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Music, masculinity, and tradition: a musical ethnography of Dagbamba warriors in Tamale, Ghana

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Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

MUSIC, MASCULINITY, AND TRADITION:

A MUSICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF DAGBAMBA WARRIORS IN TAMALE, GHANA

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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DEDICATION

For Amy, Lucy, and Greta.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As my good friend Fatawu is fond of saying, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Thanks are due to the sapashinima of Kakpagyili, Tamale, most especially Mba Buaru Alhassan Tia, Wulana Adam Baakɔ, and Kambon-naa Sheru. My friends and research assistants of many years Fuseini Suloɣukongbo Abdul-Fatawu, Saeed Alhassan Dawuni have been indispensible to the success of this project. The late Kasul Lun-naa Alhaji Abubakari Wumbei Lunna and his family also provided me with invaluable advice, information, and points of entry into their culture. I am also grateful to the late Zo Simli Naa Susan Herlin, Wyatt MacGaffey, Simli Lun-Naa Yakubu, and the staff at Zo Simli Naa palace for their kindness and hospitality.

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KARL J. HAAS

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Chronic unemployment and decreased agricultural production over the last two decades have left an increasing number of men throughout Ghana's historically under-developed North unable to meet the financial and moral expectations traditionally associated with masculinity. Paralleling the liberalization of Ghana's political economy over this period, this "crisis of masculinity" has resulted in unprecedented transformations in traditional kinship structures, patriarchy, and channels for the transmission of traditional practices in Dagbamba communities. Driven by anxieties over these changes, Dagbamba "tradition" is being promoted as a prescription for problems stemming from poverty, environmental degradation, and political conflict, placing music and dance at the center of this discourse.

Music, Masculinity, and Tradition, investigates the mobilization of traditional music as a site for the restoration of masculinity within the Dagbamba community of northern Ghana. Drawing on eleven months of participant-observation conducted with Dagbamba warriors in Ghana's Northern Region, archival research, and ethnographic interviews, this dissertation explores the relationship between performances of traditional

music, preservationist discourses, and the construction of masculinity in the first decades of the 21st century. Through analyses of the warriors' ritual performances, including sounds, movements, and dramatized violence, I ask how traditional ideals and contemporary realities of Dagbamba masculinity are constructed, negotiated, and reinforced through performances of traditional music, suggesting links between the "iterative performativity" of the ritual and evolving constructions of gender.

This dissertation offers insight into the musical construction of masculinity and the place of "tradition" in the 21st century. It also challenges over-determined notions of power/resistance through a critical evaluation of traditional musical performances as sites for the negotiation of ideas about gender, power, and history in contemporary Africa.

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This text uses the International Phonetic Alphabet, including several non-Latin letters to render Dagbanli words.

ŋ – pronounced like “ng” in “becoming”

ɔ – pronounced like “aw” in “hawk”

ɛ – pronounced like “e” in “bet”

ɣ – pronounced similar to “g” with glottal stop

Introduction

> There used to be a head of the family who had control of every resource in the family. Today, it is not there. Resources are now individually owned. There used to be a common pool—farming season, we would all gather to go to my senior father's farm, my uncle's farm. And in the evening, they would prepare a meal and serve everybody. The boys were about three to a bowl. We used to eat together. Today, go to my senior father's house in the village here—you cannot get it. If you go there you will see this woman preparing for herself and her children, and this woman preparing for herself and her children. Family unity is not there. This is because it is not my senior father who gives them the chop money these days.
> […]
> I was telling you that men are no longer men, where a man was supplying all the basic needs of the children—food, shelter, water in the family—. Families are broken down because [men] cannot provide for the family anymore. There are cultural issues that will come—let's say my dad is supposed to lead the family to do a particular cultural performance. Economically, he is not empowered. What happens? He forgets that particular performance. He abandons it, and what happens to the tradition? It has died as a result of poverty.
>
> You are doing *kambonlunsi*, and even *baŋsi*, they will praise our great parents who had a legacy of outstanding performances. We cherish those people. What are we doing today to maintain that, or even create it? We don't have it….
>
> John Issah, 12 June, 2014

This dissertation explores a resurgence of ancestral practices and values in early 21st century Ghana, focusing especially on the mobilization of traditional music and ritual for the production of masculinity. It is based on fieldwork among the Dagbamba community in and around the city of Tamale, the capital of Ghana's Northern Region, between the years 2006-2014. My analysis links the loss of strong patriarchs in Dagbamba households to anxieties over social and economic changes that are being interpreted as the loss of culture, as the absence of male role models is resulting in a break in the transmission of traditional practices and historical knowledge. Fueled by radio broadcasts, music DVDs, and Dagbanli-language literature, a growing movement within Dagbamba society is advocating a return to traditional practices and values as an answer to the social and moral problems of poverty, lack of education, inter-generational

friction, and politically-motivated violence. Traditional music—conceived as an embodiment of history and traditional values—has emerged as a central linchpin in this movement.

Questions that animate my dissertation project are: why, now, after generations of the modernizing discourses of development emanating from local, state, and international aid agencies, is a return to traditional values and practices being presented as an effective strategy for meeting the challenges of the present and effecting positive change in the future? Why has music been assigned such high value in this transformation? How is masculinity—and by extension patriarchy—implicated in this discourse? How might we understand these preservationist impulses in the face of global economic and ecological forces? Is this simply an escapist gesture towards nostalgia, or is there an efficacy in this movement?

This movement to preserve Dagbamba traditional culture started at approximately the same time that I first traveled to Tamale to study traditional warrior music in 2006, although I was unaware of it at that time. The extreme poverty I encountered then seemed consistent with everything I had read about the economic and educational development of the North since the earliest days of colonization, but ran counter to more recent developments in the national economy. Juxtaposed with the depraved material conditions was what I saw as the richness of Dagbamba culture, to say nothing of the congenial demeanor of the people I encountered. What I came to realize after subsequent research trips (2007, 2009, 2013, 2014) was that the level of material poverty was a relatively recent phenomenon, dating to the late 1980s and early 1990s, and that the traditional

practices that constitute Dagbamba "tradition" were only then beginning to come back after a long period of decline. As I will argue throughout this dissertation, these two trends of material decline and traditional impoverishment are inextricably linked.

The epigraph opening this chapter is illustrative of the link between economics and the performance of traditional customs. It presents complex linkages between poor agricultural yields, the decline of patriarchal authority, the breakdown of family unity, and the abandonment of "tradition." Above all, it is a condemnation of men "are no longer men" because of their inability to provide the most basic necessities—a list that includes food, shelter, and water, to which might be added school fees and healthcare—for their wives and children. While I agree that this inability of men to "be men" has caused changes in cultural practices and structures of power in Dagbamba communities (labeled by many in Tamale as "culture loss"), it is my contention that a crisis of masculinity (Cleaver 2002a; Cornwall 2003; Lwambo 2013; Silberschmidt 2007) has been the catalyst for a movement to rekindle and preserve Dagbamba traditional practices. In the chapters that follow, I argue that renewed interest in traditional music and dance is part of a collective effort towards restoration—the restoration of a sense of the proper order of things, predicated on an ethics whereby youth follow their elders and elders provide guidance for the youth, and communal harmony is privileged over individual freedom; the restoration of masculinity for a community lacking men capable of "being men" in the current climate of economic hardships.

In my discussions of traditional culture, I adopt the Dagbanli term *kaya* to refer to the practices and values that Dagbamba interchangeably refer to as "tradition" and

"culture" when speaking English. Kaya refers specifically to legacies of the ancestors, rather than a time before, and thus, opposed to, modernity. Configured in this way, the practices and teachings categorized as kaya are facilitators of social relationships between the living and the dead, and the past and the present. Traditional music and dance, as manifestations of kaya, are viewed as embodiments of a constellation of histories and relations between people, the land, ancestors, and God,[1] as well as the values that inform these histories and relations.

In this dissertation, I focus on the specific sounds and movements of one Dagbamba performance genre, called *Sapashin-waa*, as an embodiment of kaya. The center-piece of my analysis is the musical ritual of the Dagbamba warriors, which I argue creates a subjunctive, "as if" (Seligman 2008; Seligman and Weller 2012) space for elder and youth masculinities to be enacted as they "should be," temporarily unencumbered by the financial struggles which make "being a man" so difficult in the present moment. As recapitulations of ancestral practices and generators of clearly defined social hierarchies, these performances restore order to the Dagbamba social world, and produce idealized versions of the men they and others wish them to be.

Traditional music and dance performances, more so than any other venue or field of practices, are critical to this project of restoring masculinity. In Chapters 3 and 4, I argue that Dagbamba masculinities are multiple, and that there are many "ideal" types of masculinities to which men may aspire: bureaucrat, politician, businessman, imam, and pastor are but a few of these. However, for men like those with whom I studied—that is,

[1] The vast majority of Dagbamba are Muslim. Some follow pre-Islamic religious practices, and some have converted to Christianity.

men without formal education, professional credentials, and access to capital—these types of "modern" masculinities were unavailable. Traditional music and dance performance genres like Sapashin-waa offer such men an accessible path to social manhood, status, respectability, and social capital.[2]

The present work shows the continuing relevance of traditional—in this case, precolonial—cultural forms in the lives of 21st century African subjects as they negotiate a thoroughly modern existence as citizens of a postcolonial nation-state and participants in the global economy. The problems the men in this case study grapple with are rooted in late 20th century neoliberal political economy: the privatization of land and previously-public utilities, the growth of the cash economy requiring English-language education and certification, the emphasis on the individual subject over the collective, and the "feminization" of government and NGO development initiatives (James and Etim 1999). The music of Sapashin-waa, the warriors' ritual *Gun Gon*, and the broader world of kaya, are key components of how my interlocutors choose to address these recent phenomena.

In recent years, there have been several valuable contributions to the study of African music which concentrates on the urban cosmopolitanism of the works' musical subjects (cf. Plageman 2013; Shipley 2013; Feld 2012; Turino 2000). This dissertation attempts a counter-narrative, directing our attention to the musical world of Africa's other 70% (*African Business* 2015)—those who make their livings in agriculture, who maintain

---

[2] Pierre Bourdieu writes that social capital is "made up of social obligations ('connections'), [and] is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (1986, 47).

powerful material and spiritual bonds with natal villages, and for whom the cultural forms of their ancestors maintain a meaningful presence in their social and economic lives.

Methodology

During my fieldwork in Tamale in 2013 and 2014, ominous talk of the Dagbamba "losing their culture" was coming from all angles—radio personalities, locally published books, pop songs, the older drummers I played and studied with, the young men who worked as my research assistants. This may seem easy to dismiss as the talk of conservative men uncomfortable with changes in the power structures of Dagbamba society amidst the advance of women's rights and increasing globalization,[3] manifested in the presence of Western culture and values. It would certainly be naïve to state that this doesn't play a part in the "culture loss" rhetoric. These concerns were shared, however, by such a large number of youth and women—the very demographics supposedly empowered by such changes—that I became convinced that there was more to this movement to preserve Dagbamba tradition than simply complaints about the loss of power among men.

When I first arrived in Tamale in June 2006, a government ban on drumming and dancing had just been lifted after four years following the burial of the Dagbamba

---

[3] I am drawing on anthropologist Marc Abélès who defines globalization "as the acceleration of capital, human beings, goods, images, and ideas. This intensification of interactions and interconnections produces relationships that transcend traditional geographical and political boundaries. […] Globalization affects societies by redesigning both global and economic space and power configurations; it filters into our daily life through the circulation of images and objects of consumption…" (2010, 6–7).

paramount chief. (In March of 2002, Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani II was assassinated in an assault on his palace in Yendi by fighters loyal to the rival Abudu family, an attack widely believed to have been coordinated with leaders in the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which had been Ghana's governing party at the time.) As a first-time visitor to Dagbon, the traditional territory of the Dagbamba chiefs, it seemed like a wonderful moment in which the people and musicians could get back to the usual business of practicing traditional culture, however "invented" it may or may not have been (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012). Looking back over the last ten years of research, the period between 2006-16 has been a critical one in modern Dagbamba history, being a moment of cultural self-reflection in which Dagbamba began to question whether the preceding years of development had brought about desirable results. It is during this time that Dagbanli-language texts and radio shows dedicated to expounding customary practices began proliferating, and in which traditional performance practices have come back into vogue among Dagbamba youth.

Over this period, I went back and forth between Tamale and the United States five times, spending a little over 11 months in Tamale studying the music and culture of the *sapashinima* (sing., *sapashini*),[4] the warriors of Dagbon. I studied with male teachers, who, in the course of my research proved to be the most respected, and in my opinion the best, sapashini musicians currently performing in Dagbon. I played with their group and others, joining in about three dozen or so funerals, wake-keepings, chief enskinments, and annual festivals. I also conducted interviews with sapashinima, Dagbamba griots

[4] Sapashinima are also called *kambonsi* (sing. *kamboŋa*), especially in scholarly literature. Cf. Haas (2008; 2007), Iddi (1973), H. Weiss (2011), and Davies (1948).

(Locke 1990, 2005, 2013; Chernoff 1985), local radio personalities, and members of youth associations. Interviews were in English, Dagbanli, or a combination of the two. Although I became conversant in Dagbanli, I relied on native speakers to facilitate real-time translation in order to ensure my limited language skills were not impeding my comprehension. Interviews, in both languages, were often conducted with a research assistant, either Fuseini Abdul-Fatawu (Fatawu), Saeed Alhassan, John Issah, or Zo Simli Lun-naa Yakubu. Dagbanli interviews were later translated from the recordings with one or more of my assistants.

I lived for a time with a senior drumming chief, who immersed me in the world of chiefs, elders, and a conservative view of Dagbamba tradition. After his death in 2008, I didn't know where I would stay, or how I would regain access to such a trove of esoteric history and custom. His death, however, forced me to seek new avenues of research and allowed me, somewhat paradoxically, to get inside the world of Dagbamba tradition as it was actually practiced by most Dagbambas. Spending time with more reform-minded young people opened up a conception of tradition as malleable, dynamic, and relevant to people dealing with globalization and the exciting but unfamiliar cultural and political forms that have come along with it.

The warriors with whom I studied and performed music, the young men who became my friends and research assistants, and the majority of people I interacted with in the course of my research were men. This was due, more than anything else, to the fact that as a male, I had access to the social world of men to a much greater extent than I did to the world of Dagbamba women. Women are, of course, important actors in the "social

world of men." I interacted with women daily, frequently engaging neighbors and businesswomen around town in conversation, and conducted a limited survey that solicited women's opinions on the value of traditional culture in their lives. The lack of female voices, however, presents a gap in this dissertation's claims to knowledge about the world of Dagbamba music and ritual, and is one I hope to bridge in the coming years.

In 2013, though, it occurred to me that my immersion in the world of Dagbamba men could be an opportunity for me to study this world as a gendered—rather than normative—space, and Sapashin-waa specifically as a gendered practice. I first became alerted to the productive possibilities of this path in a conversation with my long-time assistant Fatawu. We had been discussing the hardships of Dagbamba women, especially those in rural communities without access to piped water. We agreed that NGO projects that were empowering women and offering micro-finance loans were on the right path. After all, he told me, everyone in Tamale knows that if you give a woman even a small amount of money, she will use it to support her children, whereas a man will spend it on himself. When I asked why this should be, Fatawu replied, "Because men are wicked."

The problem thus presented, is that of the many men I knew in Ghana (who were presumably being considered more wicked than men on other parts of the world), none of them actually were wicked. In fact, I had seen some of them express grave concern over their wives' working situations and future opportunities for their children. And so the question arose, how were the economic situations of my teachers and interlocutors, as economically disadvantaged men, impacting their families? Together with all of the talk

about the Dagbamba losing their culture, a picture of a "crisis of masculinity" lead to, and eventually precipitated, efforts to reverse a breakdown of Dagbamba tradition.

My own commitments to Dagbamba traditional music, and the socio-political world in which it circulates, are complicated, and are inescapable throughout the pages of this work. I am a fan of Dagbamba music, and have worked in a number of capacities to help my friends and teachers record the sounds, texts, and oral histories that constitute it. I support their efforts to promote their intangible cultural heritage, and I think Dagbamba are justified in being proud of their history.

What I find more difficult, as a progressive American academic, is reconciling my commitments to social justice and equality with what is fundamentally an exclusionary, hierarchical, and patriarchal power structure, and the musical forms that extol its virtues. My way of dealing with this personal tension has been to focus more on the individual men struggling to meet expectations of themselves and their communities, rather than to excoriate the structures of power they navigate along with everyone else. I remain confident that the music and dance organizations provide a net benefit to the Dagbamba people for their capacity to offer meaningful work and positive life lessons for those who might otherwise be considered at-risk youth.

Background Information

The Dagbamba

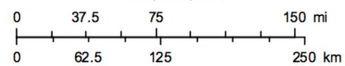
The Dagbamba are the largest ethnic group in Ghana's Northern Region, numbering approximately six hundred thousand (Government of Ghana 2016), almost all

Map 1 Ghana

Ghana

April 14, 2016

1:4,622,324



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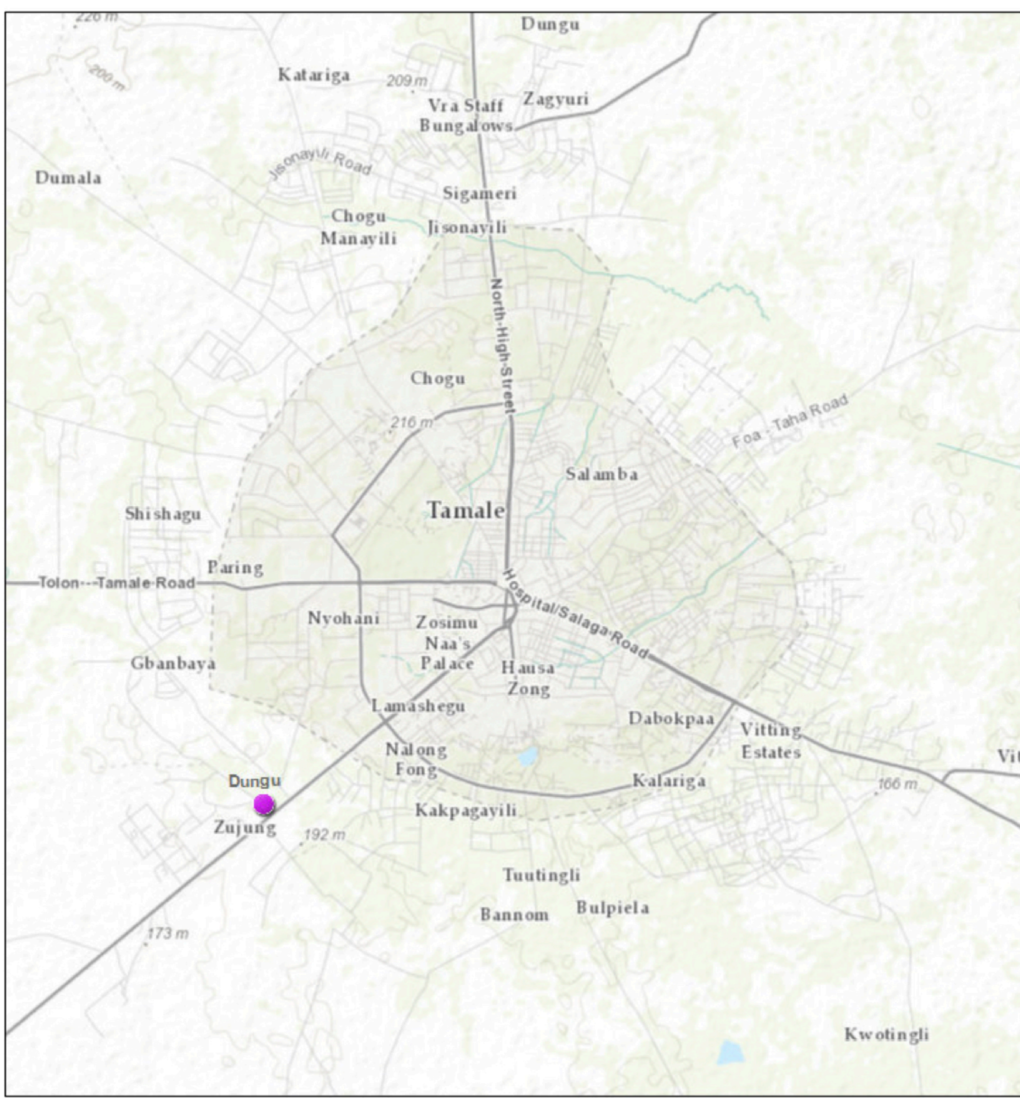
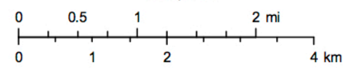
Map 2 Tamale, Ghana



April 14, 2016

1:72,224



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

of whom are Muslim. Most Dagbamba still practice agriculture as their primary means of income, although a host of environmental and economic factors in recent years have made farming less attractive for those with other options to pursue. The majority of Dagbamba today live in the regional capital of Tamale, though frequent trips to rural villages as well as mobile technologies allow most to maintain strong ties to natal and ancestral communities throughout Dagbon. Chieftaincy remains a critically important part of Dagbamba social, political, and ritual life. The office of the paramount chief of Dagbon, the Yaa Naa,[5] "has orders" on all Dagbamba chiefs and is, according to the constitution of Ghana, the de facto owner of all land within the borders of modern-day Dagbon.

Infrastructural, economic, and educational development in the North have been notoriously impeded since the establishment of the colonial protectorate of the Northern Territories by the British in 1902 (Bening 1975, 1976; Plange 1979b, 1979a; Goody 1968), and progress has been slow in the sixty-plus years of independence (Botchway 2004; Brydon 1999; Coleman 2012; Dessus et al. 2011; Lawrence 2011; World Bank 2004). During colonialism and following independence in 1957, Dagbamba were notoriously skeptical of Western-style schooling (Brukum 2005; Pellow 2012), and have only very recently begun sending their children to school rather than to work on farms. As a result, today most adults have little or no formal education, are unemployed and largely unemployable outside of the informal sector. Meanwhile, agriculture is becoming less desirable for small-scale farmers as farm plots are sold off for construction, and

[5] As of 2016, there is no sitting Yaa Naa. The previous paramount, Yakubu Andani II, was assassinated in 2002 and conflicts between competing factions have prevented the selection of his successor.

yields have diminished in recent years as a result of below-average rainfall, soil infertility, and the switch to high-yield seeds, which are poorly suited to the environmental conditions of the North.

As more and more children went to school, fewer and fewer children learned drumming, folktales, the logistics of ritual customs, and the history of their families and of the chiefs of Dagbon. Beginning around 2006, however, young people started coming back to traditional music and dance in large numbers. Youth associations specializing in group dances such as *Takai* and *Bamaayaa* began springing up around Tamale, formed by young men who had grown up without strong affiliations with chieftaincy or other investments in kaya. For the first time in several years, young men sought out teachers to learn the music of Sapashin-waa.

I feel it is important to note that these young people were not forming “cultural troupes” to perform in hotels or for political events, although such groups exist in Tamale and this was an option for them. Rather, these groups perform at funerals, festivals, and other settings where these dances have traditionally been featured. In making this choice, they were electing to enter into a patriarchal socio-political world dominated by chiefs and old men, regulated by social protocols requiring subordination to elders, and adherence to behavioral norms dictated by traditional prescriptions and proscriptions established by the ancestors.

15 May, 2014. Dungu, Tamale.

There had been a buzz about the funeral for the late chief of the traditional area of Dungu for a week or so among my friends and teachers, and so I knew it was likely to be a well-attended event. The chieftaincy title (referred to as a skin because northern chiefs sit on animal skins, rather than stools, as chiefs in the South do) of Dungu—the Dungu Naa—is under the Yaa Naa, the Dagbamba paramount chief, and is therefore seen by many as historically more legitimate than chieftaincies originating from land priests. Dungu is politically important for its position as a stepping stone to higher, more prestigious and powerful chieftaincies.[6] After more than a century of alternating external political regimes—first German then British colonial authorities, followed by a string of six post-Independence governments—the institution of chieftaincy remains central to Dagbamba social, political, and ritual life. Final funeral rites for chiefs can bring out thousands of attendees and numerous performance ensembles to pay respects, to make new and revisit old relationships, drum, dance, or otherwise enjoy themselves. At a time of heightened cultural and political influence from Accra, the West, and beyond, funeral celebrations have become emblematic of Dagbamba tradition, providing opportunities for Dagbamba of all socio-economic levels to re-affirm their ties to their community and ancestry.

---

[6] There are historical and ongoing tensions between traditional rulers who fall within the purview of the (apparently) original chieftaincy system, emanating from the paramount chief, and those rulers who are descended from or installed by land priests, an institution that pre-dates Dagbamba invasion and chieftaincy. The relationship of these two types of leaders is complex, deeply political, and highly contested. See MacGaffey (2013) for a detailed treatment of this topic.

Dungu is the southernmost quarter (*foŋ*; *pl. fonsi*)[7] of Tamale, straddling the Kumasi road on the way out of town. Within the Tamale metropolis, the southern quarters have the highest concentrations of Dagbambas, with several pre-colonial settlements nestled together in a relatively small, densely populated area. The areas are physically attached through a web of dirt paths and the completed portion of the paved Ring Road, and socially connected through webs of friendship, commerce, and family relations.

The Dungu Naa's palace was barely a two-mile *moto* (motorcycle) ride from my house on the Kumasi Road in the Lamashegu quarter, and so my research assistant, Fatawu, and I elected to travel to the funeral directly without going out of our way to meet up with the sapashini performance ensemble, as I normally would have. I had been studying and performing with the warrior musicians of Kakpagyili, Tamale, since first coming to Ghana six years earlier, and I had drummed in dozens of funerals and festivals over this time. We were among several groups coming to Dungu that day from all around Dagbon to pay respects to the skin and the late chief's family through the performance of the Gun Gon, a sapashini ritual in which the warriors dramatically reenact a normative sequence of combat set to music and dance.

The unpaved road leading to the funeral became more and more congested with vehicles, drummers, and pedestrians as we approached the house, so we eventually had to get off the *mapuka* (motor scooter) and push it to a suitable and safe parking space. The

[7] *Foŋ* can refer to a neighborhood, section of a village or town, or a whole city. Tamale is comprised of dozens of traditional areas, formerly independent villages with their own chiefs, drummers, and sapashinima.

entire surrounding area was choked by throngs of people—funeral-goers showing themselves in their finest traditional and Islamic clothing, women and girls carrying goods for sale on their heads, drumming groups praising the ancestors of passers-by. Fatawu and I found a shaded spot under a thatch roof overhang and waited for the sapashini to arrive. That May afternoon in 2014 was a hot one for that time of year. The rains of early Spring had started to taper off after about six weeks of above-average rainfall, and now it was hot again.

After about 20 minutes of waiting, we heard the sound of the sapashinima approaching. The first indication of the arrival of the warriors is always the sound of the *dawulɛ*, the iron double-bell that lays the timeline of the drumming ensemble. The penetrating tone and timbre of the cow's horn beater striking iron is significantly louder than the drums that the bells are ostensibly accompanying, and cuts through the sounds of a crowd, sonically announcing their arrival before they are seen. A moment later we could also hear the drums and women ululating. The driving, steady eighth-note pattern of *Sochendili* (music to accompany travelling) became more insistent, more urgent, more intense as the warriors got closer, goading them all the while, "*Chama, chama, chama, chama!*" (Go, go, go, go!).

I went to meet up with them and began playing a supporting rhythm on my *lunbila*, a small "talking" drum, as I fell in line with the musicians. Abukari, a man in his mid-thirties, had been given the lead drum to play; Buaru, the usual leader of the ensemble and teacher of Abukari and myself was monitoring his protégé's performance from his position among the chiefs in the procession. The unusually high energy level of

this performance was already apparent from the smiles of the chiefs, the faster than usual tempo of the music, and the exuberance of the musketeers and dancers. As the column of chiefs, musicians, and warriors moved slowly into the mass of people, the *Kambon-naa* (chief of the sapashinima) suddenly stopped, spun on his heels, and danced towards the musicians with the vitality of a man half his age. The sight of the chief moving jubilantly in his amulet-covered war tunic and hat sent another charge of excitement through us all, and young men and women sounded their approval, blowing whistles and ululating loudly. The joyful intensity was palpable as the drummers playfully challenged each other to play more forcefully and the crowd urged us on.

As the entourage approached the area for the ritual shooting of guns, the lead drummer signaled us to change the music to *Chokwahili*, the piece that is used to accompany this section of the ritual. Our path soon became impeded by the crowds of people assembled for the event. As ululating women and boisterous young men walking alongside the column of sapashinima began to press in on us, the musicians were soon shoulder to shoulder with the spectators as the area became more and more choked and the crowd more and more animated. After months of hearing from elders that today's youth were too concerned with popular culture and "fast money" to make time to participate in their heritage, the number of enthused young people gathered in that space suggested something quite different.

We slowly circled the small field where the shooting was to take place, and after the third circuit we stopped as the musketeers lined up and fired one after the other. After the muskets were fired for the third time, the ritual reenactment of combat was complete.

The moment immediately following the final round of shots is always the most boisterous moment of any performance, as it was on that day. The young men erupted with cheers, shouts, and crawled on the ground with their guns and clubs in comedic, raucous reenactments of hunting and warfare. They had shown their strength, paid respects to the deceased and his family by providing a vehicle for the community to celebrate, and no one had been injured by the unloaded, but still dangerous, handmade muskets. The event was a success. We began playing *Namyo*, the piece designated for celebration after a successful exhibition, and began walking towards a space that had been set aside for us to drum, dance, and bask in the afterglow of the event. On this particular day, though, we didn't make it that far.

