Presence, Absence, and Disjunctures:
Popular Music and Politics in Lomé, Togo, 1967-2005

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the history of popular music in Lomé, the capital city of Togo, a small West African country that has thus far been largely excluded from ethnomusicological inquiry. Through ethnographic and historical research, it explores shifting practices of, ideas about, and sentiments towards, local popular music and their articulations with state power and political culture during the nearly four-decade lasting regime of late President Eyadéma. It divides this long timespan into three distinct periods of political domination. The first period covers the years between Eyadéma's inception of power in a military coup d'état in 1967 through the rise of his charismatic authority in the 1970s. The second period covers the 1980s, a time of economic decline and growing socio-political tensions, during which the state relied increasingly on terror and violence to solidify its power. The final period covers the last years of Eyadéma's regime, from the people's struggle for democracy in the early 1990s through a forged political reconciliation, followed by a gradual process of economic and social liberalization leading up to Eyadéma's death in 2005.

Within this political framework and chronological outline, this dissertation captures an essentially disjointed history of local popular music, which involves musical characteristics and socio-musical processes that remain substantially unaddressed – as is Togo itself – in the extensive literature on African popular music. These characteristics and processes include the stifling of musical creativity and musical evisceration under

state patronage, subtle dynamics of subversion among socially alienated musicians involved in seemingly unremarkable generic musical styles, and an overall predominance of imported popular music styles, rather than the hybrid national popular musics prominently featured in the ethnomusicological literature on West Africa.

This work is structured around the theme of "absence," a concept that was dominant in the local discourse on popular music in Lomé towards the end of Eyadéma's regime. The young generation of urban Togolese, especially, mourned the absence of a set of local musical conditions, principally that of an identifiably Togolese popular music sound. By theorizing "absence" as a phenomenon of perception, rather than an objective state of non-existence, the analysis centers on the nature of the disjunctures between that which is desired and expected, and that which is.

In addition to probing various political, economic, cultural, ideological, and discursive trajectories that led up to, and informed, the emergence of perceptions of absence around the turn of the millennium, this work also critically engages with the absence of Togo in the ethnomusicological literature. It identifies, analyzes, and historicizes paradigmatic trends and epistemological conventions that engendered a scholarly concentration on socially vital, stylistically innovative, and audibly "African" popular music cultures, the legacies of which, I argue, have not only inadvertently reinforced celebratory tropes of otherness that parallel those circulating in the context of the World Music market, but have also rendered a place like Togo invisible and inaudible to ethnomusicologists. The larger aim of this dissertation is thus to broaden the scope of the Africanist project on popular music towards the representation of a fuller spectrum of socio-musical experiences in postcolonial Africa through the inclusion of a place whose

popular music history is characterized more by absence and alienation than it is by a tangible and assertive musical presence.

The ethnomusicological analysis of post-independence popular music practice in Togo also contributes to the broader literature on this generally understudied country in Africa, by revealing and analyzing larger social and cultural responses to, and articulations with, Eyadéma's autocratic regime, most importantly the absence of a genuine cultural nationalism in the context of Togo's Cultural Revolution in the 1970s, a pervasive political disengagement among Togolese in the 1980s, and a short-lived search for a national identity around the turn of the millennium. This dissertation can thus be situated within the larger Africanist body of literature on postcolonial state power. By illuminating the complexities inherent in state-subject relations through an investigation of musicians' modi operandi across various stages of Togolese political domination, it especially resonates with a body of work inspired by Achille Mbembe that has complicated interpretations of domination in the context of postcolonial totalitarian regimes.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Togo's Most Promising Youth

In the summer of 2002, during my exploratory field research on the state of popular music in Togo, a project was underway in the capital city of Lomé that aimed at raising the artistic standards of local popular music. Carried out by the Togolese Association of Music Teachers and funded by the European Union in the context of their "Support Programme for Decentralised Cultural Initiatives," the project entailed the selection and training of Togo's most promising fledgling musical artists. Of the thirty initial participants who underwent the training program that consisted of composition, harmonization and singing, ten finalists had been selected to participate in a closing concert tour across the country. The tour was schedule to start in Kara, Togo's northern region, from where it would move south through all major Togolese towns and cities, including Dapaong, Sokodé, Atakpame, and Kpalime, to finally conclude in Lomé.

Among the people in charge of the training was high school music teacher and choir director Jean-Paul Nenonene, a French-trained ethnomusicologist, who I had recently met to talk about local musical activities. During our meeting, Jean-Paul had told me about the project and invited me to attend one of the last rehearsals that preceded the beginning of the concert tour. The rehearsal took place in the open-air Espace *AREMA*, one of Lomé's few formal performance venues. I arrived during a rehearsal break and approached the stage, which was fully equipped with a sound and lighting system. The promotional leaflet, on which Jean-Paul had written the details of the rehearsal for me, announced the upcoming concert tour with a promising request: "*Venez nombreux*

admirer vos vedettes!!!" ("Attend in large numbers to admire your stars!!!"). The musicians hired for the project were members of Togo's prominent Sasamaso orchestra. In excited anticipation, I waited for the resumption of the rehearsal; my expectations were high – after all, this was Togo's promising youth and I was about to catch a glimpse into the country's musical future.

To my surprise, however, with the exception of a couple of participants, the singers appeared to have mediocre to poor vocal, musical, and presentational skills. Much of the music consisted of simple formulaic compositions characterized by a complete lack of originality, and several singers sang in English, quite evidently, however, with little or no knowledge of the language. All in all, the performances resembled a less than mediocre karaoke act. I could not but wonder how these could be the most talented aspiring musicians in Togo, a country located in the heart of a region thought of as the cradle of innovative popular music styles.

2. Dreams from the Diaspora

When I set out to conduct preliminary exploratory fieldwork in search of a topic for this Ph.D. thesis, my choice of location was primarily motivated by a desire to deepen my knowledge and understanding of a country, which, when growing up, I had thought of as home. Born and raised in Cologne, Germany, as the daughter of a Togolese father and a German mother, my parents had throughout my sisters' and my childhood planned the family's "return" to Togo. Yet, their plans never materialized, and instead, my father returned to Togo alone in 1998, long after my sisters and I had moved out and away, to Berlin, Dakar, and New York, respectively.

Prior to 2002, I had been in Togo only a couple of times. Aside from a one-month attendance of a middle school in Sokodé at age thirteen, my visits had revolved around informal social gatherings with family and friends, none of which involved musical practices other than the playback of various "African"-sounding popular musics of – to me – unknown origin.[1] I had witnessed dance-drumming performances in neighborhood associations, and was familiar with Togolese *animation politique*, propaganda performances consisting of slogans, praise songs and dances presented in the context of state rituals, broadcast on radio and television, and rehearsed in schools.

In Germany in the 1970s, my father, who traveled frequently to Togo, listened to a variety of music, ranging from French chansons through African-American jazz and funk, to Congolese rumba. He explained that Congolese rumba, today more frequently referred to as Soukous,[2] was the sound to which "Togo dances." Thus, the music of pivotal Congolese rumba figures such as Franco, Verckys, and Sam Manguana became for me the sounds of Togo. What I did not know at the time was that the particular eclectic mix my father listened to in Germany – including the music from France and the US – mirrored exactly the sounds popular throughout Lomé in the 1970s. But even without this knowledge, it never occurred to me to ask about music that had originated in Togo; knowing what music Togolese listened to was all that mattered to me at the time.

[1] The concept of "popular music" is used throughout this work to denote a presentational, technology-based and mass-mediated genre of music not specific to any particular culture or locale. See Malm and Wallis' concept of "transcultural music" (1984: 300), Robinson's concept of "internationalized music" (1991: 21), and Turino's concept of "cosmopolitan music" (2000: 7-12). A critical examination of "African popular music" as a discursive object is provided in Chapter 1, Section 4.

[2] The term "Soukous" also denotes a specific variant of Congolese Rumba, conceptualized as the "second stage" in the evolution of the broader genre.

As a teenager, my own musical preferences did not include anything African; I trained to become a classical pianist and, on the side, played electric guitar in a punk rock band. Only years later, as a graduate student in ethnomusicology, did I revisit my earlier experience with popular music from Africa. Inspired by recent ethnomusicological work on the role of music in Africa's postcolonial experience of modernity and nationhood, I began inquiring about specifically *Togolese* popular music. In spite of the abundant material available on a variety of West-African urban musics in both popular media and scholarly research, however, I found practically no references to Togo. Was there no distinctly Togolese music to be circulated (and studied), or had Togo's music escaped broader public attention, as has been the tendency for the country as a whole?

3. Togo – The Invisible Country

The relative international invisibility – and inaudibility – of Togo does not pertain to Togolese cultural practices alone. Within the generally limited news coverage of Africa in international media, Togo is among the most underreported of African states. Small in size and of no special global economic or political relevance, Togo has been a comparably stable state that quietly carried the burdens of a long-lasting repressive dictatorial regime, whose increasing human rights abuses, violence, corruption, and financial mismanagement rarely reached a magnitude that captured the attention of an international audience by comparison with the major humanitarian crises that ravaged other parts of the continent and dominated international news coverage on Africa.

Located on West Africa's Atlantic coast, Togo (officially the "Togolese Republic") stretches over a narrow, north-south oriented, longitudinal strip of territory,

confined by Ghana to the West, Benin to the East, and Burkina Faso to the North. It encompasses six natural regions including, from south to north, sandy beaches and shallow inland lagoons, the Ouatchi plateau (characterized by a reddish, iron-rich, soil), an elevated tableland, a mountain chain, savanna grassland, and a granite region. Its rapidly growing population of now over 6 million is composed of numerous ethnic groups,[3] many of which expand into neighboring countries. A historically conditioned conceptual division is manifest between the ethnic groups from the south and those from the north, most prominently represented by the *Ewe* and the *Kabiyè* respectively.[4] Until colonial intrusion in 1884, most of Togo's various ethnic groups lived in decentralized groupings of villages with little contact with one another, while the *Ewe* dominated the coastal area between the Kingdoms of Ashanti and Dahomey.

A German protectorate at first, Togo became a League of Nations mandate administered by France following World War I.[5] In 1946, the mandate was redefined as a United Nations trust territory. Togo was declared an autonomous Republic in 1956 and gained formal independence from France four years later. With a military coup d'état in

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[3] Numbers differ in various sources and depend on the classification system (Decalo 1996). According to a 2010 sensus, Togo's population comprises 40 different ethnic groups. (http://www.stat-togo.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&Itemid=56&gid=58&orderby=dmdate_published&ascdesc=DESC, accessed on 11 January 2014).

[4] The Ewe make up approximately 50% of Togo's population, while the *Kabiyè* comprise around 30% (Toulabour, 1986: 11).

[5] The German protectorate had originally occupied a larger territory, called Togoland, which the League of Nations partitioned in 1919. The French portion, Togo, consisted of two-thirds of the original territory, while the administration of the other third was assigned to the United Kingdom, who later incorporated it into the Republic of Ghana.

