa in ruins...they retreat into an idyllic Africa, the Africa of “African music” (2009: 34). In her efforts to subvert the dominant stereotype, Sarah Lee contributed to the formation and maintenance of another stereotype entangled with perceptions of music and dance: the poor-but-happy.

Sarah Lee repeatedly emphasized an inverse relationship between material wealth and happiness. She highlighted the juxtaposition of poverty and contentedness among Guineans, and compared this to herself and to others in the West who were often unhappy despite having

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<sup>66</sup> Contemporary media studies scholars including Scott (2015) and Nothias (2016) have pushed back against the idea that the mainstream media in the United States overwhelmingly reports on Africa in ways that reinforce negative stereotypes.

relatively high material wealth. At One World camps, Sarah Lee mediated tourists' experiences with Mamady's family, music, dance, and poverty in a way that generated similar sentiments among tourists. It is not without irony that tourists exchanged thousands of dollars of excess money to gain exposure to a happiness and morality so closely entangled with poverty.

Even as sociologist Ruut Veenhoven (2017) dispels the poor-but-happy stereotype through evidence contradicting correlations of poverty with life contentedness, impacts of the surrounding narrative loom large. Social anthropologist Robert Pijpurs (2014) argues that representations of Africa by and for the West generate a discourse that produces the African as the destitute but morally superior "noble poor". The moral superiority projected onto Africans encourages ignorance of "internal issues that might be counterproductive in their daily struggle and could even reinforce the unjust system people themselves are suffering from" (Pijpurs 2014). Geographer and international development specialist Kate Simpson argues that statements characterizing people as poor-but-happy trivialize poverty: "In effect, poverty is romanticized into an equation where material deprivation equates to social and or emotional wealth" (2004: 688). Simpson further notes that, for tourists, "the rhetoric of 'poor-but-happy' can be turned into an experience of 'poor-but-happy', presenting few questions about the nature of, or reasons for, poverty" (Simpson 2005: 688). One World tourists typically did not come away with a sophisticated understanding of how or why poverty manifests in Guinea. Instead, they developed strategies for producing happiness by reducing the material focus of their own lives.

### **Performing Joy and Poverty**

Nearly all tourists returned from camps in Guinea remarking in wonder on the joy of life in Guinea, most frequently talking about how people could drum and dance every day, living in

the art form. These tourists did not refer to the day-to-day lives of urban professional musicians, who spent hours in exhausting daily ballet and percussion ensemble rehearsals and late night weekends playing for fetes that often allowed for only a few hours rest before sunrise. Neither did they cite the lives of non-artists, from whom they were largely sheltered. Instead, they referred to the relatively leisurely pace of drum and dance classes for tourists, where teachers and accompanying musicians smiled, laughed, and exuded overwhelming happiness during classes.

I became convinced of the performed nature of the joy in these classes when I noted obvious differences in the camp staff members' behaviors based on the proximity of their employers, the facilitators. Teachers and accompanying musicians displayed far less positive emotion during classes for which tour facilitators were absent, and the energy and effort quickly drained away. Further, when facilitators arrived to a dance or drumming class already in progress, the accompanying musicians and teachers immediately changed their posture, smiled broadly, and sometimes began shouting encouragement to the students. These kinds of behavioral shifts occurred consistently in the camps that I attended. I remain perplexed as to why none of my collaborators commented upon this phenomenon, and how it did not impact tourists' perceptions of the genuineness of the joy performed during classes. It may be the case that, in their own efforts to learn, the tourists simply did not notice.

The success of the One World business model also hinged in part on tourists' positive experiences of family, requiring the Mansaré family to repeatedly generate performances of joy. While not necessarily insincere, the joy that staff members—including family—performed, was a prerequisite for continued employment. Cultural geographer Michael Crang (1997) argues that the process of commodifying employees as part of the tourism product can be disruptive to their identities. Tourism employees are “emotional laborers” for whom “feelings produced on order

for money seem estranged from any autonomous sense of self' (Crang 1997: 153). As emotional laborers, Mamady's family members were compelled to perform joy, year after year, in order to retain their value as tourism objects for achieving the One World facilitators' larger goals. The One World facilitators consistently promoted Mamady's family as exceptionally warm and loving, then overlaid that sense of exceptionalism onto Guinea as an entire nation of people. Presented within a context steeped in music and dance, this generated interpretations of the camp, and therefore of Guinea and Guineans, as perpetually and universally joyful. However, the One World camps relied upon a presentation of both joy and poverty.

A central way that the One World facilitators incorporated poverty into the performance of Guinea presented to tourists was through visits to hospitals and medical clinics. The One World inland camp itinerary typically includes a visit to the premature infant ward of Donka Hospital in Conakry. These infants, as the most helpless individuals, came to stand for Guinean life as one of abject poverty on a knife's edge of survival. This worked to set up a controlled two-fold representation of Guinean identity for tourists. On one hand, family and tour staff represented Guineans as perpetually joyful, engaged in art and music making, welcoming total strangers into their homes and treating them as family. On the other hand, Guineans not directly connected to the drum and dance camp, including premature infants, stood in as tourism objects representing poverty and suffering. During the One World coastal camp that I attended, Donka Hospital was deemed unsafe for a tourist experience because of lingering cases of Ebola Virus Disease. As an alternative, the facilitators took tourists to a local medical clinic run by one of Mamady Mansaré's friends. The tourists returned from that experience fixated on poverty, repeatedly referencing the poor working conditions, especially the lack of reliable electricity. Even without the added emphasis on vulnerability created through contact with premature infants,

the local clinic offered a performance of poverty that imbued tourists with a sense of the precarity of life in Guinea.

In the One World camps, poverty operated in tandem with joy, encouraging reflection and change in the lives of tourists who came face-to-face with poverty and suffering. I observed in drum and dance camps in Guinea similarities to what social scientist Émilie Crossley notes of volunteer tourists who are “simultaneously invested in poor communities’ happiness and suffering” (2012: 237). Crossley follows the work of Smith (2004) to argue that tourism transforms poverty from a “threatening, anxiety-inducing object into one associated with moral redemption – delivering Western subjects from a state of ignorance and ingratitude” (Crossley 2012: 244). Crucially, the proportions of joy and suffering performed for and experienced by One World tourists were such that they maintained a perception of the pressing need for assistance. Joy emerged each and every day as tourists experienced music, dance, family, food, and personal relationships with camp staff, each of which were refracted through Sarah Lee’s mediating lens. Sarah Lee curated tourists’ experiences with poverty and suffering through brief and almost entirely pre-planned events, including the hospital visit.

### **Poverty and Exchange**

The two facilitators of the One World camps formed a partnership with complimentary agendas. Sarah Lee fulfilled what she perceived as her life’s purpose of helping people in the West. In doing so, she highlighted the relationship between poverty and contentedness in Guinea, indirectly encouraging a material trajectory for the personally-transformative potential generated through participation in the One World camps. While tourism scholars including Simpson (2005) find in tourists a lack of urgency to respond to poverty, Sarah Lee asserted that, in addition to

members of her own family, the overwhelming majority of those who contributed to her fundraising drives were people who traveled to Guinea as part of One World camps. Mamady noted that foreigners typically wanted to help alleviate poverty in Guinea, but often lacked the necessary connections to put their money to good use. He understood himself as filling that position by providing a clear avenue toward productive giving intended to generate sustainable services and opportunities for Guineans.

Sarah Lee and Mamady consistently reminded tourists throughout the One World camps of their work to support the family and surrounding neighborhood by providing money for the purchase of food, the creation of a sewing and academic school for girls in the Mansaré family compound, and the construction of a bakery in Mamady's father's village of Dembayara. Sarah Lee and Mamady demonstrated to tourists attending One World camps that money given to them for use in business ventures resulted in positive change. They successfully generated trust that prompted continuing support from tourists who had come to understand that material goods contributed to their own unhappiness, and the One World facilitators provided multiple specific options for shedding newly-realized oppressive excess. Mamady helped tourists channel their money into the form of remittance support, education, businesses construction, and job creation . The money that Sarah Lee and Mamady generated primarily impacted members of his family, but also filtered out to benefit neighbors and friends in both Conakry and in rural areas outside of Kissidougou, where Mamady and his parents were born.

### **Ethics of Poverty Tourism**

Commentators and scholars are split regarding the ethics of poverty tourism, pejoratively called “poorism” (Whyte et al. 2011). Some suggest that all cases of poverty tourism are

voyeuristic and harmful, while others claim that certain examples provide meaningful and beneficial interactions. Tourism scholar Nilima Achwal (2007) concedes that all poverty tourism can be framed as harmful insofar as it works to reinforce colonialist-driven perceptions of Western superiority. However, she insists that “the *only* thing that doesn’t continually reinforce the unequal dynamic resulting from colonialism is genuine person-to-person interactions, when one can’t help but feel on the same level” (Achwal 2007). The One World camps—and, to a lesser extent, the Dounia camps—exemplified what Whyte et al.(2011) qualify as “consensual poverty tourism”, which can “include some prior consent process among the tourists, operators, and residents, although the tourists have not collaborated meaningfully with the residents in advance” (Whyte et al. 2011: 14). Whyte et al. highlight the potential for exploitation in poverty tourism even when consent is sought and given, as local residents are likely to be at a disadvantaged bargaining position and thus willing to compromise to maintain the economic opportunity provided by hosting tourists. They insist that, in the presence of consent, the process and substance of that procedure and the consent that it produces must be scrutinized. As an example for the potentially exploitative nature of consensual poverty tourism, they cite a company that intentionally underpays local homestay hosts in the hopes that locals will not be motivated to alter their behavior for the sake of the tourists, and thus will provide ‘authentic’ experiences of poverty.

Whyte’s example provides an interesting comparison to the outlook of One World co-facilitator Mamady Mansaré. Mamady expressed concern with the impact of tourism and fundraising dollars on his employees in Guinea, intentionally paying them less than the money that he raised would have allowed. Rather than authenticity assurance, Mamady was motivated to underpay by a desire to generate sustainable employment and services while mitigating

dependence and the associated risks. He observed that, when expatriates returned to Guinea and developed rural businesses that paid far more than the local norm for other kinds of employment, residents abandoned other work in response to this opportunity. Mamady noted that this led to local economies that were susceptible to catastrophic collapse due to increased specialization as well as increased dependency on external financing. Thus, Mamady's strategy to pay employees according to local norms and not the amount of money provided by tourists and donors, both in touristic and other businesses, can be understood as an ethical practice designed to minimize negative local impacts and financial dependency.

### **Reactions and Returns**

Individuals who participated in drum and dance camps and later had experiences outside of formal camps remarked on the sheltered and contrived nature of packaged tours. One tourist from a One World inland camp described her experience as follows:

“I mean, even on this [inland] camp where we saw more of the country and went inland and got more of the culture, it's still slightly protected, or slightly padded for foreigners. When we were in Dembayara, we had lights. We had a generator that was turned on every night, so there was lights. That's not normal. That's not how the Guineans live. That's not how these villagers live every day, normally. In a way, it felt a little bit less genuine” (2015: Personal Interview).

This tourist equated the amenities afforded by relative wealth as producing a less genuine experience of a culture, pointing toward a disconnect between her desires and the One World facilitators' priorities with respect to authenticity. Whereas Sarah Lee prioritized measured levels of control and safety to encourage transformation and self-improvement, the tourist desired a genuine experience of immersion into the lives of Guineans. Notably, it was the availability of atypical amenities that represented a negative marker for the tourist, and not the segregation of the tour group from the local residents.

This tourist interpreted her later experiences, which occurred outside of a formal camp setting, as more representative of quotidian Guinean life because of the absence of apparent control, comfort, and an organized schedule of dance classes. Even as she perceived the tourist bubble as having disappeared, I interpret it as having only weakened and become less apparent. While engaged with fewer contrivances, she remained a sponsor, paying to ensure her own personal security as well as the room, board, and transportation of multiple musicians and dancers. Her hosts catered to her anti-tourist sentiments, fulfilling her desire for a genuine Guinean experience while maintaining adequate levels of safety and comfort. She did not recognize that, even beyond the confines of an organized camp, Guineans continued to work diligently to fulfill her desires as a returning tourist and financial matron, facilitating travel to various parts of the country and offering access to individual music and dance lessons.