As we moved along, our progress was even more severely impeded than before by the throngs of spectators, who were now mixing in physically with the musicians because the path was too narrow for all of the people. The young men that were walking alongside were bunched up very closely and began raucously pushing each other, partially in a good natured way that exuberant young men do, but also a little too strongly. People were shouting at them to cool down, and to give us room to pass, but to no effect. As the energy and excitement of the young men began to peak, the crowd became "hot," as they say in West Africa, and I began to feel that something bad was about to happen.

As we approached our destination, we came upon the chief of Lamashegu and his retinue of sub-chiefs, elders, and youth. The Lamashe Naa was on his horse, as were two other young men with him, each decked out in fine traditional clothing and accoutrement.

The horses' headdresses hung with fringe that covered their eyes and hung low with bells. Their saddles were beautiful patchworks, with many colors sewn together and embroidered with geometric Islamic patterns and other symbols. Like many horses in Dagbon, the traditional polity of the Dagbamba people, these were trained to dance, and the young men rode them as pranced, hopped, and pounded their hoofs. As our party came closer to where they were, the horses continued dancing, bells jingling, jumping around in what seemed to me dangerously close proximity to a large crowd, including the elderly and children who would be unable to quickly move out of the way. From our vantage point, the dancing of the horses appeared unnecessarily dangerous, and the sapashinima invoked their traditional authority as peace-keepers and entreated them to stop. Members of the two parties began arguing, and then shouting at each other. The pushing from the sidelines escalated and became much more violent, and suddenly the warriors became embroiled in a fight with the Lamashegu youths. The music stopped, and the warriors began brandishing their weapons above their heads, shaking them menacingly. I had seen these same young men behaving aggressively at performances time and again, but I had never seen things become violent. Shots fired out, punches were thrown, and it seemed like tragedy was inevitable. After several minutes of chaos, the young men began to disperse. Somehow no one was severely injured.

The fighting that day had to do with the perceived adulteration of traditional behavior, specifically concerning the use of the horses. The morning following the fight, the Kambon-naa told me that the young people from Lamashegu should never have been on horseback at a cultural event. According to Dagbamba traditional practice, horses are

exclusively for chiefs, and only chiefs are entitled to attend a funeral while riding a horse. He explained that the horses would have been fine had it been the annual Damba festival, but not for a funeral; youth to have attended a chief's funeral on horseback was a transgression of traditional custom that he was unprepared to accept. What had disturbed the Kambon-naa most was that, these days, young people were "taking every cultural event to be the same" (p.c., 16 May, 2014). As an elder and chief, he was frustrated that the practices of important rituals like funerals, chief enskinments, and naming ceremonies were being conflated with those of festivals, with the result that each was becoming an indistinguishable "cultural event."

Interestingly, just a few years prior a drumming chief had complained to me that youth should not be riding horses during Damba, appealing to the same rationale that only chiefs are entitled to do so. The drummer's claim about the degradation of tradition was not based on a supposed homogenization of festivals and life-cycle events, but that "human rights" were now pushing aside tradition. Young people had begun exercising agency in a context where individual agency had until recently been severely limited by the proscriptions of historical precedent. For this senior drummer, these proscriptions were part and parcel of this, or any other, tradition.

For the youth on both sides of the conflict that day, however, the fighting represented a site of negotiation over what new innovations should be allowed to permeate ancestral practices. Innovation has always been a facet of Dagbamba tradition, as ethnomusicologist John Chernoff's key interlocutor Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai pointed

out regarding the music and dance of *Takai* (1979, 62–65). But as Alhaji Ibrahim also noted, innovation has also always been a point of contention between the generations.

The assertion of individual freedom within this sphere is altering Dagbamba tradition in ways traditionalists find threatening to the structures of authority that undergird Dagbamba society. That this is seen to have coincided with a growing litany of social problems, including teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, politically motivated violence, ongoing chieftaincy disputes, and stalled development, I argue, has prompted the movement to re-orient Dagbamba society through a recourse to history and ancestral practices and teachings.

The mounted youth at Dungu notwithstanding, most young people who align themselves with Dagbamba tradition, whether as performers or simply as people who wished to present themselves to me as respecting ancestral values, must sacrifice considerable personal agency in their personal relationships as a matter of course. To walk with the sapashinima requires submission to the authority of the Kambon-naa, his retinue of chiefs, and senior warriors. For the musician, he must follow the direction of the lead drummer and play as he is directed. Hierarchies are firmly entrenched within the ensemble, and for youth this means accepting and performing a subordinated status position. Despite the advance of "human rights"[8] and individual freedoms, participation

[8] Elders in Dagbon often listed "human rights" among the causes of culture loss. This phrase is in reference to laws, and NGO-sponsored programs to spread knowledge about them protecting women and children from physical abuse and guaranteeing their rights to freedom of expression. More conservative Dagbamba men viewed these laws as restrictions on their ability to physically discipline their children, which they believed was resulting in laziness and the disregard for their social obligations. See Piot (2010, 14).

in traditional cultural ensembles appears to be increasing after a period of drastic decline from the 1990s through the mid-2000s.

Theoretical Frameworks

Subjunctive Realities and Distributive Masculinities

My framework for analyzing the Gun Gon in this dissertation is based on the ritual theory of Adam Seligman and Robert Weller (2008, 2012), who argue that the efficacy of any ritual lies in its ability to bring order to an otherwise disordered world "through the construction of a performative, subjunctive world. Each ritual rebuilds the world 'as if' it were so, as one of many possible worlds" (Seligman 2008, 11; see also Seligman and Weller 2012). In the Gun Gon, sapashini men leave the profane world in which their masculinity is challenged by their inabilities to provide adequately for their families, and enter a liminal time and space (Turner 1977) in which they collectively produce masculine identities in line with traditional ideals of powerful warriors and authoritative patriarchs.

The global crisis of masculinity has been addressed by many authors, predominantly from the social sciences. Frances Cleaver (2002b), Paul Dover (2005), and Neil Boyle (2002) have addressed the impacts of male disempowerment, and I follow their example showing the importance of masculinity-affirming practices or spaces for not only men but their communities (see also Cornwall et al 2011; Silberschmidt 2007).

My approach to Dagbamba masculinities is predicated upon two notions: masculinity is not a monolithic conceptualization but exists in multiple forms; and that

masculinities are distributive, inhering in and produced through connections between bodies, objects, sounds, and spaces. The field of men's studies was pioneered through the work of sociologists Michael Kimmel (2012; Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell 2005) and R.W. Connell (2000; 2005) who were the first to develop models for the study of men as gendered subjects. Connell's model of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities has long been a standard for analysis of men's identities (2005), though debates continue over the relevance and usage of "hegemony," "dominant," and "subordinate" in contemporary studies of men and masculinities (Beasley 2008b; 2012; 2008a; Jefferson 2002; Messerschmidt 2008). In particular, historian Stephan Miescher has questioned this model's applicability to Ghana (2005), and Africa more generally (Miescher and Lindsay 2003). I share Miescher's concern that labeling one type of masculinity as hegemonic, for example, "chief," does not allow room for other high-status masculine identities to which men may aspire, such as "pastor," "imam," or "assemblyman." Furthermore, the types of masculinities to which young men may aspire are not always the same types that older men may seek to acquire.

My framework for analyzing how these different masculinities are produced draws from Joseph Campana's suggestion that masculinity is better understood as distributed—enacted through networked actors—than as an aspect of individual identity (2015). He writes that

> More interesting, here, than the question of which of these styles of masculinity is dominant or hegemonic is the question of how masculinity comes to be distributed across multiple bodies and as such comes to be constituted in a set of transactions…. (692)

This redirection of focus, from performativity to distribution, not only stipulates that masculinities are produced through personal interactions but also invokes Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2005), calling attention to how objects, spaces, sounds, and non-human entities function as collaborative actors in constructing masculinities. When Campana writes that "Masculinity is shared across bodies. The individual self or the individual body is not necessarily a standard, or even useful, unit of measure of masculinity" (2015, 692), he suggests that what gender studies needs is a broadened scope away from performance and performativity (cf. Butler 1993), or even identity, towards a focus on networks.[9]

It is important to differentiate between my uses of the analytic of performativity and the related concept of performance.[10] Performativity, and the adjective performative, have been theorized by John Austin (1975) and expounded upon by Judith Butler as "the iterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (1993, 2). I use the term "performance" to refer to the physical and corporeal *doing* of something, whether drumming, dancing, greeting, praying, etc. Centered on bodily praxis, a performance may be public or private, and may or may not be discursive (see Taylor 2003, 6). My purpose in drawing on network theory is not so much to refute performativity *per se*, but to argue for the importance of looking beyond discourse to the

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[9] I do not share the same concerns over the notion of masculinity as identity as Campana, who, rightly in my opinion, rejects a definition of identity which includes "the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness" (2015, 692; quote from OED "Identity").

[10] As "performative" has been claimed for discursive practice, Taylor suggests using the term performatic (based on the Spanish performático) to denote the "adjectival form of the nondiscursive realm of performance" (2003: 6).

material world of objects, actions, sounds, and movements in the construction of masculinities.

Throughout, I focus on the formation of masculinities in music and dance performance; in Sapashin-waa, this is a process that happens largely among and between men. Though women only rarely participate in Sapashin-waa as musicians or gunners, women are not absent during these performances, nor in the performers' lives as wives, girlfriends, mothers, sisters, daughters, etc. I raise this issue to make two points explicit. First, I do not intend to suggest that Dagbamba masculinities exist in a vacuum, that is to say, the feminine identities of women constitute the other half of the gender binary in Dagbamba society. My analysis of the production of masculinities in performance, especially in Chapter 3, centers on inter-personal actions between men, but the Gun Gon ritual is effective precisely because of its public nature, in full view of women, from whom the men's performances of masculinity differentiate them. Second, as participants through dancing, praise-singing, and ululation, women are part of the network of actors producing the masculinities in the performances. The praise-singers, for example, produce the privileged masculinity of chieftaincy. Through ululation, the women in these performances affirm and encourage the masculinities being displayed, thus taking part in their construction.

In Gun Gon performances, a diverse set of male actors—chiefs of various ranks, untitled elders, leading musicians and adepts, grown men and teenage boys—embody and perform masculinities appropriate to each of their stations. These senior and junior masculinities are mutually constituted through personal interactions, mediated by drums,

guns, clothing, and the order in which the sapashinima move within the procession, which identifies their status as senior, junior, master, or adept. Because of the variety of masculine identities on display, multiple levels of social hierarchies, and the hyper-masculine nature of the warriors' performances, the Gun Gon is an especially rich site on which to base my analysis of the distributive nature of Dagbamba masculinities.

Each of the sapashini musicians I studied and performed with were illiterate farmers who spoke little or no English, qualities that severely limited their access to economic resources and opportunities. In 2013, my primary drumming teacher, Buaru, did no farming because he hadn't been able to raise the money to purchase seed and the fertilizer necessary to produce a respectable yield on his depleted fields. Buaru's prowess as a virtuoso drummer, his deep knowledge of the history of *sapashintali* (customs, history, and essence of being sapashini), and the respect he commanded in the social and ritual sphere of Dagban kaya, however, were unparalleled. According to several people I met during my research, Buaru was surpassed in these areas only by his late father, whose drumming had earned him the nickname "the chest" because all who heard him were moved to dance. In Dagbon, he is a "big man" that many young sapashinima seek to emulate as a drummer and selfless teacher. But he is also emblematic of the disempowered small-scale farmer of 21st century Africa, written out of the narratives of economic growth, and the rising middle class, left to the mercies of fluctuating commodities prices and ecological forces beyond his control. For Buaru, and thousands of Dagbamba men like him, the subjunctive world of the Gun Gon has become a critical venue for the production of masculinity.

Kaya, the practices and teachings associated with Dagbamba ancestors, offers these men an entry into a subjunctive world where a clearly defined order is produced. Through re-enactments of various rituals, in dance movements and musical rhythms, and in a thousand performative iterations, gender roles and social hierarchies are re-created in accordance with ancestral values. In these temporary times and places, things are as they "should be." Kaya generates its efficacy through its ability to offer access to an "as if" world that presents itself as more stable and ordered than the "as is" one with which Dagbamba find themselves daily, even though ideas about how the world "should be" may change as contexts shift and generations turn over. But these roles and hierarchies, and their attendant practices and politics, are not stable formations. As we saw in the fighting at the chief's funeral in Dungu, youth continue to struggle with elders, and reformists with traditionalists, over the boundaries of this subjunctive world. The sapashini ritual of the Gun Gon emerged in response to a need for a world in which warriors remained powerful and necessary at a time when colonial pacification threw their utility into question. This same ritual has subsequently been re-purposed since the turn of the past century to respond to a new need—concerns that men are failing in their fundamental responsibilities to properly provide for their children and dependents.

Disjunctive Temporalities

All along the main thoroughfares and backstreets of Tamale, or the feeder roads leading to and from the villages and smaller towns in the region, travelers are inundated by sign-posts advertising NGOs, development projects, or illustrated political slogans.

Along with ads for mobile phone companies and political parties' candidates, the NGO signboards are a ubiquitous and visible part of Tamale's physical and political landscape. Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Net Organization for Youth Empowerment and Development (NOYED), and hundreds of other NGOs advocating for social development, youth development, and economic development have posted their names and mottos throughout Tamale. A 2012 election ad for NDC presidential candidate John Mahama promises "Jobs. Stability. Development," while the opposition party's signs assure "Freedom in Development." President Mahama's domestic policy is officially branded "The Better Ghana Agenda," an optimistic spin on an implicit admission that the future will be better than the currently inadequate situation of the nation. Ghana's pre-occupation with the promise of the future goes at least as far back as Kwame Nkrumah's famous slogan, "Forward ever, backward never!"

Plate 1 Development sign-posts

Plate 2 Development sign-posts

For Dagbamba in the 21st century, a growing disenchantment with the politics of the future has given rise to a movement that places the past at the center of a strategy of restoration—of masculinity, of social order, and an ethics of inter-relationality between generations. At the heart of this movement are the music and dance forms handed down from past generations, and the cultural events at which they are performed. In theorizing the forces driving Dagbamba to turn to cultural forms associated with the traditional past of their ancestors, I focus on this traditional turn's capacity to produce new narratives for its adherents in a moment of "disjunctive temporalities," by which I mean the friction produced by competing worldviews alternately trained on the past and the future. I borrow both concepts from Charles Piot, who described a situation in northern Togo in which the direct inverse has been happening—a radical rejection of "untoward pasts" in exchange for the promise of the future (2010, 20). In his study, the formerly-traditionalist Kabyle people from Togo's northern hinterland have been converting to Pentecostalism in a move that Piot interprets as embracing future-oriented narratives relating to End Times, salvation, and Euro-modernity. As much as this move is an embrace of the future, it is equally a rebuke of a past rooted in dictatorial control by "traditional" village headmen. Piot argues that

> Today, a diffuse and fragmented sovereignty [NGOs and churches] is replacing authoritarian political culture; tradition is set aside and cultural mixing looked down upon; Africanity is rejected and Euro-modernity embraced; futures are replacing the past as cultural reservoir as the state retreats from the region. (16)

The social afflictions to which preservationists in Dagbon are reacting are intertwined with the imposition of state and non-state actors which has resulted in

frictions with indigenous values, such as community-based subjectivities (Fortes 1987) and chieftaincy (Staniland 1975; MacGaffey 2013), and prevailing configurations of power. The chieftaincy crisis has been exacerbated by maneuverings of national political parties; the Guinea Fowl War was fought over control of land, newly privatized and placed in the hands of paramount chiefs by the constitution of the Fourth Republic in 1992; the introduction of unfamiliar, high-yield seeds replaced crop strains that were better suited to local soil and climatic conditions; the expansion of school enrollment and the proliferation of NGO-sponsored youth empowerment programs placed the youth outside the sphere of control of the elders, placing them instead on a trajectory of "development" that neither the state, the market, nor international agencies have been able to sustain. The path towards development and modernity for Northerners seemed to be accelerating, but in each case—multi-party democracy, market liberalization, modern agriculture, education, so-called "capacity-building"—these "advancements" have come with a cost. Violence, family and community disharmony, and increases in poverty rates have accompanied this march into what had been presumed would be a better future.

Dagbamba have begun seeking new narratives as they become tired of waiting for promises of earlier narratives to materialize. I contend that kaya is also a social movement, being a reaction against the individualism that has been encouraged by the free market, and the depravities that many Dagbamba feel have been brought upon society as a result. As the Ghanaian state and society have become more and more enmeshed in global networks of culture and economy, the preservation movement represents a recalibration, not out of rejection of globalization but, as my informants

explained, in order to re-locate a moral compass and strengthened sense of self that would help them navigate this exciting but uncertain new reality.

The attractiveness of kaya in the 21st century lies in the capacity of practices such as the Gun Gon to generate narratives for people attempting to negotiate a world of unprecedented promise and personal freedom, but which has proven elusive and threatening for many. Performances of Sapashin-waa present the possibility for a reconciliation of the "disjunctive temporalities" of the present moment—the optimistic, future-oriented teleologies of "development," Western-style education, and NGO-sponsored programs aimed at empowering women and youth, on the one hand; and subordination to elders, gender- and age-based obligations to kin, and a sense of moral certitude equated with the ancestors via narratives of the past and historical origins on the other hand. According to the narrative building on the past, the knowledge of history and the performance of tradition are seen as key components in building a sustainable future for Dagbamba culture and society. Interestingly, some of the preservationists I knew and interviewed framed the urgency of restoring the ethics of the past using the language of "development." They believed that the discipline and morality that were the ostensible by-products of showing respect for elders and kaya were critical in producing better educational outcomes, promoting entrepreneurship, sustainable agricultural practices, and advancing maternal and natal wellness (for example). If only Dagbamba would look to the teachings of their ancestors, the reasoning goes, the problems of underdevelopment would work themselves out.

In defiance of decades of future-oriented narratives, the movement has caught on, I believe, because it allows local actors to create their own locally-informed narratives, responsive to each community's social and political needs. For Dagbamba critical of the adoption of foreign values and laws, "…the contemporary narrativization is empowering in a way that the earlier one was not, precisely because it is seen and experienced as self-authored" (Piot 2010, 62). Kaya is being promoted as an integral element of development, a tool to facilitate engaging the future with the necessary skills and moral integrity to contribute to the economy and society while retaining a sense of Dagbamba identity. But, it is a development defined in local terms, offering a narrative that is attractive because it is intelligible to the Dagbamba actors involved in this movement.

This dissertation is an investigation of how Dagbamba men, especially youth, are attempting to cope with a socio-economic situation in which their ability to be the men they and others expect them to be is severely inhibited, viewed through the lens of the performers and performances of Sapashin-waa. As they struggle to feed their families, or to acquire the means to start one, to accrue social standing appropriate to their age-sets, and to become contributing members of their communities, the men I worked and performed with had embraced traditional performance genres as a way to generate social capital in the absence of economic opportunity (Bourdieu 1986). For these men, and others like them throughout Dagbon, the time-tested and reliable practices and values of the past—embodied in the rhythms, rituals, historical recitations—seem a more secure path and comforting narrative than the once promising future-oriented narratives proffered by politicians and countless NGOs.

Scholarly Contribution

This dissertation contributes to scholarship on music in Africa; music and masculinity; and debates over tradition and modernity in Africa. Ethnomusicologists John Miller Chernoff (1979, 1985, 1997, 2013) and David Locke (1982, 1990, 2005, 2013) have published extensively on the music, traditions, and social importance of Dagbamba (Dagomba) drummer/griots, called *lunsi* (sing. *luŋa*). Jacqueline Djedje's work on Dagbamba fiddlers (2013, 1980) joins Chernoff's and Locke's in showing the importance of history in producing political and cultural legitimacy in Dagbamba society. My dissertation extends these scholars' work by introducing the culturally significant music of the Dagbamba warriors (sapashinima) and updating the contemporary contexts in which traditional music circulates in the 21st century. My focus on men and masculinities complements the recent work by Katharine Stuffelbeam on Dagbamba women's song (2012, 2014).

Ethnomusicological studies of masculinity have been few. Henry Spiller's *Erotic Triangles* (2010) and Alisha Jones's "Pole Dancing for Jesus" (2014) show ethnographic analyses of the construction of masculinities through music and dance. I depart from both in that the present work does not treat sexuality, but rather focuses on the limits on and possibilities for agency afforded by music and dance for economically disempowered men, as does Louise Meintjes in "Shoot the Sergeant, Shatter the Mountain" (2004).

My work also engages the work of ethnomusicologists who have written in recent years on traditional music as practiced and experienced in contemporary Africa. James Burns (2009), Steven Friedson (1996, 2009), and Kofi Agawu (1995) have shown the

continuing social, political, and spiritual relevance of traditional music in Ghana, demonstrating the ways that contemporary actors adapt and update precolonial music and dance forms for the unique challenges and opportunities of the times in which they live. My approach to Sapashin-waa builds on these interpretations of contemporary traditional performances.

Eric Charry (2000) and Daniel Reed (2003) have critiqued divisions between tradition and modernity in the music and lives of contemporary Africa. Charry notes that, even as the terms "traditional" and "modern" represent "non-exclusive dualities" rather than a temporal and political rupture (see Geschiere et al 2008; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993), these terms nevertheless function to make "meaningful distinctions" for Africans (Charry 2000, 24). My position is in agreement with both Charry and Reed, who states that

> Regardless of their origins in European/North American social evolutionary discourse (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: xii), these terms 'traditional' and 'modern' hold currency for my consultants, who imbue them with new nondichotomous meanings as they use them to interpret and understand their world. (2003, 64)

I find discourses opposing tradition to modernity unproductive for my research project. When Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye argues that tradition is an articulation of a unique take on modernity (1997, vii), he is expressing a sympathy with the idea of an "alternative modernity" (cf. Gaonkar 2001). This line of argument locates indigenous conceptions of the present within the Euro-American ontology of modernity, when it is equally accurate to place these contemporary cultural adaptations within the frame of "alternative tradition" (Quintero, p.c.). "Alternative modernity" places African

realities within a Western frame: this is a discourse very much of and by the metropole (Agawu 2003). By employing the Dagbanli term *kaya* to refer to practices and values attributed to ancestors, I follow the ethnographic tradition of generating theory from local onto-epistemologies (Da Col and Graeber 2011; Henare et al 2007; Condry 2006; see also Mauss 1979; Strathern 1988). Kaya transcends Western conceptions of before and after by placing the origins of cultural forms in the unspecified past of ancestors, whether recent or ancient, highlighting a reliance on locally-informed knowledge.

Another point of departure from the above-cited works, as well as many other important contributions to the field of men's studies (cf. Connell 2000; Seidler 2006; Kimmel 2012) is my reluctance to problematize masculinities by critiquing the discourses that produce what can be a limited and problematic gendered identity. Beyond my lack of faith in the efficacy of scholarly "critique" to bring about the more just and egalitarian world for which it ostensibly aims (cf. Wark 2014; Latour 2004; see also Sedgwick 2003), I am more interested in investigating how masculinities are musically produced and understanding the attractiveness of patriarchy for at least some segments of a quickly liberalizing population.

Following literary theorist Joseph Campana (2015), my conception of masculinities is one in which gendered subjectivity is distributed across a network of human and non-human actors. Anthropologist/sociologist Bruno Latour (2005; see also Law 2009, 2002) has suggested that the entirety of the social world is constituted by a network (Actor-Network Theory) of humans and objects acting upon each other. Philosopher Manuel DeLanda has similarly argued for the acknowledgement of the

interaction of human and non-human actors in the construction of social reality in building on Gilles Delueze and Felix Guattari's notion of the assemblage (De Landa 2006, 8-13; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 88–91). My analysis of the processes by which masculinities are produced in the Gun Gon ritual draws upon both approaches, demonstrating that gendered identities are distributed across, and generated through, bodies, sounds, spaces, and material objects (see also Miller 2005; Banerjee and Miller 2003; Warnier 2001).

My work seeks to intervene in the sub-field of men's studies which looks specifically at the Global South (cf. Jones 2006). Scholars working on men in development have drawn attention to the urgency of the global crisis of masculinity, arguing convincingly that men's concerns are society's concerns (Boyle 2002; Bujra 2000; Cleaver 2002a, 2002b; Cornwall et al 2011; Gutmann 1996). My dissertation seeks to show that for the Dagbamba, the disempowerment of men is not simply a matter of men's fragile egos in a time of female empowerment, but is about a society grappling with the re-ordering of what gender means, viewed locally as the most fundamental element of identity.

The work on men and masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa highlights the unique political and economic situations of men navigating a world in which deeply entrenched ideas about gender roles are being altered by forces beyond their control (Arku and Arku 2009; Cornwall 2003; Luning 2006; Matlon 2011; Morrell and Ouzgane 2005; Ouzgane and Morrell 2005; Silberschmidt 2007; Dover 2005; Weiss 2009; Bolt 2010; Overa 2007). Others working on masculinities in Africa have shown that previous models of

"hegemonic" and "subordinate" masculinities fail to capture the plurality of male identities to which men may aspire (Carton and Morrell 2012; Hodgson 2003; Meintjes 2004; Miescher and Lindsay 2003; Miescher 2005; Uchendu 2008). Like these works, I aim to show my male interlocutors as subjects dealing with varying levels of agency and power.

Chapter Layout

In Chapter 1, I explore the discourse of cultural preservation in Dagbon, and explore the place of kaya and history in this discourse and in Dagbamba social life more broadly. In probing some of the media voices leading this movement, I examine differing meanings and uses of kaya across different constituencies, asking how socio-economic status affects individual orientations to kaya. Chapter 2 examines the music and instruments of Sapashin-waa. I offer a history of the music and present evidence that the Gun Gon ritual took on its present form in the early 20th century, arguing that, beginning in the 1990s, the ritual began taking on new significance and urgency as a generator of masculinities. I present drum language referencing historical people, places, and events, pointing to how these texts are able to remain meaningful for new generations of sapashinima. I render the language in Western musical notation, but my focus is explicitly on the texts rather than the rhythmic or melodic underpinnings of this complex music system.[11]

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[11] Rhythmic and structural aspects of Sapashin-waa are addressed in my MA thesis (2007) and article (2008), and inform significant portions of a forthcoming article on rhythm and space in Dagbamba drumming genres.

Chapter 3 presents an analysis of a particular Gun Gon performance that took place April 17, 2014 in the village of Yemoo, north of Tamale. Through a close reading of the sapashinima's performances during a Gun Gon ritual, I outline the various ways that junior and senior masculinities are distributed across a network of bodies, sounds, objects, and spaces. Chapter 4 addresses the youth contingent of the cultural preservation movement, focusing specifically on two sapashini drummers in their 30s. Situating their lives within the tumultuous history of the North over the past twenty years, I show that ostensibly independent young people are choosing to enter into subordinating social relationships associated with Sapashin-waa because kaya offers life benefits and opportunities unavailable to them through the state or market economies.

CHAPTER ONE

Nooyuli Diri Noo

(The Termites Are Eating The Fowls)

In the music video "Nanima" (lit. *Chiefs*), Dagbamba pop singer Sister Zet issues an endorsement of traditional values through a critique of contemporary northern Ghanaian society, taking on the seemingly diverse socio-economic problems of the region, including poor healthcare, unemployment, and the lack of security (Sister Zet 2013a). Singing in six different languages accompanied by English subtitles, she addresses a multitude of Northerners—living and dead, male and female, young and old, professionals and farmers, chiefs and commoners—in several locations and time periods throughout Ghana. Following traditional praises for the late Dagbamba paramount chief, calling him *tia ni mohu-lana*, lord of the trees and grass, she runs down a list of troubles facing Northerners, including the Dagbamba, her own ethnic group: poor harvests, low market sales, house fires, traffic accidents, unemployment, diseases, and the general difficulty of earning a livelihood. With heavily auto-tuned vocals, accompanied by a programmed beat and electric guitars, she begs the historical and living chiefs of Ghana's northern kingdoms to rise and alleviate their people's suffering, singing "*Ti tamila ti piligu*" (We are forgetting our origins).

The video is loaded with traditional gestures and iconography, proverbial praises for northern Ghanaian chiefs, and visual and lyrical references to the mythical origins of the empires of the Voltaic Basin, including the Gonja and Mossi-Dagomba states of Dagbon, Mamprugu, Nanumba, and Mossi (Fage 1964; Iliasu 1970; Delafosse 1912;

Davis 1992). Sister Zet is dressed in locally made Dagbamba cloth, called *chinchina*, or *binmaŋli* (lit. the real thing), which is worn by Dagbamba women at traditional events as symbols of Dagbamba culture. Two female dancers, a common trope in Dagbanli music videos, are also wear binmaŋli, and a man dances in a traditional outfit of smock, hat, loose-fitting pants, and riding boots. A *luŋa* drummer, the musician-historian and ultimate symbol of Dagbamba tradition (Locke 1990; Chernoff 1985), is also featured, although the drum does not figure prominently in the music. Wearing locally made cloth, alternately standing in front of and prostrating herself within chiefs' palaces, Sister Zet expressly links northern Ghana's social and economic hardships with the abandonment of traditional values and disregard of the received wisdom of the founding ancestors.

Throughout "Nanima," Sister Zet appeals to the mythical founders and contemporary chiefs of the kingdoms of the North, asking them to intercede in fixing the social issues of contemporary life. In successive verses and scenes, the singer prostrates herself at the feet of Dagbamba, Gonja, and Mamprussi chiefs, the *zongo* chief of Kumasi,[12] and sings to images of the Asante and Mossi paramount chiefs, addressing each chief in his own language. In a segment addressing a Mossi chief, she is sitting atop a horse holding a spear, an image most Dagbamba will recognize as an homage to Princess Yennenga, the female warrior and sister to the first Dagbamba chief, who begat the Mossi kingdom hundreds of years ago (cf. Fage 1964). The Northern chiefs, and the founding ancestors to whom they are linked through their political offices and their

[12] Hausa, community of Hausa residents, but within Ghana may refer to any community of Northern Muslims, such as those in Kumasi and Accra, as well as the Hausa and Mossi zongos in Tamale (Schildkrout 1978; Friedson 2009).

bloodlines, symbolize *kaya* (sing. *kali*).[13] They are the living personification of the values, knowledge, ethics, and practices associated with better times, juxtaposed with contemporary problems that have proliferated in their absence. Following verses directed at the chiefs, she addresses doctors, the police, and the army to ask for their help in bringing health and security to the region.