1967, General Gnassingbé Eyadéma installed himself as president and erected a one-party state that consolidated his authoritarian regime. Eyadéma maintained power until his death in 2005, thereby entering history as Africa's longest-serving postcolonial head of state.

With the end of the Cold War and the wave of democracy movements sweeping through Africa, Togo made international headlines in the early 1990s, when a growing contestation of the dictatorial regime resulted in brutal clashes between government opponents and the military. Eyadéma resisted the popular revolt as well as the efforts of a National Assembly to introduce a constitutional liberal democracy, and retained power through a combination of brute force, strategic manipulations of the constitution, and forged democratic elections.

A final surge of international news coverage was prompted by Eyadéma's death in 2005 and the army's installation of Eyadéma's son Faure Gnassingbé as his successor. Subjected to severe international critique and fearing serious retributions from the Economic Community of West African States, Faure initially stepped down, only to reemerge a couple of months later as the winner of another highly contested presidential election. Since these events in 2005, Togo has returned to the margins of international awareness. However, political tensions continue, and a ravaged economy has thrust the Togolese people into severe economic hardship.

Togo has been most visible in the Africa-centered press, in particular in the journal *Jeune Afrique*, as well as in the national media of France, with whom Togo has maintained active political and economic relations after independence. In the context of Togo's colonial history, a considerable body of academic literature has been produced in

French and, to a lesser extent, in German. A limited number of English documents from this earlier period is also available, most notably United Nations reports concerned with the partition and administration of former German Togoland. After independence, the ongoing interest of France and Germany in the history and development of their former colony has continued to inspire French and German research and writing. The bulk of scholarly literature on Togo, however, has been written by francophone scholars, including Togolese, within their respective paradigms. Recent scholarly literature in English is mostly limited to shorter publications, including journal articles and book chapters, primarily in the disciplines of economics, political sciences and education.

The work of American Anthropologist Charles Piot constitutes an important exception. Piot's 1999 book on a small *Kabiyè* Village in Togo's north challenges the association of the rural with tradition and indigeneity, by showing how life in this village community has long been shaped by, and incorporated, foreign and distinctly "modern" cultural elements and characteristics. More relevant to my project, however, is Piot's subsequent work, *Nostalgia for the Future*, which aimed at capturing the current socio-political climate, characterized by people's growing awareness of, and longing to take part in, the larger world, to which the effects of local geopolitical predicaments severely limit access.

The lack of scholarly studies concerned with music in and from Togo is perhaps especially striking, considering the great, and sustained, interest with which ethnomusicologists have researched musical practices in other parts of West Africa. Only a handful of early descriptions of Togolese music appeared in German and French texts during the colonial period, including a collection of Ewe Songs from German Togoland,

whose joint analysis by early ethnomusicologists Erich von Hornbostel and Otto Abraham as well as linguists Carl Meinhof and Dietrich Westermann has ironically become the marker of the birth of Africanist ethnomusicology (Waterman 1991: 169). Short entries on Togo have been included in recent encyclopedias and surveys on popular music in Africa that aim at a comprehensive country-by-country coverage.[6] These entries, however, tend to consist of arbitrary enumerations of Togolese musicians, who may not live or work in Togo, and yield little insight into the socio-musical dynamics in the country.[7] No major research on musical practice in Togo has been conducted within the frameworks of contemporary U.S. Ethnomusicology, itself a subject of this dissertation.[8] At the end of 2010, Togolese musician and music advocate Abiadé Adéwusi published a 350-page manuscript on music in Togo, *La Chanson Togolaise – De la Tradition a la Modernité* (Adéwusi: 2010), a book which not only provided some historical information for this dissertation, but also served as an object of analysis – and thus a primary source – regarding local ideas and concerns about Togolese musical life.

When I ventured into this project, however, secondary sources on urban musical practice in Togo were virtually non-existent. Brushing aside the anxieties I felt about the potential challenges associated with conducting research on an under-studied subject in

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[6] Examples include Volume VI on "Africa and the Middle East" of the *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* (Seck and Clerfeuille 2005: 181-183), where Togo is listed in the table of content as a city of Senegal (2005: vii); and Volume 1, also on "Africa & the Middle East," in *The Rough Guide to World Music* (2006: 39-42).

[7] In a later chapter I will show how these representations are formulated to fit leading narratives of popular music in Africa.

[8] Minor recent publications include Patricia Devine's "Summary on Ife music in relation to church use" (1997).

an under-reported country, I was excited about the opportunity to shed some light on this, to the larger world, unknown musical territory. The Garland Encyclopedia reassuringly asserted: “The African popular-music market may be fraught with contradictions, but what remains uncontested is the energy and diversity of musical creativity in the continent. [This] review is therefore only the tip of this iceberg, and further research remains to be done” (Impey 1997: 419). And so I took up Impey’s challenge.

4. Musical Landscape in Lomé

As I explored the musical landscape in Lomé in the summer of 2002, I observed that communal-participatory forms of musical practice, such as dance-drumming and choir-singing, were the most vital musical activities. Various forms of mass-mediated popular music primarily from Africa and the diaspora were popular, and so was a local music genre termed “gospel,” in which Christian-themed lyrics were set to generic musical accompaniment, frequently produced by music workstations. Events advertised as “live concerts” provided the atmosphere of pop concerts, as performers danced and lip-synched to foreign recordings. A small number of Togolese musicians, whose music was locally labeled as pop or rock, performed sporadically in Lomé’s *Centre Culturel Français*, or in the context of large-scale festivals held infrequently in the *Salle du Congrès*, Lomé’s large stadium. In spite of the broad local popularity of these musicians, many conversations I had with a variety of interlocutors – including musicians – about Togolese popular music implicated the idea of “absence.” While many deplored the absence of a distinct “Togolese” popular music, descriptions of absence extended to surrounding aspects of popular music, including music infrastructure and governmental

support, as well as to such fundamental aspects as training and musical skill. I frequently heard people lament “We don’t have any music,” “Our musicians aren’t skilled,” or “Every country has its own. Where is ours?”

The perception of absence that informed the local discourse on popular music in Lomé paralleled my own impressions. Familiar with the oppressive omnipresence of governmental control in Togo, however, and aware of the musical resourcefulness for which other urban centers in West Africa were known, I had expected urban music to prosper in permitted but less visible places in Lomé. I had secretly anticipated the discovery of a music that would both fill the silent blank in the experience of my musical heritage and become the center of my scholarly work. In my own terms, I shared the regrets over the absence of a distinctly national sound. But while my personal assumptions as an ethnographer might have been in need of critical reassessment, how could I deny the validity of the perception of absence expressed by people locally? Did *absence* constitute a valid and relevant subject of inquiry, and if so, how could *absence* be researched?

5. Absence as an Object of Inquiry

The theoretical debate pertaining to the idea of “absence” has mostly involved its construction as binary opposite to its formal antonym, presence. Viewed as mutually exclusive and diametrically opposed phenomena, binary opposites have served as primary research tools in structuralist social analysis. Post-structuralist theorists, however, advanced the understanding of binarisms by unveiling their hierarchically organized and contingent nature (Derrida 1976). Particularly useful for theorizing the

case of Togo, I believe, is Martin Heidegger's ontological interpretation of absence and presence as two variations of a single basic phenomenon, which he termed "praesens." Based on the premise that we cannot become aware of absence without relating to that which is "unavailable" (presence), Heidegger argues that the (dis-)connection between absence and presence is the experience of "missing," defined as the "not-finding of something we have been expecting as needed" (1982: 310). With desire and expectation as formative factors, "absence" is thus not treated as an objective state of non-existence, but primarily as a phenomenon of perception (ibid.: 305-314).

By defining "absence" and "presence" as modifications of one experience ("praesens"), Heidegger annihilates the dichotomous positioning of the two concepts, and anticipates the poststructuralist critique of binary opposites. This becomes particularly evident in the German original text (Heidegger 1927), in which Heidegger refers to "presence" and "absence" as "Zuhandenheit" and "Abhandenheit," translated into English as "handiness" and "unavailability," whereas "Präsenz" (English: "praesens," but literally: "presence") is conceptualized as the single phenomenon that encompasses both, "Zuhandenheit" (presence) und "Abhandenheit" (absence).

Heidegger's interpretation of "absence" as a phenomenon of perception enables us to treat "absence" as a tangible object of inquiry. The methodology then is to juxtapose the contrasting reality with that which is present in absence – that is, the ideas that underlie, the experience that accompanies, and the actions that arise from, a perception of absence.

6. Chapter Overview

Based on the notion of absence elaborated above, this dissertation is structured around a set of perceived absences – disjunctures between expectation and longing, on the one hand, and contrasting realities, on the other – in relation to the state and development of modern musical practice in Lomé over the course of several decades. Relevant to this project, however, are not only the perceptions of absence expressed by my local interlocutors, but also my own as an ethnographer. And while my expectations were partially fueled by my own desires, they were decisively also shaped by my training as an ethnomusicologist, or, more precisely, by the collective writings produced by scholars from my discipline on the larger subject relevant to my research: popular music practice in African urban milieus. As described above, the social, economic, and musical manifestations of popular music practice I observed in Lomé – the profound state of crisis, the absence of originality, the prevalent low level of musical skills, the lack of infrastructure – did not merely constitute a gap in the scholarly literature, but appeared to represent a complete departure from the findings presented in the literature.

In **Chapter 1,** I address this disjuncture by interrogating the role of Africanist ethnomusicology in shaping conceptions of popular music practice in Africa. I critically examine the history of Africanist popular music scholarship, whose aggregate knowledge, as I will show, has contributed to a conception of syncretism as quintessential African musical response to modernity, an essentialist conception that is equally central in interrelated nationalist and popular discourses on "African popular music." Because I am assessing the dominant Anglophone discourse specifically in the context of U.S. academia, the literature I review in this chapter is largely limited to the Africanist popular

music literature published in English. As I correlate larger paradigmatic trends in the study of Africa to scholarly conceptions of and attitudes towards modernity, I illustrate how the emergence of postcolonial theory in the 1970s and 80s engendered an ethnomusicological paradigm that resulted in a collective scholarly focus on socially vital, musically innovative, and audibly "African" popular music cultures. This focus, I believe, has fostered a number of celebratory tropes of otherness, specifically those of musical vitality, resilience, and subversiveness, tropes that have not only reinvigorated older stereotypes about Africans and their musicality, but have coincided with the themes of absence that have also informed Togolese conceptions of local popular music. I conclude that the representational bias, and some of the intellectual legacies that underlie it, continue to result in the scholarly exclusion of sites and objects of study that do not match the dominant narratives, and identify popular music practice in Togo as one such object.