Beth, a drummer and dancer in the Seattle-Guinean scene, described her experience of the tourist bubble transforming in the opposite direction, from weaker to stronger. After spending a month in Senegal working on a study abroad project and living in the home of some friends, Beth traveled to Conakry to participate in part of a dance camp. There, she noted the vast differences between camp culture and larger Guinean society:

“I got there and I was super uncomfortable. It felt really, really weird to me. It felt like I was in one city when I was behind the walls of their compound and then another once I left. Inside the walls it was like: *Britney Spears*, and *fruit salad*, and *people speaking English*. Everyone was conspiring to make me feel comfortable. I was very much shielded from all of the shitty things that exist in Conakry: sick people and the poverty. (...) You know, there’s shit in the street and garbage everywhere. And the food that folks are eating. Rice and oil. The most calories for the cheapest” (2014: Personal Interview).

Beth’s discomfort with the difference between life inside and outside the drum and dance camp was amplified by her own experiences with poverty as a child in the United States:

It brought up a lot for me because I came from this really poor background. It made me look at my experience in a different way because, even though I was near the bottom,

economically, as a kid, we still had heat and a relatively nice house. Our house wasn't made out of corrugate and boards. There wasn't a half an inch of algae growing in the shower. Stuff like that. It made me question a lot of my whole identity. It brought up a lot of emotional stuff. In the middle of that, I go [to the camp] where it's like: 'Let me make you as comfortable as I possibly can, *Toubab* [White/foreign] tourist who's giving me money. And you are my livelihood.' (...) It just felt too weird to have this dual existence while I'm still being confronted with this kind of culture shock, I guess. And so, I left" (2014: Personal Interview).

Childhood poverty shaped Beth's self-identity, and she acknowledged a residual chip on her shoulder regarding wealthy people. In Guinea, she felt conflicted at finding herself among the obviously wealthy. She removed herself from the camp because it brought the privileged aspect of her identity to the forefront of her experience.

MacCannell (1976) points to the irony in the fact that tour facilitators meet tourists' desires for "genuine" experiences with a product that is, itself, artificial and commodified.<sup>67</sup>

Sarah Lee understood One World camps as artificial environments, and struggled to find a balance between providing and withholding amenities such that tourists could have transformational experiences:

"Are we doing a nice hotel with air conditioning and we go on bus tours and look at the locals out the window and point and tell stories? No. But, are we living in a dirt floor hut, sleeping on a mat, no mosquito net, eating once a day, simple rice? No. There's a lot of things that are contrived. From an African perspective? You wanna experience Africa? Our camp is contrived. And, our camp [is less contrived] compared to the hotel and the bus tour—right? So, I'm always asking that question. Asking it of Mamady. Looking around. Asking our graduates—or, our participants who have returned one year and two years and five years and ten years after they went. Talking to people who go on other camps. Doing a lot of that" (Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré 2015: Personal Interview).

It is interesting to note that her articulation of the contrived aspects of the One World camps came across as mildly defensive in the context of our interview. Sarah Lee was aware that some non-Guineans who spent time in Guinea outside of formal camp experiences were critical of the

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<sup>67</sup> Acknowledging the ways that later tourism scholars have problematized MacCannell's formulation as a universal theory of tourism (e.g. Graburn 2001), this observation remains useful for understanding the challenges facing tour facilitators in the Seattle-Guinean scene.

relative level of comfort afforded to tourists in One World camps. She also understood that many tourists anticipated authenticity, whatever that might mean to them. Sarah Lee intentionally adjusted the One World camps to best provide tourists with experiences that were perceived as sufficiently authentic while contrived enough to avoid danger or overwhelming discomfort. Further, her website and in-person rhetoric manipulated tourists' understandings of what actually constitutes the authentic. For most tourists, that understanding emerged as one that included poverty at the forefront, consistent with Sarah Lee's association of an "African perspective" with inadequate housing and food.

Drum and dance tourists commonly experienced guilt resulting from exposure to manifestations of the vast economic differences between Guinea and "home". Those whose experiences were limited to formal camps typically responded to that guilt by engaging in a variety of savior-oriented actions such as direct giving and contributing to facilitators' remittance programs or business ventures. However, Beth responded, not with giving, but with extreme thrift: "I wanted to lie. I had these impulses to wear flip-flops instead of Chacos. I intentionally didn't bring nice clothes because I didn't want to stand out." (2014: Personal Interview). Even as she found this denial of personal economic privilege irrational upon reflection, her response resonated with the behaviors of other tourists whose time in Guinea included experiences both with and beyond formal camps.

Like Beth, drummer Greg Evans attempted to deny himself the privileges afforded by his wealth relative to the people he met in Guinea. However, instead of battling through self-identity conflicts, he desired to emulate the lives of his teachers in order to learn and perform like they did:

"This [playing djembe music] is more about how your life is wrapped up in it, what you sacrifice for the music. I don't like to approach it from a place of privilege. Although

that does exist, right? I have this inescapable seat of privilege in how I have access to the music, and the resources to purchase things and hire teachers...there is that privilege. I want to come at it from as close to the same perspective as my teachers. I want to sleep on the concrete floor. I want to eat rice out of the same bowl with everybody. I want to walk to repetition.<sup>68</sup> I want to provide what I can for my teachers but not use my money for my own comforts.

For Greg, self-denial and sacrifice provided a pathway toward immersion into the lifestyle of his friends and teachers in Guinea. There is some irony in this response, as Guinean artists cited money as a central reason for participation in either formal or informal camps with tourists. They worked with foreigners as a way to overcome the same challenges that foreigners intended to experience.

While tourism scholars frame tourists from the West as “invested in a culture that celebrates affluence, materialism[,] and consumption” (Crossley 2012: 242), both Beth and Greg rejected the comforts afforded to them. Rather than celebrating their economic privilege, they lamented it. They performed poverty as treatment for self-diagnosed cases of “affluenza” (De Graaf et al. 2005), with symptoms made apparent by extreme material inequity and inequality (James 2007).

Greg’s perceived that his own affluenza restricted his access to a musical culture that he perceived as hinging on a lifestyle driven by struggle against economic hardship. His voluntary poverty removed a barrier to immersive learning and belonging. Beth also attempted to deny herself privilege in order to immerse herself into Guinean culture. However, her affluenza struck in a way that threatened to upend key aspects of her identity. Rather than performing poverty as an avenue to learn about or belong to an unfamiliar culture, she did so to preserve her self-perception as among the economically underprivileged in the face of emergent evidence to the contrary.

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<sup>68</sup> The word “repetition” here is used to refer to rehearsals of ballet companies and percussion ensembles, consistent with usage among professional artists in Conakry.

## Reverse Culture Shock

Drum and dance tourists typically experienced reverse culture shock, manifesting in extreme emotional discomfort upon returning home from Guinea.<sup>69</sup> In describing their return experiences, most tourists cited hyper awareness to the emphasis on material wealth in American culture, as well as the absence of a sense of community with the people around them. Tourists in Guinea confronted reverse culture shock regardless of the company or facilitator. Remarkable among the One World tourists, however, was the consistency and intensity of the discomfort that they reported experiencing upon return. These tourists experienced symptoms of reverse culture shock comparable to those reported by people who have lived independently overseas for months or years (Ward et al. 2005). Sarah Lee, as the One World facilitator whose primary role was as an interpretive mediator, constructed discourse about Guinea that produced and reinforced a specific kind of discomfort around issues of choice, poverty, and happiness.

Many tourists experienced guilt upon reflection of the relative material privilege afforded to most people in the United States compared to most Guineans. Seattle-based dancer Nikki Fleming described her feelings upon returning home from a One World camp:

“It was awful, to be honest with you. It was so overwhelming to come back to the States because I was so in tune with the gap of everything that we have and everything they don’t have, in a very materialistic way” (Nikki Fleming 2014: Personal Interview).

Nikki identified difference in material wealth as a driver of her reverse culture shock. By far, the most common experiences of reverse culture shock reported by participants in One World camps were emotional breakdowns at grocery stores. These breakdowns emerged from ideas around choice, as was the case for Michelle:

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<sup>69</sup> The phenomenon of “reverse culture shock” is neither new nor restricted to tourists, having been commented upon increasingly in scholarly literature since the mid-1960s following the return of the first few generations of Peace Corps volunteers under the Kennedy administration (Duhl et al. 1964).

“My first trip back to the grocery store was like, God! This whole fricking aisle of cereal! Who needs this much choice of cereal?! It was rough” (2015: Personal Interview).

Like Michelle, Nikki described an intense emotional reaction around the choice of cheeses at the grocery store. For Nikki, the experience of the One World camp disrupted her previous perspective, which coupled happiness with access to choices:

“I was flooded with this idea that I have so many choices and yet sometimes I’m so unhappy. It’s not enough. It doesn’t feel like enough choices. And yet, I just lived three weeks in Guinea without any choices. They don’t have a lot of choices. Yet, I experienced being perfectly happy” (Nikki Fleming 2014: Personal Interview).

While attending the One World camps, I witnessed Sarah Lee laying out this exact scenario for multiple tourists. She extended her rhetoric on the poor-but-happy, calling into question the positive correlation of choice and happiness by emphasizing the lack of choice among Guineans, even making explicit references to the cheese section at a grocery store.

Sarah Lee successfully shaped tourists’ interpretations of experience, inducing a particular flavor of reverse culture shock by reinforcing connections between poverty and joy in Guinea through an emphasis on choice as it relates to food. This is not to suggest all examples of discomfort at the confrontation of one’s own privilege of choice while in a grocery store can only be attributed to the manipulation of interpretation. Asymmetries of both availability and access do exist between the majority of Guineans and the majority of Americans, and I have heard dozens of stories similar to Nikki’s from fellow ethnomusicologists and from Peace Corps volunteers. And yet, One World tourists stayed in Guinea for an extremely brief time relative to these travelers, and neither selected nor prepared their own food. The One World tour groups made scheduled sightseeing visits to markets that included rich varieties of food choices. Returning tourists universally experienced discomfort around foods such as breakfast cereal and cheese that were not part of a typical Guinean’s diet, and thus did not exist in wide varieties in

those markets. They did not make note of the similarities in abundance of high-quality, and freshly grown produce upon their return. Furthermore, tourists exerted almost no control in choosing when to take meals and what foods were made available to them, although some made special requests that were fulfilled. The One World facilitators restricted food options to a range of potential ingredients and meals based on trial and error regarding tourists' preferences and in response to dietary needs.

Control extended more broadly to the entirety of the One World camp experience, and tourists both relished and struggled with letting go of the reigns of their lives. Returning home, tourists fixated on the stark contrast between the choices available to them at home and the lack of control that they experienced in Guinea. Tourists mapped their own lack of control in the camps onto Guinean culture more generally, even as their awareness of Guineans' lack of options emerged through verbal communication from Sarah Lee, and not through direct experience or even personal observation.

Sarah Lee mobilized rhetoric around food and choice in a way that successfully provoked tourists to question the role of material wealth in their pursuit of happiness. Although sometimes short-lived, returning tourists responded to the amplified reverse culture shock by considering ways that they might incorporate positive aspects of their experiences in Guinea into their daily lives. Nikki provided insight into her process of coming to terms with the discomfort caused by her re-aggregation into American society after three weeks in Guinea:

“I didn't know how to reconcile it, and I didn't know how to process it. I went through a lot of like: I'm going to live simpler. I want less. (...) And, trying to balance this thing that I can't live like a Guinean in the United States, can I? (...) I don't know if it was a need or an interest in wanting to be in solidarity or just feeling like it is possible to be so consumed by all the material things that it gets in the way of just dancing and drumming and living with joy. (...) Then I went through that whole process of: I chose to go there and be on vacation for three weeks' versus having that actually be my life” (Nikki Fleming 2014: Personal Interview).

Nikki worked from the assumption that affluence was getting in the way of her experience of joy. While Nikki attributed this perspective to her own experiences and reflections, it was also consistent with the rhetoric generated in the mediated experience provided by Sarah Lee in the One World camps.