Within the past decade, a grassroots movement to preserve Dagbamba culture has gained steam amidst fears that traditional practices are in danger of extinction.[14] Locally published books, in Dagbanli and English, describe various customs, give instruction in the telling of folk tales, explicate proverbs, and provide historical accounts of traditional music and dance genres. Over the airwaves and in home DVDs, teachers and musicians deliver exhortations on the virtues of respecting community elders, or give advice on how a man may court a woman in accordance with tradition. These mediated messages are part and parcel of a larger popular anxiety surrounding what many see as negative changes in society. Especially during my research visits in 2013 and 2014, and much more so than in 2006-07, people repeatedly complained to me about the increasing loss of what are regarded as traditional customs, social protocols, and cultural art forms. While it may seem a stretch to suggest that low agricultural yields and a stagnating Northern economy are the result of Northerners turning away from kaya, and that strengthening the patriarchal authority embodied in chieftaincy could alleviate such problems, Sister Zet is by no means alone in articulating this connection. Indeed, "Nanima" is but one

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[13] I will use the plural form kaya rather than the singular kali throughout this dissertation in an effort to minimize confusion on the part of the reader.

[14] Haruna Mohammed Mburdiba cited one UDS study that determined that Dagbamba culture would be extinct within 10 years unless action was undertaken to intervene (interview, 19 February, 2014).

instantiation of a growing discourse calling for a re-engagement with Dagbamba history and traditional culture—kaya—as a means for combatting the issues outlined above.

In conversations and interviews, both men and women expressed to me the concern that Dagbamba society was at a crucial juncture in its history. I heard again and again, in person and through media, that moving forward requires a closer engagement with the past. This first chapter sets out to explicate this apparently contradictory rationale by asking how various constituencies of Dagbamba society collaboratively produce, consume, and value tradition in the first decades of the 21st century. The questions this chapter asks are: What is "tradition" in the 21st century? How is it produced, and by whom? Why does it continue to matter to so many, and for whom does it matter? And why has the discourse on tradition taken on such urgency at this time?

I suggest that the indigenous concept of kaya—rather than the empty signifiers "tradition" or "culture"—is the key to appreciating how Dagbamba actors negotiate the contradictions and ambiguities produced by the pervasive juxtaposition of "tradition" and "modernity" in everyday life. Understanding kaya requires attending to its temporality, especially the performative and repetitive nature of Dagbamba customs and lifeways from rituals to gendered labor, from family names to musical grooves. History, presence, repetition, and citationality are crucial to the understanding of how and why kaya is produced and imbued with significance, and they provide the theoretical groundwork for asking why it is being invoked so strongly now. My aim is to explore how tradition, culture, and history are understood and practiced by contemporary Dagbamba in order to probe the logic undergirding the prescription of precolonial values and practices for

coping with the decidedly modern issues of education, political economy, global warming, and national politics.

I will also show how those involved in the preservation of Dagbamba culture approach tradition with differing, though frequently overlapping, investments and interests, and that these variously positioned actors together produce the contemporary "world" of Dagbamba tradition (Becker 2008; Barth 1993). Any given chief, business person, praise-singer, or market trader may be active in maintaining ties to traditional culture, but each is likely to have their own sets of reasons why they might observe, modify, or ignore one or another custom (including funeral attendance, keeping taboos, performing sacrifices, raising a relative's children, etc.). To understand the motivating factors behind what are often burdensome activities and social affiliations we must of course take into account the importance of power, politics, and economics. It would be a mistake, however, to disregard the centrality of the indigenous values of prestige, ancestor reverence, and personhood.

My goal at the outset of this dissertation, then, is not so much about producing a critique of contemporary constructions of tradition, or the various ways that it is selectively invoked in the interest of serving agendas and legitimating power—of men over women, elders over the youth, conquerors over first-comers (Amselle 1998; MacGaffey 2013), or of the state over land.[15] Rather, I wish to explore the multiple significations and applications of kaya by a diverse set of constituencies within Dagbon. To that end, I ask how individuals' affiliations with one or another demographic affect

[15] Chapters 2-4 delve more deeply into critical explorations of gender, political economy, religion, and civil society.

their investments and motivations for promoting or participating in traditional culture. It may seem obvious why a man might favor a family structure in which ultimate authority lies with him, or why a chief may wish to claim exclusive rights to the sale of land within his jurisdiction. What is less clear is why those subordinated by such domestic and legal systems—including Sister Zet, a young, cosmopolitan woman—would also have an interest in preserving them.

My Dagbamba interlocutors simply claimed that practices such as traditional music or foodways, like communal eating, for example, were important because they were their kaya. But this simple statement, of course, belies a complex system of contingent affiliations, motivations, and obligations that cut across the social, economic, temporal, and spatial entanglements that constitute the lived experience of 21st century Dagbamba, as they do all humans. It also conceals the performative nature of specific traditional values and practices. Understanding what is actually meant by kaya—and what is not—is critical to understanding how Dagbamba are conceptualizing, producing, consuming, valorizing, and mobilizing traditional beliefs and practices at a time of great anxiety and uncertainty about the future. I posit that in addition to describing a historically-rooted complex of praxis and knowledge, kaya is being mobilized as an ideology for promoting the development of community and self in local terms.

Usually translated into English as "culture" or "traditions," I believe that kaya is better likened to "heritage," a crucial distinction that I hope to make clear below. This is not a small distinction, and reflects the importance that many Dagbamba place on historical origins and the rationalization of even the most mundane of lifeways. Kaya

generally refers to practices, values, beliefs, or fields of knowledge that are considered to have been passed down from one's ancestors, and can apply to micro or macro levels, ranging from a family heirloom to a professional lineage, language, or chieftaincy. I believe that "heritage" gets into the deeper associations of kaya, as something with a history that has been passed down rather than an ahistorical set of practices and beliefs that are observed without any clear rationale. If we take "culture" to refer to the lifeways of a group of people, kaya encompasses only a sub-section of this category, which of course includes many other aspects outside of the kaya realm, such as mobile phones, motor vehicles, national politics, and the countless other objects, ideologies, institutions, and patterns of behavior—among other things—that have become integrated into daily life in Dagbon. As explained by Haruna Mohammed Mburdiba in *Kpamba Yɛligu* (2014):

> Kali is things said or things done which we consider to be achievements of our ancestors and our artisans, including the work itself and that which is produced by the work. As kali is extensive, it includes gender roles, funeral performances, and whatever else a particular ethnicity/clan does in the course of living. Food and clothing are all inside kali.[16] (17; translation by the author)

As I outlined in the Introduction and will expand upon in the pages that follow, kaya as a conceptual category is contingently applied for a variety of interests, yet I find Mburdiba's definition sufficiently broad to serve as an introduction and I believe most of my interlocutors would provisionally accept this explanation. Significantly, kaya is constituted by the discursive and performative domains of words and actions, including specific types of labor as well as the products of that labor, life-cycle events, gender roles, and any number of quotidian actions and items. "Things said" should be taken to

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[16] *Kali nyɛla yɛli shɛŋa bee tuun shɛŋa ti ni yiɣisi na n-paai ka ti yaanim mini ti banim tumda bee n niŋda ka ti gba doliba n-tumba. Kaman kali soli zuɣu, bɛ ni bɔri paɣa shɛm, kuli malibu, ni din kam kpalim ka zuliya maa ningda bɛ biɛhigu puuni. Bindira mini neenyɛra zaa nyɛla din be kali puuni.*

mean various forms of knowledge and values that have historically been transmitted verbally. This would include, among other things, proverbs, songs, folk tales, advice, religious beliefs, and taboos. To the extent that these forms of knowledge are realized through specific utterances, these "things said" materialize as actions performed, as temporal instantiations.

The critical point, and central to the thesis of this dissertation, is that these words and actions are ascribed to ancestors. This is significant for two reasons. First, by attributing these words and actions to ancestors Mburdiba legitimates them through the demonstration of a historical precedent, thus incorporating them into the realm of ancestor reverence. The importance of this cannot be overstated (DjeDje 2008, 93). Second, he does not locate the origins of these words and actions in time. Inclusion in kaya does not depend on origination in a pre-modern, pre-colonial, or pre-Islamic epoch, but rather in an unspecified past. Over time, through voiced and embodied repetition, these "performative iterations" (Seligman and Weller 2012) have been assigned special significance as they have been reproduced by subsequent generations of revered ancestors through what Mauss labeled "prestigious imitation" (Mauss 1979, 73). The various practices and domains of knowledge that are kaya are validated by history, granted prestige through association with ancestors, and rooted in the indeterminate past. Thus, kaya is not exclusive to a time before colonization, or the nation-state, or capitalism, and so is not positioned by Dagbamba as the obverse of modernity.

Some practices or institutions, such as chieftaincy, may be situated within kaya, but chieftaincy as it is practiced today is a thoroughly modern office. Or rather, it is a

traditional office that has been transformed to one extent or another by the various legal, economic, and social changes that have come and gone since the formation of German Togoland and the Northern Territories at the turn of the last century (MacGaffey 2013; Staniland 1975). All historical sources, including the oral epics told by the drummers, indicate that the role of chieftaincy in Dagbon had been evolving since its very inception (Ferguson 1972; MacGaffey 2013: 6-10). Kaya exists side-by-side with modernity. The perceived threat that traditional culture is becoming extinct is predicated on the abandonment of kaya, *not* the adoption of modern ideas and practices.

On the relationship of kaya to time, the images, sounds, and lyrics of "Nanima" are instructive. Northern traditions, including chieftaincy, clothing, and indirect praising through proverbs feature prominently, but allusions to historical origins are the only references made to the past. Sister Zet's concerns are the challenges of the present. The video is firmly situated in present-day Ghana. The use of digital audio production, like electronically programmed percussion and auto-tune on her vocal track, is consistent with Sister Zet's medium—contemporary African pop. Aside from a few token appearances of Dagbamba and Asante talking drums, she makes no effort to *sound* traditional. This is an important point that speaks to local conceptions of "tradition" and "modernity." Contemporary scholarship on African culture has problematized both of these terms as empty constructions that fail to adequately describe the complex nature of African subjectivity and sociality (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels 2008; Ferguson 1999; Erlmann 1999). However, even critics of these concepts portray them as polar opposites (cf. Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels 2008: 5), between which

contemporary African subjects dynamically and contingently, however thoughtfully, position themselves.

Sapashintali: Being a Warrior

The warriors with whom I apprenticed as a drummer throughout my field research inhabited a social space in which kaya was an integral factor of daily life. The sapashinima were established sometime in the 18th century to serve as royal security for the Yaa Naa and an armed militia to supplement the existing ranks of mounted warriors who fought with bow and arrow and spears. To this day, they are still expected to provide security for their chief and community, and serve under the direction of chiefs and their elders. Many of the men I performed with had accompanied the Kakpag *Kambon-naa* (warrior chief) in raids on Konkomba communities during the Guinea Fowl War of 1994, including musicians who emboldened the warriors with ancestral praises as they fought (Brukum 2001).

One Saturday morning in the Spring of 2014, I accompanied the Kakpagyili *sapashinima* to the enskinment of a new Kpanalana, or chief elder, to the Guma Naa, chief of Kakpagyili.[17] The performance began as most did, at the house of the Kakpagyili Kambon-naa waiting for the chief's entourage of sub-chiefs, musicians, and musketeers to assemble. Over the course of an hour or so, men in tattered smocks and hats, covered in

[17] The Guma Naa is technically a *tendana*, or land priest, and not a chief. He has traditional political authority, but is not within the traditional power structure stemming from the paramount chief of Dagbon. The tensions between chiefs and tendanas, as well as those associated with each system, will be revisited throughout this dissertation. See MacGaffey (2013) for a historical and contemporary account of this relationship.

protective amulets sewn up with red leather trickled in, on foot and by bike, one or two at a time. Young men prepared their gunpowder reserves for the coming ritual shooting while elders sat chatting under the *sampahi*, the shaded area just outside the chief's compound. A little before 9 am, my primary teacher, Buaru Alhassan Tia, invited me to join him on a short walk to a makeshift bar for a drink of *akpeteshie*, a powerful local spirit made from distilled palm wine. As we always did, Buaru and I poured the first few drops on the ground as an offering to our ancestors and swallowed the rest. I bought a few 1oz. satchets of whiskey to share with the other drummers and we were on our way.

Buaru had for several years been the main praise-drummer for the Kambon-naa of Kakpagyili, a very old *foŋ* (neighborhood, or quarter) of Tamale adjacent to Lamashegu, where I stayed for most of my research period. He was a master musician known and respected throughout Dagbon for his facility with a drum and his knowledge of ritual and history, beyond which his jovial attitude made him well-liked. Approximately 50 years old in 2014, he had never attended school and spoke essentially no English. His public life consisted primarily of drumming *Sapashin-waa* and farming, both of which he learned from his father, also a renowned drummer whom I often heard about from Dagbamba villagers old enough to remember him. For Buaru, kaya was a way of life. From his father he had inherited his drum and inclusion in *sapashintali*, and on his mother's side he was related to the land priests of Kpalsi, an old but newly developing area on the northwestern edge of Tamale. His livelihood, his social status and title, and his entire social identity were all derived from his participation in musical and ritual spheres of Dagbamba tradition, and from his ancestor's participation before him.

When we returned from the drinking spot, the group had reached what was deemed critical mass, Buaru took up his luŋa and began playing solo. The lead *kambonluŋa* (warrior-drummer) plays an especially large luŋa, which provides timbral contrast with the rest of the ensemble, allowing his musical commands to be heard through the other drums and bells. Tied under the arm of Alhassan-*bila*, as he was sometimes called because of his small stature, Buaru's drum always seemed especially huge to me. His right hand made his stick dance over the drumhead, showing off his *zambaŋa*, or cat's hand, while his left arm flexed and pulled the tension ropes in perfect timing to manipulate the pitches. The powerful sound he somehow coaxed out of his drum seemed to magnify his stature, and the charisma of his playing commanded the attention of everyone present.

As he played, the assembled chiefs intermittently got up and walked over to him and handed him a few coins, tribute for the musically rendered praises he was bestowing upon them. In contemporary Dagbamba practice, in Kambon-waa or otherwise, the praising of an individual is done through the musical recitation of the great deeds of his or her revered ancestors (Chernoff 1997). These rhythmic phrases and narrative associations bring the greatness of revered ancestors and the sacred power of chieftaincy (*nam*), from which all Dagbamba are ostensibly descended and are thus constituted, into the present. However, this direct confrontation of past greatness is a challenge to the individuals of today, asking whether they are capable of matching the achievements of their ancestors and leaving a legacy worth singing about in the future. The praising works by proxy, through a recourse to history. So intimately connected are a person's family

history and their identity that the exaltation of a person's origins is, in effect, an exaltation of that person. As one friend, a certified accountant, told me, "If you don't know your history, you can't know who you are." Just as important, no one else can know who you are, either.

Praise-drumming is a performative act through which individual personhood is musically constructed. It creates the subject and provides a social identity by naming the ancestors whose blood flows through that individual. They are made to acknowledge who they are, and are embedded within a larger spatial and temporal domain in the presence of their community. It is people's connections to others, in this case familial affiliations, that make up who they are in Dagbamba society, and are what allows others to know them. A person without a family, or without a past, has no identity and is viewed with suspicion. In naming that individual's history, praising provides an identity and affirms personhood.

Buaru's solo luŋa playing was a sonic recitation of historical actors, heroic deeds, and ancestral knowledge associated with various communities, lineages, or chieftaincies. This praise-drumming signaled the beginning of the performance event by producing a liminal moment in which the past, present, and future were brought together, blurring the line between past and future that defines the present. The sounds of the drum created a crossing-over point between the ordinary sociality of the morning and the "subjunctive world" of the impending ritual by making the assembled participants' pasts *present* (Runia 2006).

Like tradition or culture, "history" does not have a satisfactory Dagbanli equivalent.[18] The word *piligu* comes closest, referring specifically to origins and beginnings, and perhaps best reflects the importance placed on historical precedent in understanding contemporary practices. When I would interview drummers about one piece of music or another, they would invariably speak of the events or circumstances that led to the origins of that piece of music. Traditional story telling of folktales almost always is concerned with explaining how one thing or another came to be: *Why does a spider always live in the corner of a room? Why does God live in the sky?* (Yahaya 2010: 12-17; see also Cardinall 1931, chapter 8). Showing connections to precedents set by revered ancestors establishes the legitimacy of social practices and implies the importance of maintaining these practices.

Especially among college educated Dagbamba men, talk about Dagbamba culture frequently boiled down to knowledge about history. They stressed that it was in their history that their culture and unique ethnic identity resided, and feared that a great lapse in the transmission of historical information was threatening to erode their solidarity as a group, blurring the distinction between them and other ethnicities in Ghana. This fear has prompted the creation of radio programs and locally published books detailing histories of the origins of Dagbon, music and dance pieces, and various aspects of daily life, including Mburdiba's *Kpamba Yɛligu*, quoted earlier in this chapter.

[18] The Naden dictionary translates "history" as *lahibali*, but lahibali also translates as news, story, data, or information (2013, 64). The Mahama dictionary translates history as *taarihi yelog'kura* (2010, 327), combining the Hausa word for "history" (itself borrowed from the Arabic *tarikh*) and a Dagbanli term for conversation.

Educators like Mburdiba and Roland Yahaya have determined that the documentation of history is what must be done to preserve Dagbamba culture. Among Yahaya's many publications is an English language book documenting traditional folk tales while also providing instruction on how to tell a story in accordance with traditional narrative conventions (Yahaya 2010). A number of these books are being used as part of the public school curriculum, which includes lessons on the language and customs of the dominant ethnic groups in each school's immediate area. Once the province of grandmothers who told stories to children when there were no other options for entertainment after dinner, folk tales are now being crafted by junior secondary school students as part of their final examinations.

Mburdiba, a radio show host and a school teacher, told me that the loss of tradition was an issue of identity; without knowledge of history, Dagbamba will be left without any sense of who they are or any way of distinguishing themselves from others. This applies to individuals, communities, and the ethnic group as a whole. As educated and cosmopolitan men, the loss of Dagbamba identity in the face of Asante political, economic, and cultural dominance throughout Ghana was a cause of great concern. For middle class men like Mburdiba and Yahaya, traditions are important because they produce group solidarity by distinguishing the Dagbamba from the dozens of other ethnic groups in Ghana. Traditions and customs are important because they mark differences. This concern for distinctions is in contrast with the sapashinima at the Kambon-naa's house, where identity was being generated by the establishment of sameness, through connections to others.

The Importance of History

When I met Alhassan Salifu, better known in Tamale as Kalaala, he was the station manager of Radio Justice and the host of a popular talk show. In the years following the Guinea Fowl War of 1994 (Brukum 2001; Talton 2010) and the 2002 assassination of the Dagbamba paramount chief Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani II (Awedoba 2011), he partnered with NGOs like the UNICEF Human Security Programme to help facilitate peace-building in rural communities throughout Dagbon (see also Staniland 1975; Ladouceur 1979; Schmid 2001; Crook 2005; Talton 2010; Awedoba 2011). He was now dedicating his energy to managing the station and his early morning radio program that he described as "morality talks," which were focused on proper Dagbamba tradition. I had expected him to complain, as many I spoke with did, about the perpetually lagging economy, financial and economic threats to small farmers, and the geo-political fragmentation of the country, in which oil profits and infrastructural investments were kept in the South while the North was kept intentionally under-developed. But Kalaala was far more concerned with what he called "the negative behavior of people, with regards to the traditions of the area" (interview, 13 June, 2014). In his estimation, the current socio-economic troubles facing Dagbon were seen as the spiritual consequences of an indifference to history, delivered as punishment by deceased but always present ancestors for allowing traditions to be corrupted by politics and economics. The pervasive poverty, low educational achievement, and a host of other issues were punishments for allowing national politics into matters of chieftaincy. The most serious

offenses were the assassination of the Yaa Naa in 2002 and the constitutionally mandated practice of chiefs selling the land in their jurisdiction. He told me that

> traditionally, nobody was supposed to sell the land, because when we are hot, it is the land that we will cry to for salvation. And you people say you can't eat your cake and have it. We have sold the land, so how do we pacify the land, or the gods on the land to help us achieve our aims? Everything is scattered. (ibid)

When Sister Zet sings that the people have forgotten their history, she is criticizing contemporary Northerners for abandoning the practices, values, teachings, and collective wisdom of their common forebears--"things said and things done." The issue is not whether people remember their history, but whether or not they are properly applying the lessons of history in decisions made in the present. The concerns she sings about are those of the poor and traditionalist men and women who constitute the bulk of Dagbamba society. Agriculturists, laborers, and petty traders who make their living in the informal sector are the ones who struggle most to gain a foothold in the modern economy and access quality healthcare. It is this constituency for whom the social and kinship networks, channels of knowledge transmission, religious observances, and gender relations associated with their parents and ancestors represent the proper ordering of the world.

It is crucial to note that Sister Zet does not only look to the agents of the past. Doctors, soldiers, and the police, all agents of the modern nation-state, are called upon to take up the values of the Northern ancestors and set about the important work of healing the sick and restoring order in a region where inaccessible healthcare and violence associated with national politics and chieftaincy disputes are continuing issues (MacGaffey 2011; Awedoba 2011). Focusing on issues of environmental degradation, the

depressed Northern economy, healthcare, and security, Sister Zet appeals to the shared history of Northerners to rise above their depressed social and economic conditions by re-engaging with the teachings, practices, and values of their ancestors.

The references to chiefs and origins, and images of traditional clothing and a warrior princess serve the same rhetorical ends as the praise-drumming of the sapshinima. The past is made present so that the living are challenged to act in such a way that measures up to the undisputed greatness of their ancestors. When Sister Zet asks the chiefs to rise from their slumber so that they may put an end to their people's suffering, her requests are veiled challenges to the general population of the North. The chiefs, origin myths, and piligu are representations of kaya, a complex of knowledge and practices that go unnamed, but are assigned value by virtue of being derived from the ancestors. Living according to these values, applying this knowledge for decision making in everyday life, and restoring cultural practices is the answer proffered for the woes that plague most Northern Ghanaians in the present.

By avoiding specific references to the values and practices associated with ancestors, Sister Zet avoids contentious issues such as religion or gender roles. This leaves the interpretation of kaya open, and is sufficiently vague so as to hold meaning for all segments of society. This is not to say that the video's representations of kaya are politically neutral, but the ambiguity of what constitutes kaya allows the viewer to decide how the lessons of history can best be applied in their own lives. For Sister Zet, kaya is an ideology that should inspire the actions of chiefs, doctors, soldiers, police, and all Northerners to improve living conditions throughout Ghana's North. By singing in

Dagbanli, then Gonja, Mampruli, Moore, Twi,[19] and finally Hausa, she constructs an image of a unified community of Northerners who can only meet these challenges through the remembrance of their origins, by adopting an ideology of kaya.

"Nanima" is a critique of the neo-liberal economics and national geo-politics that have increased poverty in the North (Dessus et al. 2011), forestalled development (Botchway 2001), and limited the agency of Northerners to prosper in this political economic system (Bierlich 2007). But it is also a call to action, refusing the patronizing narratives of Western development (cf. Escobar 1995; Kothari 2005), and placing agency—as well as accountability—in the hands of Northerners. Kaya is in this way reconfigured as an ideology for productively engaging modernity in order to realize the promises of development and modernization that state and international organizations have made for decades but have failed to bring about. Beyond the "things said and things done," kaya has become an ethical action strategy that provides for the development of community and self in terms dictated by, and intelligible to, the Dagbamba actors in this movement.

The song ends with a repeating call and response section between Sister Zet and the backup singers, once again in Dagbanli. Sister Zet sings,

Yi bo nuzaa,	(In seeking to know our left,)
Yi bo nudirigu,	(In seeking to know our right,)
Yi bo tooni,	(In seeking to know our front,)
Yi bo nyaanga,	(In seeking to know our back,)

[19] Mampruli, Moore, and Twi are the languages of the Mamprussi, Mossi, and Akan, respectively.

The singers respond after each line,

Ni ti tamya (We have forgotten.)

To "know one's left and right" is an idiomatic expression suggesting presence of mind. Conversely, to not know one's left and right refers to a state of confusion, analogous to the English expression "not knowing whether you are coming or going." So, we can take these phrases to mean, "In seeking to orient ourselves, we have forgotten;" or "Our current state of confusion can be explained by forgetting our history." In this final gesture, the singer, like Kalaala, draws a direct correlation between the observance of history and the condition of Northern society.

How to ride a *mapuka* on rough road

The transportation infrastructure of Tamale and the surrounding districts is no small component of the urgent calls for better, swifter development. A substantial factor in low agricultural profits in the North can be attributed to the expense of getting fruits and vegetables from fields to markets. The transportation costs are so high because of the difficulty of navigating tipper trucks over dirt roads filled with potholes, where large sections have been washed away by heavy rains. To repair rough roads, crews pulverize the top layer of earth on roads connecting rural communities in order to even out areas with holes, which has the effect of creating several inches of loose dust that make getting traction difficult.

The dirt roads are especially treacherous for *mapukas*,[20] the 110hp scooters that have become the transportation of choice for many Northerners. Their engines are weaker, tires are thinner, and suspension less strong than most motorcycles. Potholes, washed out sections of road, exposed rocks, and pockets of sand can easily damage the mapuka and injure the rider and passengers. A mapuka rider has to be extra careful when leaving a paved road.

There are few people that I worked very closely with in Tamale who did not also spend a significant amount of time in rural communities. My friends and research assistants had farms, jobs, parents, siblings, and other familial connections in one or more villages that required their presence fairly regularly, and so they spent quite a bit of time riding between the city and outlying communities. When I began research in Tamale in 2006, it was still very common for young people to ride their bicycles 20 or 30 miles to visit relatives, weed a field, or just run an errand for an elder. By 2013, mapukas had become ubiquitous, at times seeming to be overrunning Tamale. These scooters are much more affordable than motorcycles and have become the vehicle of choice here, providing an unprecedented freedom of movement for young people. But they are not only popular because they are cheap, they are better at navigating the North's rough roads than cars or even trucks because they can easily weave around potholes and even whole sections of washed-out road.

As I learned for myself, there is a technique for successfully and safely navigating rough roads: a mapuka rider has to identify and follow the tracks of previous motos.

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[20] *Mapuka* is the local term for motor bikes that are generally larger than mopeds but smaller than motorcycles. They are also called “motos,” a term which also includes mopeds and motorcycles.

Whether riding around town, where the paths are dusty light brown, or west, towards the villages of the Tolon District, where the dirt is a deeper reddish brown, a rider can discern dark brown trails worn into the road that show where countless riders have been able to pass safely. By following an already proven, well worn track, riders are spared the task of constantly sizing up each pothole, sandy patch, or exposed rocks that can cause bodily harm or expensive damage to his vehicle. If he follows the track, he doesn't need to figure out his own way around each obstacle by himself. The path has been well established, endorsed by previous riders.

In 2014, most of the main roads in Tamale were paved and generally well maintained. These roads are lined with businesses big and small, filling stations, chop bars, vulcanizer's shops, credit unions. But most people in Tamale don't live on the main roads, they live in residential neighborhoods and have to take dirt paths to and from their homes. The moto tracks in these areas are well defined and well known by those who use them everyday. They change over time as puddles block part of the way, or as the landscape slowly morphs from weather and usage, but the riders readily adjust. The materiality of these rough roads is a fact of everyday life for all Tamale residents. Several times a day, as they head to work or to the market, rush off to meet friends or lovers, or carry family members to schools, airports, or hospitals, mapuka riders find themselves in an immediate, tactile relationship with the earth in all its tangible, undeniable bumpiness. The easiest, fastest, and safest way to get to all of these locations is by following in the tracks of people who have gone before.

Throughout Dagbon, especially in rural communities, the ritual and quotidian lifeways associated with pre-colonial times continued longer than in much of Ghana's South, due in no small part to the lack of economic and infrastructural investments in this part of the country. Tamale was transformed from a group of villages connected by a central market into a business and administrative center within only a few years at the turn of the last century (Soeters 2012; MacGaffey 2006). However, in peripheral and rural communities social and material change has been much slower.

And so, in the early part of the 21st century, there are still many elders who grew up in social and material conditions only minimally removed from the lifestyle that predominated before direct European contact. I spoke with some men who believe themselves to be in their eighties or nineties (older Dagbamba I encountered rarely knew their date of birth or age), and they spoke about the simplicity of the "olden times," and lamented the changes that have come to their communities over the last few decades. One man, the chief of Gurugu Yapalsi, a rural village northwest of Tamale, shared his opinions with me about what he saw as the value of the traditional Dagbamba way of life.[21] In the course of our conversation I asked him whether life for young people is better now than when he was a young man. After all, in the last several decades there have been significant reductions in infant mortality rates, maternal mortality, malaria-related deaths, guinea worm infections, and a host of other advances have been made in public and personal health care. He shook his head and replied with a grin that, no, life was definitely better when he was young.

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[21] Interview with Yapalsi,Naa Alhassan, conducted in Dagbanli, translated by Fuseini Abdul-Fatawu, 12 July, 2013.