After thus interrogating *absence* as a process of scholarly exclusion rooted in complex epistemological legacies, the following chapters begin to address this state of exclusion with a historical and ethnographic examination of the case of Togo. Given the oppressive omnipresence of governmental control and the political supremacy of Eyadéma, understanding the development of popular music in Togo must involve a close consideration of the nature and workings of the regime. State power and political culture emerged as important factors, particularly under President Eyadéma. Therefore my research is framed around his nearly 4-decade long rule from 1967 through 2005. I divide this long timespan into three distinct periods, each of which became the basis for a separate chapter: a first period from 1967 to the early 1980s, the prime era of Eyadéma's

charismatic authority; a second period of economic decline and growing socio-political tensions from the early 1980s to the early 1990s; and finally a period of forged political reconciliation, as well as a gradual economic and social liberalization, that followed the population's uprising and struggle for democracy.

Chapter 2 focuses on the first period of Eyadéma's regime and is concerned with the short- and long-term effects of Togolese post-independence cultural policy on the development of modern music. Contrary to the other well-documented examples in West Africa, where state-sponsorship of popular music has been associated with the promotion of musical and musico-economic developments, the incorporation of modern music into Togo's political machinery under President Eyadéma is locally believed to have had lasting stifling effects. Chapter 2 examines this claim by tracing the evolution of modern orchestras, the most prominent form of modern music in Togo around the time of independence, from private sponsorship at its inception in the 1950s through a shift to predominantly state-sponsorship by the mid-1970s.

Specifically, I analyze the tenets and implementation of Togo's Cultural Revolution, and interrogate the application of the cultural doctrine of *authenticité* in the launch of a nation-wide cultural program referred to as *animation politique*. I lean on musicians' experiences in the latter context to illustrate how the relegation of modern orchestras to the accompaniment of dance spectacles and so-called "revolutionary songs" discouraged musical creativity and originality. By exploring musicians' opportunities and constraints, I argue that their choices must be understood in the context of a complex political culture, in which the state increasingly exerted a near-complete control over the social and cultural public sphere, and fostered a political economy of dependence that

combined financial incentives with the instilment of fear. I conclude this chapter with reflections on an apparent absence of a musical resistance, a subject that I more fully develop in the following Chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses on the 1980s, a period of economic decline and increased political tensions, during which a small number of individual musicians emerged, who, in dissociation from the state, embarked on a quest for musical professionalism. I explore how these musicians navigated Lomé's culturally neglected, yet politically tense public terrain, and investigate what I identify as a shared modus operandi among these musicians, specifically a self-imposed social and political alienation, as well as a focus on generic musical styles, including various pop and rock styles, salsa, and reggae.

Focusing on the case of a Lomé-based Togolese rock singer-songwriter, I examine some of the dynamics that have informed this trend, and propose a reading that focuses on that which is largely absent in musicians' work: engagement with the local, culturally as well as politically. Musicians' disengagement, I argue, is located in an ambiguous space between compliance and defiance, and constitutes a form of hidden resistance (Scott 1990), whose apparent innocuousness not only disguised counter-hegemonic dynamics, but also secured musicians' public existence under the scrutiny of an increasingly oppressive and paranoid state. By locating counterhegemonic elements in musical styles that appear unremarkably generic, chapter 4 also challenges the focus on hybridity as the quintessential tool for musical resistance in the African context.

The final chapter, **Chapter 4**, covers the last period of Eyadéma's regime from the early 1990s through 2005, a period initially marked by political and social unrest, which, in spite of Eyadéma's political perseverance, engendered significant change,

including the establishment of a multi-party system and a gradual process of political, economic, and social liberalization. While I briefly sketch the impact of the politically more eventful years during the early to late 1990s on musical life in Lomé, I am especially interested in the latter half of this period, when the privatization of print and broadcast media and the proliferation of information and communication technology rapidly expanded Togolese's exposure to intellectual and cultural formations from around the world.

By focusing on shifting ideas about, and practices of, popular music in Lomé, I capture the impact of this ideologically and culturally transformative process especially on the younger generation, whose perceptions of themselves and their place in the larger world were increasingly shaped by the influx of data and exchange of ideas via the internet. It was in this period that the perception of absence, described in the opening of this introduction, entered the Togolese discourse on local popular music, a perception, as this chapter illustrates, that articulated with a broader realization of Togolese absence and invisibility in global intellectual and cultural flows.

By examining the efforts of an ethnically diverse group of Togolese music-makers to create a distinctly Togolese popular music, I not only describe musicians' attempt to break into the transnational music industry, but also capture a short-lived rise of genuine nationalist sentiments as young urban Togolese negotiated their place and the meaning of Togoleseness in the world. The exploration of their struggles documents a set of old and new obstacles in the context of which their efforts eventually largely failed. This failure, I argue, ultimately reinforced the very feelings of marginalization the musicians had hoped to overcome, and gave rise to a new discourse on local popular

music that echoed the larger sentiment of the Togolese people at the end of Eyadéma's regime, a discourse that centered on the idea of "crisis."

7. A Few Words on Methodology

This dissertation is based on a combination of various methods of data acquisition. The ethnographic portions throughout this work are primarily based on data collected in Lomé during three periods of ethnographic fieldwork conducted from June through August 2002, August 2003 through January 2004, and December 2004 through February 2005. In addition, I have drawn on continuing conversations with Togolese and others, in person, over the phone, via email, and in various online forums, to substantiate the data collected in Togo.

The historical narratives (particularly in Chapters 2 and 3) have been based to a great extent on oral history collected primarily between July and September 2009 (as well as during the above-mentioned periods of ethnographic field research) through personal communication with eyewitnesses who were involved in various capacities in music and politics during the time of the described events. I have further drawn on the examination of historical primary sources, including official reports and transcripts of speeches, as well as musical audio and video recordings. Adéwusi's book (2010) has been an important source of information. However, his historical accounts, while being remarkably wide-ranging, are primarily based on his personal recollections. Much of the data presented in his book in a factual manner is not substantiated with evidence and is at times imprecise. Therefore, all references to Adéwusi's book throughout this work should

be considered with the same awareness for the subjectivity, partiality, and potential inaccuracy that affect all personal accounts.

Unless indicated otherwise, all direct and indirect quotes throughout this dissertation stem from formal tape-recorded interviews as well as informal conversations.

I. “AFRICAN POPULAR MUSIC” – BETWEEN DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

1. Introduction

In this chapter I aim to understand the absence of Lomé – or a case like it – in the ethnomusicological literature on Africa, whose dominant narratives on popular music differ considerably from, and run largely contrary to, the observations I made in the city of Lomé. I tackle this task by critically examining the history of Africanist scholarship on popular music and the discourse the resulting studies have collectively fostered. As a “system of thought” (Foucault 1972) that is instrumental in shaping its object, I define this discourse as constituting the established ways in which Africanist scholars think and talk about popular music in Africa, share a set of assumptions, and produce knowledge that perpetuates essential underlying ideas vital to that particular discourse, in turn not only defining but also (re-) producing its object. As Mudimbe reminds us, “discourses have not only sociohistorical origins but also epistemological contexts” (1988: ix). My method is thus to identify, historicize, and analyze some of the intellectual and ideological legacies and historical paradigmatic trends that have shaped the Africanist scholarly project on popular music.

This inquiry derives some of its impetus from a more personal pursuit, rooted in my history as a German of African descent, specifically with regards to my experiences of having been positioned by others, and of later positioning myself, vis-à-vis essentialist images of Africa and Africans, a history I would like to take a moment to elaborate:

Having grown up in Germany as the daughter of a Togolese father, I have frequently been on the receiving end of essentialist projections about “Africa.”

Notwithstanding the occasional instances of overt derogatory contents, these projections were widely thought of as “positive,” and most typically manifested themselves in exoticized ideas about my athletic prowess, my sexuality, and, last but not least, my musicality. As a child, I did not interrogate these projections. I dismissed the overtly negative associations as racist, but the supposedly positive ones were harder to shake off. I felt pride in how athletic I was – presumably because of my “black” genes – and while I was arguably musical, I often felt a disconnect in terms of the kind of musicality people around me expected me to have. In elementary school, for example, my Belgian teachers expected me to perform an “African dance” at a state-wide school event without any practice or instruction. Years later, when I studied classical piano at the “Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln,” my voice teacher thought I would do best singing American spirituals, while all other instrumentalists who choose voice as a “minor” were assigned German Lieder. Such projections left me ambivalent. Especially when I was younger, I felt occasionally inadequate when I failed to live up to the expectations people in Germany derived from my African heritage.

My first visit to Togo at the age of 13, however, demystified this heritage for me. I recognized my own Togoleseness in less remarkable facets than athleticism and musicality, first and foremost in my familiarity with the sensibilities that informed social relations in Togolese society, sensibilities, I came to later understand, that had been instilled in me in Germany by my Togolese father. As I grew older, I deliberately distanced myself from racialized stereotypes, a process which – perhaps surprisingly – became easier when I moved to the United States at age 26. That my background did not easily fit the dominant preconceived racial and cultural categories in the U.S. emphasized

to me the cultural relativism at work in the construction of race. As my own cultural identity shifted away from a racialized notion, my intellectual interest in the historical trajectories of images of Africanness, now in the American context, grew and eventually became the focal point of my master's thesis in ethnomusicology titled "Imagining Africa in NYC: The Djoniba Dance and Drum Center" (Saibou 1999).

My doctoral dissertation, I envisioned, was going to be different, however. It would have nothing to do with foreign projections of images of Africanness; instead I wanted to focus on how people in a specific African urban locale (Lomé) thought about and engaged in musical practice. But once I arrived in the field and encountered a scenario that completely diverged from what I had expected to find (that is, a vibrant and stylistically innovative modern music scene, as described in the literature on other urban centers in Africa), I realized that my expectations were premised on an essentialist, unitary conception of Africa which, if not consciously informed by, at least subliminally articulated with, the very notion of an innate African musicality to which I myself had been subjected and with which I had critically engaged in my work.

This bewildering experience – and the sense of embarrassment that accompanied it – turned into a set of questions that has stayed with me and broadly informed my dissertation and this chapter in particular: Why do essentialist presumptions about Africa reemerge so persistently? What could I, as an ethnomusicologist, do to contribute to the reduction of the pitfalls of essentialism that seemed to lurk every time we consider people and places in and of Africa? Why did ethnomusicology, a discipline so evidently devoted to egalitarian and anti-essentialist scholarship, produce a collective literature whose selection bias may inadvertently encourage monolithic conceptions of Africa? What is

the cost of such essentialism, in terms of knowledge production as well as for the people we do and do not write about?

I begin this inquiry with an exploration of the broader discourse on "African music," rooted in the conception of Africa as a singular and homogenous entity, and contend that its legacies continue to operate implicitly in the more recent discourse on African popular music. This conception, I argue, has fostered the circulation of tropes of musical otherness and essentialist attributions of racial difference that, often uncritically, reproduce older stereotypes about Africans and African descendants. I will then explore the concept of "popular music" and identify "modernity" as the central theoretical theme in specifically Africanist popular music studies. I historically contextualize this connection by chronicling ethnomusicology's changing attitudes towards modernity (and the meaning of "Africa" for these attitudes), and illustrate how they reverberate with larger movements in African Studies. I am particularly interested in how acculturation theory and the ethos of postcolonialism engendered a selection bias towards distinctly hybrid popular music styles, which in turn fostered the image of syncretism as a quintessential African musical response to modernity.