## **Closing**

Tourists in Guinea consistently equated poverty and struggle with the authentic. Likewise, they linked wealth and comfort with the inauthentic. This conception of what constituted authenticity applied to their perceptions of what “African life” was like, and also in the sense of being an authentic person. Further, they linked authenticity with morality. Thus, in addition to the transaction of foreign dollars for access to instruction, food, and safe and controlled experiences of an imagined culture, the tourism product constituted a moral exchange. Through segregated and curated experiences of poverty, enhanced by the promotional discourse and control exerted by tour facilitators, tourists relieved themselves of the problems of relative privilege and excess.

Through emphasizing specific kinds of difference, the One World facilitators successfully contributed to personal transformation among tourists in their camps. Ilona Berzups, who traveled for a camp in 2008, provided the following testimonial for the One World website that demonstrates the power and influence of Sarah Lee’s work:

*My journey to the land of Guinea with One World Dance & Drum was truly life altering. I am not the same person I was before this experience and there's not a day goes by that I don't think of it. The people of Guinea are like no other. Strong, gentle, joyful, inclusive, spirited, a lightness of being - all in spite of crushing poverty and a lack of infrastructure to meet the most basic needs we tend to take for granted. Music and song are tightly woven into the fabric of everyday life in Guinea, a music that grabs your soul and holds you up in good times and bad. I am forever grateful to One World Dance & Drum for*

*opening my world to Guinea, for being incredibly mindful hosts and for taking care of us like family. And they work tirelessly to spread their love for this culture by keeping us connected to it here in our US community - through dance classes, workshops, communications and friendly Guinean gatherings throughout the year. Thank you One World Dance & Drum!*

In this testimonial, Ilona reiterated nearly all of the ways that Sarah Lee framed her own camps. She cited a view of Guineans as essentially different both in their joy and poverty, the cultural infusion of music and dance, and the feeling of family. This characterization, which Ilona framed in terms of her own personal transformation, showed the success of the One World product, and the gratitude felt by tourists. In Chapter 5, I focus on a single event at a One World camp, finding that, despite the differences produced by facilitators and perceived by tourists as highlighted throughout this chapter, extraordinary moments sometimes included profound experiences of sameness.

## Chapter 5: *Soli Ci* in Sundiya

### **Mirrored Liminality at the *Fáfa***

*To my left, three girls sit side-by-side, legs extended on woven mats lain upon the forest floor.*

*The pain-relieving balm on their torsos scatters glints of sunlight descending through gaps in the canopy leaves. To my right, three women stand side-by-side, each directly across from one of the seated girls. Clutching bags and cameras, their faces flush from walking in the late-morning sun, already hot and high. Three local girls, each engaged in an initiation designed to integrate them tightly into the social fabric of adult life. Separated from the rest of the village population for three weeks, they sing, clap, and move their bodies together as part of an educational process.*

*Three foreign women, each immersed in a drum and dance camp designed to free them from the binds of their society by taking them farther and further into an unfamiliar culture. Separated from their friends, families, and quotidian responsibilities, they sing, drum, and move their bodies as part of an educational process. The symmetry of the moment strikes me as almost absurdly poetic.*

*Looking around the space, I notice that this mirroring extends beyond the initiates and the tourists. A group of local women are situated beside and behind the three girls, there to support and guide them through the initiation. Behind the three tourists stand one man and one woman, there to support and guide them through the experiences of the camp. I aim my video camera to the left, capturing images and sounds of the initiates and the women teaching and supporting them. I swing to the right, focusing on the tourists and the facilitators. Hearing a twig snap, I spin around slowly to find the face of Lanciné Keïta looking back at me. A former djembe soloist*

*with Les Ballets Africains, Lanciné holds up a cellular phone in my direction, squinting to assess his recording on the dim screen. We catch eyes for a moment through our respective viewfinders, smiling and nodding gently before turning our cameras back toward the encounter between the initiates and the tourists. I am not merely observing the elegant symmetry of this moment. I am immersed within its mirrored liminality.*

*At the facilitators' prompting, each tourist places a ten thousand Guinea Franc note (equivalent to approximately US\$1.25) on the fabric skirt covering the outstretched legs of the initiate across from them. One of the initiates begins to clap, leading the local women and girls in a call and response song of gratitude for the gift-giving gesture:*

Barika bougnala (lo), bougna diyara n'gnè  
*(Thank you for the respect, I like the respect)*  
Barika farangla (lo), farang diyara n'gnè  
*(Thank you for the Francs, I like the Francs)*  
Bougna nĩ na nĩ, bougna nĩ bara n'bo  
*(The respect came, The respect came for me)*

*After the song, the initiates reach out in front of themselves and touch their own toes in another sign of respect, the small bells around their necks ringing gently. The tourists' smiles seem nervous and apprehensive, though not forced or insincere.*

In February of 2016, I traveled on two consecutive days along with the staff of the One World Dance and Drum inland camp and three North American female tourists to Sundiya, a village near the city of Kissidougou. There, the tour group witnessed and participated in portions of a *solì ci*, a cluster of events surrounding the rite of passage for three girls from childhood to womanhood. Music and dance associated with the *solì ci* was part of the core repertoire in the Seattle-Guinean scene, and is among the most popular music among djembe players across the

globe (Charry 2000: 220). Transposed into Seattle via teachers who had trained with private and national ballets in Guinea, the music and dance took on the name, “*Soli*”.<sup>70</sup> *Soli* has been a part of staged performance by Guinean musicians since at least 1967, when it was included in a medley of initiation musics by *Les Ballets Africains* (Polak 2000: 40). Mamady Keïta further popularized *Soli*, including it in his recordings, books, and workshops beginning in 1989.

At the two days of *soli ci* in Sundiya the tour group attended and participated in five distinct events that included music and dance. On the first night, a large group of women, many dressed in men’s clothing and boldly fashioned facial makeup, sang and clapped to celebrate the arrival of the tour group to Sundiya. Following that welcome, the tour group and the majority of the Sundiya residents gathered under a large Baobab tree in the center of the village, where dance, drumming, and comedic storytelling occurred. Finally, there was a procession that led between the homes of the families of each of the initiates, with dance, drumming, and singing at each home. In all but the initial welcoming, I participated in each of these events as a drummer.

The next day, the tour group returned to Sundiya where another procession took place, this time between the houses of the mothers of the initiates’ fiancés. When the procession arrived at a house, the group circumambulated in an increasingly dense and tightening spiral. The tourists, facilitators, and all but one of the One World camp detached from the procession as the spiral began, joining dozens of Sundiya residents who were watching the event while sitting or standing nearby. After several minutes, tour facilitator Mamady Mansaré approached me and the three tourists, inviting us to go to the *fāfa* (ritual education space) and meet the

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<sup>70</sup> Drummers in Seattle distinguished between “*Soli Rapide*” (fast *Soli*) and “*Soli Lent*” (slow *Soli*), using terminology developed by Mamady Keïta. Almost without exception, “*Soli*” stood in as a shorthand for “*Soli Rapide*”, while “*Soli Lent*” emerged as a distinct piece that was played rarely in informal jam sessions and never taught in dance classes or performed by ensembles in Seattle. While outside the scope of this dissertation, evidence from musical analysis suggests that *Soli Rapide* and *Soli Lent* may have previously been joined into a single extended performance and understood, not as two musics used in the same ritual context, but as the same music performed at different tempos. I intend to explore this evidence in later work.

*solimamusolou* (female initiates) who had undergone a genital cutting procedure a few hours earlier. With a bit of uncertainty, all of us agreed that we wanted to go to meet the initiates. The tour staff were not included in the invitation and remained with the Sundiya residents. The three tourists, the two facilitators, and I filed off away from the gathered mass and toward the *fáfa*.

In this chapter, I frame the touristification of the *fáfa* as an event drenched in sameness, despite being driven by desires to promote, experience, and cater to difference. The One World facilitators commodified liminality as a tourism product, re-configuring the *fáfa* from a liminal space restricted to ritual initiates into a mirrored liminal space that simultaneously honored the initiates and fulfilled the educational and experiential interests of the tourists. I situate the *fáfa* as a “dark tourism” site and in comparison to other touristic events featuring genital cutting. Examining tourist interpretations of their experience at the *fáfa*, I highlight apprehension over attendance, photography, and the gendered nature of the event to show that, rather than mindless consumers, the tourists demonstrated sensitivity and the desire to participate respectfully and in their own ways. Finally, I highlight aspects of music and dance at the *solí ci*, situating them within local norms, urban Guinean performance, and practices in Seattle. Again, I find that, despite conspicuous distinctions in styles and procedures, similarities outshone differences in all contexts. While participants acknowledged the problematic nature of transposing a practice tied to female genital cutting (FGC) into the scene through replicated performance, I assert that recontextualization turned down the volume on ethical uneasiness. Furthermore, this allowed for music that worked to generate social cohesion as a part of a coming of age ritual in Sundiya to function in essentially the same way in Seattle, generating social cohesion through the cumulative liminality of weekly dance classes.

## A Note on Legality and Terminology

Female genital cutting (FGC) has been officially illegal in Guinea since 1965, not long after the country achieved independence (LaRose 2014). The Guinean government again legislated FGC as a criminal act in 1984, and an amendment to the country's constitution in 2000 provided harsher punishment for those who perform cutting. In Conakry in 2015 and 2016, I observed anti-FGC billboards installed by the US State Department in cooperation with UNICEF, the Senegalese-based non-profit organization Tostan, and several smaller Guinean organizations. For UNICEF and other international institutions, the criminalization of FGC was clear cut; they referenced the procedure as a human rights violation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these anti-FGC efforts, whether through legislation or informational outreach, have had a limited impact in rural Guinea. Estimates suggest that between 90 and 98 percent of Guinean women have undergone some form of genital cutting procedure. Although my fieldwork in Guinea did not include systematic research into FGC, all of those women with whom I spoke about the topic indicated that they had undergone a cutting procedure. Further, more than half of all men and two-thirds of all adult women in Guinea continue to value and support cutting practices (Gage and Van Rossem 2006).<sup>71</sup>

A number of terms have emerged to describe ritualized cutting of the genitals of a female in academic and mainstream discourse, and each carries with it particular political overtones. Most governmental bodies, medical organizations, and activists throughout the English-speaking world have gravitated toward the term “female genital mutilation” (FGM). French-speaking people, including those generating campaigns by and for the Guinean government, generally utilize the word “*excision*”. Most Guineans in Guinea and Guinean expatriates in the US used

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<sup>71</sup> Gage and Van Rossem (2006) attribute the gender discrepancy in support to a relatively weak impact of urban anti-FGC campaigns on women, also noting the importance of conceptions regarding a woman's marriageability.

the word “circumcision” (or the French, “*circoncision*”). Some scholars and activists elect to use the term “female genital cutting” in an attempt to maintain the most neutral position available. Yoder and Mahy (2001) and Charry (2000) offer a variety of phrases used by Maninkakan speakers to refer to the cutting procedure. Although I value the use of locally-relevant language, I lack confidence in my understanding of the potential political or cultural overtones entangled with these Maninkakan phrases. Thus, I elect to use the term “female genital cutting” (FGC) for general references to the practice. When quoting directly from interviews or literature, I retain the terminology of the speaker or author.

Scholars have used a variety of alternative spellings for the *soli ci*, including “*solisee*” (Kenny 2011), “*solisi*”, (Chéron 1933), and “*soli si*” (Charry 2000). The word “*soli*” is a Maninkakan word that can translate literally into English as either “penis” or “prepuce”. The word “*ci*” is more difficult to translate precisely. In Bamanakan, a language that is largely mutually intelligible with the Maninkakan spoken in the rural areas outlying Kissidougou, “*ci*” translates to the verb “to break”. Further, the word “*si*” in related Mande languages can also refer to the verb “to spend a sleepless night” or “to stay up all night” (Vydrine 2016). Some of my research collaborators suggested to me that Bamana people use the distinctive term “*fura ci*”, meaning “to break the leaf”, when referring to the rite of passage for Bamana girls. However, the Maninka near Kissidougou used “*soli ci*” for rites including either boys or girls.