When he was a young man in the 1930s, young people learned how to live from those who were older than them, through direct instruction, stories, proverbs, and observation. Even today, there persists a conception that there is a proper way to do just about anything, and that one's elders can, and are even obliged to, show one how to properly manage social relations, receive strangers, observe rituals and holidays, replace a roof, cook a meal, raise children, and bury the dead. An important difference between the early 21st century, and when this particular chief was growing up, is that in the past so many aspects of life were decided for you. A man knew what profession he would have because he would learn his father's work, whether farming, drumming, trading, or anything else. Yapalsi Naa learned about his first wife when he was called away from his farm and introduced to her at his father's house. His consent was not sought, nor did he think it should have been.

Living within traditional family and community structures, his life's path was set for him. He knew what to do and who he would be. He felt a sense of security in knowing that he was following a path that had been set out by others who had lived happy and fruitful lives. Today, he told me, young people don't know what to do, which way to go. They are pulled in different directions by school, the media, friends, and the lure of "fast money." The modern social structure offers people the opportunity to make their own choices, which the Yapalsi Naa regarded as a most unfavorable development. The youth were choosing paths other than ones cleared for them by their ancestors over generations, they were abandoning traditional lifestyles, and disregarding their obligations to their parents and grandparents as well as their communities. The result of all of this was

confusion, which produced the poor economic and social situation in which Dagbambas find themselves today.

Like Kalaala, and most of the people I talked to about the place of tradition in Dagbon, Yapalsi Naa commented on the bad behavior and lack of discipline in contemporary youth. As we spoke in his zong, his chickens walked over my recording equipment and backpack, clucking and flapping their wings as they invaded each others' space. The chief gestured toward his adolescent grandson, half sleeping on the floor next to us, and said that in his youth children would have taken it upon themselves to chase the birds outside so that elders could talk in peace; today, young people do whatever they want, and don't consider the needs of their elders. Hearing this, the boy looked up at us, smirking.

Few people anywhere in the world have been spared the complaints of the old regarding the lifestyles of the young, and so the Yapalsi Naa's comments come as no surprise. What may seem strange, however, is that the codgery of an old man in a village is in line with the sentiments expressed in "Nanima," a song by a cosmopolitan young woman. The young people I knew expressed deep respect for their elders and for their traditions. But if Dagbambas had once successfully approached their future through an understanding of their past, many youth I spoke with felt that the world they had inherited was too different from their parents' world for the past to be of much use. Farming had become expensive and financially risky as rains have become less reliable. Drumming was less in demand than just a few years ago now that DJs were in vogue. Most of these young people's parents had not gone to school, spoke little English, and so had little to

offer them as they tried to make lives for themselves in a present without a historical precedent. Many of the young men I spoke to were experiencing a tension between reverence for the old ways and a feeling that new paths were needed in order for them to succeed in contemporary Ghana.

For elders like Yapalsi Naa, the lifestyle of kaya represented a way of life that they had grown up with. He was clearly quite comfortable in his compound of earth and thatch construction, an unambiguously gendered division of domestic labor, and his seat of power as village chief, and he told me as much. I was told that the young women in his house had the same educational opportunities as the men, but with so many dependents and so little monetary income, that didn't amount to much. Most of the economically poor throughout Dagbon are not chiefs, and hold only as much power as their personal charisma allows. They build their homes from organic materials because modern construction materials like corrugated roofing and glass-pane windows are prohibitively expensive, not because of an affinity for tradition. I once commented to my research assistant, Fatawu, on the level of dedication the Kakpag Kambon-naa must have had for his tradition in assembling so much thatch for his roof, to which he replied, "We don't do this by choice. This is by force." Like James Ferguson in Zambia, and likely countless other Westerners in Africa, I had confused the materiality of poverty with a "traditional way of life" (Ferguson 2006: 21).

However, I found a pervasive friction in the interpretation and application of kaya in daily and ritual life, located at intergenerational and class-based levels. It is in this friction that the fluid nature of contemporary usage of the term kaya gets complicated. I

had expected a similar friction between women and men, but found that views on the roles of women varied more with age and education level than between the two genders.[23] The older women in low-income households that I encountered expressed a commitment to kaya at approximately the same level as men (Haas and Dawuni 2014).[24] The differences in each constituencies' (young and old, rich and poor, men and women) investments in kaya were ultimately about choice. For many educated and professional Dagbamba I encountered, *Dagban kaya* (the traditions of Dagbon) was an important ideological concept in understanding their identity and grounding them within spatial and temporal entanglements larger than themselves.[25] Knowledge of their history and kinship relations was key in the formulation of their social and personal identities. Some men who have been successful in business or civil service have even ascended to important chieftaincies. The economically elite are free to walk away from Dagbamba tradition entirely, as many have. For the poor, traditional social and kinship structures remain crucial resources for financial opportunities, communal labor, and food supplies when necessary. For this demographic, an investment in kaya is linked to physical and psychological wellbeing.

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[23] My primary research assistants told me that Dagbamba only identify two genders: men and women. I have yet to meet a Dagbamba who identifies openly as homosexual.

[24] N.B. A friend who worked for an international NGO directed toward poverty alleviation once told me that women in the Northern Region consistently represented far more conservative views on gender surveys than those in Ghana's nine other regions. For example, approximately 50% of NR women surveyed believed that men were sometimes justified in beating their wives (personal communication, 2014).

[25] Dagb., *practices, values, and institutions considered to be traditions, culture, or heritage common to all Dagbamba*; see Chapter 1. I use the adjective *Dagban*, the Dagbanli term for something of or from Dagbon, in this idiom only, opting for *Dagbamba* as an adjective in all other instances in hopes of minimizing confusion.

For the older and uneducated people I knew, including my primary drumming teachers, kaya was materially and ideologically a way of life. Traditional practice and knowledge were defining components of their lives. Through the embodied repetitions of ritual performances, of pouring libations, and the drummed recitation of ancestor's names, a warrior musician like Buaru affirms his connections to networks of people he has only ever known through the musical valorizations his father taught him to play as a boy. His kaya, his personal and ethnic heritage, defines him, his familial and social networks, and structures his relationships within them. Unlike the Dagbamba elites, his affiliation with kaya is about *sameness* rather than difference. Kaya links Buaru to a larger spatio-temporal community of contemporary actors and ever-present ancestors who represent a path to God. The actions and knowledge of these ancestors give order to a world that has shifted under his feet in the last few decades. Unlike the college-educated Dagbamba who maintain only an ideological connection to kaya, Buaru's investment in kaya is total—without it he has no status, no identity, and no source of income.

He has devoted his life to building upon the legacy given to him by his father and his father's father, and it has not been an easy one. As Locke (1990) and Chernoff (1979) have both noted, the vocation of Dagbamba drummers is likened to that of a servant, spent in service to their patrons, their communities, and to their kaya. But the Dagbon of 2014 is not the Dagbon that Locke's and Chernoff's teachers lectured them about. Buaru is a member of what is likely the last generation of drummers to have been groomed for this type of life, as few young people have the time or will to absorb the esoteric

information and ritual knowledge that made their forefathers essential and respected members of society. Sapashini drummers often play for hours on end without breaking, and most make little or no money. Furthermore, several consecutive years of poor rainfall have made farming less productive and the growth of Sunni Islam has contributed to a decline in work for traditional drummers. Performing Kambon-waa is a physically strenuous and financially thankless endeavor, and so young people seeking activities likely to contribute to their financial well-being search for greener pastures. Even for the young men who desired to be a part of the Dagbamba traditional world, they knew that drumming and farming were not likely to lead to a sustainable future for them. Education and wage labor are crucial to earning a living, supporting a family, and becoming what Dagbamba expect a man to be. But as one young drummer told me, "Everyday I go to school, but drumming is not there."

However, many students and laborers participate in Kambon-waa performances when scheduling permits, such as weekends or during school vacation periods. I often played alongside young men who performed when time allowed, and were content to take on musical roles that did not require the deep knowledge of a lead drummer. In fact, it is from this constituency that the majority of participants in traditional cultural events come. Despite ostensible losses in Dagbamba culture, funerals and festivals remain important social events that bring out thousands of spectators from all demographics. As most event attendees come from this semi-traditional constituency, these events will remain important social events only so long as individuals from this group continue to attend.

Conclusion

> I want to say something about the fall of the Dagbon tradition. In every situation there is a rise and fall, and in the olden days, our people used to pray to their gods for them not to experience the day that termites will be eating fowls. You know, we harvest termites for fowls to feed on, but they used to say that, "A time will come that termites will be eating fowls, instead of fowls feeding on termites."
>
> Now, the reason why Dagbon has been endangered is that the aged, because of money, are not respected. And they know the way forward. Our elders told us that we should not in any way turn to be ducks and ducklings. We should live like the hen. The hen takes the lead, and the chick follows. When there is danger, the hen will make – alert the kids that there is danger, and will open the wings, and the young ones will run in for shelter. But the duck—it's the small ones that take the lead. So when there is a ditch, it can fall in, and the old one will call back. In today's world, because of money, the young ones have overtaken, and will not listen to the elderly for advice. The simple reason that they think money is everything. Money is not everything. [...] And that is why I said that our forefathers said that they will not want to live to see termites feeding on chickens. [...] That is the proverb I gave you, and that is what is happening today.
>
> Kalaala Alhassan Salifu, 13 June, 2014

The proverb he references regarding termites and fowls is a commentary on the natural order of things. The idea that the present moment is one in which a social hierarchy that places authority in elders, and by extension the lifeways of those elders, constitutes an overturning of the natural order of the world has gained currency in recent years. A world in which the youth defy their elders is one that is upside-down. The violent conflicts between members of competing chieftaincy gates and political parties, the perception that ancestral knowledge is no longer being transmitted from elders to youth, that young people seem to prefer DJs to drummers at their weddings, or that converts to Sunni Islam refuse to perform sacrifices to their ancestors are all taken as evidence that the natural order has been upset. These issues, together with those outlined by Sister Zet, are being attributed by a growing number of people to the perception that Dagbambas are abandoning the ways of their forefathers.

Kaya is not positioned by Dagbamba as the obverse of "modern." Some practices or institutions, such as chieftaincy, may be situated within kaya, but chieftaincy as it is practiced today is a thoroughly modern office. Or rather, it is a traditional office that has been transformed to one extent or another by the various legal, economic, and social changes that have come and gone since the formation of German Togoland and the Northern Territories (MacGaffey 2013; Staniland 1975). All historical sources, including the oral epics told by the drummers, indicate that the role of chieftaincy in Dagbon had been evolving since its very inception (Ferguson 1972; MacGaffey 2013, 6-10). Kaya exists side-by-side with modernity. Once again, the perceived threat that traditional culture is becoming extinct is predicated on the abandonment of kaya, *not* the adoption of modern ideas and practices. This ideological capacity of kaya is thus a product of an interaction of tradition and modernity.

In the Dagbamba cultural preservationist discourse, the knowledge of history and the performance of tradition are seen as key components in building a sustainable future for Dagbamba culture and society. Significantly, these preservationists often frame this issue in terms of "development." As defined by my friend Fatawu, himself a founding member of a youth development association, development is "anything that brings us closer to modernity." For him, promoting kaya—heritage—was as important as his other development objectives, which also included building a shea butter processing plant and installing solar panels and a water filtration system in his village. For many Dagbamba, traditional culture is seen as an integral element of the modernizing project, a tool to facilitate engaging the future with the necessary skills and moral integrity to contribute to

the economy and society while retaining a sense of Dagbamba identity. Kaya is at the heart of this movement. As a complex of praxis and knowledge, it links present actors to their past. As an ideology, kaya is an ethical action strategy that allows for the development of community and self in local terms, dictated by, and intelligible to, the Dagbamba actors involved in this movement. Kaya, and the honoring of historical roots through embodied practice, is being presented as a prescription for the re-establishment of proper social, temporal, and cosmological relations by actors who have linked a perceived social degradation, to the abandonment of traditional practices.

In Dagbon, history provides an identity. Knowledge of origins validates practices and institutions and explains how things came to be as they are. As I have tried to show in this chapter, history is an integral component of kaya, and a defining characteristic of kaya is its ability to integrate the past with the present. While various constituencies of Dagbamba place value on kaya and are striving to sustain it, their investments and motivations vary. For some, kaya is ideological, representing a moral code and providing time-tested prescriptions for the ordering of society. For others, kaya holds the key to ethnic identity by establishing difference in a multicultural nation. For traditionalists, the above are also true, but the connections are deeper and the stakes are much higher. They are the custodians of centuries-old legacies, and have taken on the responsibility of building upon them and passing them on out of respect and obligation to their ever-present ancestors. Their economic livelihoods and social standing are dependent upon cultural events.

In the overall world of kaya, each constituency contributes to its production, as financiers, event spectators, and producers. The successful performance of life-cycle events, festivals, and chief enskinments often relies on an underclass of musicians who, more often than not, are uneducated, unemployed, and have few options for economic advancement. It is the producers—drummers, singers, and other ritual specialists—who constitute this underclass. What they need to know cannot be taught in local culture classes in school. Methods for performing funerals or other practices that have been deemed Dagban kaya can be learned from books, which can be consulted as necessary, and the history of Dagbamba chiefs and various social conventions can be learned alongside the other subjects in the educational curriculum by men and women who will go on to any number of occupations. The esoteric and ritual knowledge needed to praise the elites and structure funeral rites, however, are acquired only through a tremendous investment of time and energy, and cannot be learned in school.

In this chapter, I have tried to unpack the logic and practices of some of the individuals who have identified what they consider to be a loss of their culture through an analysis of music and discourses around "tradition" and history. I introduced the Dagbanli term "kaya" in an effort to theorize the different approaches, ideas, and investments of these disparate actors to show why and how kaya has been engaged in efforts to remedy social and economic problems. I argued that various constituencies collectively constitute kaya as it exists in contemporary practice, and suggested that despite agreement on the importance of history in the construction of identities, interests and investments in kaya vary across demographics. I also showed that for Dagbamba,

tradition and modernity are not oppositionally situated, arguing that despite its necessary affiliations with the past, kaya takes on value through its ability to do work in the present. Having established the discourse and contexts of kaya, the following chapters examine contemporary warrior hood through analyses of history, political economy, and Dagbamba masculinity.

CHAPTER TWO

Kabira bɛni, saa kani.

(The destructive juju is still here, but there is no war.)

In the previous chapter, I argued that a social movement was underway in the Dagbamba community in which the knowledge of history was being placed front and center in a struggle to determine a way out of social problems that have arisen over the course of the previous twenty to thirty years. Following my Dagbamba interlocutors and local opinion leaders, the knowledge of history was equated with traditional music and dance, which is held to embody the morals and values associated with Dagbamba ancestors of both the recent and distant past (Mburdiba 2014, 17). Through the many musical and textual histories of Dagbon, Dagbamba pasts remain dynamic as situations change and old narratives are enlisted to provide new meanings in unprecedented contexts.

In this chapter, I examine the rhythms and musical texts in the ritual of the *sapashinima*, focusing on the historical lessons, proverbs, and prescriptions for ethical behavior encoded in the drum language and sung texts of the *Gun Gon*. In the previous chapter, I argued that in mentioning the praise-names and great deeds of past ancestors, sapashini drummers and singers brought the past into the present, challenging listeners to live up to their forebears' examples, and that such musical recitations were a "basis for social action" (Chernoff 1997, 7). In this chapter, I will lay out specific texts and names—nearly all derived from battle or otherwise encouraging warriors to the violence

necessary to defeat their enemies—of the most common rhythms in *Sapashin-waa* in order to demonstrate the role of these rhythms in producing the subjunctive world of idealized masculinities.

My approach is to treat the rhythms and drum language as oral history: dynamic, fluid, and capable of being meaningful for new generations, if not always objectively accurate (cf. Wiredu 2009; Vansina 1985; McCaskie 2014; Finnegan 1977; Barber 1991). The point I make is that these drummed texts are a way of creating and also understanding sapashini, and thus, Dagbamba, histories. These texts represent the past by narrating their histories, and at the same time are an embodiment of those histories; the past is brought into the present, and the disjuncture between these temporalities is collapsed. In doing so, I analyze specific examples from three of the five primary musical pieces of the Gun Gon, including descriptions of the musical instruments used and the basic rhythms of each, providing the corresponding Dagbanli drum-language texts where applicable.

In addition to being a site for the construction of masculinities, the Gun Gon has also become socially important as a symbol of *kaya* in the 21st century. As young men and women are being encouraged by radio personalities, teachers, friends, and relatives to discover their roots and to know their history, the Gun Gon and Sapashin-waa offer them access to these narratives of stability in precarious social and economic times.

Origins

In this section, I provide a brief account of sapashini origins because they give us some indication of the origins of the music. As we shall see, the instruments, rhythms, and drum texts show clear connections to Akan music and culture.[26] It seems reasonable to expect that the first sapashini, the Akan migrants, would have incorporated music with which they were already familiar into their new official positions. At least one bell rhythm, from the piece *Chokwahili*, is still performed by Fante *asafo* musicians in southwestern Ghana.[27]

The exact origins of the sapashini of Dagbon are disputed, but there is unanimous agreement that the story of the lineage begins with some type of exchange between the Dagbamba and Asante. Historians Ivor Wilks and J.D. Fage suggest that a contingent of Asante musketeers were sent to Yendi as part of a diplomatic treaty that resulted from an Asante military victory in the 18th century. Oral sources indicate that migrants from the forest belt were conscripted by the sitting Dagbamba paramount chief, the Yaa Naa, to fight as well as to re-organize the Dagbamba military in the model of Asante, probably in the mid-19th century. Unfortunately, there are no surviving written documents describing the coming of the sapashini to Dagbon.[28] Although the exact details of the conflict and

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[26] "Akan" is an umbrella name of a number of matrilineal, *Twi*-speaking cultural groups from the forest zone of Ghana and neighboring Ivory Coast and Togo. The Asante are the most populous of this cultural grouping ("Ashanti - Government of Ghana" 2016).
[27] https://youtu.be/hYNQQKvXDQI?list=PL9EC56D23123D64CB
[28] The best summation of the narratives amassed by the historians of Ghana working in the first decades after Independence is one by Holger Weiss (2011); see also Iddi (1973) and Ferguson (1972, 40–41). Among the problems with the sources used in these early histories of the sapashini are the lack of Dagbamba voices in the construction of these narratives. A colonial essay written by District Commissioner A.W. Davies in 1948 provides a notably detailed history and outline of the military structure of the sapashini (1948). It suffers, however, from a number of inaccuracies, such as dates that are incompatible

ensuing negotiations are disputed, the terms of the settlement are believed to have included Asante musketeers training Dagbamba warriors in Asante military strategy and on how to use the guns the Dagbamba had begun receiving from their southern neighbors (Staniland 1975, 7 and 33; Fage 1964; Wilks 1975, 22; H. Weiss 2011, 304).[29]

Oral accounts from sapashini suggest that the military and social integration of sapashini into Dagbon was an organic and gradual process, much more so than previous historians have believed.[30] M. D. Iddi collected a series of interviews for his unpublished master's thesis, *The Musketeers of the Dagboŋ Army: Dagban Kambonse* (1973), many of which indicate that the first Asante fighters in the Dagbamba army were agricultural migrants who had settled in towns in the vicinity of Yendi, most notably Tuusanni (36).

My primary teacher and interlocutor on oral history of the sapashinima, Buaru, told me that the origins of the first sapashini were Asante by virtue of an Asante man who became an executioner to the Yaa Naa,[31] but this man was not a *Kambon-naa*, nor did he command a militia. According to Buaru, all sapashini chiefs and foot soldiers after the first migrants from the South were either native Dagbamba or slaves conscripted from neighboring Gurunsi or Konkomba communities. Independent oral sources quoted in *The*

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with known events. As importantly, Davies made no effort to show the reader the source or sources of his data.

[29] The author is preparing a manuscript for an article presenting new evidence from oral sources and revisiting existing evidence to challenge historians' conclusions regarding the timing and circumstances around the formation of the sapashinima in Dagbon. The very general history presented above suffices for the present purposes of this chapter.

[30] The most widely accepted explanation in the scholarly community—although based on several analogous, but far from corroborating, oral narratives—is that the sapashinima were formed in or around 1772 following a dispute between Yaa Naa Gariba and the Asante paramount chief (*Asantehene*).

[31] Probably Naa Gariba (fl. 1733-1772; see Ferguson 1972, 15). Buaru could not recall the name, but stated that it was the Yaa Naa who was carried south in a palanquin when the Asante who carried him died one after the other, referencing a well-known story about Yaa Naa Gariba. See Iddi (1973, chapter 2) and Haas (in preparation).

Musketeers of Dagbong indicate that the earliest sapashinima were Akans from the forest zone, suggesting that Buaru may be mistaken about the inclusion of Southerners in the first years of *sapashintali*,[32] perhaps even intentionally down-playing Asante involvement in Dagbamba history.

Following the "pacification" of the Middle Volta Basin by the French, British, and German colonial powers in the 1890s (Goody 1998), the wars and slave-raiding that took place throughout the previous century were rather abruptly brought to a halt. As previous commentators have suggested (Weiss 2011; Davies 1948; Iddi 1973), the role of the sapashini became ceremonial after the defeat against the Germans in 1896, and the transfer of colonial control of Dagbon in 1917 to the British. The sapashini were no longer needed to participate in warfare, although their roles as bodyguards to the chief and security guards for the general population remain to this day. In the absence of warfare and a requisite militia, a ritualized version of combat—the Gun Gon—allowed the sapashini to maintain a performative connection to their ostensible social and political utility as warriors. I believe that the cultural shift following colonization is an instance of the sapashinima having to come to grips with their changing status and relevance to Dagbamba society, analogous to the contemporary socio-economic shifts that challenge their masculinity.

[32] Dagb., "sapashini-ness," the culture and history of the warriors.

The Music of Sapashin-waa

The Instruments

I begin my description of Sapashin-waa by offering a brief description of the instruments used in order to provide some context for the musical passages that follow. The primary instruments of the Sapashin-waa ensemble are the leading luŋa called lundoɣu, a response luŋa called lunbila, a group of three or more iron double-bells called dawulei, and one or two single-headed log drums called dalega. Often, the percussion ensemble will be accompanied by a flute, called kalimbɔ, and/or a praise-singer.

Lundoɣu

The lead drummer (*kambonluŋa*) plays the largest sized *luŋa*, often called *lundoɣu* (lit. male luŋa), generally larger even than those used by lead drummers in lunsi ensembles (Locke 1990, 29–32). This is the leading drum of the sapashini ensemble, and generally played by the senior ranking drummer. The kambonluŋa calls the transitions between the pieces, beginnings and endings, and directs the rest of the ensemble with musical, aural, and visual cues. Every ensemble will have one lundoɣu, but it is not uncommon for two or more leading kambonlunsi to play together at large events where many sapashini groups are in attendance.

Lunbila

The *lunbila* (lit. small luŋa) drums are the smallest size of luŋa played by adult drummers. My own drum is typical of lunbila sizes, measuring 47cm. in length with heads of about 22cm. in diameter. Like the lundoɣu, each group typical has one lunbila,

but it is not at all unusual for several to play together at large events, such as chief funerals or enskinments.

Plate 3 Sualey (L.) playing *lunbila*, Buaru (R.) playing *lundoɣu*

Dawulɛ

A side-by-side iron double bell, called a *dawuro* or *gongon* by the Akan in the South. One bell is pitched lower than the other, generally by about a major third. It is played with a tip of a bull’s horn, usually about 15 cm. long.

Plate 4 Wulana Adam Baakɔ (L.) and Fuseini Abu (R.) playing *dawulɛ*

Kalimbɔ

Approximately 20-25 cm. in length, the *kalimbɔ* is a transverse piccolo flute with four notched finger holes. It can be made of bamboo, wood, or, just as often, plastic piping. The kalimbɔ was the instrument that accompanied the core battery instrumentation most frequently in my experience, and was featured playing in many other ensembles including performances of the group dances *Baamaaya* and *Jɛra*, as well as with lunsi praise-drumming groups.

Dalega

A log drum of about 150 cm. employing tuning pegs and a cowskin head, it is played with two sticks whose shapes resemble the numeral 7 and is not entirely unlike the *atumpan*.[33] Sticks that have naturally occurring angles are chosen, unlike luŋa or guŋgoŋ

[33] Asante "talking drums," they are played as a pair with one drum pitched higher than the other. In Dagbon they are typically associated with chieftancy, played by an *akarima* who plays praises to the chief and may send messages on behalf of the chief.

sticks, which are boiled and subsequently bent into shape (see plates 5-6). The male (*dale'loɣu*) and female (*dale'nyaŋ*) drums are essentially the same, with the male having a lower pitch and (usually) playing the support part, and the female having a higher pitch and playing the *paranbo* (lead) role. According to Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai, the dalega (or *dalgu*) were used to praise Dagbamba chiefs and send messages at least as early as the 15th or 16th century during the reign of Yaa Naa Datorli,[34] who drummers sometimes refer to as Naa Dalgu (Chernoff 2011, 9).

Plate 5 Unknown (L.) and Abukari Napodoo (R.) playing dalega

The Gun Gon

The Gun Gon is a ritual dramatization of combat performed most commonly during the final rites of a funeral. Funerals for chiefs and sapashini tend to attract the

[34] Dating the early Yaa Naa reigns is nearly impossible, and estimates vary widely (ŋf. Cardinall and Tamakloe 1970; Ferguson 1972, 3–17). Naa Datorli was the grandson of Naa Nyagse, who is

largest number of groups to perform, with the highest participant turnouts generally on weekends when students and workers can attend. In a time of lasting peace and without a practical need for a standing militia, a ritualized version of combat allowed the sapashini to maintain a performative connection to their ostensible social and political utility as warriors.

The Gun Gon consists of six basic parts, structured by five musical pieces specific to each stage: traveling to the event (*Sochendili*); shooting guns, called *kukolaata* (*Chokwahili*); individual dancing (*Kambon-waa*); celebratory singing and more dancing (*Namyo*); taking food and drink (*Bandawuli*); and returning the chief to his home (*Namyo* and *Sochendili*). Originally, the music used in the course of contemporary Gun Gon rituals were each played for specific sapashini chieftaincy offices to accompany them as they traveled, much the way that *Sochendili* is used now. It was only later that they were grouped together to make the Gun Gon, almost certainly some time in the 20th century.[35] Originally played to accompany chiefs and to send warriors off to battle, in the days after colonial pacification it became a way to pay respects to deceased chiefs and sapashinima, and to honor the surviving family members by elevating their status.

As Buaru told me, "*Gun Gon nye piɛlli shɛm*," that is, the Gun Gon is performed in order to bring happiness. He explained that when the sapashini perform at a funeral,

> The children of the deceased are so proud. It makes others know who the deceased was, and the family. Other people in the community will get to know what kind of people they are

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[35] It is unclear whether the Gun Gon started soon after colonization or some more recent time. More research on this point is necessary to get a better idea of the time period in question. It is telling, however, that no mention of the Gun Gon is made in Davies' 1948 essay or Iddi's 1973 thesis. Iddi does mention the instruments of the sapashini, but only names Kambon-waa and "*Daba-waa*" (1973, 70) a dance I neither witnessed nor was told about, but which Iddi claims accompanied the enskinment of a sapashini chief. Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai describes the Gun Gon in 1977 or 1979 in Chernoff (2012b, 21–22).

> living with, that they are not any common people. The children of the deceased are going to feel proud of themselves, and others will also feel proud of them. It will raise up their names. That is wealth." (10 May, 2014, trans. Fuseini Abdul-Fatawu)

The Gun Gon is classified as *sɔŋ*, meaning that it is a contribution to a life-cycle event, such as a funeral or chief's enskinment. Other types of sɔŋ include donating foodstuffs, burial cloth, or domestic labor. At large funerals, for example, you will see people dressed in their finest clothing riding motos to a funeral with a goat or small sheep tied to the handlebars, and teams of women tending boiling pots of *saɣim*,[36] light soup, or pounding yams to feed the hundreds of guests in attendance. It is the Gun Gon's status as sɔŋ that precludes the groups from charging a performance fee, beyond the cost of transportation and gunpowder for the gunners. This distinction, according to Buaru, is what separates those who perform according to tradition and those who perform to serve their own interests, such as the professional groups resident at the Centre for National Culture (CNC), locally referred to as the Arts Council, and the drummers and dancers based at Tamale's Youth Home.[37]

According to Buaru, each of these five pieces of music—or something that likely sounded very much like them—were originally used in different contexts than they are today. *Sochendili* and *Bandawuli* were played to accompany the movements of specific chieftaincies, Chirifo and Dua, respectively;[38] *Chokwahili* was played during battle (as it

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[36] Dagb., corn flour porridge. Also called "TZ" throughout Ghana, from the Hausa *tuwo zaafi*, meaning "hot porridge."

[37] "Because today, we see others learn it at Art Council—it is not the right thing. They teach the students based on the teachers' interests, or the drums are played based on the teachers' interests. They don't play according to the tradition. They play it based on where they can get money" (Buaru Alhassan Tia, interview 6 June, 2013, trans. Fuseini Abdul-Fatawu).

[38] The original music to accompany and Kambon-naa is *Janbobgu niŋ baa bo* (What can many monkeys do to a dog?) which is only occasionally played and is not part of the Gun Gon proper.

was in the Guinea Fowl War in 1994); and *Kambon-waa* has always been for dancing, as it is today. Sometime after the arrival of first the Germans and then the British—it is unclear when[39]—these five pieces were put together to accompany a sequence of actions that filled a social and political need. Therefore, I argue that the first Gun Gon emerged in order to provide the sapashinima with a productive means for asserting their identities and their utility to Dagbamba society after their military prowess had become unnecessary.