Musical syncretism has undeniably been an important device used to varying degrees of self-consciousness by Africans to socio-musically negotiate changing conditions in rapidly transforming urban environments as well as to ensure their music's profitability. Especially in the context of African nationalist ideologies and the project of nation-building, the making of distinctly local popular musics came en vogue, propelled by nationalist discourses and enforced through cultural policies. An important body of scholarly texts has dealt with this deliberate production of locally-rooted popular musics

in the context of peri-independence nationalist ideologies. In the 1990s, the inception of the "World Music" market and its aesthetic demands for musics that sonically indexed their region of "origin" fostered another surge of self-consciously produced hybrid popular musics. Scholars addressed this phenomenon by studying the dynamics between the production of popular music in some African locales, and the politics and aesthetics of the transnational music industry. What has been mostly neglected thus far, however, is ethnomusicology's own preoccupation with distinctly syncretic popular music styles and the consequential contribution to the construction of a modern, urban musical Africa that retains – and often asserts – its distinctiveness from the West. This chapter sets out to understand this collective bias.

2. Constructing Difference – Africa, Music, and the Other

The emergence of "African popular music" as a discursive object can not be considered outside of the broader – and considerably older – discourse on "African music." The rise and nature of this discourse is itself epistemologically tied into the larger construction of and ideas about "Africa" as a homogenous entity, which, variably defined by geological, cultural, racial, and political parameters, have first been shaped in European imaginings in different historical moments over the course of several centuries since the continent's official discovery by Europe in the 15th century.[9] It is thus with this history that I will begin.

[9] Mudimbe, among other critics, contextualized this "discovery" as the beginning of the history of Europe's invasion of Africa, and, based on the writing of Herodotus, traced first circumnavigations of the African continent (then called "Lybia"), starting from present-day Egypt, as far back as to the 6th century B.C. (1994: 16-19).

Early ideas about Africa and Africans mostly derived from travelers' tales and explorers' ethnocentric accounts, initially primarily based on encounters in West Africa. Their predominantly negative portrayals, typically tainted with aversion and despise, revolved around the concepts of savagery and barbarism, and ranged from representations of Africans as naïve and child- or animal-like creatures, requiring the "use of authority,"[10] to those of cruel and bloodthirsty brutes, needing to be forcefully subdued. Systematized in a variety of texts that began circulating in Europe and later in the United States, these images (and proposed measures) were central in informing and justifying Europe's early large-scale interventions in Africa, notably the Atlantic slave trade and Christian conversion missions.[11]

Increasingly construed as one of Europe's Others in the context of the transformative ideologies and intellectual arguments of the Enlightenment in the late 18th and 19th centuries, Africa became a "negative trope" (Comaroff 1997: 86) that reaffirmed Europe's status as a superior civilization. Fueled by new theoretical models within the evolving natural and social sciences, particularly scientific racism and evolutionary theories, the duality between Africa's "primitiveness" and European "civilization" served as primary rationalization for European imperialism and colonial expansionism in Africa as well as for the institution of African slavery. As the idea of Africans' inferiority

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[10] Schweitzer (1964: 99), as quoted by Okoye (1972: 114) and Taylor (2007: 76). On the history of images of Africa and Africans see, for example, Pietersen (1992) and Mengara (2001). For a history of British images of Africa between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries, see Curtin (1964).

[11] See, for example, Waldman's discussion of Archibald Dalzel's 1793 *The History of Dahomy* (1793), a text on Dahomean human sacrifices used to justify violence against Africans in the context of the Atlantic slave trade (1965).

continued to produce a host of derogatory depictions, Africa simultaneously emerged as a locus of Europe's imagined ancestral past, and as such became in the West the subject of a paradoxical admiration and yearning. As a result, idealized depictions arose that attached supposedly positive qualities to Africa and Africans. 18th-century Europe, especially, produced romantic images that conglomerated in the notion of the "noble savage," which depicted Africans as "unspoiled" by civilization, essentially good, physically healthy, and innately wise.[12] While such depictions contradicted the boldest of negative preconceptions, they were, of course, equally biased and condescending, and further document how Europe construed its modern self-consciousness in polarized opposition to non-European Others, particularly Africa.

It is in this context, in the construction of Africa as the "negative category of the Same" (Mudimbe 1988: 12), that philosopher and cultural critic V.Y. Mudimbe locates the emergence of a dichotomizing system, rooted in a fundamental paradigm of difference, that brought about a set of thematic oppositions, most lastingly that of tradition and modernity. This dichotomizing system, Mudimbe argued, engendered a definitional interdependence between the concepts of Africa and Europe, whose epistemological order, he believes, inescapably informs every discussion of Africa. In his influential book on *The Invention of Africa* (ibid.), a Foucauldian "archeology of [Africanist] knowledge," he illustrated this epistemological order across multiple, sometimes conflicting, discourses, and showed how it has created what he referred to as "Africanism," that is, the belief in, and production of, an essentialist body of knowledge

[12] For a detailed history and analysis of the myth of the "noble savage" see Ellingson (2001).

that affirms Africa as perpetually different from the West. This body of knowledge, Mudimbe argued, has not only shaped the ways in which Africa and its inhabitants were seen in the West, but that "Africans themselves read, challenge, rewrite these discourses as a way of explicating and defining their culture, history, and being" (ibid.: xi).

The adoption of Euro-American conceptual frameworks by Africans and African descendants is particularly tangible in the various strands of late-19th and 20th-century Pan-Africanism, including *Négritude* and Afrocentrism. Aimed at negating the adverse mental and psychological effects of century-long European and American domination,[13] pan-Africanist narratives attempted to refute negative Eurocentric representations of Africans by offering a mythologized image of a pre-colonial Africa, whose positive depictions served as a source of pride and validated a new affirmative African identity rooted in the idea of a distinct "African personality." Such narratives were particularly powerful among the descendants of slaves from Africa, whose forceful displacement ruptured the ties and awareness of a specific geographic home, and for whom a pan-African identity provided a sense of continuity and belonging.

While the resulting accounts provided powerful counter-narratives to the predominantly negative Euro-American representations, they did, however, operate within the same Western categories and conceptual systems, particularly the ideology of

[13] It is important to note, that notwithstanding their shared experience of oppression, the pre-war African experience of racism differed considerably from that of African descendants outside of Africa. As Appiah illustrated, African descendants in the United States, for example, lived in a segregated society in which they suffered racism's harsh manifestations as America's inferior second-class citizens. By contrast, most Africans under European colonial rule continued to be embedded in their own traditions in which being black was a norm, and were therefore less preoccupied with race than African descendants in the New World (1992: 6-7).

otherness. Philosopher and cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah examined this legacy in the writings of Alexander Crummell and W.E.B. Du Bois, whose pre-war Pan-Africanism significantly stimulated African nationalist ideologies. Appiah was particularly concerned with the reliance on the idea of race, and, interrelatedly, the notion of an African cultural unity, which, as he illustrated, African American pan-Africanists inherited from increasingly racialized 19th-century European and American discourses that "biologized" the concept of culture. It is this racialized conception – the belief that Africans are distinct, culturally and physically – Appiah argued, that has imaginarily tied Africa together as a unified, homogenous entity, regardless of its obvious internal diversity.[14] He wrote: "We are speaking of a continent, of hundreds of millions of people. But the fact is that the legacy of the old European way of thinking, in which what unites Africa is that it is the home of the Negro, makes it natural for us, here in the West, to expect there to be a shared African essence" (1995: 23). The tradition of this essentialism that conjoins culture, race, and territory (Gupta and Ferguson 1997), "makes us equally likely," Appiah continued, "to expect that this essence will show itself in the unity of African art" (1995: 23).[15]

[14] It was in fact this racial conception that restricted Europe's imaginary Africa to the area south of the Sahara, graphically described as "Black Africa," thereby defying its – equally contested – geological delineation as a continent (see Lewis and Wigen 1997 on the arbitrary continental divisions). The frequent exclusion of the area north of the Sahara, generally inhabited by lighter-skinned Africans, involved the construction of this area as "Arabic" and hence culturally distinct.

[15] It should be noted that while Mudimbe proposes to abandon the concept of an "African identity" altogether, Appiah continues to see value in it, but calls for a de-racialized and de-nationalized conception, one that is instead rooted in a sense of solidarity, based on the idea of a "continental fraternity and sorority" (1992: 180).

Africa's *musical* arts, especially, have been the object of Euro-American, and later African and diasporic, projections of "Africanness," and have been a major theme through which ideas and images about the African continent and its people have been constructed, negotiated and circulated in a variety of texts, popular, nationalist and academic. Early popular accounts mirrored the two extremes in the representations of Africa observed earlier: many missionary testimonies were laden with derogatory depictions of music and dance performances, describing them as, among other recurrent characterizations, "wild," "primitive," and "appalling."[16] Other accounts, by contrast, praised the "native's" expressive musical forms for their supposedly uncorrupted genuineness and archaic energy, thus associating them with qualities reminiscent of those attached to the "noble savage." Over time, such double-sided representations of African music were increasingly organized along an emerging dichotomous divide of Africa and Europe: primitive versus civilized, oral versus literate, crude versus refined, hedonistic versus ascetic, impulsive versus self-controlled, and, within the same discursive formation, representations with inversed value judgment revolving around a natural/"close to the earth" versus artificial/industrial divide. Most fundamentally, perhaps, the distinction between African and Western music became that of the African *body* (wild, unrestraint, sexual, and intuitive) versus the modern *mind* (civilized, cultured, refined, and logical).

[16] On early depictions of musical practices specifically in Togo see, for example, Spieth as primary source (1910 [1906] and 1911), or the website of the Norddeutsche Mission, where an article revisits earlier preconceptions of their missionaries (http://zeitgemaess.unsere-mission.de/Drums-and-Trombones.65.98.html?&L=1). On the effects of such depictions on Ewe converts, see Azamede (2010).

Although originated in European representations of African inferiority, many of the derogatory tropes about African music, and, by extension, people of African descent, have been appropriated in their inversed forms to signify inherently positive "African" qualities. An example of such appropriations in the context of Pan-Africanism is found in the writings of Senegalese poet and politician Leopold Senghor, co-creator of *Négritude*, who laid out his monolithic conceptions as follows: "African music […] is rooted in the nourishing earth, it is laden with rhythm, sounds and noises of the earth," while "Western music […] has become impoverished through being based on and perpetuated through arbitrary and, above all, too narrow rules."[17] Senghor also described the frequently evoked idea of an African physical predisposition for music, which he contrasts with a supposedly specifically modern capability for restraint: "When I listen to jazz or to an African song, I have to make a violent effort of self-control (because I am a civilized man) to keep myself from singing and dancing" (1965: 31).