When facilitator Mamady Mansaré informed the One World Dance and Drum tour group about the *soli ci* in Sundiyya, and that we were invited to attend and participate, he made a speech in which he acknowledged the illegality of the genital cutting procedure included in the ritual ceremony. Mamady explained to the camp staff and tourists that, while FGC is technically illegal in Guinea, the government does not have the ability to control the actions of people in

rural areas. He offered all tourists and staff the option either to attend the *solí ci* or to remain in Dembayara, where the tour group had set up camp. While many of the One World camp staff members voiced agreement with the Conakry-based campaign to end female genital cutting, none expressed any surprise or dismay upon hearing that the cutting was happening in the village, and all declined the offer to remain in Dembayara instead of attending the *solí ci* in Sundiya. None, however, were invited to be present at the *fáfa*.

Neither the tourists, the facilitators, nor I were invited to witness the cutting procedure, which occurred away from the *fáfa* at a site called the *dankun*. Further, the privilege of access afforded to me through attendance at the *fáfa* did not extend to speaking directly with the women, girls, and initiates assembled for the ritual. I thus have no direct ethnographic data with which to conduct an analysis of the portion of the *solí ci* that occurred at the *dankun*. Interested readers may refer to accounts by Kenny (2011) or Yoder and Mahy (2001) for ethnographic details and statistical patterns of the specific cutting procedures and practices carried out by Maninka people in nearby areas of Guinea.

### **Genital Cutting as Dark Tourism**

The One World tourism group's experience at the *fáfa* was one among many examples across the world of intersections between genital cutting and tourism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, including those in Uganda (Hay 2014), Thailand (Morison 2010), Madagascar (Duffy 2008: 333), Tanzania (Stephen 2005), and Kenya (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblet 1994). However, the touristification of the *fáfa* in Sundiya differed from all of the examples above in at least three ways. First, in all other examples, genital cutting served as the center of publicized or even state-sponsored events. Second, the experience of the *fáfa* differed

from these contexts in that the associated rite involved female, and not male, initiates. Finally, the *soli ci* occupied a relatively blurry middle ground between a planned and unplanned tourist event. The local residents did not organize the *soli ci* specifically for the tour group; it would have occurred regardless of our presence. However, the locals did make special accommodations based on the presence of the tour group. The tour facilitators did not advertise the *soli ci* as part of the One World tour package in promotional materials. And yet, Sarah Lee and Mamady correctly anticipated that the tourists would be interested in attending the event, and enabled the experience.

None of the tourists had previous knowledge of any substantial details about what the *soli ci* meant on a societal level or for the initiates, aside from the general notion that the girls underwent cutting and participated in traditional education in order to become sociable and marriageable adult women. Tourists were motivated in part especially because the initiates had undergone cutting, and much of the emotional gravity felt by the tourists was generated by the knowledge that cutting preceded their time there. While the *fáfa* was not the site at which the cutting occurred, the tourists anticipated it to be a geography of suffering. One tourist stated, “I did expect them to look like they were in pain, or violated, or shaken or something” (2016: Personal Interview). Given the expectation of suffering, as well as the general—though contested—consensus among international bodies that FGC represents a human rights violation, the *fáfa* in Sundiya emerged as what tourism scholars call a “dark tourism” site.<sup>72</sup>

Foley and Lennon coined the term “dark tourism” in their 1996 analysis of tourism at the site of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. They conceptualized dark tourism

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<sup>72</sup> Some tourism scholars criticize dark tourism theorizations for both ignoring tour industry perspectives and reinforcing stereotypical readings of tourists as shallow, morally suspect, or even deviant (Bowman and Pezzullo 2010; Light 2017). Taking these criticisms into account, I raise the specter of dark tourism in order to address the controversy inherent in the touristification of FGC while aiming to avoid demonization of the tourists or facilitators.

as “phenomena which encompass the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites” (Foley and Lennon 1996: 198). Subsequent scholars extended theories of dark tourism to include sites of murder, genocide, terror, warfare, torture, imprisonment, suffering, tragedy, and crimes against humanity (Dann 1998; Sharpley and Stone 2009; Preece and Price 2005). Tourism scholar Peter Stone (2006) moved away from categorical distinctions of dark tourism, instead situating tourism events along continuums of relative darkness according to supply-side parameters.

The *fáfa* differed from most other types of dark tourism sites in that the *solí ci* was not an obsolete practice or historical event; it remained a vital and potent rite of passage for people in Sundiya. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that neither the local population in Sundiya nor any of my Guinean-born collaborators characterized the *fáfa* as a dark site. Even as they acknowledged that tourists lived in a cultural milieu that problematized the practice of FGC, my Guinean collaborators viewed the *fáfa* as a valuable energetic and quasi-sacred educational space that, while perhaps old-fashioned, should be respected and, in some cases, feared. Furthermore, while the tourists were drawn to the *fáfa* by the prospect of proximity to suffering as well as the opportunity to come into contact with an exotic practice, they approached the experience with care and curiosity, and each left feeling deeply moved.

### ***Fáfa* as Liminal Space**

The *solí ci* in Sundiya displayed strong resonances with rites of passage examined by Arnold van Gennep and further theorized most famously by Victor Turner, including clearly-defined separation, liminal, and reintegration phases.<sup>73</sup> Yoder and Mahy assert that Maninka

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<sup>73</sup> Kenny (2011) finds that Maninka people in other parts of northeastern Guinea use the term “*kolakadi*”, and not “*solí ci*”, to identify the re-integration phase.

women perceive genital cutting as constituting a transition from *solima* (uninitiated) to being *sunkudun* (initiated)” (2001: 12).<sup>74</sup> Anthropologist Erin Kenny further positions the *solici* in terms of the constitution of the gendered adult:

“Uninitiated children in Upper Guinea do not fully possess ‘person-hood.’ Ritualized genital cutting, circumcision and excision, dispels gender ambiguity by removing the substance of the ‘other’ sex and re-making a non-person into one who is fully and unambiguously male or female..., but these ceremonies also mark the construction of a new person.” (Kenny 2011: 127).

Genital cutting marks the beginning of the liminal phase of the rite of passage to adulthood, and also physically alters the body from an androgynous child to a fully articulated and gendered adult man or woman. While isolated at the *fafa*, initiates in Sundiya were referred to as “*solimamuso*” (pl. *solimamusolou*), signifying both uninitiated (*solima*) and adult womanhood (*muso*). The *fafa* thus emerged as the liminal site at which initiates existed in a transitional and ambiguous in-between social state.

At the *fafa*, the *solimamusolou* healed, rested, and engaged in education, some of which occurred through singing. The local women at the *fafa* sang songs addressing a variety of topics, with most referring to the importance of the *solici*, as well as its function. One song included lyrics intended to both create female solidarity and reinforce limitations of sexual activity:

*Call: Tafô n'dia gnon yé makèlenindé*

(You go and tell my boyfriend that I am unhappy)

*Response: Kérélén késsa*

(Euphemism for sexual intercourse)

*Call: N'babô môbo lèrô n'na gninimka yo*

(If I could leave the space of control, I would go and ask him)

*Response: Kérélén késsa*

(Euphemism for sexual intercourse)

This song presented a first-person declaration by a hypothetical *solimamuso* who, in the process of the *solici* was found to have previously engaged in *kérélén késsa* (a euphemism for sexual

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<sup>74</sup> Vydrine (2015) defines *sunkudun* in a gendered way, as “grown-up girl” or “girl of marriageable age” (pg. 295).

intercourse). The song's narrator exclaims anger that her boyfriend had sexual intercourse with her. Because she is confined to the *fāfa* during the *solī ci*, the initiate asks one of the other women to confront her boyfriend in her stead. This song reinforces the value of premarital virginity of women, as well as their mutual support in times of need.

For the *solimamusolou*, the *fāfa* was the site for activities that constituted their transition from sexually ambiguous and incomplete child to gender-defined adulthood. They were there as a part of compulsory rite of passage that is necessarily undertaken by everyone in the local society in successive generations. Tourist participation in a drum and dance camp in Guinea was optional and individual, both hallmarks of liminoid experiences (Thomassen 2014). As I address in Chapter 2, the distinction between liminal and liminoid should be understood as fluid and polar, and not as categorical absolutes (Spiegel 2011). Once in Guinea, tourist experiences drifted closer toward the liminal than the liminal ideal-pole. As addressed in Chapter 4, One World tourists were almost completely dependent upon the facilitators who controlled transportation, food, water, and itinerary. Like the *solimamusolou*, the tourists can also be understood as liminal initiates, submitting to the authority of the facilitators who acted as ritual elders or liminal emcees.

In exchange for giving up control to the facilitators by participating in an organized camp, the tourists gained access. Tourist Renee Lynch reflected on her time at the *solī ci*, finding it to have been a rare and special outcome of traveling to Guinea with a tourist group:

“Being in the *solī* experience is something that I don't think would have happened had I not been with Sarah Lee and Mamady. If I were traveling by myself or in some kind of work situation as a teacher or a teacher trainer, I don't think that I could have had the cultural 'in' to get to that. Having Mamady be from the area. They know Sarah Lee. They've brought people there before. Everybody gets the gist of, 'They want to learn about Guinea. They're here to learn music and dance.' I felt that was also a special opportunity of being with them” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Thomassen argues that engagement with liminoid phenomena is “tied to the individual consumption of the ‘out-of-the-ordinary’ as a commodity” (Thomassen 2014: 186, emphasis in original). The importance of the out-of-the-ordinary was evident in Renee’s characterization of the *solici* as the type of experience to which she would not have had access were she to travel alone in Guinea. The potential for such an experience was a driving factor in her choice to travel with One World Dance and Drum.

The *solimamusolou* put trust in the teaching of the *séma*, who acted as the ritual emcee during the *solici*. The *séma* relied upon generations of tradition and decades of personal experience to inform them as they guided initiates through the rite of passage, and helped to interpret liminal symbols. Likewise, the One World tourists put their trust in the care of Mamady and Sarah Lee. These tour facilitators, unlike the *séma*, had no tradition on which to lean and relatively fewer experiences from which they could draw strategies to best guide tourists in interpreting their liminal experience.

Despite their relative inexperience as ritual emcees, the facilitators navigated the event in ways that the tourists appreciated. For Renee, the American tour facilitator Sarah Lee articulated the sentiments that she wanted to communicate:

“I think Sarah Lee’s words of: ‘We wish you good luck in your marriage and in your life.’ I was like, ‘Yeah.’ That is what I want to convey in this situation. When they asked us if there was anything else that we wanted to say, I was like: ‘I have no idea.’ You know? But then Sarah Lee stepped in, and I agree with everything that she said. I think that she put that feeling that I had into words. I do want to lend my support to these individuals. Maybe not in the process of being cut. But, in making this transition” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Sarah Lee’s words at the *fáfa* also had a strong impact on Sara, another tourist:

“I thought a lot about what Sarah Lee said when we said goodbye. She said, ‘We’re coming with respect and honoring your culture. She said something along the lines of, ‘This isn’t something that we do in our culture, but we come with respect’ (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

Both Renee and Sara valued Sarah Lee's performance as a cultural mediator. Sarah Lee was unable to speak directly to the Sundiya women in Maninkakan; Mamady interpreted her words. Rather than losing meaning through translation, the necessity of translation allowed Sarah Lee to better stand in as a surrogate for the tourists, connecting them to the experience more fully by speaking for the group in English, ensuring that the tourists were included.

The *fáfa*, for the *solimamusolou*, was the space set aside for isolation from ordinary social life in Sundiya. For the tourists, too, the *fáfa* was a space of isolation from ordinary life and the most distant, culturally and geographically, from their homes and quotidian experiences. The *solimamusolou* were in a state of transition in identity and status, moving from childhood to adult womanhood. The tourists also experienced the *fáfa* at a time of transition; each following the guidance of Sarah Lee as they moved toward intensified or evaporated commitment in personal romantic relationships, and reconsidering professional and life goals. Through its touristification, the *fáfa* emerged as the site of a mirrored liminality between the tourists and the *solimamusolu*.