Then, starting in the 1990s, participation in Dagban kaya waned amidst a period of social, political, and moral crises and increased economic precarity. The Gun Gon, without changing its content or form, has gone from an expression of sapashintali and destructive power to a venue for producing masculinity in a time of threatened social manhood. It has also emerged as a powerful symbol of Dagban kaya in the 21st century as many Dagbamba youth seek a space to negotiate how narratives of the past will factor in their lives, a connection to something they fear is slipping away.

The Music of the Gun Gon

In this section, I present texts and rhythms of the Gun Gon in order to demonstrate the histories present in the music of this ritual. In my analysis, I suggest that the narratives and moral lessons present in these drummed and sung texts are a constituent element in the creation of a “subjunctive world” (Seligman 2008, 11), in which the

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[39] The period of indirect rule (1932-1952) appears to have been a time of social and political standardization across Dagbon (Chernoff 2012a, 19–20), so it may well be that the Gun Gon was solidified into something resembling its present state during this time.

sapashinima inhabit a time and space in which idealized masculinities are produced. The analyses in this chapter are not intended to cover all of the instruments and rhythms played in Sapashin-waa. Nor do they address theories of polyrhythm, aesthetics, or the affective power generated through the interactions of the ensemble.[40] I begin with a brief background of the musical genre of Sapashin-waa.

The rhythms, metric relationships, and ensemble organization of Sapashin-waa display a mixture of Akan and Dagbamba musical styles. The dawulɛ are a clear indication of southern influence, both as an instrument and in its musical role within the ensemble. Sapashin-waa is the only Dagbamba music that utilizes iron bells to play the musical timeline, what Kofi Agawu calls the *topos*, a stylistic trait typical of music-cultures throughout the forest zone along the Guinea Coast (1986). The lunsi, on the other hand, are indicative of Dagbamba music. Although tension drums, called *dondons*, are used in some Asante musical genres, oral sources indicate that these drums were imported to Asante from Dagbamba, probably in the late 18th or early 19th century (Poku, interview, 1 September 2014; Abdallah, interview, 13 September 2012). The dalega are analogous to drums played throughout Africa, although the practice of carrying them overhead during processions suggests the performance practice, if not the instrument itself, has Asante origins.

The influence of Dagbamba music-culture is perhaps most evident in the interaction of like-instruments to the rest of the ensemble: lunsi interact rhythmically and linguistically with lunsi, bells with bells, and each section fulfills a role in the total

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[40] My MA thesis, *Kambon-waa: Warrior Music of Dagbon* (2007), extensively treats the rhythmic interactions of the drums and bells.

ensemble rhythm (check Agawu 1986). For example, the rhythms of the leading (*paranbo*) and responding (*kpahira*) dawulɛ interact with each other in such a way as to create composite rhythms. The large (lundoɣu) and small lunsi (lunbila) are in conversation with each other only, musically and linguistically, as are the dawulɛ. The Sapashin-waa ensemble is in this way like the lunsi ensemble, wherein leading and responding luŋa create composite rhythms while the leading and responding *gonguna* (sing. *guŋgoŋ*) create their own.

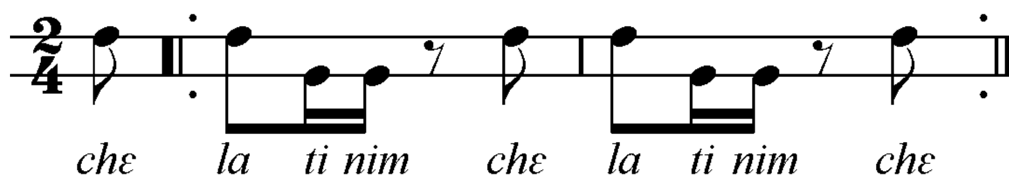
Sochendili

Sochendili is the music played to accompany the travel of a chief and his retinue in the course of his official duties, generally attendance at a funeral celebration, wake-keeping, or enskinment. It is played at the beginning of the Gun Gon as the group moves from the chief's house to the event, and again to accompany the chief back to his zong to close the ritual.

Musically, the piece seems well suited for its place in the Gun Gon; the meaning of the dawulɛ *kpahira* language seems to match the persistent, driving affect of the piece: *Chama, chama, chama*! (Go, go go!). *Sochendili* is in duple meter, and the most common rhythms conform to a binary or quaternary division of the beat (notated here in 2/4 time). It is generally played at a tempo of 155-170bpm, with the tempo building towards the higher range the longer it is played and the closer the group comes to the gun-shooting portion of the Gun Gon.

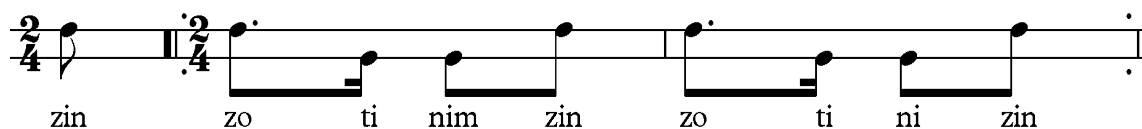
Sochendili is announced by the *kambonluŋa* (the lead drummer in a sapashini ensemble, who plays the large lundoɣu), who plays a rhythm which says, "*Tinim' chɛla, tinim' chela*," "We are going, we are going." In practice, the lead drummer may play any number of variations, such as those notated below in figure 1, but in my experience the unifying characteristic of all of them is the repetition of the two-note figure "+ 1."

Figure 1 Tinim' chɛla.



Upon hearing this lead figure, the other instruments will join with their parts and Sochendili will be under way. The lunbila rhythm is a short phrase that repeats throughout the entire performance of Sochendili, which can go on for over an hour. In actual practice, lunbila players greatly alter the rhythm as they improvise around its basic structure. The lunila says, "*Ti nin zjin zo, ti nin zjin zo*," "We never run away, we never run away."

Figure 2 Ti nin zin zo

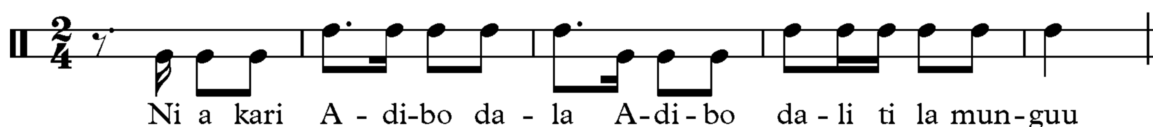


This statement is a boast of the sapashini's bravery, referencing the notion that it is better for a warrior to die in battle than to flee in defeat, while also a denial of any shame that would be attached to running away in fear of death (Abdallah 2012). This sentiment is echoed in the solo praise-singing of Fuseini Yusif Nakɔhi and -drumming of

Buaru, performed during a studio recording of Gun Gon music:[41] "The brave man is passing by, the great one going. He has not hidden his movement. If you are also a man, cross his way."[42] In both instances, the musicians challenge the sapashinima to be ideal warriors—men unafraid of death and willing to give their lives.

The lundoɣu may teasingly reply to the lunbila's boast that, "*Ni a kari Adibo dala, Adibo dali ti la mun guu*": "But you ran away that time at the battle of Adibo." On the day the Dagbamba forces were defeated by the Germans (4 December, 1896), the sapashinima suffered huge losses. Facing automatic weapons, the sapashinima were decimated in a terrible loss, described by Dagbamba as the day "the [war] clubs were scattered on the field" (Iddi 1973, 67). The lundoɣu's teasing is aimed at the drummers who ran from the battlefield amidst the carnage at Adibo, and whose fear in the face of the enemy is now remembered by contemporary drummers. This drum rhythm is a warning to all warriors that shameful actions will also live on and invoke shame in future generations.

Figure 3 Ni a kari Adibo dala, Adibo dali ti la mun guu



Nakɔhi gave a sung narration referencing this same battle, in which he recited the praise-names and deeds of Kambon-naa Ziblim Waɣibiɛɣu, known alternately as the

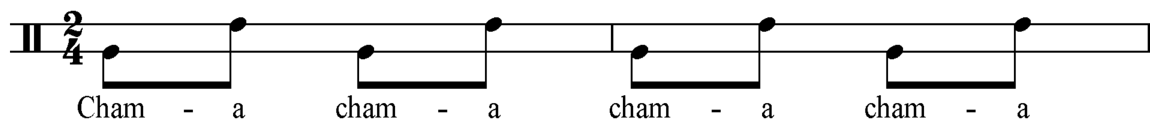
[41] Recorded 8 June, 2014. The drumming and singing texts from this session were transcribed and translated by John Issa, and are in preparation to be deposited in the African Language Materials Archive project "African Voices," http://alma.matrix.msu.edu/aiv.

[42] *Doo n-chenla, doo n-garitila, o bi sɔɣi o chendi. A gba yi nyɛ doo, to nyin doli o na.*

"poisonous snake" and the "cockroach,"[43] who died leading the sapashinima against the Germans at the battle of Adibo: "How can we forget of this man? Kambon-naa Waɣ'biɛɣu, the day of whose death there was a great shake at the battle-front. He fought alongside Naa Andani [1876-1899]."[44] Kambon-naa Waɣibiɛɣu is perhaps the most well-known figure in the history of the sapashini, and singing his praises provides a history lesson as well as an exemplar of what a warrior should be.

The dawulɛ kpahira plays a simple pattern of constantly alternating eighth notes, encouraging the warriors to keep going until they reach their destination, repeating "*Chama, chama, chama, chama":*

Figure 4, Sochendili dawulɛ kpahira.



The dawulɛ paranbo improvises along with the kpahira, usually playing one of a large handful of stock phrases that are common across all of the sapashini ensembles I saw and heard in the course of my research.

[43] A proverb associated with Kambon-naa Waɣibiɛɣu states, "Mankind hates cockroaches, but God protects them from harm" (*Salinima je leliga, ka Naawuni piigi niŋ ŋmana puuni*).
[44] *Ti niŋdi wula n-tandi doo yɛlla? Kambon naa Waɣ' biɛɣu, o kubu dali ka jambona ŋman taba mɔɣi puuni. O daa zabri ka dolila Naa Andani.*

Figure 5, Sochendili dawulɛ paranbo.

Var. 1 Var. 2 Var. 3 Paranbo 1

9 Paranbo 2 Paranbo 3 Paranbo 4a Paranbo 4b

16 Paranbo 5 Paranbo 6a

21 Paranbo 6b Paranbo 7

The dawulɛ paranbo plays at least two figures that carry a linguistic narrative. Variation 3 from figure 6 tells the warriors, "*To tɔb' chiriga!*", which means "Shoot your arrow straight; don't miss your target."[45]

Figure 6 To tɔb'chiriga

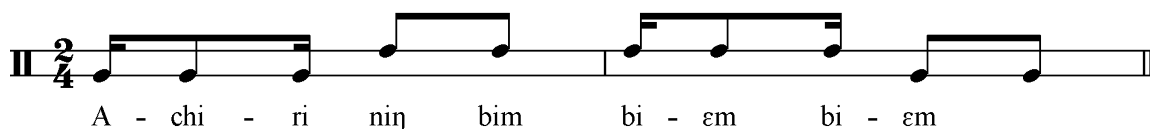
To tɔb' chiri - ga to tɔb chiri - ga

According to Buaru, paranbo 3 references a moment in sapashini precolonial history. As one or another group of sapashini were preparing to go to war, a delegation

[45] The Naden/GILLBT dictionary defines *to tobu* as "to fire an arrow" (2013, 624) *chiriga* as "straight line" (92), but *tobuchiriga* as "warcry" (624).

was sent to inform a certain warrior chief, *Achiri*,[46] that he should be prepared to go fight on such and such a day. When some warriors arrived to Achiri's house on that day, he feigned ignorance of the plan to go to battle. He claimed that no one had told him about the war, and that he was not prepared and would not go. The dawulɛ tells him, "*Achiri, niŋ bim biɛm biɛm*," meaning "Achiri, you are doing a very bad thing (so prepare yourself and go)."

Figure 7 Achiri, niŋ bim biɛm biɛm



The language of the following (kpahira) dawulɛ persistently urges the warriors on to battle, or to a dramatic re-enactment through ritual. The leading (paranbo) dawulɛ directs the warriors in firing, and killing, their enemies, while also warning against dereliction of duty by memorializing, as the leading luŋa does in Figure 3 above, a historical figure's actions unbefitting a proper sapashini.

Chokwahili

Chokwahili is played for the portion of the Gun Gon when the guns are fired, called kukolaata.[47] This is the most affectively charged moment in the ritual, and the part that usually draws the largest crowd. Without diminishing the importance of the other components of the ritual, it can be said that the kukolaata is the climax of the Gun Gon,

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[46] *Achiri* is a sapashini title, second only to the rank of Kambon-naa.

[47] *Kukola* refers to voice or the call of an animal; *ata* is the number three. *Kukolaata* refers to the three rounds of gunfire during the Gun Gon. The number is gender specific. Three is the number for a man, while four (*anahi*) is the number for a woman. Firing guns for a woman's funeral is called *kukolaanahi*.

as it is the ostensible reason for the sapashini's participation in the funeral rites. To be sure, the *Sochendili* leads up to the firing of guns, and the dancing and celebration that takes place afterwards (*Kambon-waa* and *Namyo*) is based upon the successful and safe completion of the shooting. Providing the sapashini with food and drink (*Bandawuli*) is a reciprocal exchange for the performance of kukolaata.

But it is also a protracted moment of intensity, full of tension and anticipation. There is an element of danger in the firing of the guns, mostly from the combustion of the powder, over-loaded as they are with gunpowder. I have never seen anyone injured during the kukolaata, but it does happen and remains a risk. There is also a fear that injury to one or more of the warriors through the work of a witch. To protect against witchcraft, the Kambon-naa may perform some protective juju while the men get in position to fire. The Kakpagyili group would also travel with a *timalana* (magician) to help detect and ward off any ill intentions.

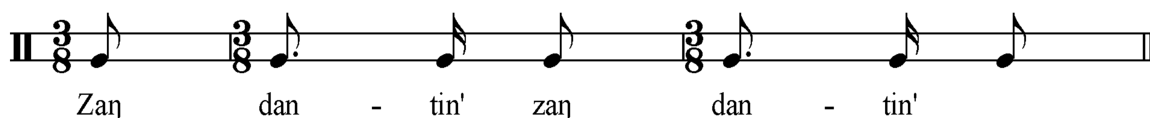
During the kukolaata the musicians and gunners circumambulate a designated area three times before lining up to fire one at a time. They circle the performance space again, fire in turn, and then circle once more and then each fires their gun for the last time.[48] All the while, the musicians play the triple-meter *Chokwahili*. When the last shot is fired, the kambonluŋa brings the piece to an end, and transitions to Kambon-waa. In my experience, the kukolataa lasts about 30-45 minutes.

The large luŋa calls the beginning of *Chokwahili* by repeating a phrase that is rhythmically identical to the dawulɛ kpahira rhythm, shown in figure 8, below. The

[48] As mentioned above, the number of circumambulations and rounds of gunfire would be four, not three. Of the three dozen or so performances I performed in or witnessed, only one was for a woman.

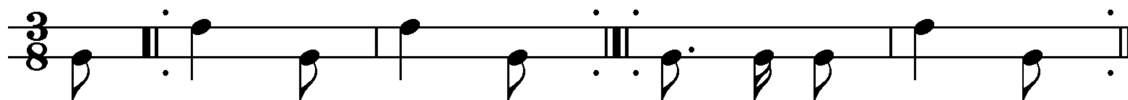
language says, "*Zaŋ dantin', zaŋ dantin'*", which tells the gunners "Fire! Fire!" (lit. Pick up and use your (flintlock) gun).[49]

Figure 8 Zaŋ dantin'



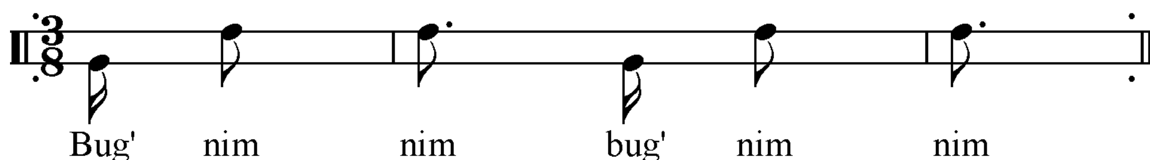
The leading luŋa will return to this phrase as he improvises over the course of the performance. Figure 8 and the rhythm shown in figure 9 (no Dagbanli language given), below, constitute the bulk of the rhythms played by the lead kambonluŋa in *Chokwahili*. Each of these three phrases, along with the dawulɛ kpahira, display a strong sense of forward motion, phrasing emphatically to the downbeat.

Figure 9



The dawulɛ kpahira part is the same as the opening large luŋa call, but the language is different. The dawulɛ says, "*Bug' nim nim, bug' nim nim*" (Everyone fire, everyone fire).

Figure 10 Bug' nim nim, bug' nim nim

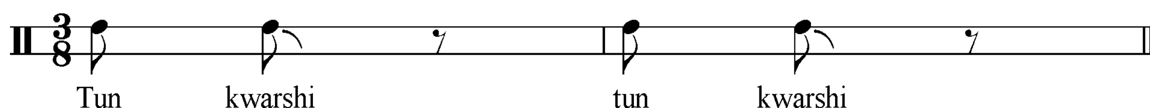


The lunbila part taught to me is a simple two-note phrase with a downward pitch bend on the second note, notated in figure 11. In contrast to the lundoɣu and dawulɛ, the lunbila phrase starts on the downbeat, with motion leading away from it. According to Buaru,

[49] Mahama dictionary (2003a, 56).

this phrase is rendered in the Akan language *Twi*, although two Asante interlocutors were unfamiliar with the phrase. Buaru stated that the drum says, "*Tun kwarishi, tun kwarishi*," which tells the warriors to "Run away and leave the blood (on the battlefield)."[50]

Figure 11 Tun kwarishi



Chokwahili, the music to accompany the firing of guns, consists of short, repeating phrases that speak of gunfire and the blood of slain enemies. These musico-linguistic references match the action of the gunners, who fire their weapons and mimic the movements of warriors in battle by crawling on their bellies or pretending to engage each other in hand-to-hand battle. The violence of battles past is brought out in *Chokwahili*, and this is where contemporary men get to embody fierce warriors in a relatively safe space. These musical texts aid in constituting the subjunctive space of the Gun Gon by referring directly to actions of combat during the firing of guns (kukolaata).

Kambon-waa

Kambon-waa is the music performed for individual dancing. During the Gun Gon, the sapashinima dance to celebrate the safe and successful firing of guns. If the peak of the Gun Gon is the kukolaata, the peak of the kukolaata is the moment when the final shot has been fired. The warriors and participants raise great din, and the emotional

[50] It is unknown whether this is an archaic Twi phrase, a corruption of the original words, or even another language altogether.

energy generated at the end of *Chokwahili* feeds directly into the music and dance of *Kambon-waa*.

The dance is performed within a circle of spectators, and rarely does more than one person dance at a time, although a man will occasionally enter the circle to discharge his musket. The dancing of *Kambon-waa* is distinct from the bodily movements that may accompany any of the pieces of the repertoire. The dance of *Kambon-waa* is highly stylized, characterized by fast footwork, wild movements such as jumping and spinning, dramatic enactments of war movements such as crawling on the ground with their weapons, and different types of hand gestures, such as circling movements. According to Rev. Daniel Wumbee, whose father had been a sapashini chief in the Yaa Naa's palace, this type of gesturing comes from the Asante, who use their hands to signify various things during their dancing.

> So then the dance, they are - the way Asantes dance, they dance with their hands showing some signs. When they do their hands like this [demonstrates moving arms and hands in alternating, inward circles] it's a, it's a message to the people who stand by. Sometimes they said like this, and this [circling the arms], which means everything that is existing is made by God, and so on. And then the people around are also for the king, or for the chief. So the signs they are making have a meaning, when they do their hands like this, and so on. But Dagbamba [non-sapashini], we don't do that. We just jump into the dance and start dancing, you know. (15 January, 2007)

Sapashinima often carry a traditional war club called *jamboŋa*, or *zaani*, which resembles a farmer's hoe, measuring about half a meter in length. When they dance they will often hold the weapon out in front of their bodies with a hand on either end of the club. Even without holding a weapon, many dancers will hold their hands in this way as they navigate the dance space.

The music of *Kambon-waa*, more any other piece in the Gun Gon, displays the multi-deteminancy (cf. Jones 1959; Chernoff 1979; Friedson 1996, 2009; Nketia 1962), or multidimensionality (Locke 2005, 2010), so often associated with African rhythm. The rhythmic patterns of the individual instruments make frequent use of the archetypal 2:3 cross-rhythms, and several patterns seem to phrase to the third beat of the meter. The lundoɣu call to begin *Kambon-waa* is notated in figure 12; I was not given any corresponding linguistic text for this part.

Figure 12 Kambon-waa opening call

The leading kambonluŋa will play many different phrases throughout the course of a single performance, but one rhythm was explicitly taught to me, and I identified one other that appeared in many recordings over the course of my research. Both are presented with common variations in figures 14 and 15, below. Figure 13 was the rhythm that my teacher, Buaru, explicitly wanted me to learn, which says, "*Kambon-waa yirili*," telling the dancers to leap as they dance. As the first low tone leads to a high tone, it suggests a feeling of being "in 3," with the emphasis on beat three.

Figures 13 Kambon-waa yirili

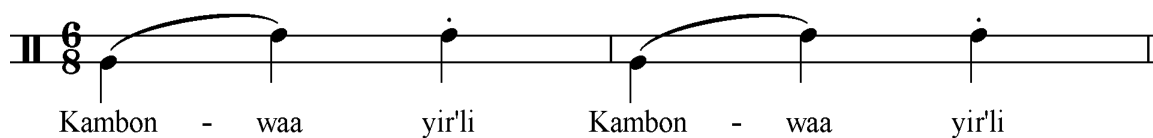


Figure 14, on the other hand, is a one-measure grouping of two two-note rhythms, structurally similar to the lunbila, below in figure 20. As demonstrated in the variations

below, it is common to vary the pitches of the notes while maintaining their rhythmic relationships. Interestingly, I encountered this phrase placed at two different points in the meter: In my recordings, Buaru typically placed the first note of the phrase on beat two of the meter, which lines up with the lunbila rhythm (although on different pitches), and gives emphasis to beat 3 (shown in figure 15). I had also heard the same phrase played with the first note on beat one (shown in figure 16); when I played this in a lesson with Buaru and Wulana, it was met with affirmative nods rather than a correction.

Figure 14

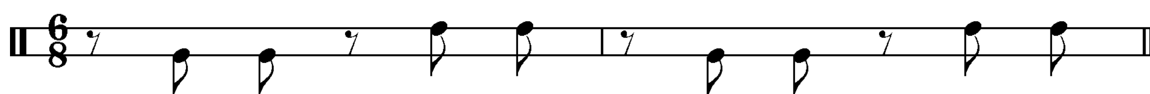


Figure 15

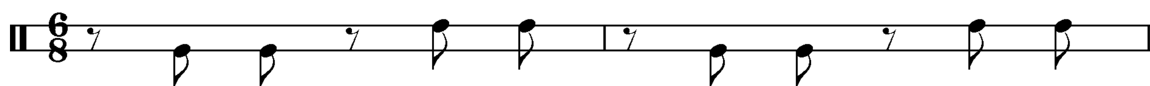
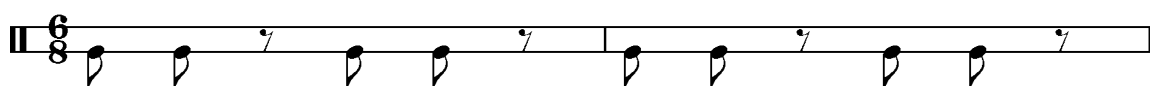


Figure 16

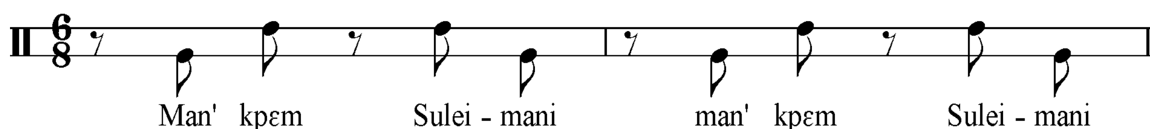


Musically, this alternation of metric placement shows the propensity of sapashini musicians to play the same musical phrases in different points in the meter, a phenomenon I have previously addressed in performances of other Sapashin-waa pieces, *Namyo* and *Bandawuli* (Haas 2008). The rhythm in figure 16 is the same rhythm and metric alignment as that played by a drummer in recordings made by ethnomusicologist J.H.K. Nketia during a trip to Yendi in 1958 recording, which also feature the same

dawulɛ rhythm that contemporary musicians play today (DAT IAS GH 172, 1958).[51] Historically, this shows that at least one basic rhythm and structural configuration has remained unchanged for nearly 60 years. There is no way to know how much these and other rhythms may have changed in the decades—perhaps centuries—prior, but it does provide some evidence for claims by Buaru and other Dagbamba musicians that the music they play today is more or less the same as it has always been. If Nketia's recordings of the *lunsi* (drummer-griots) ensembles from the same period are any guide, it is likely that the primary changes in musical performance has come in the styles of improvising and playing variations on the common phrases.[52]

The lunbila rhythm closely resembles the leading luŋa rhythms in figures 14-16, with two closely linked couplets per meter, shown in figure 17. The lunbila language expresses a claim to relative seniority within the group, saying, "*Mani kpɛm' Suleimani*," "I am senior to Suleimani." I was not able to verify whether there is a story behind this statement, or if Suleimani had been a real person.

Figure 17 Mani kpɛm' Suleimani



[51] Both of these recordings (likely the earliest recordings of Sapashin-waa) feature only of each of the primary instruments of the Sapashin-waa ensemble, a large luŋa (*lundoɣu*), one iron double-bell (*dawulɛ*), and one single-headed drum (*dalega*), leaving many unanswered questions: Would this instrumentation have been a typical ensemble of the time? Were these especially skilled musicians brought out especially for the recording, or were these just a few musicians nearby when Nketia was running tape? Would musical styles have varied in different regions of Dagbon at that time? More research is necessary if these questions are to be resolved.

[52] Recordings of lunsi from the Nketia archive similarly display structural continuity in pieces still commonly played today, including "Naani Goo" and "Takai" (DAT IAS GH 171, 1958).

The text in the lunbila rhythm asserts a social status, and by way of implication makes a claim to the benefits that come with seniority. Without proper context, it is not possible to know what historical situation may have led a particular warrior (represented in the lunbila text) to make such a claim, but one may presume that his relative position to "Suleimani" had been questioned. By virtue of his seniority, any senior warrior is entitled to respect from any junior one (like "Suleimani") and proper respect (shown in any number of ways; see Chapter 3) from his fellow warriors. As I will demonstrate more fully in Chapter 3, the performance of one's status is an important element in the construction of the masculinities. Seniority is relative; the claim to seniority produces both the elder and the younger warrior's masculine identity vis-à-vis each man's relation to the other. The lunbila isn't only speaking to "Suleimani," but is making a statement about the ideal order of hierarchy and the ethics that maintain it, which is manifested in the subjunctive, "as if" world of the ritual.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the music of the Gun Gon and outlined the ritual's basic structure. I presented historical contexts for the origins of the sapashinima and the Gun Gon, and examined the historical narratives, proverbs, and prescriptions for ethical behavior encoded in its rhythms and musical texts. I argued that those texts stemming from the violent and masculine acts of combat are constituent elements in producing the subjunctive world of ritual in which idealized masculinities are generated. In the following chapter, I analyze the distributed masculinities produced in a particular Gun Gon performance from 2014.

CHAPTER THREE

To be a man is not easy!

17 April, 2014. Kakpagyili, Tamale.

The early afternoon is hot, even for Tamale, and shady spots are hard to come by this time of day. It's now the time of year that farmers begin to look for the first rains of the season to arrive so they can till their fields, but it's been dry for weeks and there isn't a cloud in the sky. And so, it's hot. I have left my *luŋa* at home and arrived at the house of my drumming father, *Mba* Buaru, with only my video and audio equipment because I just don't feel like drumming today. In my present physical and emotional state, I'm not up to the task of hours and hours of drumming, and being growled at when I show signs of getting tired. It's only been ten days since I had helplessly watched my wife board a plane out of Accra with our two daughters, both of whom were being medically evacuated back to the U.S. after protracted bouts with misdiagnosed illnesses. It will be another month or two before I deal with what I will eventually discover to be a parasite that had been draining my energy and deepening my depression. On top of it all, it's just so damn hot.

In the hour or so since giving Buaru a ride on my moto from his house to Kambon-naa's house, I've been watching the *sapashinima* gather for the coming *Gun Gon* that afternoon. Men of multiple ranks and life stages (at this point there are no women present) are awaiting the afternoon's festivities, and all are performing a masculine identity consistent with their life stages through their demeanors, clothing, and spatial configurations. Young men and teenage boys—the *sapashini* youth—take turns

filling plastic bottles with their allotted rations of homemade gunpowder. They are exuberant, joking and playfully rough-housing amongst themselves. One wears a locally made smock, another a worn out Bob Marley T-shirt.

About a half dozen sub-chiefs and elders have arrived and sit chatting under the *sampahi*, the chief's shaded sitting area. An elder with a white goatee wears the white tunic, hat, and red-and-white checked scarf of an Alhaji; the Nachin-naa (chief of the youth) is dressed in the typical Dagbamba ensemble of *gbingmaa* (smock), *zupiligu* (hat),[53] pressed cotton trousers, and sandals. Another old man is combining markers of Islamic piety with his sapashini heritage by wearing an embroidered silk *baba riga*[54] over a visibly frayed gbingmaa. Kambon-naa sits authoritatively upon his *kugiziniga*, a locally made reclinging chair associated with elders. He is the only senior warrior wearing clothing associated with war: a tunic and hat covered in leather-sewn amulets.