Such discursive frameworks have significant continued salience for the way music from Africa is understood and experienced in the West. In my Master's thesis (1999), I ethnographically examined the dichotomous conception of "Africanness" and "Eurepeanness" as embedded in discourses on and practices of "African music" among students in a New York City-based "African Dance and Drum Center" in the late 1990s. I was particularly interested in how different interpretations of the same images correlated with the students' racial and ethnic identities. Students frequently evoked the body-mind dichotomy, mentioned above, accompanied by a number of associated contrasting characteristics, including emotionality, sexuality, and nature, on the one hand, and

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[17] Senghor (1964 [1939]: 36), quoted in Munro and Britton (2012: 134).

control, asceticism, and artificiality, on the other. While these ideas were widely present across the student population independent of racial and ethnic backgrounds, divergent and conflicting notions of ownership and entitlement marked a division between students of African descent and others, including both Anglo American students and African teachers. Virtually all students agreed, however, that, musically, the distinctiveness of Africa was manifest in the primacy and complexity of “African rhythms,” predominantly conceived of as “natural,” and often figuratively embodied in “the power of the drum.”

Established through a focus on, and fascination with, West African dance-drumming ensembles, the conceptualization of rhythm as a primary and distinctive characteristic of music from Africa has been persistent across all “African music” discourses. Equated with extra-musical features such as an alleged particularly “communal” disposition of African societies, polyrhythms became a marker not only for the difference of African music but also for the difference of Africans, frequently characterized as essentially “rhythmic” people. And because early representations denied Africans the intellectual abilities to analytically comprehend and consciously create, the frequently noted presumed complexity of African rhythms was construed as the result of a natural musical faculty. This originally distinctly negative notion survived in its inversed affirmative form as the idea of an African innate musicality, which has in turn informed the belief that music is a particularly vital form of cultural practice in Africa.

Rooted in the notion of a shared “African” essence, implicitly, when conceived as comprising all musics of the African continent and, explicitly, when delineated by a number of specific characteristics distinct from Western music, the monolithic concept of “African music” has been central in academia, too, where it overtly operated as both a

presumed category of music and, institutionally, a field of study. The very academic discipline of African studies was in fact founded on the premise that "Africa" constitutes a discrete and epistemologically meaningful historical and cultural category, and has been significantly involved in the production of knowledge that emphasized the continent's distinctiveness. In recent decades, however, and notwithstanding the continuing institutional significance of African Studies, the homogenous conception of an "essential" Africa has become an increasingly contested, and largely refuted, subject in academia, and an important body of self-reflective literature has been produced that critically examined Africanists' own contribution to the construction of an "imagined" Africa. Mudimbe and Appiah, some of whose ideas I have outlined above, have been among the critics most actively engaged in this debate.

Throughout these developments, ethnomusicologists have responded to the evolving critiques by experimenting with analytical frameworks that promised a departure from essentialist productions of knowledge. In the mid-20th century, following developments in cultural anthropology, they began exploring culture-based theoretical frameworks that could replace the biological essentialism that dominated earlier discussions of music. Franz Boas's notion of cultural relativism as well as Melville Herskovits's culture-based conceptions (disassociated from race) established ethnomusicology as the musicological sub-discipline committed to a judgment-free cultural egalitarianism.[18] However, as Christopher Waterman observed in 1991, all in all

[18] Radano and Bohlman, who briefly outline this history in the introduction of their edited volume on *Music and the Racial Imagination*, have argued that in spite of their progressive attitudes and outlooks, these mid-century ethnomusicologists, notably Alan Merriam and Richard Waterman, have contributed to the perpetuation of a "denial of race," while simultaneously upholding a "legacy of racializing music" (2000: 22-24).

Africanist ethnomusicology "has, with a few notable exceptions, lagged behind other branches of African studies in critically examining its own ideological 'context'" (1991: 179). Since the turn of the millennium, the perhaps most comprehensive critical examinations of ethnomusicology's contribution to the construction of essentialist ideas about Africa include Paulla Ebron's *Performing Africa* (2002) and, notwithstanding the controversy surrounding some of its own problematic claims and representations, Kofi Agawu's *Representing African Music* (2003).

In her book, cultural anthropologist Paulla Ebron explored how the discourse on, and performance of, "African music" has served as a way to both evoke and enact what she referred to as "The Africa:" the conceptual collectivization of the continent into a broadly singular and homogeneous object (2002: 1). Her second chapter deals specifically with the rise of the idea of a distinct "African music" in opposition to "European music," including its scholarly construction in the context of Africanist music scholarship. She identifies two themes of difference central in the scholarly construction of the concept of "African music:" "rhythmic repetition" and the notion of a "community feeling" (ibid.: 34). According to Ebron, the foundational text that instituted the correlation between music and Africa in academia was Francis Bebey's *African Music: A People's Art* (1975), a UNESCO-supported broad musical survey of Africa that aimed at countering Western derogatory representations of music from Africa as essentially "noise." The generalizations presented in Bebey's book, Ebron posits, provided the theoretical validation for African music studies as an academic subfield: "Without Bebey's book […] it would be difficult for scholars to talk about something called African music" (2002: 35). Ebron further locates the foundational academic validation of

the conception of rhythm as a salient feature of music in Africa in J. H. Kwabeha Nketia's *Music of Africa* (1974) and John Miller Chernoff's *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (1979). "It is the distinction between the West and Africa that prioritizes rhythm, and in turn rhythm repeats the difference," Ebron explains. And: "Africa is singular and unified because its difference is that which can be repeated in the form of rhythm" (2002: 44).

The emphasis on rhythm has also constituted a point of critique in the book of historical musicologist and music theorist Kofi Agawu (2003: 55-70). While Agawu maintains that rhythm is indeed "imaginatively elaborated in African music," he is troubled by its "persistent thematization in Euro-American discourses" (ibid.: xx). Like Ebron, Agawu leans on Edward Said's notion of "orientalism" to argue that Euro-American music scholarship, Africanist ethnomusicology in particular, has been instrumental in the production of knowledge that perpetuates a hegemonic relationship between Africa and the West. He expresses concern about a geographical bias in Africanist music scholarship, arguing that the music from selected locales, mostly in West Africa, has come to represent the music of the entire continent. He illustrated this concern with the example of Chernoff's focus on a single ethnic group in Ghana, based on which Chernoff drew generalizations about the "music of Africa." However, while Ebron reads the representations in the Africanist ethnomusicological literature (including the emphasis on rhythm) as a genuine attempt to dissociate African music from earlier dominant negative images,[19] Agawu suspects "a plot to deny that Africans can and do

[19] It is important to mention that Ebron, in spite of this view, acknowledges the limitations of the hegemonic constructions of musical value (2002: 37).

control the procedures within dimensions like harmony, melody, and form with comparable skill" (ibid.).

Promulgating a wish to stimulate a debate about modes of knowledge production on the music of Africa, Agawu asks: "Who writes about [African music], how, and why? What assumptions and prejudices influence the presentation of ethnographic data? […] What ethical considerations motivate individuals? How different is African music from other world musics, and how can we best construct difference? […] What role has ethnomusicology played in promoting as well as inhibiting the development of African music" (ibid: xii)? In spite of the importance of these questions, the debate Agawu hoped to stimulate failed to materialize, arguably because his own text bore shortcomings that were difficult to ignore. Flawed with partial examinations, disturbing contradictions, and unsubstantiated allegations, Agawu vastly oversimplified the complexities inherent in these questions.[20] Also, ironically, Agawu himself frequently articulates the continuing premise that a distinct "African music" exists, which, according to him, possesses a unique "spirit," whose "secret" had yet to be understood (ibid.: xi-xii). By employing this rhetoric, Agawu promotes the very sensationalized notion of difference, the promotion of which he accuses Euro-American music scholarship.

Regrettably, these shortcomings and perhaps more so Agawu's condemnatory tone distract from, and potentially discredit, his more valuable observations and stimulating ideas – and the importance of his overall critique, which this dissertation undertakes to extend. In particular, I share Agawu's dissatisfaction with what appears to have cumulated into a representational bias in the collective knowledge produced in

[20] For a discussion of these issues see Meintjes' review of Agawu's book (2003).

Africanist ethnomusicology, and likewise believe that the discipline's continuing focus on African "difference" has been the core obstacle to a more egalitarian approach to the ethnomusicological study of Africa. However, my argument departs from that of Agawu in a number of ways, most fundamentally with regards to his indiscriminate depiction of Africanist popular music studies, which he portrays as a "pioneering" area of inquiry that "might usefully orient future works" (ibid.: 150). He erroneously claims that African popular music has been neglected by Africanist music scholars and frames this alleged neglect implicitly as evidence of ethnomusicology's continuing adherence to anachronistic and essentialist models of scholarship, rooted in what he refers to as "ethnomusicology's epistemology of difference" (ibid.: 153). He asks: "Why is the most widely heard music on the continent not also the most written about, the most taught in our institutions, the most valued" (ibid.: 118)?

While Agawu is evidently mistaken about the dearth of popular music studies (popular music practices, histories, and genres have been a dominant domain of inquiry in Africanist ethnomusicology since at least the 1990s and into the new millennium), the notion that popular music studies have superseded the prejudices inherent in earlier discussions of "traditional music" is, indeed, a prominent one. Celebrated as the cornerstone of a new Africanist ethnomusicology, popular music studies marked an important departure from the discipline's focus on traditional and supposedly "authentic" music towards a dedication to methods and objects of inquiry that have accounted for and yielded insights into contemporary African – mostly urban – realities.

I, too, believe that urban and popular music studies have advanced the discipline of ethnomusicology in crucial ways and consider some of the work done in this context

among the discipline's strongest scholarship. However, I am apprehensive about the studies' collective contribution to a discourse on African popular music that has evolved as a *new* site of essentialist – and this time overwhelmingly affirmative – projections onto Africa. I am particularly concerned with the centrality of "hybridity" as a defining feature, which I believe has operated as a new theme of difference that sustains, if it does not reinvigorate, the idea of Africa as an Other. This conception, I argue, has involved the circulation of a set of glorifying tropes that implicitly draw on earlier stereotypes about Africans and their musicality, among them the view that Africans possess innate musical prowess.