All musical contexts in the Seattle-Guinean scene, whether in Seattle or in Guinea, included touristic representation of liminal experiences. The *fáfa* was unique among these in that the liminal performance was not *re-presented*, but presented directly to tourists for their consumption. All other contexts included performances based on representations of liminality, as the overwhelming majority of the repertoire taught in dance classes and performed at drum jams or in stage shows, whether in Seattle or in Guinea, derived from practices associated with rituals. The presence of the One World group transformed the *fáfa* into a space at which liminality itself became a touristic object to be toured and consumed as entertainment and education.

## Tourist Interpretations of the *Fáfa*

All of the tourists expressed apprehension about participating in the *solí ci*, and especially about visiting the *fáfa*. Tourist Renee Lynch felt uneasy, not only because of her moral/ethical concerns over FGC, but also because she was aware of her own lack of knowledge about the practice and what her presence might mean.

“I don’t know what exactly has happened to these girls, if that would even make a difference. How much has been cut of them? Were they anesthetized? Is it clean? I also didn’t know enough about what does my presence do to this situation? Does it condone this thing that, in principle, I don’t think I agree with? But, I’m not sure. And then, too, uncertainty about opinions about the whole thing. Like, is this a good idea or is this a bad idea? I remember as we were walking toward the forest I was like, ‘What are we doing?! This is probably not a good idea. It just feels icky to me.’ I think it was more because of the uncertainty of all the things. I didn’t want to be a dumb foreigner traipsing into a situation that is very meaningful to people. Very sacred, and has this long history. It’s all stuff that I felt very ignorant about, and so I was really nervous about just showing up and being like, ‘Hey!’” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Other tourists described feeling similarly conflicted about attending the *solí ci* and being at the *fáfa* with the *solimamusolou*. Tourist Sara described the difficulty in balancing her unease toward FGC with her desire to confront her own fear in making the choice to participate:

“It was really conflicting for me. I had so many thoughts in my mind: What does it say that I’m silent? What does it say if I say an opinion, at least to the dynamic of the group? I’m physically supporting it by going with you guys, but does that mean that I’m all in agreement in my mind? I don’t know! In the end, I was like, fuck it. I’m never going to see anything like this in my life. Ever. I don’t think. Ultimately, I would be missing out on an experience out of fear rather than from anything else, because I was afraid of what I was going to see or that I wasn’t going to see” (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

Following the visitation at the *fáfa*, Sara continued to process the experience. Though she did not perceive the event in a negative light, it was emotionally challenging and energy draining.

Tourists at the *fáfa* struggled to interpret the emotional states of the initiates. Renee stated:

“I felt strange in doing that: trying to look and figure out: what are they thinking. What has happened to them this morning, and how do they feel about that? I did expect them

to look like they were in pain, or violated, or shaken or something. I didn't get that impression, so that was something else that struck me. It was hard to tell, but my reading of it was of quiet pride. They were proud of themselves. But, it wasn't beaming or joyful. It was hard to tell, and I wasn't expecting that it would be hard to tell" (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Renee expected the initiates to visually communicate discomfort of some kind. Instead, she saw in them an understated sense of pride.

The liminal period of the *solici* served to re-inscribe normative adult gender roles upon the *solimamusolou*. For the tourists, the *fāfa* was a space at which normative Western feminist notions about FGC were brought into question. The ludic (playful) nature of their liminal state allowed them to connect emotionally with the *solimamusolou* without literally undergoing the genital cutting. It further allowed some of them to rethink the value of a ritual practice that, when revealed to exist in North America, provoked national scandal (Dyer 2017).

Discussions between the tourists following the event at the *fāfa* revealed personal interpretations that resonated with cultural anthropologist Graham St John's association of liminality with "marginality, conditions fomenting social critique, subversive behavior, and radical experimentation" (St John 2008: 9). During those discussions, some of the tourists exhibited radical views of FGC in relation to their own perceptions of most North American women. In verbal reflections just after the experience, none of the tourists condemned the cutting. Instead, comments ranged from expressing a desire to hide uncomfortability to declaring of non-judgment. None of the tourists at the *fāfa* expressed to me, verbally or in writing, any statement that I construed as being evidence of advocacy for genital cutting. Instead, their perspectives resonated strongly with that of Sarah Lee, who spoke for the tourists at the *fāfa* and focused on conveying care and respect.

## Photography

Tourists' attitudes and behaviors with respect to photography at the *fáfa* laid bare tensions between the desire to witness something at once unusual to themselves and fundamental to the socialization of women in rural Guinea on the one hand, and the desire to mitigate undesirable aspects of their own participation as consumers on the other hand. The Sundiya women welcomed photography at the *fáfa*, but tourists met this invitation with resistance. After briefly speaking with a ritual elder, Mamady informed the tourists that they could stand behind the three initiates if they wanted to have their photos taken together with the girls. All three of the tourists declined this opportunity. Even the thought of taking photographs was off-putting to Renee:

“I was like, ‘I don’t want to take pictures because I feel this is special and intimate in a way that taking pictures would violate it.’ I had a camera. I could have taken photos or video. But I didn’t want that for myself” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Renee refrained from taking photographs to avoid spoiling the sacred nature of the *fáfa*, and also to maximize her own experience of the event: “I wanted to just absorb the experience as it was and be present in a way that I feel taking photos/videos takes me out of. In other words, [taking photos] distracts me and makes me miss parts of the experience” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview). Sara, another tourist at the *fáfa*, attempted to both film and remain engaged:

“I remember. I was taking a film of it, too. I think I was holding it like this [at chest level] because I was like, ‘I want to take a video of this because I know this is going to be a lot for me to process and I’ll probably want to watch it again and think more about it. But, I also want to be here, so maybe if I hold the camera here, that will be better’” (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

Sara hoped that taking photos and videos in the would allow her to more fully consider and process the event. In examining the performativity of photographs in tourism, Urry and Larsen argue that photographs construct and mobilize places that tourists “consume and remember”

(2011: 136). They show that “tourists take photographs so as to produce tangible memories to be cherished and consumed well after the journey” (Urry and Larsen 2011: 136-137). Sara filmed the event at the *fafa* as a strategy to combat the anticipated impact of the emotional experience on her perception of the event, allowing for more considered and complete consumption.

Tourism scholars Urry and Larsen characterize the role of photography and digitization in the dominance of the visual in tourism in Foucauldian terms: “To photograph is in some way to appropriate the object being photographed. It is a power/knowledge relationship. To have visual knowledge of an object is in part to have power, even if only momentarily, over it” (Urry and Larsen 2011: 139). Renee expressed a similar sentiment:

“I think for me, taking photos/videos is a form of capturing or taking an experience for oneself in a formalized way - more formalized than recording sensations or experiences as personal memories. I think this stems from the fact that it's active and visible to others (vs. the more passive mental process of making a memory that happens naturally and almost passively, inside one's own mind)” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Correspondence)

Renee stressed that photography works as a kind of formalized consumption. She perceived photography as an appropriative act, and enacted resistance through abstinence. By relying on personal sensation and memory, she attempted to mitigate formalization and artificiality.

Photography expands the consumptive and power/knowledge-generating tourist gaze both spatially and temporally (Urry and Larsen 2011). Drum and dance tourists sometimes interpreted photography as extending their culpability in the potentially negative impacts of their own tourist gaze:

“I often carry a lot of ‘tourist guilt,’ so to speak, in that I am consuming someone else's culture, perhaps taking it at merely face value...via a photo rather than fully engaging with the human experience of it via talking to people, participating, etc. In Africa especially, I worry about perpetuating the colonial overtones/history of that” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Communication).

While some contemporary tourists refrain from taking photographs in order to differentiate themselves from other tourists (Maoz 2006), the tourists in Sundiya did so from a desire to engage more directly and less consumptively with the women at the *fáfa*. They abstained from photography in order to preserve the intimacy and sacred nature of the event and space, and also in response to a reflexive and self-conscious impulse toward justice.

The One World tourists expressed hyper-awareness at being under what sociologist, anthropologist, and tourism scholar Darya Maoz calls the “local gaze” (2006: 228). Renee exclaimed surprise at being photographed by a local Guinean while with the initiates at the *fáfa*:

“I saw Lanciné with his phone taking pictures of us with them. (...) Having him taking pictures of us with his cell phone in the middle of the forest was like: What?! Mind-blowing” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Renee found it strange that others in the tour group (including me) took photos at the *fáfa*, but emphasized that being gazed upon and photographed by a local Guinean had a greater impact on her experience. Rather than dismissing the local gaze, as occurs in other touristic environments (Maoz 2006), Renee and the other One World tourists remained keenly aware of and influenced by it.

The power entangled with the local gaze is both repressive and productive; it both stifles action and constitutes particular kinds of knowledge and subjectivities (Foucault 1978).

Lanciné’s photographic gaze amplified self-consciousness among the tourists, exerting a limiting or muting force on their behaviors. Sara described her perspective of Lanciné’s presence, stating: “I was confused as to why Lanciné was there. I wasn’t expecting him to stay, but why didn’t I expect him to stay?” (2016: Personal Interview). Lanciné also amplified their perception that they, like he, were out of place in the *fáfa*. The tourists interpreted the *fáfa* as a closed, intimate, sacred and feminine space, and Lanciné’s photographic gaze reinforced the spectacle of the event.

Furthermore, it reified their positions as outsiders consuming the experience, whether for entertainment, education, or personal growth.

## Giving Thanks

During an interview with Renee, I introduced my conceptualization of the *fāfa* as a mirrored liminal space, with the *solimamusolou* and tourists reflecting each others' experiences. She expressed a degree of hopeful solace in the idea that she and the other tourists shared a kind of vulnerability with the *solimamusolou*:

“It feels more just to me—when I think about it that way—that we’re each getting something from one another, supporting each other because we recognize that the other is in a special place that’s not normal” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

At the same time, Renee suspected that the *solimamusolou* might not have recognized her vulnerability, or that of the other tourists.

“I like thinking about it that way because, to me, it kind of diffuses the power differential that I felt a little hung up about at the time. At least if there was equal footing for both of us...if there was something in common where we were both in a vulnerable place—to share that. I don’t know if the three Guinean women were quite aware of that for us. We were very aware of their being vulnerable...but, I don’t know if they would have said that for us” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

For Renee, the likelihood for a mutual understanding of vulnerability also connected to the statements that Mamady Mansaré made to the Sundiya women at the *fāfa*:

“I keep thinking about how Mamady described us [the tourists]. He had this thing afterwards: ‘They [the tourists] came here. They came so far from their families. They came from their home and they arrived their home.’ You know? That sort of idea that people have? Not only, ‘Poor you. You’re away from your home’; but, ‘It is now our responsibility to invite you. Everybody needs a home. We want to make you feel good about that.’ Also recognizing that there’s an honor in that, too. They [the local women] recognize that for you to leave your home must be something special. Maybe that resonated with them. Like, ‘Oh. They’re vulnerable.’ Maybe having some idea that it was strange for us to be in a place that was different” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

In reviewing film of the event with me, facilitator Mamady Mansaré provided additional details about the description of the tourists that he gave to the Sundiya women at the *fáfa*. Following some general thanksgiving and words of respect, Mamady attempted to explain to the Sundiya women the ways that culture in the United States differed from their own. He placed special emphasis on the absence of community and togetherness for foreign women in their regular lives. He also made mention of the difficulty that the tourists were likely to have upon returning to the United States, telling the Sundiya women that when foreigners return home, they typically become confused about their own lives because they come to value the bonds displayed in Guinea. The Sundiya women reacted to Mamady's statements by looking at the tourists and nodding, and Mamady did not provide the tourists with translations of his statement at the time. The tourists did not directly interact with any of the women at the *fáfa* beyond the exchange of simple greetings, smiles, and gestures. Still, my sense is that the tourists and the *solimamusolou* each had enough information available to them to understand, at least at a superficial level, that the others were experiencing something that was simultaneously unusual, important, and challenging in their lives.

## **Gender**

For some of the tourists, the *fáfa* transformed their understanding of female genital cutting as a moral/ethical practice. Renee Lynch was sensitive to the cultural baggage that she brought with her:

“I think it's something that in Western culture, and probably American [culture] particularly...the messages that I've received about FGM. Just even calling it 'Female Genital Mutilation'. Those are very strong terms that give it an overall negative feeling. Cast it in a negative light. Certainly something that I took to be just straight up negative because it hurts women. It disempowers them. It takes away pleasure. It's a form of sexual control. All of the things that I've heard about and talked to people about. (...) It

was something that I did not expect to be a positive experience, and the feeling that I came back with was that it was generally a positive experience for me” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

While not necessarily walking back on her belief in claims that FGC hurts and disempowers women, Renee found that her experience of the *solu ci* at the *fafa* in Sundiya provided nuance to her understanding, specifically with regards to gender.