While we wait for the signal to move out, I am offered an overflowing cup of *akpeteshie*, a locally distilled palm spirit. I suck down a huge shot that's as hot as the afternoon air, and the sapashinima laugh as they watch to see how the *silminga* (white, European) handles his liquor. As the alcohol burns its way down my throat and into my already upset stomach I am careful not to show any signs of weakness—I've also got a masculine identity to portray.

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[53] Dagb., *hat*, referring specifically to a cotton hat with a floppy top worn by Dagbamba men and considered part of a traditional outfit. They often have colored stitching all over, which are the visible traces of magical amulets sewn inside the hats. Some still bear amulets, but today it is mostly symbolic and aesthetic.

[54] Hausa, *large men's shirt*. A *baba riga* is a Hausa-Yoruba style vestment, often made of silk and featuring colored embroidering on the front. In Dagbon, it is most typically worn by senior Muslim men, and is generally associated with the pious nature of men who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca. See Douny (2011).

Finally, the signal comes when Buaru picks up his drum and begins praising the Kambon-naa. In contemporary Dagbamba practice, the praising of an individual is done through the musical recitation of the great deeds of his or her ancestors (Chernoff 1997). The varying tones of the drum are modeled on language; the drum recites praise-names of chiefs and ancestors, praises their heroic feats, and validates contemporary chieftaincy claims by providing a substantiating genealogy. Praising brings the eminence of revered ancestors and the sacred powers associated with chieftaincy into the present. This direct confrontation of past greatness is a challenge to the individuals of today, rhetorically asking whether they are capable of matching the achievements of their ancestors—almost always male warriors and chiefs—and leaving a legacy worth drumming or singing about in the future.

The musical praising also constitutes a network, through which senior and junior masculinities are constructed. Buaru's musicking body, the historical narrative brought forth through coded drum language, the sounds coming from the drum, and the drum itself are each nodes in a network creating the chief's masculine identity of chief and elder, while at the same time establishing the other men as subordinate.

The warriors begin loading into the back of the freight truck waiting to transport us to Yemoo, a small community just outside of Savelugu, a culturally important Dagbamba town north of Tamale. Over the course of the next few hours, the sapashinima will participate in a funeral ritual in which multiple forms of Dagbamba masculinity will be enacted. These men will publicly display their identification with and relation to the

idealized masculinities associated with elders and youth, big men and small boys, constructed across a network of participants.

In this chapter I argue that Dagbamba masculinities are both multiple and distributive, and that Dagbamba men's endeavors to realize idealized forms of masculinity are being impeded through their difficulties in living up to economic and ethical standards set for them. In outlining the various stages of the sapashini ritual of the Gun Gon, I demonstrate the distributive nature of Dagbamba masculinities, suggesting that they are collaboratively constructed across a network of bodies, objects, sounds, and spaces. Within this framework, I contend that the ritual provides a rare occasion for men across different social categories to perform the relational network of masculinity within a subjunctive, "as if," time and space in which the powers and hierarchies of Dagbamba patriarchy are reaffirmed.

Acknowledging the distributive ontology of masculinity necessitates a shift in focus from the performative identity of the individual to the network of actors from which masculinities emerge. By conceiving of masculinities as residing in and across multiple bodies, our attention shifts from the individual subject to the network of people, objects, and sounds that produce these masculine identities.[55] As Joseph Campana suggests, masculinity "is constituted through the connections between a series of objects

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[55] My approach here is informed by two similar, but not identical, conceptions of part-whole relationships: the actor-network, as theorized by Latour (2005), and the assemblage, as conceived by DeLanda (2006), himself heavily influenced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The former model dissolves the subject/object dichotomy by postulating that entities and their actions are products of networks of animate, inanimate, and immaterial actors; the latter is conceived along the lines of an aggregate, or network, possessing particular capacities which emerge through the interaction of its constituent parts (De Landa 2006, 8-13; Deleuze 1987, 88–91).

and actors none of which is the sole repository of masculinity" (2015, 694). Drawing on the Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour (2005), Campana writes that

> Masculinity inheres in the connections between disparate and sometimes seemingly arbitrary actors and objects. Imagine, then, masculinity not as essence or identity, social construction or performative iteration, but as connectivity. (2015, 694)

In my view, thinking masculinities as distributed does not require a refutation of the "performativity" of gender, which Judith Butler defines as "that power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration" (1993, 20), but rather expands the field of actors within the discourse to include the human and the non-human, and the material and immaterial. As the Gun Gon ritual progresses through its stages, Dagbamba masculinities will be performed through musical performance, dance styles, wild behavior, and spatial configurations of warriors, drums, and guns. Because of the variety of masculine identities on display, multiple levels of social hierarchies, and the hyper-masculine nature of the warriors' performances, the Gun Gon is an especially rich site on which to base my analysis of the distributive nature of Dagbamba masculinities. But it also does another kind of work for Dagbamba society.

The Gun Gon is an occasion for idealized masculinities to be reaffirmed, and for the men who wish to bear them to be reassured in their capacity to attain these ideals at a moment in history when this has become difficult. The overwhelming majority of the men I knew and worked with in Tamale, including all of the musicians in my study, struggled to live up to the material and economic expectations of "being a man." Like so many men throughout the Global South, Dagbamba are in the midst of a "crisis of masculinity" (Ouzgane and Morrell 2005; Cleaver 2002a), owing largely to boys' low

achievement levels in school and "economic changes resulting in the loss of men's assured role as breadwinner and provider to the family" (Cleaver 2002b, 3).

I argue that this ritual does the socially important work of temporarily neutralizing the crisis of masculinity and alleviating anxieties of both the sapashinima and Dagbamba society by facilitating the successful demonstration of various "idealized" masculinities within the temporal and spatial frame of ritual.[56] By reiterating these performances within the frame of the Gun Gon, the sapashinima create what Seligman et al call a subjunctive space, an "as if" world that is presented as it *could* or *should* be (2008; Seligman and Weller 2012, 93). Participation in these performances places these men outside of the broken and disordered world in which unemployment and poverty prevent them from being the providers they and others wish them to be.

I focus on the instrumentality of this ritual in an effort to answer one of this project's central questions of why *Dagban kaya* is being mobilized to address social anxieties, and why now? Through analysis of the sounds, movements, and spatial configurations of the Gun Gon, I show how *Kambon-waa*—and performances of kaya more broadly—re-produces Dagbamba masculinities. My analysis focuses specifically on the various ways idealized forms of masculinity are constructed and negotiated through music, dance, and drama by viewing these performances as gendered practices. In adopting a performance-based approach that treats the event as an integrated whole of musical and non-musical sounds, bodies, objects, and identities in time and space, I aim

[56] Youth-specific reactions to the crisis of masculinity and cultural anxieties will be addressed in the following chapter.

to illustrate the various means and mediums through which the Gun Gon's significance and efficacy are generated.[57]

Dagbamba Masculinities

Since the publication of R.W. Connell's *Masculinities* (2005), it has become a truism in critical men's studies that there is no single way of "being a man," although some ways carry more social cachet than others. Connell identifies two categories of masculinities: "hegemonic," representing the dominant form of masculinity prevalent in any one society at a given time; and "subordinate" masculinities, which generally carry less privilege.[58] Although I find the designation of one or another type of masculinity as "hegemonic," it is nevertheless true "that not all men have the same amount or type of power, the same opportunities, and, consequently, the same life trajectories" (Morrell and Ouzgane 2005, 4). Dagbamba society may be patriarchal, but patriarchy dominates less politically powerful men as well as women.

Historians Stephan Miescher and Lisa Lindsay challenge Connell's influential concepts through African case studies, pointing out that it "fails to acknowledge situations in which different hegemonic forms might coexist" (2003, 2). Drawing from his research on Akan masculinities in Ghana, Miescher articulates a model in which

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[57] A performance-based approach to African music has an established precedent in ethnomusicology (Stone 1982; Reed 2003; Burns 2009), as music is often ingrained within a larger complex of multi-media performance, including dance, drama, and visual arts. In privileging the oral and temporal natures of these performances, "the music event replaces the archive as the new locus of research" (Burns 2009, 18; Taylor 2003) For a counter-argument to this view, see Agawu (2003, Chapter 3), in which Agawu advocates treating African music as text.

[58] Although they do not feature in this present study, queer and gay masculinities would likely fit into the category of "subordinate" masculinities. No one I encountered during my fieldwork admitted any association with homosexuality to me, nor did I witness any overtly homosexual activity.

multiple masculinities are considered “ideal,” noting that the masculinities available to any one man change with time, experience, and across divergent social spaces (2005, 2-11).[59] Refuting the idea of a single "hegemonic" masculinity, Miescher questions the validity of any claims to be made on just which type of masculinity may be dominant at any one time, suggesting that the post-colonial African context is especially fraught. He highlights the historically and socially contingent nature of African masculinities, noting that

> Elders and kinship groups in Akan societies promoted forms like adult masculinity, senior masculinity, and big-man status, and a mission church advocated what [Miescher] call[s] “Presbyterian masculinity.” As school graduates, some men became 'middle figures,' crucial players in colonial encounters but at odds with older ideas of seniority. (2005, 2)

Despite my claims that there are multiple "ideal" masculinities available to Dagbamba men, there is a high degree of consent regarding the perceived obligations of all men to their families, regardless of age or class.[60] Both men and women agreed that the primary responsibility of a man is to provide for his family in the form of food, shelter, education, healthcare, clothing, and physical security. A man, as father and husband, is expected to be the sole breadwinner for his household. Everything his dependents may need, including his wives, should come from him; any money earned by a man's wife or wives is ostensibly for their own discretionary spending. Beyond his domestic responsibilities, men are expected to contribute to communal labor. This may include working on a friend's or chief's farm for a limited period, assisting in repairing a neighbor's thatch roof, or contributing labor or cash to repair a local roadway.

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[59] See also Hodgson (2003), who makes a similar case in a study of Maasai masculinities.

[60] There seemed to be a widespread assumption that the normative version of a man was one who was married with children. I treat this notion more extensively in Chapter 4.

While all men are expected to attend to the same basic types of responsibilities, there are also qualitative ideals to which Dagbamba men may aspire. A well-respected man is a community leader; he is educated, whether through schooling, a trade, or in agriculture. He is knowledgeable about Dagbamba history, and is respectful of elders and freely supportive of those junior to him. He is well networked and can ably navigate his situational identities as a patron, with obligations, and as a client, in the service of more senior men.

In the case of the sapashinima, they are also expected to be brave, fierce, and physically and spiritually powerful. They keep the peace in their communities while also possessing the potential for violence and destruction in the service of their chiefs. They are known for their propensity to drink alcohol, and are often portrayed as drunkards in Dagbanli home DVDs. Sapashini youth especially, though not exclusively, often exhibit raucous behavior that falls well outside the limits of Dagbamba social ideals stressing coolness and restraint.

The responsibilities of men that I've listed above are considered gender specific: biological men are expected to do these things, and women are not, although they often *must*. The qualities of Dagbamba men, however, are not in and of themselves "masculine." However, regarding those various qualities and life stages not exclusively associated with men or masculinity, like, say, strength, knowledge, or seniority, they become masculine insofar as they are associated with masculine identities, such as when a Kambon-naa exercises his social power in assembling dozens of warriors and musicians

to accompany him in a Gun Gon performance. In other words, these qualities are *situationally* gendered, rather than *essentially*.[61]

Using Miescher's model of Akan masculinities, whereby several idealized forms of masculinity may be dominant at once without any one form being convincingly "hegemonic," I have identified two overarching categories of what might be called dominant Dagbamba masculinities, each containing multiple "ideal" forms of masculinity: youth masculinity and elder, or senior, masculinity. Youth is the category ascribed to those aged between the late teens and mid-40s. The men in this category are generally regarded as capable and enthusiastic, although lacking in wisdom and restraint. Dagbamba elders are those over 40 or 50 years of age; the nebulous transition from "youth" is made more clear if one has achieved a title, either of a chief or Alhaji. Elders are respected for their ostensible experience, knowledge, and wisdom, and demonstrate their invaluable worth to Dagbamba society by sharing these with the youth. Masculinities fitting within this dualistic model may include chieftaincy, kaya masculinity, and "modern" masculinity.

By kaya masculinity, I am referring to men who forge their identities through participation in activities and institutions perceived to be connected with ancestral practices and/or teachings, what I have been referring to in general terms as Dagban kaya. The sapashinima are included here, as are other praise-musicians, blacksmiths, butchers,

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[61] While the prevalent Dagbamba view of gender difference is physiological, based on biological differences in the capacity for sexual reproduction, I take the position that there is neither an essential basis for gender nor anything natural about gendered forms of labor or gender-specific behavioral qualities.

and practitioners of other lineage-based professions; the gendered identities of chiefs are necessarily constructed through participation in Dagban kaya.

My use of the term "modern" is analogous to what Miescher identifies as "Presbyterian masculinity" (2005, 2) which he uses to describe men who were raised to exemplify a type of educated, Christian, and "modern" African man. I use "modern" cautiously, and with some reservation. "Modern" here does not connote a condition—temporal, technological, or otherwise. Rather, it describes a type of masculinity cultivated in dialogue with agents of the state, global capitalism, or the products of their interaction, and often requiring certification attained through schooling. Such men make their livings as teachers, religious leaders, professionals, or in business, government, or with NGOs.

None of these categories are exclusive; men can and do take on more than one of these forms, often oscillating between them as contexts require and over the life course. In my experience, a contemporary Dagbamba man fitting only one of these categories would be the exception. Furthermore, each type is an umbrella term, covering many variations, crafted and customized by men exercising agency in a dynamic social and economic environment. As in other sections of this dissertation, the "modern" and the "tradition" of Dagban kaya overlap freely and unproblematically.

As I will show, each of these masculinities is simultaneously constructed through the collaborative work of networked actors, animate and inanimate, material and spatial—it is through this *relationality* of men and women that Dagbamba masculinities are reproduced. These masculine identities are not individually performed, nor should

they be considered as constitutive others of femininity, but, rather, are sustained through a network of bodies, objects, sounds, spaces, and symbols.

The *Gun Gon* Moves to Yemoo

Moving through the side streets of Tamale, the sapashinima are heard before they are seen. The sound of the musicians is loud and distinctive: *Kambon-waa* is the only Dagbamba genre in which iron bells are played, and the incessantly repeating timelines ring out through the still afternoon air. As the truck rumbles towards the Bolga Road, we make a stop in the Bilpiela neighborhood to pick up Achiri, the ranking sapashini chief in this part of town and senior brother of my *dawoulɛ* teacher. Achiri carries a forked walking stick hung with *juju* in one hand and a folded up umbrella in the other. Resting on his shoulder is a leather switch. He is accompanied by another eight young men with guns.

After they all load into the truck bed we are moving again. Buaru plays the large *kambonluŋa,* while Sualey plays the smaller *lunbila* beside him and Napodoo straddles the *dalega* opposite them as he punctuates the music with the dry, clear sound of the drum. The drums and bells are accompanied by an old man playing short, repeating phrases on the small side-blown flute called *kalimbɔ*.[62] As we continue north through the Hausa *zongo* and into the center of town, people turn to look as we pass international banks, street hawkers, and the central market. Within minutes the traffic and activity of the city are behind us and we speed through the brown landscape en route to the funeral.

[62] See Chapter 2 for a description of the instruments, playing styles, and transcriptions of musical content of the pieces that constitute the *Gun Gon*.

Upon arrival, the driver parks and the warriors exit the truck, everyone taking his place to begin the procession toward the area designated for the shooting of the guns. The musicians continue to play Sochendili as the men slowly get into formation. The chiefs and their attendants line up in the front of the group according to their rank: the lowest ranking elder walks in front, followed by the next in the hierarchy. Each chief is accompanied by his *wulana*, a position akin to an advisor. Two young boys carrying chairs for Kambon-naa and Achiri walk at the very head of the procession. As the highest ranking sapashini chief, Kambon-naa is last among them, with second-in-command Achiri just ahead of him.

The musicians walk behind the chiefs, with the lead kambonluŋa at the front of the ensemble such that he is directly behind Kambon-naa. From this position he can praise Kambon-naa as they process while also being in the line of sight of the other musicians, who must quickly respond to his musical and visual cues. Sualey follows Buaru closely, with the dawoulɛ players on his heels. They stand shoulder to shoulder so that their bells are in close proximity to each other—this arrangement exaggerates the composite rhythms emerging from the interaction of the lead and support rhythms.[63] As usual, Wulana Adam takes the lead in improvising over the unison timeline played by the other two dawoulɛ players. The dalega is next. In procession, the long, thin drum is balanced on the head of one man while it is played by another walking behind him. On

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[63] On composite, or inherent, rhythms, see (Kubik 1962; Monson 2008).

the occasion that there are two dalega, they move side-by-side.[64] The gunners are positioned together behind the musicians, without any observable internal order.

The spatial configurations of the chiefs and the musicians are based on hierarchical status, which is closely aligned with age and seniority, and is an important component of the network of Dagbamba masculinities, with each man literally "in his place." The men further down in the hierarchy show their respect to those above them by positioning themselves accordingly within the procession. For the musicians, this is dictated by which rhythms are played, at which times, and on which instrument. While the more experienced elders improvise and praise chiefs and ancestors, the novices take on the mundane yet crucial role of playing repeating rhythms to keep the musical time flowing. Younger musicians perform their subordinate status, while also bestowing senior status upon their elders, by following the directions of their section leaders, and thus, collaboratively re-creating traditional power structures in the course of constructing the masculinities fitting to their station.

The small rural community of Yemoo is jammed with thousands of people, and we have to wait for another sapashini group to finish the gun-shooting portion of their own Gun Gon before we can move onward. This is fairly typical of large funerals, which often attract groups from several different communities. As we wait, *Sochendili* continues unabated, and as the energy around the group builds, the tempo accelerates and the

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[64] Had a chorus of *gbeɣu* (side-blown trumpets carved from antelope horns) been at this performance, their place would have been behind the *dalega*. The *gbeɣu* chorus is uncommon today (see Haas, in preparation). This may be because few people are interested in learning and performing with these instruments, or because the antelope used to make the *gbeɣu* (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*; Dagb., *molifu*; Eng., *kob*) are both rare and protected.

groove seems to intensify. Women standing at the sides of the procession ululate, and a male praise-singer arrives and begins shouting praises to Kambon-naa, who acknowledges his presence only by intermittently handing him a few coins in reciprocation.

A large crowd is pressing in on the group. Some dance, some record the music on their mobile phones, and others just watch and listen. All the while, some of the young men have been taking turns performing with the huge umbrella that marks Kambon-naa's status as a chief. Measuring approximately three meters in diameter and made of red silk decorated with alternating Akan *adinkra* symbols of the Golden Stool and Sankofa bird, the umbrella (*lem* in Dagbanli, or *bamkyim* in Akan Twi), is being twirled as it is pumped up and down.[65] The twisting, pulsating movements cause the silk to billow out, making for an impressive sight. The youths playfully compete with each other over who can most stylishly manipulate the umbrella, which is quite heavy and requires a combination of skill and strength to manipulate. The best among them balance the pole between their thighs as they move it up and down while straining to twist it. When one of them allows it to fall over, the others shout and laugh at his expense. I suggest that this is another site for making masculinities. Twirling the umbrella is a job reserved exclusively for young men. By besting one another in their performances, the youth momentarily establish dominance over each other. This activity also creates the Kambon-naa as a man of great status; the umbrella is first and foremost a marker of his seniority and authority. The

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[65] The Golden Stool is an Akan symbol of chieftaincy, and is especially pertinent for sapashini chiefs who are unique among Dagbamba chiefs in that they sit on stools rather than skins. The Sankofa is represented by a bird with its head turned backwards, symbolizing the value of historical awareness.

umbrella, itself a material object denoting senior masculinity, acts as an agent in a competitive, masculine becoming of these young men, while also adding to the chief's status and public image.

A Crisis of Masculinity

In 1992, the newly ratified constitution of the Fourth Republic implemented mandatory free public education, and soon after that Tamale was brought online with the national electricity grid. These potentially democratizing developments, however, have come with a cost. While schooling is free, students are required to purchase uniforms along with the standard expenses of books, pencils, and other school supplies. Electricity and water bills need to be paid monthly, and electronics such as televisions, DVD players, and mobile phones are now fixtures in even the most modest of households.

Even as the national economy has grown since the start of the 21st century, in the North the total number of people living in poverty has actually increased.[66] While most Dagbamba did not benefit from recent economic gains, they have been directly impacted by the economic downturn of 2013-2015.[67] As the value of cedi began to fall in late 2013, the costs of imports rose significantly. A steep price increase on construction materials,

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[66] This decrease in living standards comes after decades of economic and educational underdevelopment in the Upper West, Upper East, and Northern regions which collectively constitute the North. Cf. R.B. Bening (1975, 1976), Nii-K. Plange (1979), and Paul André Ladouceur (1979) on development policies and implementation in the North. See also Dessus et al. (2011, 5).

[67] Although the cedi had slowly been losing value since being introduced in 2007, its value on the international exchange market began dropping precipitously in the second half of 2013. In June 2013, the Ghana cedi was valued at .52 USD and by August of 2014 was down to .27, reaching a low point of .23 in June 2015 ("XE.com - GHS/USD Chart" 2015). Having been introduced at a value just under one dollar, the Ghana cedi has lost roughly 75% of its value in less than nine years.

including cement and iron and zinc roofing sheets, directly impacted men's domestic responsibilities to sufficiently repair and augment rooms in their family compounds.

Whichever type of masculinity a man may wish to achieve, his ability to do so rests largely in his capacity to meet the responsibilities of providing his dependents with access to basic needs including food, shelter, education, and healthcare. Providing these needs, however, has become more and more difficult over the past two or three decades. The increase in economic pressure on male breadwinners likely stems from the convergence of decreasing incomes and increasing living costs, many of which are new since the early 1990s. Farmland has become especially scarce as a result of the privatization of land (which had previously been readily provided by chiefs for a small share of the yield) and increases in population. Agricultural subsidies were removed as part of the institution of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), beginning in 1983 (Kraev 2004), which proved economically disastrous for northern farmers and agricultural laborers (Konadu-Agyemang 2001). Additionally, unemployment remains high, certainly well above the 20% projected by the national government.

The overwhelming majority of the men I knew and worked with in Tamale, including all of the musicians in my study, struggled to live up to the material and economic expectations of "being a man." The Dagbamba crisis of masculinity, in which so many men are failing to live up to the expectation of being the sole provider, is calling men's fundamental identity into question (Cleaver 2002b). More than just blows to men's self-esteem, these failures place significant burdens upon the women in their lives. When a man cannot—or will not—pay for his dependents' basic necessities such as food,

books, or medicine, these costs are absorbed by women who must use their own money to provide their childrens' needs. Shortfalls are suffered by the children, as well. Many Dagbamba children are malnourished, many still don't attend school because of the cost of supplies, and many still succumb to preventable and treatable diseases. One associate's child died of malaria after the father put off buying drugs until it was too late to save her. The mother subsequently divorced the man, although her other child still lives with the father, as her upbringing remains his responsibility.

When women are forced to provide meals for their children, they feed only their own natural-born children; in a household with a single provider, meals are shared by all residents in the house according to age and gender. The result has been that the children of co-wives do not grow up as closely bonded to their siblings, as in the case of my language teacher, John. As adults, their networks are smaller than they might otherwise have been, and they cannot rely on the assistance of their half-siblings in the event that they need it. Furthermore, when the father ceases to be the provider, he loses the moral authority to command the labor and direct the actions of his children. The knowledge and practices of Dagbamba lineages, such as the sapashinima or drummers, are typically transmitted from senior males to junior dependents. This transmission is being disrupted as sons—those dependents who may become musicians and warriors—look less and less to their fathers to be role models.

These and other effects of the crisis of masculinity on women and children will be the focus of the next chapter, but for the present purposes it is important to note that this crisis has a tangible effect on women and children, and the structure of Dagbamba society

more broadly. Although this crisis has affected a loss of power on the part of family patriarchs, most women and youth I encountered—the very people who, ostensibly, stand to benefit from such a flattening of power relations—viewed these circumstances as being negative on the whole, and ultimately to everyone's detriment. In this way, the crisis of masculinity is directly implicated in the anxieties over, and reactions to, the perceived moral degradation and culture loss in contemporary Dagbamba society. This has been a significant factor in the frictions between youth and elders discussed in Chapter 1.

Men cannot always perform the masculinity they and others want for them in their homes, but the *social* responsibilities of men, especially towards each other, are far easier to achieve. The ethics of interpersonal engagement by which masculinities are distributed and collectively constructed—a young novice drummer addressing his teacher as "*mba*" (my father), or a singer praising a chief as the "son of a lion"—require only adherence to a social structure in which one is willing to temporarily accept subordinate social and political status, or conversely, the moral responsibilities of seniority. Within the plethora of social and ritual events that constitute Dagban kaya, masculinities remain imminently available. Traditional performance events such as Sapashin-waa provide spaces for men to successfully and collaboratively construct masculine identities. The Gun Gon ritual, in particular, presents an opportunity for senior and youth masculinities to be realized through the creation of a subjunctive, however temporary, world.

The Gun Gon and The Subjunctive

After about 30 minutes of drumming and dancing in a holding pattern of sorts, it is time for our group to move on to the next stage. Buaru signals the musicians to transition from *Sochendili* to *Chokwahili*, the music for shooting guns. We process into the designated area and the group circumambulates the space three times, the appropriate number for the funeral of a man (for a woman, the number would be four). As the procession moves, the chiefs take their seats at what has been deemed the top of the circle, the vantage point from which spectators will observe the action. A small altar has been constructed from a rock perched atop a few logs of firewood that have been singed but are no longer burning. On the altar is a 20 cedi note. Kambon-naa approaches the altar and taps the rock three times with his foot. He then touches the money with a hand-held fly-whisk before waving it above his head in an effort to blow away any ill intentions or witchcraft sent to harm any of the participants. The guns are loaded only with gunpowder, but there are dangers posed from the explosion of the blast and the forceful recoil of the gun. One by one, the gunners approach the rock and fire their muskets directly at it. One of them crouches down and pretends to sneak up on his surrogate enemy. The sound of the guns is deafening.

The musicians continue playing as the group circles the area again, and some of the young men are dancing inside the circle. The gunners once more take turns firing at the altar. At this point, the scene is becoming more and more chaotic. The tempo of the music has increased since the shooting began. A young man in his early 20s is now improvising the lead dawoulɛ rhythms while Wulana Adam walks next to him, closely

scrutinizing his playing. Now more youths are dancing as they hold their muskets in the air and kick up dust. I have seen these same young men lay on their bellies several times as they slowly creep along the ground as if preparing to ambush an enemy fighter, or perhaps an animal in the bush. As the third round of gunshots approaches the event takes on a carnivalesque air.

This portion of the Gun Gon is a dramatic re-enactment of the masculine practices of warfare. The dense rhythmic and timbral textures produced by the musicians, the intoxicated, screaming youths, and the lingering white smoke stand in for the intensity of battle. As they circle for the final time, the gunners take positions around the perimeter of the circle, crouching as they wait their turn. One by one they fire into the center of the circle, 28 gunners in all. By the time the last gunshot fires, the whole performance area is filled with smoke, and the crowd erupts. Gunners race through the smoke-filled space, screaming as they go. In the absence of an enemy, this one-sided battle has gone as it should: with the Dagbamba warriors victorious and unharmed. Buaru calls for a transition to *Kambon-waa*, the warrior's dance, and Kambon-naa smiles broadly as he begins to dance.

The musicians quickly transition to *Namyo* to accompany the group's relocation to an out of the way spot where they can dance. They move slowly. The red umbrella is once again being floated above the crowd, and the mood is jovial and buoyant. The drummers have been playing non-stop for close to three hours by this point, but they show no signs of slowing down. When they reach the dance space, the chiefs take a seat and a small circle forms with the drummers positioned opposite the seated chiefs, once

again playing *Kambon-waa*. A young man, covered in dust and sweat, dances into the circle holding a *kuli*, a farmer's hoe with a metal blade that also serves as an instrument of war. Reminiscent of Deleuze's mounted warrior assemblage (1987, 87-91), the young sapashini increases his destructive potential by brandishing this masculinity-creating object. In this moment, this male body-with-weapon is a powerful warrior demanding respect. The drummers play with equal ferocity, providing the sonic and rhythmic frame for this idealized version of youth masculinity.

Solo dancing is yet another opportunity for the sapashinima to establish difference among themselves according age groups and genders, and represents still another node within the network of Dagbamba gender identities. Senior warriors tend to employ minimal footwork, centering their movements in their upper torsos and utilizing facial expressions. Some are reserved in their movements and affects, while others are clownish, crossing their eyes or sticking out their tongues. Older men occasionally employ symbolic hand gestures in their dancing, which is a practice associated with Asante dancing and not is found in other Dagbamba dance genres.

Youths dance an entirely different set of movements. As discussed in Chapter 2, the tempo of *Kambon-waa* is relatively fast (ca. 140 bpm), notated as I have in 6/8 meter. A typical youth step consists of a continually alternating pattern of step-kick, step-kick (R-r, L-l), where each step divides the meter in half. The timing of the steps corresponds to a dotted eight-note each, punctuated by a quick kick outwards. The movement is fast and results in generating considerable dust from the ground. As the feet move in time with the music, the dancers typically keep their backs straight, bent slightly at the waist,

arms in front of their bodies. Often, as they do at Yemoo, the young men will hold a war-club as they dance, and each new entrant will seize it from the previous one on his way to greet the chief.