3. Reaffirming Difference – Hybridity and Tropes of Otherness

"Hybridity" entered the scholarly discourse as a framework for critically interpreting expressions of difference in the 1970s and 80s when several works – scholarly and popular – emerged, which focused on distinct popular music styles that had originated in Africa and sonically mediated this origin.[21] As Karen Barber observed, these early works were "permeated with the vocabulary of novelty: almost every study speaks of innovation, freshness, inventiveness, modernity, topicality, change or fashion" (1987: 120). Reflecting this explicit interest in, and concentration on, African musical innovation and stylistic genesis, the reference to an "African" popular music in this early literature denoted specifically hybrid, locally-rooted, musical *styles*, rather than implying

[21] Scholarly works include Roberts (1972), Nettl (1978a and 1978b), Mukuna (1980), Coplan (1981), Barber (1987), Collins (1985), Chernoff (1985), and Manuel (1988). Popular and semi-scholarly surveys include Bergman (1985), Stapleton and May (1987), and Stewart (1992).

popular music practices in Africa by and large. Other forms of popular music performed and listened to in Africa – especially the widely dispersed American and Caribbean styles – were acknowledged, but largely excluded from serious inquiry.[22] As Peter Manuel maintained, such imported styles were "outside the subject matter" of his, and other, surveys of that time (1988: 94). Paralleling the former geographical bias in African music research, many of these early continental surveys were West Africa-centric, with a distinct focus on the musics of Ghana and Nigeria.[23] Ghanaian highlife, in particular, served as a common example for popular music in Africa more broadly, as it was believed to provide, in Chernoff's words, an "idea of the spirit of modern Africa," which could serve as "a model for understanding the continuity of African traditions in the face of change" (1985: 156). Similarly, Agawu, analyzed three highlife songs with the aim "to reinforce the point that *African popular music* is finally music, not social text or history" (2003: xx [emphasis mine]).

[22] In his pioneering chapter on postcolonial African "Modern Urban Popular Styles" Roberts (1972), for example, acknowledged the popularity of American popular music styles, but constructed their adoption as a necessary stage of imitation that preceded a "digestion process" on the path towards musical "re-Africanization." Similarly, in his survey on *West African Pop Roots* (1992), Collins acknowledged the popularity of globalizing American rock and roll, soul, rock, and disco; however, his focus lied on distinctly local versions of these styles, by which, as he put it, musicians "made a quantum leap out of the copy-cat straitjacket," "got away from simply copying Western pop music," and "started to produce their own local versions" (1992: 62). In his survey on the *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World*, by contrast, Manuel did not attempt to downplay the significance of imported popular music, and instead observed, in the specific context of Nigeria, that "much of [the] contemporary music differs little from disco or rock in terms of style" (1988: 94). Nevertheless, he, too, excluded this dominant phenomenon from further consideration, and instead pointed to juju, apala, and afrobeat, as being among "[a] few genres [that] are worthy of attention" (1988: 94).

[23] Note, for example, that the West Africa bias in Collins's *African Pop Roots – The Inside Rhythms of Africa* (1985) was so pronounced that he renamed the book in its 1992 re-edition to *West African Pop Roots*.

From their inception, African popular music surveys were characterized by distinctly affirmative, if not enthusiastic, narratives that represented hybrid African popular music as a privileged site of African agency, resilience, and resistance – themes that came to also dominate popular discourses and the promotional rhetoric in the media several years later with the rise of the "World Music" industry. In academia, the scope of affirmative stereotypes that accompanied the emerging scholarly interest in novel African popular culture is well illustrated in Karin Barber's following declaration:

> The most obvious reason for giving serious attention to the popular arts is their sheer undeniable assertive presence as social facts. They loudly proclaim their own importance in the lives of large numbers of African people. They are everywhere. They flourish without encouragement or recognition from official cultural bodies, and sometimes in defiance of them. People too poor to contemplate spending money on luxuries do spend it on popular arts, sustaining them and constantly infusing them with new life. (1987: 1)

Such depictions of hybrid popular music styles as omnipresent, vital, vibrant, resilient, and subversive have since continued to be asserted in scholarly texts, especially where information on the subject has been self-consciously generalized.

Agawu, for example, praised African popular music as the "most vibrant of African art forms" (2003: xx); Angela Impey maintained that the "energy and diversity of musical creativity in the continent remains uncontested" (1997: 419); and Chernoff established the often-implied connection between such affirmative images, on the one hand, and the music's hybridity, on the other, when he concluded that the "source of [the] musical vitality [of African popular musics] is their connection to their own African roots" (1985: 153). Such characterizations, I argue, support the trope of resilience, which is frequently also evoked in the context of the music's resistance to a wide array of potentially adverse circumstances. The following excerpt, from ethnomusicologist Veit

Erlmann, reinforces Barber's earlier depictions and further illustrates how the idea of hybrid popular music in Africa as an all-resisting force has been more than merely implied:

> In view of the manifold traumatic experiences – be it civil wars and bombs in Angola, racial and political oppression in South Africa and Sudan, or the more general cultural uprooting and impoverishment in cities like Lagos and Nairobi – Africa's popular music reestablishes something like a sense of analogous reference, a continuity with the past. (Erlmann 1991: 13 [translation mine])

To resist such extreme circumstances as civil war, oppression, and poverty, Africa's popular music must indeed possess an obscure "power" – or "a secret," to borrow Agawu's words (2003: xi). Perhaps it is this phenomenon that Impey preemptively addressed in the opening of her encyclopedic article, when she reassuringly posited: "Africa is an extraordinary and powerful continent" (1997: 415).

The rhetoric observed in these and other excerpts employs a vocabulary that is markedly less common in scholarly texts on other regions of the world. For example, ethnomusicologists are unlikely to emphasize how "extraordinary and powerful" Europe is, or to extol the vibrancy of US popular music output (unless, of course, they stress the productive richness of black music in the face of oppression, a common theme informed by the same essentialisms). It is in fact curious to note how the adjective "powerful" changes its connotation depending on which continent it qualifies: in the context of Europe it evokes images of political authority and economic and military strength, while in the context of Africa, a continent substantially deprived of such dominance, the meaning of "power" suggests a more esoteric – that is, cultural and spiritual – dimension.

Interrelatedly, however, African popular musics are also celebrated as ideologically and politically subversive. As Nomi Dave (2014) recently elaborated in her

article on “The Politics of Silence” in contemporary Guinean popular music culture, the scholarly interest in politically subversive music has had a long history and has been particularly prevalent in the context of Africa. Popular music studies, especially, document this preoccupation with resistance: descriptions of popular music from Africa as “explosive” and “liberatory” abound in the literature and parallel the imageries attached to the broader postcolonial concept of hybridity celebrated as an “empowering, dangerous or transformative force” (Werbner, 1997:4). “Music is the Weapon of the Future,”[24] proclaims the title of a volume that covers “Fifty Years of African Popular Music” (Tenaille 2002), and lays out the contexts of resistance, and associated artists, with which hybrid popular music from Africa has been associated.

Across these surveys, the reference to “African popular music” transitioned gradually over time from denoting popular music styles that originated specifically in Africa, to denoting popular music practices on the continent by and large. This fluent shift is well illustrated in Impey’s encyclopedic article on “Popular music *in* Africa” (1997 [emphasis mine]), in which she recurrently and interchangeably referred to her subject matter as “African popular music” or “African pop,” and maintained that “all African pop embodies creative interaction between foreign values and local styles” (ibid.: 148).

Claims of the predominance and omnipresence of innovative hybrid popular music styles across African urban centers are indeed common. Ronnie Graham, for example, affirms that his introductory narrative “discography” of “Contemporary African

[24] Note that the phrase “Music is the Weapon of the Future” is a popular quote by Nigerian musician Fela Kuti.

Music" merely "scratch[es] the surface of the vast panorama of music, much of which remains unheard in the West" (1988: 3). Ulf Hannerz, referring specifically to the region of West Africa, maintains that "nobody with any experience of West African urban life can fail to be impressed with the continuously changing variety of popular music – highlife, juju, afrobeat, apala *or whatever*" (1991: 119 [emphasis mine]). Impey, too, claims that "West Africa hosts an immeasurable range of popular music," so much so, that "[a] comprehensive overview of the range of styles, with each one's own blend of local and external influences and fascinating social histories, regional permutations, and influences on diasporic musics, would require dedicated volumes" (1997: 419). In a comparable vein, Agawu concludes his enumeration of African popular music styles – "juju, fuji, afrobeat, afro-rock, highlife, makossa, [and] taarab" – with the addendum "and several dozen others," which, however, like the other writers, Agawu fails to identify (2003: 117). Apparently overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of diversity, he contemplates: "Perhaps we should stop dreaming of an adequate taxonomy and speak simply of *varieties* of African popular music" (ibid.: 122 [original emphasis]).

A close look at the sources in this survey literature, however, reveals a reliance on a limited number of publications that revolve around a handful of musical styles in recurrent urban locales. As illustrated above, these styles are frequently enumerated in ways that convey the impression that they represent a fraction – "the tip of [an] iceberg" (Impey 1997: 419) – of a multitude of other, similarly innovative, vital, and hybrid styles supposedly present throughout Africa. The sustained recycling of the same sources throughout these excerpts is troubling, not only because they constitute the data based on which a monolithic conception of an "*African* popular music" has been coined, but also

because it reveals a collective bias towards certain objects and locales of study, a bias that lends itself to such generalizations.

This collective bias, I argue, is the result of lasting legacies of the founding paradigm of African popular music studies, going back to the 1970s, specifically the legacies of syncretism as the founding theory, style analysis as the founding methodology, and a multi-dimensional commitment to countering negative essentialist representations of Africa through the production of affirmative narratives. Throughout the following pages I am delving deeper into this history and investigate what I perceive as a paradox of Africanist popular music studies: a dedication to a deconstructionist agenda inspired by postcolonial theory, on the one hand, and the unintentional reinvigoration of a discourse of otherness, on the other. I begin by exploring the concept of "popular music" and identify "modernity" as the central theoretical theme in specifically the Africanist discourse on popular music. I historically contextualize this connection by chronicling ethnomusicology's changing attitudes towards modernity, and illustrate how they reverberate with larger movements in African Studies.

4. Continuity and Change - Africa, Modernity and the Study of Popular Music

In his 1986 dissertation on *juju*, a Nigerian Yoruba popular music genre, ethnomusicologist Christopher Waterman noted that "despite frequent use of the term, there is little explicit agreement in the ethnomusicological literature concerning descriptive or operational definitions of *popular music*" (1986: 1). Today, four decades later, "popular music" still lacks a distinct and unequivocal definition; however, the quest for such a definition has largely been abandoned by recent generations of popular music

scholars. Multiple notions of popular music currently coexist in academic and everyday discourse, and derive their meanings from the theoretical angle, philosophical outlook, cultural context, and value-system within which they have arisen. In contemporary Western music scholarship this conceptual variety is legitimized in the mission statement of the Popular Music Section of the Society of Ethnomusicology:[25]

> Broadly defined, the ethnomusicological study of popular music engages the concrete social activities of musical participants, including mass mediated musics, musics developed on a local level, musics developing outside of established institutional power structures, music emerging in the context of the international industry, musics developing with limited forms of institutionalized pedagogy or orally transmitted musics. Popular music may also be construed in a more narrow fashion, in which case any one of these elements may serve as guiding definition.

Framed deliberately comprehensively, this statement illustrates the multifarious contemporary notions of, and approaches to, popular music, and how these definitions draw upon a variety of criteria and characteristics, social, socio-economic, cultural, and specifically musical in nature.