Renee identified female support as a defining feature of her experience of the *solu ci* in Sundiya:

“One of the very palpable senses that I got from the experience was how much female support and camaraderie was there. I really felt that. There was this multi-generational group of women that were there supporting these girls. Celebrating them, and taking care of them. That also really got me because, I feel like in the US, we don’t really have that. Or, at least, I have yet to experience that in my life, a more formalized version of that. It happens in relationships with other ladies in my life. But, having something that’s very set? Like, at this point you *will* become a woman and we will help you with that. We will tell you everything you need to know. We will support you. The whole village will know. They will sing about you and give money to you. There’s so much support. From other women, in particular. That strikes me as a contrast, not just with the ‘becoming a woman’ experience in the US, but female relationships in general” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Here, Renee found inspiration in the gendered nature of the *solu ci*, interpreting the *fafa* emerged as a space of feminine community support and belonging. Furthermore, she observed and lamented the absence of comparable structures of gendered support in her own life.

In the villages surrounding Kissidougou, tradition prohibited adult men from entering the *fafa* during the time of a female *solu ci*. Their presence, whether purposeful or unintentional, constituted a breaking of the energy of the space that required payment of a material or sacrificial toll. At least two exceptions to this rule existed, both manifesting in Sundiya. First, the privilege to visit the *fafa* extended to male musicians, regardless of the gender of the initiates. As a general rule, only men play musical instruments appropriate for accompanying the songs that form a central pillar for educative processes at the *fafa*. This exception accounted for both

Mamady Mansaré's and Lanciné Keïta's presence. Although neither accompanied any of the songs, nor brought an instrument to the *fáfa*, both Mamady's and Lanciné's identities as musicians were well known in the area and permitted access.

In addition to the ritual utility of musicians, foreignness also allowed for an exception to the gendered exclusivity of the *fáfa*. This exception did not extend to Maninka people from other parts of Guinea, other ethnic groups within Guinea, or even to Africans from neighboring countries. Non-African foreignness, dovetailing in part with racial Otherness, carried with it a special quality that communicated cultural foreignness. This allowed for the transgression of gender-based rules, including my presence at the *fáfa*.<sup>75</sup>

Just as tourists alter performance practices and event structures in touristic geographies, the same is true of the ethnomusicologist in the field. Sara, a tourist who was familiar with my research interests and some of the questions that I intended to approach through my work, asserted that my presence at the *fáfa* increased the emotional challenge of the event:

“It was difficult for me having you be there at the *solli*... I knew when that event came up that it would definitely be of interest to you because these are Americans coming to experience Guinea culture, and this is an aspect of Guinea culture that can be provocative and controversial” (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

My presence as an observer conducting research made Sara self-conscious:

“I was like, ‘Oh my God. Don't fuck up. Don't be the wrong kind of White girl in the *solli*.’ That's not you. It's me. Even as you were doing your absolute best to be an observer and to be objective and all these things. (...) I didn't want to fuck up and say the wrong thing. I knew, because, the fact that I was being observed either actively or passively by you, that it was a thing for me” (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

Here, Sara articulated a racialized view of her identity in her desire to avoid being the “wrong kind of White girl”. As in other contexts of the Seattle-Guinean scene, the *fáfa* emerged as a site

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<sup>75</sup> Other instances at which foreignness superseded gender included non-Quaranic prayers and blessings, where male-only exclusivity expanded to include non-African foreign women.

at which White tourists displayed sensitivity to the negative connotations of Whiteness as a marker of foreignness, imperialism and colonialism.

In addition to her apprehension at being under the ethnographer's gaze, Sara felt that my gender contributed to her unease:

“I don't know if it was because you're a dude. (...) For whatever reason, that was very conscious to me. I thought that you should know that. (...) It's one of those experiences that I was like, 'This is a sacred feminine space. What doesn't [feel right about this]?'” (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

Because of my gender and professional identity, Sara attempted to mute the outward display of her emotions:

“I remember at the time being like, 'Oh my God. This is so weird for Jim to be here, because I'm feeling emotional right now.' There were many points where I just felt like I wanted to cry because it was really overwhelming” (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

She continued, articulating that she may have projected her own self doubt onto others at the *fāfa*:

“I have judgment of myself and the ways that I'm understanding this experience, and then I project it on you. In my mind, I tell the story of: Jim's judging me. I'm judging myself. [The other tourists] are judging me. You know? The random dude [(Lanciné)] with the camera on his phone is judging me [laughter]. I had a mini meltdown about it” (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

Sara's experience in the *fāfa* suggested that, while contributing to lowered inhibitions (Bauer 2014), liminality in tourism environments can also induce a profound self-consciousness and heightened inhibitions when the tourist gaze exists alongside a mutual gaze (Maoz 2006) from other tourists, locals, or an ethnomusicologist.

## Sharing

Upon returning to North America, the tourists developed and implemented differing perspectives on sharing about their experience. Some tourists refrained almost entirely from sharing about the event. Shortly after returning to Seattle from Guinea, Sara spoke about the *solli*

*ci* with another participant in the Seattle-Guinean scene who had traveled to the villages neighboring Sundiyya on One World Dance and Drum's first inland tour in 2014. Following that discussion, she did not speak of it again until the day of our interview: "That was one of the points of the trip where I chose not to tell many people about it. Actually, I told my therapist about it this morning because I was telling her that I was going to talk to you and I was feeling anxious about it" (Sara 2016: Personal Interview). Sara continued:

"I'm still processing it. I'm processing it so much that I haven't even told anyone about it, really. I think that's because it's even hard to just talk to people about even the basic stuff of my trip to Guinea. It's difficult to put into words, and to explain my experience there" (Sara 2016: Personal Interview).

Sara's silence emerged from the emotional gravity of the *soli ci*, as well as the difficulty that she had conveying about all of her experiences in Guinea. She did not publicly share the photos and videos that she shot at the *fáfa*, but this was consistent with her tendency to rarely post photos or videos to social media when traveling. "Going to a developing country, or going to somewhere where I'm the obvious White person there, I don't want my experience to be misconstrued by others" (Sara 2016: Personal Interview). Here, Sara racialized her decision to post photographs using social media, demonstrating sensitivity to the potential for replicating examples of the Othering of Black bodies—especially Black African bodies—through photography (Bale 1998).

Unlike Sara, Renee Lynch shared her experience at the *fáfa* with everyone who asked her about her time in Guinea:

"I feel like it was a really special opportunity that we were granted, or witness too. I feel that that witness quality of it makes me want to share it with other people because I know that that's not available for everyone. I also feel some sort of responsibility to represent the other side of the FGM story, which I certainly had not heard very much. This is a very powerful, largely positive experience for growing up in the village. It's an honor for the women, and people support them and celebrate them. Those things had not been part of my experience, so I feel the need to share those with other people, which is mostly why I tell the story a lot—to everyone that I talk about Guinea with" (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

Renee relayed information about the *solici* to friends and family out of a sense of duty as a witness. She felt compelled to share her experience at the *fáfa*, both because of the rarity of opportunity it represented, and because it facilitated a different perspective on FGC.

Renee intentionally abstained from taking photographs at the *fáfa*. As a witness, then, Renee shared about her experience at the *fáfa* based entirely upon her memory of the event and the words she recorded in her personal journal after having returned to Dembayara from Sundiya. When she talked about the *fáfa*, she utilized image-laden descriptive language:

“When I discuss it with people, I think I focus mostly on describing what it was like and how it happened. The very tactile and sensory things about it, because I found that to be the most powerful. For example, the way that the sunlight filtered through the trees above on this glistening, oiled skin of the girls. That really has stuck with me. Or, the fact that they had bells around their necks. The pounded metal of the bells. The fact that they were wrapped from the waist down in black fabric, which kind of seemed like *bazen*. It had this sort of a pattern in it. Then, they had a more colorful *pagne* over that. Those are the things that I tend to focus on...I think it really sticks with me because the very powerful sensory nature of everything. The sounds of the clapping. Even where their eyes went when they moved their head from side to side. All of them moving together. The sounds of their voices” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Interview).

The visual sense dominates in tourist settings (Urry 2003), and although Renee first referred to the importance of “tactile” aspects of her experience at the *fáfa*, her recall was more heavily weighted toward, and more richly detailed in terms of, the visual. The sunlight, in her telling, interacted with the skin of the initiates. She recollected, not only that the initiates wore bells, but that they wore “pounded” bells. She described the cloth skirts using details of both colors and patterns. Renee included two sonic markers in her accounts: clapping and voices. However, she referred to both the clapping and voices in general terms of “sound”, contrasting with the vivid details represented regarding the visual elements at the *fáfa*.

Renee recognized that similar ethical issues can arise whether recording and relaying experiences through language-based description or through digital media, insofar as both the

writer/teller and the photographer introduce their own subjectivity into their communications. For Renee, a photograph “results in a concrete product (someone's image) that can be shared with others without the ‘captured’ individual's knowledge or permission. I realize that this may be similar to my journaling about the experience and then telling others, but a photo/video seems more egregious somehow” (2016: Personal Communication). For Renee, written or spoken language was a more respectful way of communicating because it abstracts the experience, and provides distance from the people involved in the event.

“[S]haring through words, even if I am sharing largely images through words, is different somehow. I feel like it's further removed from the girls (my own experience/words/interpretation of them vs. their direct images) and so that seems more respectful to me. My words are also something that I feel to be mine, in contrast to someone else's image, so I feel more free to share them” (Renee Lynch 2016: Personal Communication).

Whereas Renee understood the images produced through photographs to belong to the person being photographed, she viewed shared words as her own. Her memories, thoughts, and words provided respectful abstraction and distance from events. She found that, because many viewers misinterpret a photographic image as including an objective truth, the imperfect recall of an event filtered through a person’s subjective experience and language was a more responsible means of communication. Renee responded to the ethical challenge of representing the *fāfa* by intentionally emphasizing the subjectiveness of her position as a witness.

### ***Soli***

In Sundiya, I performed music for the *soli ci* in a remarkable ensemble, the members of which can be understood as belonging to one of four geographic classes: the rural, the national, the urban, and the global. The rural musicians included two men who lived in Sundiya, and whose primary professional activities were agricultural. These two men played only during local

events, and, limited by endurance and facility, they were sometimes unable to maintain successful execution during periods of relatively dense textures or high tempos. Representing the national class of musician at the Sundiya *solli si* was Lanciné Keïta. Lanciné was recruited from the Kissidougou region to Conakry as a professional djembe player with *Les Ballets Africains*, rehearsing and performing with the group in Guinea and on international tours through the 1990s. After retiring from *Les Ballets Africains*, Lanciné moved back to Kissidougou where he earned money by playing djembe at ceremonies throughout the region. He demonstrated a high level of competence as an accompanist and soloist, and provided feedback to the two rural musicians on occasions when their playing faltered. The urban class comprised four professional musicians, each of whom lived in Conakry. These musicians were between and twenty and thirty years old and earned their livelihoods by performing for weekend ceremonies, at *spectacles* (staged performances of various kinds), and in tourism camps. The final class is the global, personified by me, the researcher/tourist. Though I typically played for between twenty and twenty four hours per week during my fieldwork in Guinea, the overwhelming majority of my practical experiences of djembe and *dundun* performance occurred in the United States, where I learned from and with Americans and Guinean-born expatriates, as well as through recordings, online digital media, and print resources.

There was little doubt, especially among non-Guinean drummers in the Seattle-Guinean scene, that the music played in Conakry and in most dance classes in the Seattle differed—typically, in the same ways—from performance practices in rural Guinea. And yet, the *solli ci* in Sundiya provided evidence that contemporary urban, ballet, and globalized performance practices remained viable when combined and repatriated into contemporary rural ritual contexts in Guinea.