Women also dance *Kambon-waa*, although I have only witnessed women over the age of 50 or so participate in this way. The few female dancers I have observed also used Asante hand gestures, but unlike the men, they did not openly clown. Nor do they express their sapashini heritage by wearing ripped or mawkish clothing, or through raucous behavior. Women may ululate, praise-sing, and move their bodies in time to the music while the ritual progresses, but dancing is generally the only time that female participants move from the periphery to the center of the action.

After about 15 minutes of dancing—a relatively short session—food and drink are provided by the family performing the funeral. The musicians play *Bandawuli* as pounded yam is separated into bowls for sharing and dressed with hot peanut soup. At this point, the drummers finally take a break and refresh themselves before the trip home. At Yemoo, we are served water sweetened with copious amounts of sugar, but on most other occasions plastic satchets of chlorinated "pure water" are supplemented by a bucket of *pito* (millet beer) or a few bottles of *akpeteshie* or other spirit.

“As if”

The theoretical model of ritual I employ from Seligman et al requires a focus on what the Gun Gon *does*, rather than what the various actions and utterances within the performance may or may not *mean*, or even how they may be understood by its

practitioners (Seligman 2008; Seligman and Weller 2012). This orientation runs counter to prevailing methodologies that seek to "clarify the meanings of rituals, to show the ways in which their symbols encode and evoke systems of cultural discourse" (Seligman 2008, 4). As Seligman et al note in *Ritual and Its Consequences*, approaching ritual as a collective exercise in meaning making, as does Geertz (1973), relies on universal agreement and a singular viewpoint (Seligman 2008, 19–20). There are many possible explanations and meanings encoded in the Gun Gon, both above and below the surface. Interpretation, however, is a tricky endeavor, and meanings are neither universal nor constant. As we have already seen in the process of fashioning what is now the Gun Gon from musics previously associated with specific chieftaincies (see Chapter 2), cultural materials may be assigned new meanings over time, even as the materials themselves remain largely intact (Pinney 2005).

For Seligman et al, the efficacy of ritual lies in its capacity to create this subjunctive universe, mobilized in the interest of "accommodating the broken and often ambivalent nature of our world" (Seligman 2008, xi). Citing examples from Judaism and Confucianism, they argue that

> such traditions understand the world as fundamentally fractured and discontinuous, with ritual allowing us to live in it by creating temporary order through the construction of a performative, subjunctive world. Each ritual rebuilds the world 'as if' it were so, as one of many possible worlds. (Seligman 2008, 11)

By reiterating the actions of the Gun Gon—through the repetition of the movements and sounds that constitute it, as well as the temporal and spatial framework within which these repetitions are enacted—a possible universe is made actual. Within

the “as if” time and space of the Gun Gon, masculine virility can be exhibited without the economic and social conditions that limit mens' potential to fulfill their roles as providers and authority figures. The sapashinima follow the traditional conventions of intergenerational behavior that so many fear are breaking down in the "as is" world of everyday reality. They show the public that they are capable men, while at the same time demonstrate to each other that they know how to behave properly relative to their station in the group and in life. Patriarchal hierarchies and the various Dagbamba masculinities described earlier in this chapter are collectively performed and, in the process, re-created. What makes the Gun Gon so important in reaffirming Dagbamba masculinities is that the most difficult aspects of being a man—the economics—are not present within the ritual.

By reiterating the actions of the Gun Gon—through the repetition of the movements and sounds that constitute it, as well as the temporal and spatial framework within which these repetitions are enacted—a possible universe is made actual. Within the “as if” time and space of the ritual, masculine virility can be exhibited without the economic and social conditions that limit men's potential to fulfill their roles as providers and authority figures. They show the public that they are capable men, while at the same time demonstrate to each other that they know how to behave properly relative to their station in the group and in life.

In the subjunctive space of the Gun Gon, intergenerational relationships between men are, according to dominant traditional values, as they should be: the junior members of the ensemble defer to the elders, and the elders tutor the next generation; the youth show strength, and the elders provide leadership. With a small drum in hand, a young

musician performs both his youth masculinity and the lead drummer's senior masculinity by walking behind, and musically responding to, the senior drummer. Kambon-naa, in his talisman-covered war tunic, walks in front of the lead drummer, behind his sub-chiefs, and alongside a young man flamboyantly twirling the umbrella, each a type of man created through the relations of these bodies, objects, and sounds. Patriarchal hierarchies and the various junior and senior Dagbamba masculinities are, thus, collaboratively constructed and, in the process, re-created.

The Gun Gon is also an occasion for the celebration of a collective sapashini identity. It is in these ritual performances that they "show themselves" as proud warriors to be feared, through a demonstration of power. The sapashinima display their capacity for destruction in the forms of military and spiritual power in several ways: by firing guns that have been over-loaded with gunpowder; through acts of dramatized violence in their dances; by prominently displaying talisman-covered war tunics, armbands, horsetail fly-whisks, and belts containing protective and destructive juju on their bodies as indicators of their spiritual powers. From this network of bodies, actions, sounds, and objects, an overtly masculine sapashini identity is also produced.

To no small degree, the entire ritual is a sounded and embodied confirmation of the political, social, and spiritual power of the male chief. The event begins and ends with musical praises that advertise his and his ancestors' accomplishments in the destructive practices of warfare, while at the same time validating his claim to his seat of authority through a recourse to the historical origins of his lineage. Throughout the day's events,

junior men show him respect through performances of subordination, collectively re-creating his power.

Leaving Yemoo…

It's now getting dark, and the group processes back to the truck and settles into the truck in more or less the same fashion as when we came. The musicians play the celebratory *Namyo* and the youth sing humorous call-and-response songs. One is about the dangers of drinking pito that has been cursed by witches. Another makes light of the contentious relationship between boys and their paternal aunts, claiming that of all the terrible animals in the bush, the only one the warriors fear is their auntie.[68] Once back at Kambon-naa's house, Buaru cues the musicians to cease *Namyo* and to begin *Sochendili* for the chief's short walk from the truck cab into his zong. Once the chief is seated in his elder's chair, Buaru brings the event to a close by ending *Sochendili* and delivering a few parting praises on his luŋa. With this final gesture, the Gun Gon is finished, and the time and space of sapashinima's shared "as if" world is brought to a close. The group is dismissed to return to the "as is" world they have left behind for the last few hours.

…from "as if," back to "as is"

On the last night of my fieldwork period in July 2014, I went to visit my kambonluŋa teacher, Mba Buaru, and his family to say good-bye. I had arranged for

[68] It is common for the widowed and/or elderly woman to reside in the a household of an older brother, who is often a family patriarch. Young men often suspect their piriba of using witchcraft against them. See Bernhard Bierlich (2007, 11).

yams and Guinea fowl to be sent to Buaru's home that day as a gesture of respect, thanking him for his generosity as a teacher and mentor. I rode to his house with Fatawu, who was much more skilled at navigating a moto on Kakpagyili's footpath-sized trails at night than myself. When we arrived to Buaru's house, around 8:30pm, his family was gathered in the courtyard of his small compound. Before entering, we offered a traditional greeting, first in Arabic, then in Dagbanli, and Buaru and his wife responded in kind.

Salaam alaykum - Alaykum salaam.

Gafara (Please pardon our intrusion). – *Garimma* (Be seated).

When we entered the compound, the women were still cleaning the cooking pots and serving bowls from the evening's dinner, and Buaru was picking the Guinea fowl meat out of his teeth with a toothpick. There were more people in his house than I had ever seen there before. I had known his eldest son, Inusa, since I began my work with him, but there were another three school-age boys I did not recognize. Fatawu and I were given short footstools to sit upon directly opposite Buaru, who was sitting on a mat next to the basin his wife was using to wash the cooking pots. Another two adult women sat behind them, working their chewing sticks, and the boys laid sleepily on the ground. They were all backlit by a fluorescent bulb mounted above the door to Buaru's room. The light was blinding, making Buaru's face difficult to make out in the shadow of his own body.

It is difficult for me to figure whether that night was actually darker than most, or whether it just felt that way. Nighttime in Kakpagyili is dark, anyway. There are no lamp

posts away from the main roads, and apart from the moon, the only light sources are the solitary fluorescent bulbs mounted on people's roofs and the occasional mosque, whose open doors allow some yellow light to escape. On this particular night, at the beginning of Ramadan, the moon was an ineffective sliver in the night sky.

I first met Buaru on my second full day in Ghana back in June of 2006, and he had been my primary music teacher and source of historical and cultural practice on Sapashin-waa since that time. I had ended each of my previous four trips to Tamale with a visit to his house in Kakpagyili, and always left uncertain of when I would be able to find time and funding to return to my studies with him, which were always, and necessarily, incomplete. These had always been conflictive moments for me, when my status as student, friend, and researcher came into a direct confrontation with my position as a privileged Westerner returning to abundant opportunities in the U.S., equipped with esoteric knowledge and cultural and historical insights that others spend years gaining access to, unsure of when or whether I would ever return. My position as a privileged American had of course always been an aspect of my identity among the sapashinima, but in these farewell visits my positionality took center stage, or so it always seemed to me. Buaru had always been gracious in these moments, fulfilling his role as teacher/father by counseling me to continue my work, to build on what I did with him, and to put my knowledge to good use. In typical Dagbamba fashion, he would wish me and my family health and success in the future, safe travels, and advise that we leave everything up to God. I assumed that things would be more or less the same this last time around.

After the customary initial greetings inquiring about the status of our work, families, and health, however, things didn't follow the usual script. Buaru was atypically somber, and his family sat silently as he laid out a long list of financial problems and familial responsibilities that he was finding more and more difficult to deal with. It seemed that every time he raised the money to pay his children's school fees, another bill was coming due. His house needed significant improvements: he pointed to the crumbling walls of one of his rooms, but the cost of construction materials had risen sharply in recent months as the value of the cedi dropped, making the repairs prohibitively expensive.

A farmer by profession, he had not earned any agricultural income over the previous year because he had been unable to raise the capital necessary to pay for seed, fertilizer, and herbicides. His only income was from drumming, which as far as I could tell, couldn't have been more than a few dollars a day. With Ramadan beginning, only to be followed by the last months of the rainy season, it would be at least four months until he would have any steady drumming work. And, with last year's disastrous harvest still fresh on everyone's minds, who knew whether the rain would be sufficient for harvesting his maize this November?

Buaru had likely participated in thousands of Gun Gons over the previous three decades, sometimes playing two or three in a day. For all his time spent in the subjunctive world of capable senior men, at the end of day he still returned to his everyday life where broken walls needed repair and children needed to be fed, clothed, and educated. That’s the thing about ritual: the subjunctive world of the Gun Gon never overcomes the "as is"

world it is created to transcend, for "the ordered world of flawless repetition can never fully replace the broken world of experience" (Seligman 2008, 30). It is for this reason that the work of the Gun Gon carries such import, as "the world always returns to its broken state, constantly requiring the repairs of ritual" (ibid.)

Unlike the theological underpinnings of the Judaic and Confucian traditions that presuppose a fundamentally disordered universe, the current crisis of masculinity confronting Dagbamba society is man made and of relatively recent provenance. The Dagbamba world is newly fractured. The current crisis of masculinity did not exist in the days before land privatization, structural adjustment policies, neo-liberal political economics, or global warming. The Gun Gon does its most important work for those men who find, or believe, themselves to be ill-prepared or unwilling to adapt to the political and economic changes of the previous decades. Men like Buaru, elder men whose prodigious skills in the domain of Dagban kaya no longer suit the contemporary world, lack the resources to adapt.

While I contend that this ritual is best understood in terms of the subjunctive, I want to push against the borders of this framing and suggest that the participating warriors are not just role-playing in a fantasy world. Although the ritual itself may be ephemeral and temporal, the work of making masculinities accomplished in the “as if” world of the Gun Gon is nevertheless real, with the potential to carry over into the “as is” world of everyday life. Indeed, Gun Gon performances are not about reflecting ideals, nor about wishing for manhood, but do in fact *make* masculinities.

The performances of powerful warriors and great leaders are not so quickly or easily forgotten by the spectators at these events, nor by fellow sapashini. Dagbamba men who demonstrate a commitment to kaya are respected for doing the difficult, largely un-remunerative, yet highly valued, work of keeping ancestral Dagbamba traditions alive. Participation in *kaya* events provides these men a path to lasting social prestige that is not reliant upon economics, but, rather, on establishing and maintaining social relationships. Moreover, performances like the Gun Gon represent meaningful work for young men with little education and limited resources, many with few or no job prospects. They allow these young men to *be men*, to feel useful to their communities, to lead dignified lives in a political economic climate that limits their potential to realize social manhood. The world created during the Gun Gon may be subjunctive, but it is not definitively bounded; although it is *temporal*, the impact of the work done is by no means *temporary*.

In the following chapter, I turn to youth-specific responses to the crisis of masculinity and cultural anxiety more generally, with a focus on the cultural production of young men as they negotiate Dagbamba patriarchy through a balance of subordination and resistance.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dakoli da kpaligu, ŋuni yɛn duɣili? O ma.

(The bachelor has bought seasoning to make the soup sweet, but who is to cook for him? His mother.)

Throughout the course of my fieldwork in Dagbon, I heard again and again that Dagbambas were losing their culture and that, more than any other reason given, this was attributable to the youth. I was told by young and old that the youth didn't value their history, were not learning their grandparents' work, and were embracing Western culture to the exclusion of their own traditional culture: they preferred reggae or DJ "jams" to traditional drumming and dances; they stayed out late at night misbehaving; they ignored the social prescriptions which dictate the conventions of youth-to-elder interactions; and, like many elders throughout Dagbon, they were eschewing the religious customs associated with ancestor reverence as a more conservative brand of Islam continued to increase in popularity. For those most concerned with the loss of traditional culture, the worst crime of young Dagbamba was that they were neither aware of their history nor interested in learning it, that they were too concerned with chasing after "fast money"[69] to be bothered with much else.

From my vantage point as an outsider, as a man in my thirties who had been working and living with many men my age and younger, the situation seemed quite different. In my travels to funerals and festivals around Tamale and throughout Western

[69] The concern for "fast money"—linking a desire for cash without large investments of time, what might be called "easy money"—among young Dagbamba was a ubiquitous complaint.

Dagbon—Worriboɣo, Tarikpaa, Gingaani, Voɣo, Kasulyili, Lingbinga, Nyeko, and others—I always took note of what seemed to me a large number of young people in attendance. There were always children present, even during all-night wake-keepings. All of the *sapashini* gunners were youths, as were many of the musicians I played with. Young men and women danced and sang, groups of *lunsi* frequently included both young and old men, and revelers and spectators seemed to be as representative a cross-section of the populace as it seemed reasonable to expect. Even if there were fewer young people participating in traditional events than in decades past, the youth were clearly a significant presence at the events I attended. So why did so many blame the youth for the social and moral problems plaguing the Dagbamba community, even many young people themselves?

By 2006 or so, Dagbamba youth—male and female, urban and rural, the educated and the illiterate—were being attracted to the preservation movement in large numbers. What I seek to understand in this chapter is "why?" What historical conditions provided the impetus(es) for this turn to tradition at this particular time? Why did a set of values and practices so rooted in local histories and practices suddenly appear so attractive to a generation raised on an unprecedented level of global integration and individual potential? More importantly, why would young people experiencing/promised/afforded levels of personal liberty and agency make the informed choice to enter into patriarchal, hierarchical social spaces in which they sacrifice their own personal freedoms?

In Chapter 1, I argued that the traditionalist movement was partly about recalibrating Dagbamba's relationships with agents and discourses of the neo-liberal

order towards a community-based ethics, and partly about an internal reconciliation of the social and temporal ruptures produced by the violent conflicts of the past two decades. To the extent that the mediated discourses of the movement are being promulgated by cosmopolitan voices, my analysis in Chapter 1 privileged local interactions with and reactions to the state and international actors, and most of all, the narratives produced by these actors coupling Western values (i.e. democracy, technology, consumption, education, individualism) to teleological discourses of progress and development. My focus here is rather on the weight of local events over the last twenty years in situating these actors in this moment in time; this chapter looks at the youth contingent of the traditionalist movement, focusing on young sapashini who have re-claimed a traditionalist temporality through their decisions to perform music and dance forms associated with their ancestors.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Dagbamba began sending their children to school in greater numbers than ever before, the liberalization of the Ghanaian economy increased from its beginnings with the SAP in the 1980s, and foreign investment poured in as the democratically elected government proved its stability. At the same time, farming became less attractive to Dagbamba youth, who were for the first time presented with the alternative of an education and the newly available economic mobility that so many assumed would follow.

This was also a period of internal, often violent, conflict in Tamale and throughout Dagbon. The Guinea Fowl War, or as the Dagbamba call it, the Konkomba War, between Dagbamba and Konkomba lasted eight months in 1994 and resulted in

thousands of deaths (Brukum 2001; Awedoba 2011; Talton 2010; Mahama 2003). Dagbamba and Konkomba villages were burned and ethnic Konkombas fled their homes in Tamale for fear of attack. Dagbamba and Konkomba who had intermarried feared violence from both sides.

The Yendi Skin Crisis, an internecine dispute dating to colonial intervention in 1899 (Staniland 1975), flared in 2002 when supporters of the Abudu gate attacked the Yaa Naa's palace in Yendi, killing 90 people, including the Dagbamba paramount. The army was called in to enforce curfews in Tamale, and clashes between soldiers and local residents often turned violent (Awedoba 2011). Abudu and Andani supporters throughout Dagbon clashed, family members turned against each other, and minor chieftaincies were heavily contested, as each side questioned the legitimacy of any chiefs enskinned by the opposing faction. Because praise-singers and –drummers were accused of exacerbating the dispute, traditional drumming was banned for four years.

Lastly, violent clashes between the youth contingents of Ghana's two major political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), have been a growing problem in the 21st century. Youth "benches," social fun clubs supported by one or another party, or sometimes individual politicians have become indistinguishable from street gangs, often fighting each other in the streets of Tamale. Buildings, cars, and farmland belonging to NPP supporters were burned following their defeat in the national elections of 2008 (MacGaffey 2011). In 2014, a young man was lynched by members of an NPP bench in a case of mistaken identity. When an NPP spokesman disparaged the victim's name on air at Radio Justice before his body had been

buried, an angry mob descended on the station property and demanded the spokesman be handed over to them. When the station manager refused their demands, the mob burned several vehicles ablaze in the parking lot and damaged the façade of the building. The army was eventually called in and maintained a visible presence in Lamashegu and neighboring Nyohini for weeks after.

Plate 6 Radio Justice building, 11 March, 2014

The Guinea Fowl War of 1994, the assassination of Yaa Naa Yakubu II in 2002, and the continuing violence between NPP and NDC youth “benches” have left an indelible mark on the 20- and 30-something generations I worked with in Tamale.

Earlier, I suggested that the Dagbamba cultural preservation movement was in large part a reaction to the failures of such future-oriented narratives to materialize. Perhaps more important for Dagbamba who came of age over the last twenty or so years, have been the fissures between communities and within families that have erupted in this time. Each of these local crises are viewed by most young people in terms of their local ramifications, rather than as repercussions of the neo-liberal order of Ghana's Fourth Republic. The vesting of land titles in the offices of paramount chiefs; behind-the-scenes maneuvers of competing political parties; and youth disenfranchisement and unemployment are generally agreed to have been underlying factors in the social and political unrest of the previous two decades. Today's youth grew up watching friends, neighbors, and family members turn against each other, often violently. Their communities have been fractured and their links to history have become tenuous as customary practices have been abandoned while the legitimacy and potency of traditional authority have been tested. The constituent components of the Dagbamba conception of social personhood—community and history—appear to have broken down amidst the proliferation of political and economic narratives privileging the individual and the future. Little wonder, then, that my friends and interlocutors so frequently spoke to me of the need for "unity."

Drumming and dancing, and especially through youth associations,[70] have become a means toward reconciliation and re-unification: connecting individual subjects to their pasts, to family members they didn't know they had, and to their communities. In Dagbamba communities, these recent trends are attempts to reconcile the "disjunctive

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[70] Youth association NGOs are beyond the scope of this work, but present an interesting topic for future research.

temporalities" (Piot 2010, 20) of this precarious moment through the promulgation of a narrative that allows them to build on the successes of a more ordered time. Whereas the Togolese community that Charles Piot describes in *Nostalgia for the Future* (2010) are setting aside the pasts of tradition to wager on more hopeful, if uncertain, futures, many Dagbamba are hedging such bets by turning to the more reliable past as the way forward.

This switch in orientation isn't merely a matter of a subjective or spiritual conversion from one value system to another. It also involves choosing to enter into social relationships in which young people, who have enjoyed levels of personal independence unthinkable in this community even thirty years ago, are subordinated to their seniors. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, traditional Dagbamba social organization—performing ensembles, kinship structures, chieftaincy—is inherently patriarchal. Young sapashini I knew and interviewed were representative of a contingent of Dagbamba youth making the informed decision to exchange individual freedom for subordination. I argue below that such men sacrifice individual liberty because of the social and material benefits afforded through these relationships.

Choosing Kaya

Even if youth interest and participation in Dagban kaya are lower than a generation or two ago, there had certainly been an increase since the ban on drumming was lifted in March 2006. This is evidenced by the number of 20- and 30-something novices I encountered in performing *Sapashin-waa* between 2006-2014, and by the

number of performance-based youth associations that have formed and become popular during this time.

Sualey and Abukari, both in their thirties, were apprenticing as *kambonlunsi* under Buaru's tutelage. Neither had grown up with the music, as Buaru had, but instead made the decision to learn as young adults. Their life histories are their own, but their entries into *sapashintali*, and *Dagban kaya* more broadly, followed similar trajectories, and were typical of other young men I interviewed about their participation in traditional music and dance ensembles.

As a child in the 1990s, Sualey entered school at level 1—not at all atypically—a few years older than the recommended age of 6. He remained in school up through level 6, when he dropped out, as most Dagbamba of his generation did at the time.[71] Like so many of his age-mates and friends, Sualey found himself with little to do and few prospects for developing economic viability in the future. As a young teenage boy with little to no English comprehension and no educational credentials, his realistic hopes for the near and distant future could not reasonably go beyond agricultural work and the hope to one day have access to his own farm land, a resource that has only become more scarce since he was a boy.

And so, with "nothing doing," his father sent him to the Kakpagyili Kambon-naa so that he could at least learn something about his culture. Unlike many Tamale residents,

[71] The Northern Region ranks last among Ghana's 10 regions in academic achievement, and majority Dagbamba communities do especially poorly within the N.R., with the Savelugu district scoring worst in the Region. While many students receive insufficient test scores to move on to Junior Secondary School, even many who pass choose to dedicate their time and resources elsewhere. There is data to suggest that in the last 3-5 years more and more students have remained in school up through the Senior Secondary level (Alhassan Seibu, p.c.).

but common in in this section of town, Sualey has deep family roots in this community; unlike the sprawling neighborhoods north of the town center, including Jisonaayili, Gumani, and Kpalsi, this centuries-old village community remains almost entirely populated by Dagbamba.[72] His mother had been born into the family of the Kakpagyili Achiri, the second highest-ranking *sapashini* chief, although his father was not a sapashini. In keeping with customary Dagbamba practice, Sualey was chosen as the male "replacement" for his mother in his grandfather's *daŋtuma* (lineage-based occupation). He began with the "small boy" task of carrying the chair for Kambon-naa, and eventually was taught to shoot the guns and to participate in the *Gun Gon* ritual.

Sualey's initial entry into playing Sapashin-waa was not his own choice, but was initiated by the sapashini chiefs. He told me that within a few years of learning to shoot guns, the elders of the Kakpagyili sapashini noticed that there were no young men learning to play the music and that there would be no one to continue the tradition in the future. Because he had shown an interest and an affinity for the music of Sapashin-waa, he was given as a student to Buaru to study its instruments and history. When I first met him in 2006, he played the smaller *lunbila* at the wake-keepings and Gun Gons I attended. By 2014, he was being given the larger kambonluŋa and the responsibilities of leading sapashini ensembles on occasions when Buaru was unavailable, sometimes with the Kakpagyili group, or with the group from neighboring Bilpiela.

Dagbamba youth during my research period, 2006-14, were part of the first generation of Dagbamba in which the majority of children received at least a few years of

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[72] Now easily accessible via the Tamale Ring Road and Zongo Road, the community of Kapkpagyili was a far-flung suburb of the Tamale metropolis as recently as the 1980s.

schooling. Following the establishment of the constitutional government in 1992, primary school in Ghana became free and compulsory and so more and more Dagbamba were able and finally willing to send their children to school in large numbers.[73] Previous to this period, most Dagbamba had been distrustful of Western-style education.[74] Some believed that schooling would cause young people to adopt European lifestyles or drink alcohol (Pellow 2011, 136), or cause them to become lazy, as my friend John's mother feared.

While many Dagbamba children are enrolled in primary school, few of them finish secondary school with certificate in hand. A statistician at the Tamale District offices of the Ministry of Education showed me figures indicating that in the Northern Region, only about 40% of junior secondary school (JSS) students test into senior secondary school (SSS), and that only 20% of students successfully complete SSS, a total completion rate of 8%. Those numbers are skewed, however, by the fact that at least 50% of SSS students in the Northern Region migrated from other regions to attend some of the nationally known SSS in Tamale. It is likely that students from other regions are outperforming Northerners, which would place their completion rate well below the 8% mentioned above. The Northern Region has the lowest graduation rate among Ghana's

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[73] In 1951, in an effort to address the lack of educational opportunities in the North, education was made free in the Northern Region, which then included the present-day regions Upper East and Upper West. However, few Dagbambas took advantage of the opportunity. Several government policies and laws making school "free and compulsory" have followed, each with carrying degrees of success (cf. Akyeampong 2010).

[74] Staniland cites a 1964 national report that by 1960 only ten Dagbamba men over the age of 25—apparently no women—had by that time received secondary or post-secondary education, and that "only 0.2 percent [of Dagbambas] were in occupations described as 'administrative, executive, and managerial' and only 1.1 percent in those classified as 'professional, technical and related' (1975, 2–3).

ten regions, and the worst performing district in the Region is Savelugu, a historically Dagbamba community.

This is all to say that despite increased enrollment figures, the majority of Dagbamba young people have no credentials to show for it. The reasons for these failures are many, including lack of family support, the lack of electricity for studying at night, and teacher absenteeism, and there are indications that success rates are on the rise. The fact remains, however, that the majority of men between the ages of 25-40 have spent some time in school, but are unable to access the types of jobs they and their parents had hoped would elevate them to a middle-class lifestyle. The scope of the failures of schooling to provide the means for economic and social mobility in Dagbamba communities has rendered the narrative of progress and "development through education" a fantasy for most Dagbamba youth.

To make matters worse, many of these men were sent to school in lieu of learning traditional work that would have provided them with an income and social status, such as farming, drumming, smithing, or butchering. Thousands of young men have not been prepared to build lives for themselves and their families, whether in the public bureaucracy, private industry, or the trades. For people with so few options and opportunities for earning a living, drumming for free may not seem like a worthwhile use of time and resources.

When I asked Sualey about why he dedicated so much time and effort to studying, performing, and traveling as a kambonluŋa, he noted that his friends often ask him the same question, and tell him that he doesn't get any money from it, or anything of value.

It's no good because he doesn't derive any benefit from it. He replied that he has come to see Sapashin-waa and sapashintali as his kaya (*Di nye n-kali maa*), and that he should know it and learn everything. For Sualey, Sapashin-waa has an intrinsic value as a historical legacy, not only of his own family but of all sapashini families and also of Dagbon. He also gave the common refrain that if he left his musical work, there would be no one there to replace him and the tradition would continue to decline and ultimately disappear; he feels a sense of personal responsibility, and obligation, to keep the traditions alive.

Abukari was another a young sapashini drummer who lived in Lamashegu, just down the road from my house in 2014. He was born in Salaga in East Gonja District, a town best known for its pre-colonial slave market. He attended school for just three months while in Salaga before being given to his uncle in Mampong, in the Brong Ahafo Region, who removed him from school. Years later, as a teenager, Abukari accompanied his father, a titled sapashini chief from a small village near the ritually and politically important town of Mion,[75] to fight in the Guinea Fowl War (see Chapter 2).

While still living in his parents' house he learned a little about the lunsi tradition, to which he is connected on his mother's side. His entry into the world of playing Sapashin-waa came when he attended the enskinment of his grandfather as a sapashini chief and felt ashamed that there were no drummers present to praise the chief and celebrate the event. After hours of waiting for sapashini drummers to arrive, he and his brother, a kambonluŋa who had been forced to stop playing because of asthma, decided

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[75] A chiefdom situated just east of the Dagbon capital Yendi, Mion is one of three "gate skins" from which a Yaa Naa may be chosen (cf.Staniland 1975, 24–27).

to apply their skills to help move the enskinment along. As he was untutored in the music and praises of Sapashin-waa, the performance did not go especially well. From that moment, he decided that he should learn to play the *kambonluŋa* so that sapashini would never have to bear the hardship and shame of not having drummers in their company. He studied drumming with his elder brother, often sitting for lessons in the company of several other young men who had also come to learn the kambonluŋa.

These young men became interested in the arduous and, as Sualey pointed out, largely un-remunerative, work of mastering the kambonluŋa as the cultural preservation movement began to grow and with it youth interest in traditional music and dance. As the movement emerged following the four-year ban on drumming in 2006, these men were just at the age that sapashini drummers had begun to lead ensembles in the past; these would have been prime training years for young men like Sualey and Abukari. The fact that Buaru continued to play so frequently at his advanced age was due as much to the lack of properly prepared drummers to play in his stead as it was to his knowledge and skill—he once remarked to me that by his age he should have given his drum to a younger drummer, but that a suitable heir was not forthcoming.