According to Frans Birrer, for example, the criteria and characteristics deployed (explicitly or implicitly) to delineate popular music translate into four main definitional categories, which, he claims, appear either in singular form or in combination: "normative definitions," conceiving popular music as inherently inferior; "negative definitions," delineating popular music by excluding it from other types of music; "sociological definitions," associating it with a particular social group or class; and finally "technologico-economic definitions," correlating popular music with mass communication (Birrer 1985: 104, in Middleton 1990: 4). Similarly, regarding concepts

[25] http://www.ethnomusicology.org/?Groups_SectionsPM

of popular culture in the context of cultural theory, John Storey identifies six notions, each embedded in distinct critical approaches: popular culture as (1) the culture favored by many people; (2) the culture that does not qualify as "high culture;" (3) mass culture; (4) the culture originating from "the people;" (5) the cultural terrain of ideological struggle between dominant and subordinate classes; and (6) "postmodern culture," with no distinction between popular and high culture (2001: 6-14). Storey argues that, whichever notion of popular culture one evokes, an "absent/present *other*" always haunts the discussion:

> It is never enough to speak of popular culture, we have always to acknowledge that with which it is being contrasted. And whichever of popular culture's others we employ, mass culture, high culture, working class culture, folk culture, etc., it will carry into the definition of popular culture a specific theoretical and political inflection. (2001: 13)

In the Africanist discourse on popular music, the principal defining theme, I argue, has been that of "modernity," with "tradition" at work as the implicit "other."

The working definition of "sub-Saharan African popular music" proposed by Waterman in 1986, illustrates well the formative centrality of modernity in emerging conceptions of popular music in Africa:

> Sub-Saharan African popular musics […] are realized and disseminated via both live performance, generally involving members of the urban African wage-work force, and electronic mass-reproduction. At a higher level of generalization, African popular musics are twentieth-century phenomena, historically rooted in and broadly conditioned by processes of colonialism, urbanization, modernization, and the progressive incorporation of Africa into the Western-dominated world economic order. (1986: 4-5)

Popular music, as defined here, is both a musical response to, and constituent of, modernist-capitalist processes. But while popular music (and, more broadly, popular culture) is a phenomenon generally associated with the processes of industrialization and

urbanization (Storey 2001: 13), “modernity” as such rarely informs the current discussion of popular music in the West, where a condition of advanced modernity is often simply assumed in any consideration of mediated culture.

The centrality of “modernity” as an explicit and problematized theme in the Africanist popular music discourse has had three aspects. As illustrated in Waterman’s quote above, modernity has been seen as a process of social and material transformations, which, in interaction with local conditions, has given rise to new cultural practices, among them popular music. Second, modernity has also been at work as an ideological construct, a locally adopted narrative, whose images have been shown to be embedded in significant ways in popular music practice in Africa. Accordingly, scholars have examined the significance of popular music as a vehicle for distinctly modern imageries and socio-cultural identities, and have explored various musical, material, and ideological ties – imagined or real – between popular music from Africa and modernity. Lastly, there is modernity as a theoretical framework in Africanist ethnomusicology, a framework that has assumed different forms throughout the history of the discipline, and that has decisively shaped the paradigm of Africanist music scholarship in Western academia. It is this latter aspect to which I want to now turn.

For almost a century, Africa’s engagement with modernity – often broadly conceptualized as “Africa’s encounter with the West” – has been a focus of, and major debate in, African Studies across the disciplines. In their introduction to *African Modernities*, Jan-Georg Deutsch, Peter Probst, and Heike Schmidt identified three distinct trends in Africanists’ multiple and changing attitudes towards modernity in the course of the last century (2002: 3-11). In Africanist ethnomusicology, these trends are

mirrored in the shifting approaches to musical change and, by extension, in scholars' attitudes towards popular music.

First, in the early 20th century, Western Africanist scholars viewed modernity primarily as a destructive force in the context of European colonial domination. This early view of "modernity as contagion" is manifest in ethnomusicologists' initial efforts to collect and document – that is, "salvage" – African music before it became "irretrievably spoiled by Europeanisms."[26] Embedded in evolutionary notions of culture, musical change was perceived as a polluting process that disturbed the musical evolution from "within."[27] Because of the belief in a pre-modern condition of "uncorrupted" musical cultures and the value attached to them, scholars interested in Africa focused during this early period of ethnomusicological inquiry exclusively on so-called "traditional" music that was considered uncontaminated by outside influences.[28] The brass bands and so-called "orchestras" that emerged across urban Africa were thus not considered worthy objects of study.

Second, with the rising African nationalism of the mid-20th century, Africanists conceptualized modernity as a historical process indispensable for the political and economic future of independent Africa. This second view, "modernity as necessity," is manifest in ethnomusicologists' willingness to confront the impact of Western music in non-Western societies, in particular the rapid musical transformations they encountered

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[26] See Hornbostel (1986) [1905] and (1928: 59-62).

[27] For an example of this viewpoint see Nettl's discussion of the concept of "intra-cultural" change, that is, change spawned by internal factors (1955).

[28] During this early period of scholarship on non-Western traditional music, the discipline was called "Comparative Musicology."

in urban environments. Inspired by anthropological acculturation theory, they tested the applicability of various concepts of change to the study of musical style.[29] Herskovits's theory of syncretism (1948), especially, drew increasing attention.[30] Defined as the blending of elements from two or more cultures in contact, "by which old meanings are ascribed to new elements or by which new values change the cultural significance of old forms,"[31] "syncretism" accommodated ethnomusicologists' interest in change, continuity, and innovation, and alleviated the continuing concern that Western influences would inevitably lead to musical homogenization.[32] Other theories proposed to differentiate between various processes of adaption included those of "Westernization" and "modernization"[33] (Nettl 1978b). The first publications on popular music in Africa began emerging in the latter half of the 1950s;[34] however, a distinct surge of scholarly interest did not arise until the 1970s.[35]

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[29] See, for example, Merriam on "The Use of Music in the Study of a Problem of Acculturation" (1955), or Wachsmann's examination of "Criteria of Acculturation" (1961).

[30] Introduced to the discipline of ethnomusicology through the work of Richard Waterman, the theory of syncretism was initially applied to the study of the "African Influence on the Music of the Americas" (1952).

[31] Herskovits on processes of "reinterpretation" which, he argued, qualify syncretism (1948: 553), quoted in Merriam (1964: 314) and Coplan (1982: 119).

[32] See Nettl's short overview of the concern of a mass cultural "grey-out" (1983: 345-349).

[33] See Nettl's exploration of "Some Aspects of the History of World Music in the Twentieth Century" (1978b).

[34] See Nketia's work on modern Ghanaian music (1955, 1957) and Rycroft's publications on South African popular musics (1956, 1958, 1959).

[35] See, for example, Roberts's chapter on "The Music of Postcolonial Africa" (1972), Collins on "Ghanaian Highlife" (1976) and "Post-War Popular Band Music in West

In the late 1970s and 80s, the African-Americanist literature on syncretism inspired the formulation of a paradigm for the study of popular music in Africa that aimed at integrating sociological understandings of human adaptation to processes of urbanization into the musicological analysis of change (Coplan 1982: 126-127). The resulting approach consolidated diachronic and synchronic methods of analysis, towards an understanding of what Christopher Waterman described as "a more holistic (and, presumably, complex) set of linkages between musical performance style, patterns of urban social organization, and processes of sociocultural adaptation to and of urban environments by diverse groups and individuals" (1986: 10). Musical styles continued to constitute the primary unit of analysis, however, in a new conceptualization that understood their emergence as the product of "economic, political, social and cultural relations between musicians and the total context in which they perform" (Coplan 1982: 124). Waterman expanded on this idea later by explaining that "[t]he concept of styles as normative structures realized in performance practice and subject [to] multiple, context-sensitive interpretations and evaluations provides an analytical link between musical processes and products, on the one hand, and patterns of urban cultural identity and social organization, on the other"[36] (1986: 24). Many studies on African popular music have developed within variations of this founding paradigm, which has coincided with, and

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Africa" (1977), Coplan's contribution to Nettl's edited volume on "non-Western responses to Western music" (1978a), and Mukuna's edited journal on African urban music (1980).

[36] For a discussion of the evolving conception of "style" and the related implications for the analysis of stylistic change, specifically syncretism, in the context of the rapid transformations in 20th century African urban environments, see Waterman's dissertation section on the subject (1986: 23-38).

reflects, the third trend in Africanists' attitudes towards modernity, that is, the view of modernity as a contingent process, in which modern social, cultural, political, and economic forces articulate with and shape diverse contemporary realities in Africa.[37]

Though it originated within a broader shift in anthropological theory,[38] the conception of "modernity as contingency" has been a hallmark of postcolonialism, which, concerned most fundamentally with inequalities related to the legacies of colonialism, has aimed at historicizing and disrupting essentialist ideological and intellectual practices. As part of their deconstructionist agenda, scholars working within this paradigm have directed their attention onto the discourse of modernity itself and have examined its role in (re-)producing a polarized phenomenological division between Europe – or more broadly "the West" – and Africa. In particular, the binary conception of "modernity" (associated with progress) and "tradition" (thought of as stable continuity), discussed in Section 2, has been criticized as a neo-evolutionary framework that "underpins a long-standing European myth: [the] story about the passage from savagery to civilization" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: xii). Literary critic Edward Said's pioneering work was pivotal in illuminating the persistence with which "orientalizing" binarisms, dividing "the West" from "the Rest," have shaped the discourse of modernity as a narrative of progress (1979).[39]

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[37] Coplan's comprehensive social history of South African urban black performing arts (1985) and Waterman's social history and ethnography on a single musical Yoruba genre (1990) were among the early path-breaking examples of this paradigm.

[38] See Ortner (1984) on the broader shift in anthropology from synchronic analyses of structures and systems to an interest in persons and practices within diachronic analytical frameworks.

[39] See also Wolf (1982) and Fabian (1983), among other important works of that time.

Following in Said's footsteps, Africanist anthropologists have explored various strategies to complicate and destabilize the tradition/modernity divide. The contributors to Jean and John Comaroff's edited volume *Modernity and its Malcontents* (1993), for example, aimed at illustrating how presumably modern and traditional forces and elements interacted in ways that challenged, and sometimes inverted, attributes conventionally associated with either modernity or tradition. Specifically, the authors examined the role of ritual in African societies, illuminating how ritual, thought of as safeguard of tradition, may operate as a practice of transformation rather than reproduction. Similarly, Charles Piot argued "against appearance" by illustrating how the supposedly traditional exchange economy in a small northern Togolese village was better conceptualized as a manifestation of modernity, as it had been shaped during the encounter with Europe over the course of several hundred years (1999). Such strategies of inversion have been effective in upsetting preconceived notions of tradition and modernity.

Another tool used in the attempt to complicate the concept of modernity has been to highlight the inconsistencies observed throughout the vast postcolonial terrain and to speak of *modernities*, conceived in the plural. Notions of "multiple," "alternative," or "parallel" modernities[40] stressed the contingent plural trajectories through which Western modernity has unfolded in unique ways in different regional and national contexts. The fundamental ideological assertion in this approach has been that human agency determines the course and nature of these trajectories. Accordingly, the Comaroffs proposed a historical anthropology that

[40] See Comaroff and Comaroff (1993), Appadurai (1991) and Gaonkar (2001), and Larkin (1997), respectively.