The influence of standardized global cosmopolitan djembe practice was evident in the orchestration of the ensemble in Sundiya. At the *solì ci*, we played in the three-*dundun* “village-style” setup derived from performance practices from the Hamanah region and popularized through the recordings and teaching of high-profile socialist-era national ballet djembe players, especially Mamady Keïta and Famoudou Konaté. This ensemble was not typical for performances in Sundiya, where two djembes was the norm. Furthermore, there were no *dunduns* in Sundiya, nor in any of the surrounding villages constituting the Dembayara sub-Prefecture of Kissidougou. Neither were there musicians living locally who were trained to play the *dunduns*. Instead, the instruments were played by the multinational and multi-ethnic group of musicians of the One World camp who brought them to Sundiya from Conakry.

The musical performances in Sundiya differed from those in Seattle, notably in the use of a wider range of tempos and faster maximum tempo. In Seattle, musicians playing *Solì* typically performed at tempos ranging between 130 and 160 beats per minute, rarely pushing as high as 180 beats per minute. The performances in Sundiya typically ranged from between 140 and 200 beats per minute, exceeding 230 beats per minute during some moments. Many participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene associated high tempos with ballet and urban professional performance practices (see Chapter 3). Indeed, the Conakry-based One World staff musicians instigated the tempo increases within the ensemble in Sundiya.

In Sundiya, two local musicians, a socialist-era national ballet musician, four urban professional musicians, and a touring/researching foreigner played *Solì* together in a way that functioned successfully in the *solì ci*. In spite of musicians trained in varying contexts, locally atypical instrumentation, and high tempos, the women in Sundiya had little difficulty participating through dance. Local women took turns, sometimes in pairs, entering the open area

created at the center of the assembled group. Most took a few moments to establish themselves in front of and facing the drummers, but not looking at them. They then repeated a single, high-energy movement while one of djembe soloists played a steady stream of tones and slaps on each beat subdivision (*échauffement*). Following a cadential ending by the djembe player (usually called break, signal, call, or *blocage*), the dancer(s) ended with a hop, hip turn, or by slumping forward at the waist. They then walked out and into the gathered crowd, having remained in the dance space for no longer than ten seconds.<sup>76</sup>

With the exception of the professionally-trained One World tour staff and the tourists who participated in parts of the *soli ci*, dancers in Sundiya performed movements that bore little resemblance to those practiced by dancers in Seattle to the music, *Soli*. The camp staff danced in ways that were similar to participation by professional dancers at *dundunba* and *sabar* settings in Conakry. They typically danced for more than ninety seconds, nearly ten times longer than local women. Furthermore, they performed movements that were more widely varied and more obviously athletic, and they took up more of the dance space as they moved. The Conakry-based tour staff participated confidently; and, although they displayed distinctive practices, their performances were cheered and applauded for by Sundiya residents.

The foreign-born women in Sundiya, including the tourists as well as the American-born facilitator, joined to dance in one of the performance contexts in Sundiya, during the large gathering in the village center. The foreigners did not attempt to emulate the performance practices of the Sundiya residents, either in the fast-paced in-and-out procedure or in their style of movement. Instead, they replicated and tried to chain together movements that they had learned from teachers in dance classes in both the United States and in Guinea. Lacking the

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<sup>76</sup> This procedure and the style of movements were similar to those I observed among non-professional dancers in participatory ceremonies hosted by neighborhood women's associations in Conakry.

confidence of the professional dancers from Conakry and the enculturated experience of the women in Sundiya, several of the foreign dancers turned to me to ask the name of the rhythm that we were playing so that they could try to remember some appropriate steps. Furthermore, when the foreign women danced, the One World djembe soloists, sensing hesitance, executed phrases typically used in staged performances to signal changes between movements in a choreography. The musicians did not play these signals for any of the Guinean-born dancers. Regardless of their inability to dance in a way that resembled any of the Guinean-born participants, or perhaps because of it, the foreign women generated what appeared to be sincere excitement, laughter, and cheers among the local residents.

If considered as a joyful replication of tradition, performing *Soli* in Seattle seemed a macabre practice, a kind of dark tourism at home. In Seattle however, recontextualization and interpretation rendered *Soli* as a related but distinct practice that developed local meaning. Teachers in the Seattle-Guinean scene provided consistent descriptions of *Soli* for their students. American-born teachers typically characterized *Soli* as a Maninka dance from Upper Guinea done by mothers celebrating their children's rite of passage into adulthood. Guinean-born teachers sometimes supplemented this explanation by mentioning circumcision and the associated education, but refrained from using the term "excision". One dance student recalled teacher Sarah Lee Parker Mansaré referring to excision while teaching about *Soli* in Seattle, but this never occurred during my attendance in any classes, regardless of the teacher. The exclusion of detail stemmed from a need for brevity in the short time of a dance or drum class, from simplified language translation, and from teachers' understandings that their students might feel uneasy about the practice.

In casual conversations, Seattle-Guinean drummers and dancers suggested to me that, while distressed at the continued practice of FGC in places like Sundiya, they perceived that the cultural and physical distance of Seattle from Guinea lessened their concern. Partial contextual information and transposition of staged representations developed for ballet performances and in urban professional settings further disassociated the music and dance of *Soli* from its rural origins and associations with FGC. Furthermore, drum and dance during the *solì ci* in Sundiya did not take place at the *fāfa*, but in public areas away from the liminal space. In Seattle, scene participants did not seek information on or try to emulate the songs or movements performed by the initiates. This enabled *Soli* to function in dance classes in Seattle as a vehicle toward social cohesion through the emergence of cumulative liminality, and without requiring participants to address aspects of the ritual context of the *solì ci* that they might otherwise problematize.

## **Closing**

The mirrored liminalities at the *fāfa* contributed to the *solì ci* being the emotional apex for tourists in the One World Dance and Drum tour group. There, the liminal was simultaneously a performed state of being and an object to be toured. Three tourists faced across from three *solimamusolou*. The tour facilitators stood behind the tourists, acting as ritual emcees. So, too, did the *séma* act as ritual emcees for the *solimamusolou*. I, standing a few feet away from the entrance to the *fāfa*, exerted an ethnographer's gaze on the Sundiya women, the tourists, and the facilitators. Lanciné Keïta, just behind me and also filming, exerted a local gaze on the entire tour group, myself included.

The One World Dance and Drum tour group at the *solì ci* in Sundiya served as an exception to tourism scholar Frans Schouten's (2007) conclusion that tourism producers in

Africa who provide access to circumcision rites in attempts to appease tourists' desires for authentic experience generate embarrassment for both the tourists and the local population. The Sundiya women sang songs indicating that they were thankful for the respectful attendance by the foreign tourists. The tourists sensed a feeling of pride among the *solimamusolou*, and the other local women at the *fáfa* expressed their thanks and happiness that the tourists came to visit them at such a special time. While unsure of the meaning and implications wrapped up in their own presence, the tourists came away from the *fáfa* with an experience that they described as being generally positive, if emotionally taxing. Further, the tourists experienced the event as historically-grounded, sacred, supportive, and intimate. The tourists, the facilitators, and the local people collectively supported this interaction.

The *solí ci* operated as a mechanism for the generation of social cohesion among cohorts of women coming of age in Sundiya. Performance of *Solí* in Seattle represented a recontextualization of music and dance derived from the *solí ci*. Foreigners in Sundiya, both from within Guinea and from across the Atlantic, injected valuable energy as they danced in a spectacle for the local residents. Perhaps most remarkably, when inserted into the Sundiya context, music retained its anticipated functionality despite transformations due to national and urban staging and global transmission. Just as the *fáfa* resonated with a harmony of complimentary subject positions, music and dance at the *solí ci* in Sundiya and the performance of *Solí* in Seattle demonstrated breathtaking consonances.

## Epilogue

Throughout this dissertation, I have analyzed how music and ritual (broadly defined) functioned in the creation and negotiation of relationships in the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene, finding that issues of sameness and difference played pivotal roles. Central themes in this dissertation have included issues of power, agency, authenticity, and community, all of which related to forms of ownership that I detailed in the Introduction. Chapter 1 included analysis of the power relations and expressions of agency in romantic relationships between foreign tourists and Guinean tour staff during camps in Guinea. Even as economic power dictated asymmetries in the expressability of agency, those with control often took ownership of their position, working to undermine their own privilege in attempts to foster more trusting relationships with their loved ones. Here, my analysis of the role of romance as a mechanism for community growth and its impact on people in the scene is novel in ethnomusicology, and extends a handful of studies in anthropology (especially Ebron 2000 and Bizas 2014) and performance studies (especially Johnson 2012).

As I argued in Chapter 2, social bonding occurred in particular and exclusive ways as participants emplaced themselves and one another through practices of drum and dance in classes in Seattle. In order to successfully experience the spontaneous *communitas* offered by collective performance, participants necessarily had to take ownership of the practices that they embodied, and yet many were compelled, not only to accept, but to assert their own lack of cultural belonging. My interpretation of performance as travel constituting tourism “at home” for dancing and drumming participants constitutes an original contribution to ethnomusicology, providing a starting point for thinking about ways that musical participation operates as a kind of

consumption of the Self through embodied emplacement. The liminality of classes was such that social cohesion depended upon the realization of three forms of “same difference”: translatable same difference, racial same difference, and a same difference of a mutual non-ownership of Guinean cultural expressions.

In Chapter 3, building from the third sense of same difference, that of mutual non-ownership, I examined the consequences of interactions between individuals who recognized divergent parameters of ownership in the sense of authority and rightful possession. The Malinké police joined other non-Guineans in the scene in denying their own personal ownership of Guinean cultural practices. However, they asserted a kind of authority-by-proxy as they deferred to their own understandings of musical practices learned from high-profile Maninka teaching artists and their apprentices. Whereas most non-Guineans deferred to any Guinean, the Malinké police did so only to those who demonstrated particular aesthetics and sufficient competence. As such, they interrupted the emergence of *communitas* between non-Guineans, performing a kind of “different difference” in relation to Guinean artists.

Difference played central roles in Chapter 4, where I examined facilitators’ roles in manufacturing and catering to tourists’ desires for unique and out-of-the-ordinary experiences. Due to segregation and control, tourists not only experienced difference from their daily lives, they also confronted differences between Guineans and themselves. Furthermore, I show that facilitators emphasized difference by clustering wealth with discontent and poverty with joy in attempts to inspire personal transformation in tourists’ lives, and to promote avenues of aid for Guinean people.

In Chapter 5, I turned sharply from a focus on difference to an emphatic assertion of sameness in recounting our experiences at the *soli ci* in Sundiya. Issues of ownership arose as

the tourists and I variously decided whether or not to attend, to record the event, and to share our experiences at the *fáfa*. While some felt responsible to act as witnesses, others refrained from communicating about the event with anyone who was not present. Even in an event so far removed from the dancing tourists' quotidian lives, and from my own, they and I recognized similarities of experience across the imagined cultural divide. In framing my analysis in this way, I aimed to hold myself accountable for my own philosophical alignment with Kofi Agawu's (2003) advocacy of an emphasis on sameness, and not simply on difference, in African musicology. The mirrored liminality at the *fáfa* in Sundiya articulated this sameness in terms of experience and of intragroup subject positions. Despite moving back and forth between Seattle and rural Guinea and undergoing numerous transformations along the way, the music of *Soli* remained viable in all contexts as it moved between rural Guinean and Seattle, again signaling similarity. Finally, I find sameness in the parallel functionality of ritualistic dance classes performing *Soli* in Seattle and the ritual of the *soli ci* in Sundiya.

When discussing my experiences at the *fáfa* with non-Guinean participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene, they consistently and sadly remarked on the absence of straightforward transitional rites of passage in their lives. In this dissertation, I have attempted to suggest that participation, not simply in camps in Guinea, but in all manifestations of the scene, functioned as a surrogate for the liminal experiences that many of my collaborators felt were missing. This is not to say that I believe that performance practices associated with or occurring in Guinea have especially inherent potential for community-building or personal transformation. I do not believe that to be true, and do not want to reinforce the essentialist perspectives toward Guinea and Guinean people that I have implicitly problematized and critiqued throughout this work.

Still, for most, participation was not merely leisure time, a break from work and responsibility. It was challenging, intimate, unusual, and resulted in a sense of accomplishment and belonging.