Sualey and Abukari knew the music of the Gun Gon sufficiently well, but ritual and historical knowledge was another matter. At a wake-keeping of a sapashini chief at Dungu in 2007, I had accompanied Buaru inside the chief's house where he drummed praises as the deceased's wives tranced; at the enskinment of a sapashini chief in the Dakpema's (an important chief in Tamale) palace in 2014, Buaru led the ensemble by playing the three ritual praises for the incoming chief as he was vested with the

traditional cloth and gun of his office. Whatever their abilities as drummers, the two young men lacked the knowledge that comes from years of experience and study, and these events foreground the problem of not having a generation of drummers between the elders and novices.

What each of them also had in common, however, was a lack of prospects for achieving social manhood and building their lives. Each had gone to school for a few years, but neither progressed beyond JSS. They noticed that fewer and fewer people were playing the kambonluŋa, and since they were "not doing anything," they should learn the tradition. Both were of age during the time that drumming and dancing was banned, and so missed that part of their training, while their colleagues also came of age without music and dance. They both had seen the precarity of the current economic situation, that development was slow and uneven in the North, and that the neo-liberal economy was not serving their own interests or bettering their lives. By learning kambonluŋa, they were aligning themselves, their present and their futures, with a narrative based on the temporality of Dagban kaya rather than the failed promises of progress and development.

The Dagbamba House

During my first few months of research in Tamale in 2006-07, I stayed in the house of a Dagbamba elder with five wives and dozens of dependents, including his children, nieces and nephews, and a few older close relatives. My host, a man in his early seventies, ruled over his compound like a dictator, ordering around the 20-30 people residing there, as if they were servants awaiting his beck and call. My notes from this

period show a deeply conflicted attempt to come to terms with being a willing accomplice to a social structure in which women and youth were clearly afforded subordinate status to the landlord of the house, the *yili yidana* (lit. house husband). The wives and young women of the house waited on him—and me—hand and foot, fetching bathing water, preparing meals, caring for young children, and cleaning what seemed like an unending supply of dirty laundry. For better or for worse, he was a man from the old school, and he ran his home in accordance with a traditional conception of the Dagbamba family.

The young men of the house were frequently ordered about with the expectation that they would drop whatever it was they were doing and obey without question. Sometimes they were sent to a neighboring house to deliver a message, other times to ride a bicycle miles into the bush to collect grass to feed the yidana's horse, an animal that I considered to be an unnecessary symbol of chieftaincy and waste of precious resources. On one occasion, one of the young men, about 19 years old at the time, accompanied me to an over-night wake-keeping performance, as he had several times before. When we returned an hour or two after sunrise, the yidana was furious that the young man had neglected his responsibilities to feed and water the horse. He chastised him for a few minutes, and then sent him to his room to prepare for school. The yidana later told me that had I not been there, he would have whipped the young man for his negligence. On top of feeling guilty for getting my friend in trouble, I resented his anger. After all, there were any number of men in the house who were perfectly capable of dealing with the horse that morning.

Although they accepted their orders and punishments without question, the men grumbled extensively in private. More than a few complained to me that the yidana didn't care about their well-being, that he was hoarding money while refusing to supplement their school fees, that he didn't understand how the 21st century world worked and was making decisions that hindered their personal progress. I wasn't privy to the private conversations of the women of the house, but some hid their feelings better than others. The youngest wife, in her early twenties, seemed especially miserable.

The archetypal Dagbamba home is presided over by a yili yidana, with each of the members of the house having an agnatic or affinal relation to the yidana: one to four wives; female relatives who have been widowed or divorced; the man's children, some of whom may be adult males with wives and children; and nieces, nephews, and female relations of wives who assist with housework and childcare. Generally speaking, the size of a man's house is proportional to his ability to provide his dependents with access to resources. People rarely stay in a house where they are not at least minimally supported if they have other options, and so divorce is common, as is the practice of youth going to live with uncles, aunts, or senior siblings.

Dagbamba compounds, which conform to traditional architectural norms, typically consist of a series of round rooms, configured in a circular pattern, varying in size and function. The yidana and senior wives occupy the larger rooms, while smaller rooms are used to house older children, food stores, or fowl and livestock. The house is closed off to the outside by earthen walls between adjacent rooms, and the door to each room opens into the compound courtyard. Typically, the largest room in a compound is

the *zong*, which serves as a receiving room for guests and storage for farming implements.[76] Chiefs' zongs tend to be quite large and are often well decorated; the zong in the palace of the Kasul-lana, the chief of Kasulyili, is roofed with aluminum sheets and features a large flat-screen TV. The zong is recognized as a symbol of the household, and of the yidana specifically. A wooden pole in the center of the room supports the roofing; without it the roof would collapse and the division between the domestic space of the family house and the elements of nature would cease to exist. The pole at the center of the zong is likened to the landlord, whose fortitude and resiliency maintain the structural integrity of the family house.[77]

The zong is also significant in that it is the only room in the house providing access to the outside: no one may enter or exit the house without passing through the zong. The zong is thus representative of the yidana's authority over the goings on of the family. This is why when a yidana dies, it is Dagbamba custom to break a portion of the compound wall. The broken wall, called *gambei*, represents another way in and out of the house, and symbolizes the lack of authority, discipline, and accountability that comes with the absence of the yidana. A broken gambei indicates that the children in the house are permitted to misbehave because there was no one to provide discipline. Once the yidana's funeral is completed, a new yidana is chosen from among the deceased's oldest

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[76] See Prussin (1976, 11–12) on the spatial layout and symbolic significance of Hausa compounds in Nigeria, both of which bear a resemblance to Dagbamba compounds. This is significant because Dagbamba oral history claims that Dagbamba originated, or at least settled for some time, in one of the Hausa *banzaa bawkwai* (seven bastard states) in Zamfara State, Nigeria (Umaru 2000, 223).

[77] The Yaa Naa, the Dagbamba paramount chief, has also been described as the pole supporting Dagbon.

sons and the wall is rebuilt to show those inside and out that discipline has been returned to the house.

In 2014, traditional architecture had become far less common than it had been in pre-colonial times. Most, if not all, compounds feature a gate to allow vehicles to pass inside for security, and more space-efficient rectangular blocks of rooms were widely used than round huts. Nevertheless, the practice of opening the gambei was still common. I mention the symbolic aspects of the traditional compound to highlight two points: the extent to which discipline and authority have been bound up in a senior (typically male[78]) authority figure; and how entrenched this coupling is in Dagbamba society.

Perhaps more significantly, the *idea* of the controlling father-figure, the provider and disciplinarian, has remained of central importance to Dagbamba youth despite the fact that few yidanas still actually enjoy such authority. It was critical for the young men I encountered in my research that they be perceived by others as being under the control of a senior figure, whether a father or senior brother.[79] In the next section, I turn to the seemingly contradictory logic of willingly placing oneself within the control of an elder, arguing that men like Sualey and Abukari enter into these uneven relationships with the expectation of receiving social and material benefits that would otherwise be unavailable to them as men with limited financial means. Sapashin-waa performances, and

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[78] This type of senior-junior relationship is present in female relationships as well, both in the home and in female workspaces, such as in the master-apprentice relationships in seamstresses shops.

[79] That the young men I encountered clearly valued their ability to exercise a degree of independence in their lives speaks to the divide between what Dagbamba do and what they say about what they do. This particular manifestation of this phenomenon is not a focus of the present study, although I hope to engage this issue through future research.

sapashintali more broadly, constitute a socio-musical context in which these relationships are brought about.

"A House Should Have a Landlord"

In a series of interviews and conversations regarding issues of the youth generation in the context of the traditional social relations discussed throughout this dissertation (junior-elder obligations, family responsibilities, community power hierarchies), men repeatedly stressed the importance of the patriarch for providing guidance and discipline.[80] The guiding logic behind this sentiment was that, in the absence of such a figure, people—especially untutored youth—could not be expected to make prudent decisions or to behave properly. When I would ask friends or acquaintances whether Dagbon really needed another Yaa Naa,[81] in light of all of the bloodshed and strife associated with the skin crisis, I was told more than once that "Yes, a house should have a landlord." Indeed, many in the Dagbamba community believe that their social and political problems have increased in the absence of the Yaa Naa, who is the physical embodiment of the Dagbamba apical ancestor—the landlord and yili yidana of all Dagbon.[82] Without the Yaa Naa, Dagbamba society was akin to a house with a broken gambei, with no one to enforce the strict codes of ethical conduct.

[80] My current data on women's attitudes is only anecdotal and far from conclusive.
[81] The paramount skin has remained unoccupied since the death of Yaa Naa Andani Yakubu II in 2002.
[82] In Dagbanli, the Yaa Naa is called Gbewaa, who begat the founders of Dagbon, Mamprugu, Nanun, and Mossi. Sitobu, the founder of Dagbon, installed his family relations as chiefs throughout the kingdom; contemporary Dagbamba trace their lineage through the chiefs to Gbewaa.

Beyond the moral and ethical guidance a patriarch ostensibly offers, the politically uneven relationship of youth-to-controlling elder[83] remains attractive to many young men because such relationships have the capacity to offer social and material benefits that would otherwise be unavailable to people with limited means. Namely, being within an elder's control provides an identity, as well as access to social and material resources: the concept of social personhood remains a core component of Dagbamba identity and subjectivity (Fortes 1987, 247–286; Mauss 1929); and the patron-client relationship continues to produce prestige for both parties. I am particularly interested here in surrogate, "classificatory," relationships between junior and senior sapashini drummers and chiefs.

In brief, patron-clientism is a relationship of mutual dependence, a system of reciprocity in which one party provides a service of some kind (client) and the other provides sustenance of some kind (patron). The social relationship of patron-clientism is a common and deeply entrenched fixture of African societies (cf. d'Azevedo 1962; Hyden 1980; Guyer 1993), with the institution of the West African *griot*, or praise-musician, being predicated upon this relationship (Locke 1990; Hale 1998; Charry 2000; Hoffman 2000). An important component of contemporary patron-clientism in Dagbon, as in many other parts of Africa, is that the neoliberal political economy co-exists with the traditional systems of gift exchange. As operators within a patron-client system, Dagbamba drummers often say that they do not charge for their performances—the cash and food offered to them is considered a gift in exchange for the services of

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[83] This type of relationship is almost always modeled after a father-child relationship. Teachers are often addressed as "*mba*" (my father), and chiefs as "*yaba*" (grandfather).

entertainment, praising, and historical documentation. Just as in the co-existence of tradition and modernity, contemporary Dagbamba must simultaneously navigate these systems of exchange. Writing on this phenomenon in Igbo communities in contemporary Nigeria, Daniel Jordan Smith states that "[a]lthough observers and analysts frequently make sense of this complexity by contrasting the two systems (Ekeh 1975), or by describing Africans as 'straddling' multiple social worlds (Bayart 1993, 69–70), for most people these contrasting systems are experienced as one reality" (2007: 12-13).

Even in 2014, most tradesmen in Tamale did not charge a fee for their services, but rather performed their work with the expectation of a reasonable reimbursement. As a white American, I was expected to pay well, and for fear of offending my plumbers and masons, I generally overpaid. Because I paid well and on time, and because of my privileged status, these and other tradesmen worked hard to endear themselves to me so that I would call them exclusively.

The benefits, however, go beyond steady work for the client and a functional septic system for the patron. Especially for the client, the economic benefits of this relationship are significant, but it also has significant social value for both parties. As Smith has shown, Igbo continue to reaffirm their own personal and family status by displaying the strength of their familial and social ties to the wider world, even now, in the 21st century (2004, 571). The same holds true for Dagbamba, especially for ties to those in their own communities with higher social status than themselves. Having dependents boosts an individual's status, while being attached to a patron with high status (being a kept person) brings respect; the patron is seen as someone with both the means

to provide as well as the generous nature to do so, while the client shows him/herself to be some one deserving of this investment. This is why Dagbamba have more children than development workers believe they can support, why chieftaincy remains a powerful political institution despite nearly twenty-five years of parliamentary democracy, and why youth seek to be under an elder's control during a period of "human rights."

One of the central arguments of this chapter is that for poor Dagbamba—that is, the majority of Dagbamba—the traditional family structure, with a male head of household overseeing multiple dependents, provides these dependents a level of agency that is difficult to achieve outside of what Saba Mahmood calls the "relations of subordination" that have defined social relations in Dagbon (2001). While it may be justifiable to question whether disadvantaged young men are truly free to choose individual liberty when the path to social status requires subservience, I would suggest that the concept of "liberty" be put into perspective. That is to say, personal liberty is not viewed the same way in Dagbon as it is in the liberal West. As Mahmood argues, "[t]he desire for freedom and liberation is a historically situated desire whose motivational force cannot be assumed a priori, but needs to be reconsidered in light of other desires, aspirations, and capacities that inhere in a culturally and historically located subject" (2001, 223).

In Dagbon, as throughout Africa, individualism is seen as suspicious by traditionalists and cosmopolitans alike. The assumption here is that anyone who keeps to himself or who does not share what he has with friends and family up to no-good, perhaps even witchcraft. In a society with rigid gender roles, strict customary

prescriptions for ritual observation, and multi-part polyrhythm, the freedom to act however one wishes is not consistent with the greater good. To be an unaffiliated young person, that is, to be some one who is not under an elder's control, is to be a person with no accountability and no guidance in identifying right from wrong. In fact, it is to barely be a person at all. The notion of the socially constructed person is alive and well in contemporary Ghana, and one's family history is a major element in constituting who they are. To not be controlled is to not have an identity; the trade-off of liberty for identity is one that young men like Sualey and Abukari are coming to find an attractive one. This accrual of social capital is valuable because it may lead to further opportunities outside of the cash economy for people who require social status (in the absence of cash and employment) to advance their lives.

For Sualey and Abukari, accepting a subordinate status as drumming adepts requires being at the beck and call of Buaru, their drumming father, and the many sapashini chiefs of Kakpagyili, Lamashegu, Bilpiela, and beyond. They know, however, that the more they are called upon, the more they and their services are valued. As uneducated, illiterate, unemployed, and unmarried men, Sapashin-waa represents a venue for them to be defined—by themselves and others—not by these absences but by what they produce for society. The gifts their music brings to funerals and chief enskinments are necessary for the survival of Dagban kaya and history—quite literally, the social identity of the whole ethnic group.

But it also brings a material benefit, although admittedly not always a financial one. Sualey explicitly mentioned that others will come to dance at his house if he has an

event in which he needs their help. The performance of the Gun Gon, or any of the other recreational and ritual events of the funeral, are about showing support, boosting the image and reputation of the bereaved family, and elevating prestige. The Gun Gon is classified as *soŋ*—a customary form of lending assistance to a family in performing an important ritual, which also includes donating food and other expenses associated with large lifecycle celebrations. Sapashin-waa is a highly valued donation given in the form of a musical performance, specifically intended to add to the affective well-being and enjoyment of the event, and thereby providing a source of pride for the bereaved family. Sure enough, when Sualey's father died in January of 2014, the wake-keeping at his house was one of the most energetic events I had been to during my research. Almost all of the musicians I had encountered throughout my research had attended the event and played that night, and the spirit of mutual support made for a wonderful evening of music and dance.

Alignment with the sapashinima integrates Sualey and Abukari in to the world of chieftaincy and Dagban kaya, a space that is as much political and economic as it is social. Whereas their liberties, their "freedoms to," are severely impeded by the exigencies of the state—their lack of accreditation, access to cash resources, and employment opportunities—their service to their chiefs and lineage (*daŋ*) provide a path to community status and inclusion in a vast social network capable of providing opportunities otherwise unavailable to them. Great musicians like are sometimes given gifts, called *bilchinsi*, by well-to-do patrons and chiefs who may become overwhelmed by the performance of praises (Charry 2000). All of my main drumming and history

teachers had owned garments that had been given to them as gifts for their musical services; Buaru's father had once been given a cow, and Alhaji was once given the daughter of a chief to marry.[84] Dagban kaya offers an alternative form of social mobility, one which the political economic situation of Ghana has not been able to replace.

The Social Value of Being Under Control

Performing Sapashin-waa shows that you are part of something with a history. Each group is connected to its home village, which also has its own history (relational identity). The drummer is a constitutive part of all of that, and is acknowledged as such through the performance—he is one of them. After he is gone, he will be remembered and brought back through the performances of others. He is embedded in the web of history and society. Sapashin-waa is a sounded instantiation of the past of all sapashinima and of Dagbon; the praising re-establishes connections to specific figures from the past, whether recent or distant. The great actors of today will become ancestors to be brought back by singers and drummers of the future. The relational identity of the sapashinima, as individuals and collectively—is that Sualey and Abukari now play kambonluŋa often, not just the lunbila. This is a position of leadership, prestige, and possible opportunity. I had first met Abukari in December 2006, when he was playing the smaller lunbila with the Kakpagyili ensemble, under Buaru's direction. Like Sualey, however, he began to play the lead kambonluŋa soon afterwards in his home *foŋ* of Lamashegu. When I attended the Somo Damba festival at the Lamashe-Naa's palace in 2014, Abukari was leading the

[84] Feeling that Alhaji was then too young to marry, his father decided to give the young woman to Alhaji's brother instead.

sapashini ensemble. Recall that during the Gun Gon at when the fighting broke out (Introduction, pg. 15), Buaru had handed his drum off to Abukari to lead the group.

Sualey's and Abukari's stories are instructive regarding the place of the contemporary youth generation in sapashintali, and Dagban kaya more broadly. Each of them entered into the "cultural practices" of playing Sapashin-waa in response to a lack of available musicians, and both of them expressed concern that if they did not carry on the tradition then it would certainly die out. Both of these men are, as illustrated in Abukari's account of the group lessons given by his elder brother, part of a Dagbamba youth movement to participate in Dagban kaya, and in the process save it from ostensible extinction.

They lived close to where I lived and conducted most of my research, Kakpagyili and Lamashegu, respectively, so I saw them fairly regularly, but I also met other young men from other areas who were intent on learning Dagbamba music and history. Especially within Tamale, young men formed themselves into youth associations focused on the performance of traditional music and dance with the larger goal of promoting Dagbamba culture. In 2014, there were well-known groups from all over town: a *Bamaayaa* group from Choɣu, another specializing in *Jɛra* from Bilpiela, two youth associations in Kakpagyili dedicated to performing the men's dance Takai, and the Lamashegu *Lagin Gbaai*[85] Takai Youth Association was perhaps the most popular of all. Even so-called "development" associations often incorporated performance into their charters and community events. One such association, the Tahama Youth Development

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[85] Dagbanli idiom meaning "to choose a course of action together." The Association's motto, printed on their green polo shirts, is "Peace & Unity."

Association from Lingbinga, a rural community about 25 miles northwest of Tamale, states in its constitution that one of its four main goals is to "promote local knowledge and practices through regularly-scheduled cultural events including singing, drumming, dancing, and story-telling" ("Constitution of the Tahama Youth Development Association-Lingbinga" 2013). Just before leaving the field in 2014, I ran into Abukari after a period of not seeing him around town. His phone had recently been stolen, and the Motoking[86] he drove for work had been taken back by the vehicle's owner, leaving him unemployed. Despite these setbacks, as a kambonluŋa, he remained a man with some status and some sense of greater purpose and utility.

Conclusion

Dagbamba youth have a special place in the traditional preservation movement, and their relationship to *Dagban kaya* is categorically different from the elders who may lament their decrease in power that has accompanied its recent decline. Almost as much as the institution of chieftaincy, music and dance are seen today as the primary mediums through which history and kaya are transmitted, embodied, reproduced, and re-shaped. Sapashin-waa, with its powerful musical aesthetic, cultural importance, and historical relevance, offers these men the opportunity to be relevant, powerful, and successful. There are two paths for Dagbamba men to achieve social status in Dagbon. One is through success within modern channels, including business, education, civil service, or professional occupations. The other is to live a life that demonstrates a dedication to

[86] "Motoking" is a model of three-wheeled cargo vehicle, akin to a motorcycle with a flatbed trailer. They haul people, livestock, or any type of trade goods.

community, which men like Sualey and Abukari do through Sapashin-waa. For those men aspiring to chieftaincy or another traditional, titled position, they must follow one of these paths and ultimately prove their dedication to local and regional institutions.

The possible and actual benefits of being a kambonluŋa require sacrificing some amount of personal liberty and individual rights afforded in the last twenty-five years. "Human rights" outlawing of domestic and child abuse; the rise of consumer-culture driven individualism; educational opportunity and state credentials offered through schools; and democracy, wage labor, and international donor agencies (NGOs) targeting the youth all amounted to the shifting of authority away from male elders. These new, "diverse sovereignties" (Piot 2010, 20) were supposed to replace traditional authority, but the failure of these new sovereignties to improve the lot of Dagbamba lives has resulted in people coming back to the old ways.

I have argued throughout this dissertation that a substantial appeal of this traditional turn is that it offers a corrective, or counter, narrative: to the narratives of progress and development coming from the state and NGOs, and the narratives of excessive wealth and consumerism beamed in their homes through satellite TV and pirated DVDs. In some ways, the turn to the past is about replacing these narratives of progress, and acknowledging their fictions. Traditionalists are replacing the narratives of social mobility and the promise of limitless potential in the neo-liberal moment, with a revitalization of an older message, providing Dagbamba with moral grounding amidst the precariousness of the current crisis. The traditional viewpoint is regarded as valuable because it not only calls for Dagbamba to place their faith in the past vis-à-vis ancestors

and elders, but it provides them with an ethical framework in a moment of moral uncertainty. Cultural texts based on kaya or heritage draw clearer lines to distinguish right from wrong, delineating proper behavior, and identifying each individual's responsibilities to family and community.

The local crisis of the past two decades have prompted a renewed investment on the part of Dagbamba youth in cultivating the social aspects of personhood vis-à-vis traditional patron-client relations. The longing for unity is rooted in the desire to be embedded within a socio-historical-spatial network, which may require a compromise of personal liberties and a willingness to accept the control of (*fukumsi ni*) an elder or elders. Dagban kaya offers this sought-after "unity" via inclusion in the narrative of community and interdependence.

EPILOGUE

As I have tried to show in this dissertation, Dagbamba, especially the youth, are at a difficult moment in history. The promises of decades of development rhetoric—electricity, piped water, more schools, infusions of capital, etc.—have arrived in the North but remain out of reach for most. Men have been disempowered due to the economic hardships in supporting their families—the most basic tenet of "being a man" in Dagbamba society. The results for society as a whole have been far-reaching. My aim has been to demonstrate that traditional music remains critically important, and is in fact exceptional among other cultural practices and social formations, for its ability to facilitate the realization of masculinities. This, not in spite of advances in digital and communication technologies, greater access to Western-style education, and the increased presence of foreign culture and capital, but precisely because of it.

For the vast majority of Dagbamba, the technological and material advances in recent years represent what anthropologist Brad Weiss calls the "juxtaposition of expanding potential and declining opportunities" (2009, 115–116). The better life that these advances are intended to bring about remain out of reach for those with neither professional credentials nor access to capital. The archetype of the successful businessman or politician remains an attractive embodiment of the classic African "big man" to which men may aspire. But for most Dagbamba, or Africans, for that matter, these archetypes remain a fantasy. Musician, warrior, and, eventually, respected elder represent accessible paths to social status and a degree of dignity for many disenfranchised and materially poor men.

Areas for Future Research

For all of my attention paid to Dagbamba histories, much remains to be said about the origins of the sapashinima and their music, and changes in the deep and recent past. The 20th century was clearly a time of sweeping changes for the warriors and their music, and much documentary and analytical work remains to be done if their histories are to be preserved and contextualized within the larger frames of colonialism, independence, structural adjustment, geo-politics, land grabs, and the myriad other forces that have affected African societies during this time.

The friction between Tijaniyya and Sunni factions of Islam is arguably the most significant and urgent matter facing Dagbamba society, rivaled only by the so-called chieftaincy crisis (see Introduction and Chapter 4). In recent decades, Dagbamba have been turning to the more conservative Sunni mosques, and a pious Muslim masculinity has become more popular among Dagbamba elders and youth alike, defined in part by an opposing stance to traditional Dagbamba customs, including animal sacrifice, ancestor reverence, and elaborate funeral celebrations, among others. That this trend has taken place over roughly the same time period and among the same demographics as the turn to kaya suggests that newly pious Dagbamba Muslims are, like their traditionalist countrymen, also in search of new, more promising narratives for re-orienting their lives. The research on this critically important issue, however, remains to be done.

Perhaps most needed are the voices of Dagbamba women. Cultural and religious norms restricted my access to women's private and social spaces, and so it remains unclear to me how actively involved women have been in the resurgence of kaya, and

what it is that those who participate are hoping to get from it. The informal conversations I had with neighbors and female traders in the market only begin to scratch the surface of how Dagbamba women accept and resist the power structures associated with kaya. More research is needed to understand their needs, desires, aspirations, hardships, and how they are positioning themselves in relation to any of the "narrative generators" discussed here and elsewhere (Piot 2010, 16, 62). I plan to address these gaps through future research.

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All interviews were recorded and were conducted in English, Dagbanli, or a combination of the two. In interviews in which Dagbanli was the primary language (marked with an asterisk), I was assisted in translation by a research assistant, noted in each entry below. All interviews took place in Tamale, Ghana, unless otherwise noted.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

PhD **Boston University**, Ethnomusicology, Defense April 4, 2016.

Graduate Certificate in African Studies

Dissertation – *Music, Masculinity, and Tradition: A Musical Ethnography of Dagbamba Warriors in Tamale, Ghana*. Advisor: Marié Abe

MA **Tufts University**, Ethnomusicology, 2007.

Thesis – *Kambon-waa: Warrior Music of Dagbon*. Advisor: David Locke

MM **The Boston Conservatory**, Percussion Performance, 2002.

Areas of Concentration – Jazz, Contemporary Chamber Music, Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian Hand Percussion, West African Percussion.

BMusEd **Montana State University-Bozeman**, Music Education, Percussion Concentration, 2000.

AWARDS

2015 The Angela J. and James J. Rallis Memorial Award, Boston University Center for the Humanities.

The Edwin S. and Ruth M. White Prize, Boston University Center for the Humanities.

2014 John Daverio Memorial Scholarship, Boston University School of Music.

2014 Fulbright-Hays, Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship.

2013 West African Research Association, Pre-Doctoral Fellowship.

Boston University Graduate Research Abroad Fellowship.

2012-16 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, Boston University African Studies Center.

2006 Graduate Student Research Award, Tufts University.

PUBLICATIONS

Forthcoming "A View From the Periphery: A Reassessment of Asante-Dagbamba Relations in the 18th Century." *The International Journal of African History* (pending revisions).

2014 Review of *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, by Wyatt MacGaffey. *African Studies Review*, 57: 199-200.

2008 "Kambon-waa: The Music of the Dagbamba Warrior Tradition and the Individual Negotiation of Metric Orientation." *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology*, 13.

2003 "Coping With a Playing Related Injury." *Percussive Notes: The Journal of the Percussive Arts Society*, 4(6): 50.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Symposia Organized

2012 "Boston University Culture Lab Spring Symposium on the Cross-Disciplinary Study of Arts and Expressive Culture," Boston University Culture Lab, April 24.

"Extraordinary Realities: A Cross-Disciplinary Symposium on Arts and Culture," Boston University Culture Lab, March 8.

Panels Organized

2015 "Performing Power: Musical Challenges to Gendered Constructions of the Human," Co-organized with Jessica Schwartz and Stephanie Jiyun Choi, Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Meeting, December 6

2013 “Performers as Researchers Roundtable,” Organizer and moderator, “Music in and of America,” Boston University, February 16.

2012 “Music and Violence Roundtable,” Organizer and moderator, “Music and Violence,” Boston University, February 18.

Papers Presented

2015 **“**‘To Be a Man Is Not Easy!’: Music and Masculinity in Northern Ghana,” Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Meeting, Austin, TX, December 6.

Also presented at the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora Biennial Meeting, Charleston, SC, November 5, and the African Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, November 19.

“Music, Masculinity, and Grass-Roots Cultural Preservation in Northern Ghana,” presented as part of the Walter Rodney Seminar lecture series, Boston University African Studies Center, November 2.

“Music, Masculinity, and Tradition: A Musical Ethnography of the Dagbamba Warriors in Tamale, Ghana,” presented at the Seventh Annual Doctoral Workshop in Ethnomusicology. University of Hildesheim/Hanover University, Hildesheim, Germany. June 25.

“Contested Pasts, Presents, and Futures: What the Written and Oral Archives Say About 18th Century Ghana, and Why it Matters Now,” presented at “Globalization, Permeation, and Exchange: Africa and the New World Order,” Boston University, March 28.

2014 “‘How Can We Live in a Country Like This?’: Music, Talk Radio, and Moral Anxiety in Northern Ghana.” Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Meeting, Pittsburgh, PA. November 13.

2013 “Music and Matter, Time and Space: Considerations of the Materiality of a West African Performance Tradition,” African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD, November 23.

Also presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, IN, November 14.

2012 “Doing Our Grandfathers’ Work,” Boston University Culture Lab Spring Symposium on the Cross-Disciplinary Study of Arts and Expressive Culture, April 24.

“Music, *Jilima*, and Discipline in Traditional Dagbamba Society,” Annual Meeting of the New England Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Medford, MA, April 14.

“The (Re)Production of Canon in Jazz and Popular Music.” Co-authored with Kathleen Camara (Tufts University) and Daniel Newsome (Berklee College of Music). National Association for Music Education 2012 Biennial Music Educators National Conference, St. Louis, MO, March 31.

2008 “Intercultural lntegration in American Music: Club d’Elf and Pluralistic Music Subculture,” Annual Meeting of the US chapter of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Iowa City, IA. April 26.

2007 “Kambon-waa: Warrior Music of Dagbon,” Annual Meeting of the New England Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Medford, MA. April 14.

Panels Chaired

2016 “Sacred Song,” Annual Meeting of the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music, Boston, MA, February 13.

2015 “Male Identities in Social Contexts,” African Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, November 19.