Part of the challenge of writing this dissertation involved navigating the limitations that accompanied my perspective, especially with respect to identity. Were I a fifty-year-old Black American woman, for example, I might have brought in a different set of priorities and insights. Likewise, I might have balanced the weight of themes differently were I a newly-arrived Guinean expatriate, a longtime devotee of a single drumming teacher, or an avid instrument builder. My identity as a White American male ethnographer also shaped what and how my collaborators shared with me. In rare and extreme cases, participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene denied my request for interviews based on my positionality or identity.

Like me, many of my White collaborators experienced uneasiness regarding the impact and meaning of their own participation, especially in teaching and public performance. Some White participants declined opportunities to perform publicly, arguing that White bodies (including their own) should not be seen onstage as representatives of African culture.<sup>77</sup> One White dancer named Sharon experienced increasing discomfort after reflecting on one of her first performances as part of an ensemble that did not feature any Black participants:

“The audience was one hundred percent African American. There were all these little kids who were like: ‘Oh, this is African’. They had, in their child minds, the experience of seeing this deep symbol of appropriation. It was a big deal for me to see that; or, think about it later, anyway” (2014: Personal Interview).

Here, she imagined into the eyes of children a view of White participation in African-derived performance as negative. Concern with appropriation dominated Sharon’s memory as she problematized the decoupling of Blackness from Africanness in drumming and dancing.

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<sup>77</sup> Occasionally, I heard this stated in the reverse. That is, White participants elected not to perform publicly, arguing that more Black bodies—and not fewer White bodies—should appear on stage.

Like Sharon, I recognized that my presence in classes or on stage, if perceived as a White body representing a Black performing art, might be emotionally injurious to some participants or audience members. I felt personal unease while performing publicly, especially in costume. And yet, I continued to do so because rehearsal and performance with *Denbaya* provided me with opportunities to have additional experiences with participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene. I also often found it personally rewarding in a purely musical sense. Learning and playing music in an ensemble setting was satisfying in and of itself. Furthermore, I was capable of successfully performing the musical arrangements, making me an asset to Manimou and affording me the ability to repay him for the access that he gave me as a researcher in his classes.

As I addressed in Chapter 2, Guinean-born artists in Seattle asserted that participation should not be restricted by identity, only by interest, ability, and comportment. They invited White and other non-Black performers into their ensembles, and articulated a rhetoric of inclusion. Sharon found that encouragement by Guinean-born people allowed White people to ignore the wishes of Black Americans who problematized their participation:

“I’ve heard directly and very clearly from African Americans, from one person in particular who was willing and patient enough to give me forty-five seconds of their time and say: ‘Look. I’m going to lay it out for you.’ (...) She ticked off a list of the things that were African or African American innovations that White people now are the most paid for, effectively. (...) She’s like: ‘This art form, here—this drum and dance—is my cultural ancestry. You want to have my cultural ancestry from like 700 years ago, also?’ She stacked it up in this argument that made it feel to me like some people think that, no, it is not for everybody” (Sharon 2014: Personal Interviews).

Sharon distinguished herself from all other collaborators in my research in that, after engaging in conversations with Black American participants who voiced their disapproval of White participation, she withdrew entirely from the scene. Sharon asserted that permission to participate from an African-born person did not negate or supersede the concerns of Black American people, even if those concerns yielded requests for White absence:

“I wanted to behave in a way that allowed this voice to be heard instead of replicating the behavior, one more time, of a White person telling a Black person: ‘Your voice doesn’t matter here, so I’m just going to continue on with what feels good to me. If you’re furious and irate, that’s your problem’” (Sharon 2014: Personal Interview).

Sharon disengaged from the Seattle-Guinean scene—and from participation in West African drum and dance more generally—due to her concerns over the impact that her presence had on Black Americans. She framed her withdrawal in terms of weighing personal experiences of joy and permission from Guinean-born people against objections by Black Americans. Sharon did not claim that disengaging from the scene earned her the moral high ground, acknowledging that abstinence was not necessarily the only or best decision for everyone. Given her ethical concerns around race and privilege, she found that stopping drumming and dancing, activities from which she derived great joy, was her best option.

So many people—White people, or non-African American people—hinge their ethical argument on: ‘Look. I’m not racist. Here’s this Black man saying that I have his permission’. I wish I had the language to really briefly encapsulate why I think that that is not permission” (Sharon 2014: Personal Interview).

Sharon’s experiences resonated with my own insofar as I found that White participants cited permission from Guinean-born artists as relieving them from at least some of the ethical problems of participation. However, whereas Sharon racialized permission-seeking, I found that most White participants viewed ownership on a cultural and geographic axis, scaled at the level of the nation and coinciding with the boundaries of the same difference of mutual non-ownership examined in Chapter 2. None of my White collaborators proposed that permission from a Black man provided a pass for a White person to participate in a Black art form. Instead, they believed that a Guinean-born man’s permission provided a pass for a non-Guinean to participate in a Guinean art form. Nevertheless, like Sharon, I seriously considered the possibility of no longer participating in the Seattle-Guinean scene on multiple occasions. Even as I perceive the Seattle-

Guinean scene as an emergent culture produced by all of those involved, that does not change the fact that others perceive me as participating in a representation of Guinean, African, or Black culture.

Given that I am familiar with and understand racialized problematizations of my participation in the scene, I am confronted with an interesting ramification of my work. If White participation in the Seattle-Guinean scene rendered symbols of cultural ancestry unavailable or impotent for Black Americans, then my adherence to an ethnomusicological methodology including participant observation can be understood as potentially unethical. Upon reflection, I remain uncertain about my research in this regard.

With this ethical ambiguity intact, I nonetheless recognize that aspects of my methodological approach constitute a meaningful contribution to the field of ethnomusicology. Although not unique in the broader humanities and social sciences, my extended dialogic approach, checking and rechecking the accuracy of interview quotes as well as my interpretation of those quotes in light of other data, remains atypical within ethnomusicological scholarship. I found the approach to be especially valuable in that it raised my awareness to potential negative impacts of my writing. In addressing sensitive issues, I always attempted to craft writing that avoided ethical judgment of personal motivations while communicating my honest assessment of the processes and impacts of people's individual and collective actions. Even so, my collaborators pointed to aspects of my writing that they perceived as unfair or unnecessary. The dialogic process allowed me to make changes that mitigated problematic passages that I could not have recognized otherwise. That being said, the process also enabled me to realize that the limits of my perspective are such that I have almost certainly included (or failed to include) interpretations that scene participants find objectionable.

In any given performance, you have to do the best that you can based on the tools that you have. It is crucial to find common ground with the people around you and their expectations. Ideally, everyone needs to have a meaningful experience. I sought and received substantial feedback while preparing the ethnographic performance that is this dissertation. While there were often disagreements, corrections, or addendums, my collaborators overwhelmingly expressed to me that they drew value from the process, learning things about themselves along the way. Despite the partiality of the analysis offered in this dissertation, I sincerely hope that the participants in the Seattle-Guinean scene who read it will find it to be meaningful.

Implied throughout this work has been a consideration of people in motion. People moved their bodies as they danced and drummed. People moved to locations in Seattle, the surrounding region, and to Guinea. People moved between regions and across oceans to act as dance and drum representatives. They moved to new stages of their lives and toward alternative ways of knowing and being in the world. Crucial in all of these movements was that people made them together. They played drums and danced together. They congregated together to share the close air of drum and dance spaces in Seattle, or the dusty heat in Guinea. They moved from Guinea to Seattle together as couples, entering into relationships with one another that allowed for the constitution, invigoration, and transformation of the Seattle-Guinean drum and dance scene.

**Appendix 1: Lyrical Transcription, Translation, and Meaning of Selected Songs Performed  
by Women at the *Fáfa* in Sundiya**

[Song 1]

*Ayé bikèlou kônô waxi gnimalé musolou hôrôyala*

*Woté musolou hôrôyala*

*Woro tan dé musolou hôrôyala*

*Ayé bikèlou kônô dimille billet lé musolou hôrôyala*

*Woté musulo hôrôyala*

*Woro tan dé musolou hôrôyala*

*Hé doutylé*

*Dounigna musolou tôrônin*

*Musolou tôrônin*

*Worotan dé musolou hôrôyala*

Literal Meaning:

Men today think that good fabric (or ten thousand Guinea Francs) will make a woman committed. It doesn't make them committed. Ten kola nuts makes them committed. Sector chief, women of the world are suffering. Only ten kola nuts can make them committed.

Figurative Meaning:

Communicates the importance of resisting potentially attractive substitutions, such as expensive fabric or money, for traditional courtship practices that guarantee commitment.

[Song 2]

Call: *N'Mariama lé*

Response: *Mariama*

C: *N'Mariama siré*

R: *Mariama*

C: *D'en bèrè lanin fowwaba téma bamba yatala Mariama*

Literal Meaning:

My Mariama

My Mariama

The good child was laid down in the center of the treeless field

The Crocodile is taking [the child]

Figurative Meaning:

Do not forget to take your daughter to be excised.

[Song 3]

*Sandô mólou yira wolou yéléra*

*N'ba wolou makis side n'séma yéé*

*Doula mólou yira wolou yéléra*

*N'ba wolou makis side n'séma yéé*

*N'ba Marien kassira kanafô*

*Gnin gnin gnin*

*N'ba fouré ko toro djina koyé*

Literal Meaning:

The people of the hill went up and down. They didn't cry from the *séma*.

The people of the valley went up and down. They didn't cry from the *séma*.

Marien is crying: "*gnin gnin gnin*"

We thought it was a problem with the ancestors, but it isn't.

It might be a problem with a *djina*.

Figurative Meaning:

Most *solimamusolou* do not have complications due to their excision. Marien is a hypothetical person who is crying while with the *séma* (ritual teacher). Here, the *séma* operates as metonym for the *kennadjeli*, who performs the genital cutting. This song communicates that, when complications occur, it is important for the family to receive consultation and/or perform

sacrifices to account for wrongdoings of ancestors, or to determine if any family members have had interactions with *djina*. [This song, perhaps unintentionally, works to resist the medicalization of complications from FGC].

[Song 4]

*Linsan woulén miyé gnama*

*Kouna ni I mayé foni I massé*

Literal meaning:

The red hat is in the tall, useless weeds.

If you haven't seen it, you haven't gone far enough.

Figurative Meaning:

Participating in the *solì ci* provides access to shared knowledge and understanding that is not otherwise available.

[Song 5]

*Fonin kala yémbè Koroba lé*

*Fonin kala yémbè*

*Hali mô ma fonin kala yém,*

*I sa kètén fonin kala yémbè (Koroba fali)*

Literal meaning:

Koroba (girls name), look at the fonio (grain) harvester. Even if you haven't seen the fonio harvester, you should do what the fonio harvester does. (Koroba donkey)

Figurative meaning:

It is important to watch how other people behave. If they behave in a way that is positive and good, imitate them even if you don't understand. (Light insult directed at a hypothetical girl to try to emphasize that she has not yet learned to imitate productive behavior).

## Glossary of Terms

*Bilakörö* – uncircumcised child

*Dankun* – the place where genital cutting occurs.

*Dundun* – cylindrical drum with skin heads on both openings, played with and without bells

*Dundunba* – lowest-pitched *dundun*; a “family” of musics and dances associated with initiation, conflict resolution, and reenactment; an showcase for urban professional artists

*Fáfa* – the place for resting after genital cutting, and the base of operations during the liminal phase of the *solí ci*

*Kenkeni* – highest-pitched *dundun*, also commonly called *Kensedeni*

*Sangban* – middle-pitched *dundun*

*Solí ci* – the events and time of the separation and liminal phases of the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, literally translates to “penis cutting” or “foreskin cutting”, used among Maninka people in the Kissidougou region of Guinea for both genders

*Solí* – term adopted to denote specific drummed music played to accompany singing and dancing during a *solí ci*, and to describe dance as practiced in staged settings and in dance classes

*Solima* – name given to child after it has been determined that they will take part in the *solí ci*, pl. *-lou*

*Solimamuso* – name given to female initiates following the genital cutting procedure, pl. *-lou*

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