> tries to dissolve the division between synchrony and diachrony, ethnography and historiography; that refuses to separate culture from political economy, insisting instead on the simultaneity of the meaningful and the material in all things; that acknowledges -- no, stresses -- the brute realities of colonialism and its aftermath, without assuming that they have robbed African peoples of their capacity to act on the world. (1993: xiv)

The literature that has emerged within this paradigm has emphasized the multifarious ways in which people have responded creatively – and divergently – to the broadly convergent modern transformative forces. Gaonkar referred to this process as one of "creative adaptation," that is, "the site where a people 'make' themselves modern, as opposed to being 'made' modern by alien and impersonal forces, and where they give themselves an identity and a destiny" (2001: 18). Thus construed as a social means and cultural site of self-assertion and empowerment, creative adaptations have been considered inherently positive responses to, and manifestations of, modernity.

An important concept in discussions of agency within this postcolonial framework has been that of hybridity. Advanced as a key concept in postcolonial and critical theory through the works of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall and Gayatri Spivak to denote the mixing of cultural elements believed to be of different origins, "hybridity" has been central in postcolonial examinations of globalization, identity, and popular culture. Theorized as a "Third Space" (Bhabha 1994) that disrupts categorical oppositions, cultural hybridity became a prime signifier for the postcolonial and increasingly globalized world.

The Africanist literature on popular music, with its founding theory of syncretism, has substantially resonated with the ethos of postcolonial theory. Popular music studies have historicized the cultural and societal transformations as responses to modern forces, fostered through colonialism, nationalism and postcolonial state policy, and have shown how local actors responded creatively in ways that are contingent to their particular

circumstances. The "syncretic" – that is, "hybrid" – nature of their objects of inquiry enabled ethnomusicologists to critically engage with oppositional views of tradition and modernity (incidentally also consolidating the – in ethnomusicology – ever-conflicting concepts of continuity and change, oral and mediated transmission, and commercial and ritual functions), by showing how local actors operate in ways that situate presumably modern and traditional currents not in mutual exclusiveness or evolutionary hierarchy, but in an often-politically conscious dialogue of negotiation and reformulation. In Karin Barber's words:

> If the key to [African] popular modern culture is its syncretic combinations, this does not mean that the pairs of opposed terms between which it operates form invariable sets. They overlap, but they are not coterminous. Traditional/modern, old/new, official/unofficial, and foreign/indigenous can shift their positions as popular art negotiates them. What seems to remain constant is the production of effects through the combination of contrasting elements. (1987: 40)

Coplan, for example, examined the complex interrelationship between evolving performance styles, the rise of urban classes, and social identities in their articulation with shifting South African racial politics across various locales from the 19th-century through the 1970s. He posited: "In the process of syncretism we can observe the specific relationships and complex blending of traditions in adaptation to urban life. Its operation objectifies the dynamic relationships between historical experience, social interaction, personal agency and cultural expression" (1982: 119). Relatedly, Christopher Waterman traced the history of *juju* music through various socio-economic transformations that emerged in Nigeria in the context of British colonialism, Nigerian independence, and Yoruba nationalism. He stressed the ways in which musicians responded creatively and resourcefully to these transformations, and "fashioned a mode of expression that enacted,

in music, language, and behavior, a syncretic metaphoric image of an ideal social order, cosmopolitan yet firmly rooted in autochthonous tradition" (1993: 66). Similarly, Thomas Turino, who examined popular music in Harare, Zimbabwe, explored how modernist-capitalist processes generated a "cosmopolitan-indigenous syncretism in the very conceptualization of 'the nation' and Zimbabwean art and identity" through a period of over 70 years (2000: 354). Other examples include John Collins's *Highlife Time* (1994), Cornelia Panzacchi's *Mbalax Mi – Musikszene Senegal* (1996), and Caleb Dube's "Changing Context of African Music Performance in Zimbabwe" (1996).

In addition to these historical monographs whose analyses traced the rise of musical styles over extended periods of time, other studies have dealt more narrowly with particular historical moments or socio-economic, -cultural, and -political contexts relevant to the politics of distinctly local-sounding hybrid music styles, especially the contexts of post-independence nation-building and the emergence of the "World Music" market. Kelly Askew's book on Tanzanian cultural politics (2002), for example, examined the roles of three Tanzanian musical genres in shifting constructions of nationalist identities across several stages of Tanzanian post-independence political history and cultural policy. Through her analysis of musical mediation, Askew emphasized the fluid and dialectic dynamics involving both the state and the people in the shaping of national identity.[41] Louise Meintjes's ethnographic work in and around a South African recording studio (2003) examined the interrelated aesthetic, economic,

[41] Other works that examined popular music in the specific context of post-independence cultural policies include Counsel's (2009) and Dave's (2009) writings on cultural policies and popular music in West Africa and Guinea, respectively, and White's work on Congolese *rumba* (2008), to which I will return in more detail in Chapter 2.

political, and social dimensions at work in the production of a Zulu popular music recording. Specifically she explored how technological and symbolic mediation in sound production articulated with local identity politics (ethnic and national), as well as with dynamics associated with the transnational music market.[42]

As Africanist popular music studies have generated this important body of literature that has advanced our understanding of how popular musics have articulated with transnational transformative processes in a variety of historical contexts and urban locales, they have also, collectively, fostered the image of hybridity as the quintessential African musical response to modernity – an image that has (in spite of the documented plurality and eclectic nature of this response) reinforced a singular conception of African popular music as distinct from Euro-American "mainstream" equivalents (themselves obviously "hybrid" and, paradoxically, deeply historically rooted in African musical gestures and idioms).

5. Conclusions

To be sure, the centrality of hybridity in popular music practice across Africa and the negotiation of dichotomous notions that informs this centrality – tradition and modernity, indigenous and imported, local and global, native and foreign – is not an academic construct, but captures (as the above-outlined literature vividly documents) the views of many Africans. As Turino noted, "essentialism is often important to people's self-definition" (2000: 24), and, quoting Herzfeld, he advised that "[d]istrust of

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[42] Other literature pertaining to the effects of the "World Music" industry on popular musics in and from Africa includes Meintjes (1990), Feld (1988, 1994, 1996), Taylor (1997), Erlmann (1999).

essentialism in social theory should not blur our awareness of its equally pervasive presence in social life" (1997: 27, quoted in Turino 2000: 24). Accordingly, I acknowledge that essentialist dichotomous notions have long informed African conceptions of popular music. However, I remain concerned about the extent to which the aggregate knowledge produced in the above-outlined literature has been involved in the (re-) production of these essentialisms.

I want to suggest that the tropes that have accompanied representations of hybridity as quintessential African musical response to modernity – those of vitality, resilience and subversiveness, outlined earlier in this chapter – have perpetuated themselves through a circular bias in favor of what Graham identified as early as 1988 as the "major epicenters of modern African music" (1988: 3), at the expense of a scholarly omission of "less musically influential countries" (ibid.: 1), whose musical practices might tell a different story. By doing so, ethnomusicology has, in spite of its explicit commitment to egalitarian scholarship, further marginalized those places and people already situated at the margins of the transnational cultural industry, confirming – ironically – via the process of exclusion, the very validity of hybridity as a trope of empowerment.

Most recently, a number of studies have emerged that introduce important new conceptual frameworks to investigate through popular music practice contemporary effects of neoliberal transformations of modernity in Africa. In his ethnographic study conducted in Accra, New York and London, Jesse Shipley (2013) locates the emergence of a Ghanaian popular music style that combines elements from highlife, African-American hip-hop, and Akan story-telling, in the specific context of recent neoliberal

cultural, economic and political transformations, and explores how notions of entrepreneurship and celebrity interrelate with what he identifies as a new kind of social and economic order. Ryan Skinner (2015), concerned with the contemporary moment in Mali's capital city of Bamako, develops Mbembe's conception of Afropolitanism to capture the ways in which musicians and audiences musically negotiate the multiplicity of their "lifeworlds," where local, national, translocal, and global currents shape contemporary multi-dimensional identities. Skinner's work also acknowledges and engages with the adverse effects the political unrest in 2012-13 had on Bamako's popular music culture.

In addition to these novel conceptual frameworks and subjects of inquiry, a small number of recent works has challenged stereotypical conceptions of popular music in Africa (what I referred to as "tropes of otherness" earlier in this chapter), particularly its pervasive representation as a site of resistance. In her aforementioned article on "The Politics of Silence" (2014), for example, Nomi Dave identifies and analyzes the omission of political critique and dissent among modern musicians in Conakry, Guinea. Relatedly, Bob White's work on popular music in Zaire under Mobutu complicates the relationship between music and power, and leads White to see popular culture "as more of an agonistic dance with power than a resistance to it" (2008: 16).

The work of this recent generation of Africanist ethnomusicologists indicates a shift away from the distinctly affirmative narratives described throughout this chapter, towards a more matter-of-factly scholarship that is willing to confront less optimistic and celebratory socio-musical realities, such as musical crisis and political silence. However, it is important to note that these studies continue to be situated in locales long identified

for their prominent histories of socially vital, stylistically innovative, and audibly "African" popular music cultures. This continuing bias on what can be viewed as a canon of Africanist popular music scholarship reveals the lasting influence of the paradigmatic trends and epistemological traditions outlined throughout this chapter, which continues to render other places in Africa invisible and inaudible to ethnomusicologists. To break this cycle and further the exploration of the full spectrum of socio-musical experiences in post-colonial Africa, I believe that it is imperative to actively seek the inclusion of places whose musical histories have thus far been excluded from scholarly inquiry, an enterprise that requires a more exploratory methodology.

The Togolese case, to which I am now turning, has constituted such a place of exclusion. Not surprisingly, local popular music in the capital city of Lomé has lacked the prerequisite assertive innovative musical presence represented in the canon. Instead, popular music in Togo has been a site of struggle and disjunctures, whose largely disjointed history has involved musical characteristics and socio-musical processes that remain substantially unaddressed in the extensive literature on African popular music. These characteristics and processes include musical evisceration under state patronage, political and social alienation of musicians, and a predominance of generic popular music styles. In the following three chapters I explore some of the broader dynamics that have articulated with these particular characteristics and processes, especially as they relate to Togo's political culture and Lomé's urban history under President Eyadéma's autocratic regime.

II. CREATIVITY BETWEEN TERROR AND SPECTACLE

1. Introduction

As illustrated in the previous chapter, popular music in Africa has been extensively celebrated as a site of subversion and agency. The idea of popular music as an empowering counter-hegemonic force in Africa has manifested itself in the literature in two especially significant ways. The first relates to cases of opposition to and resistance against local political conditions, particularly well documented in a later period of the independence era or in the context of the South African apartheid regime.[43] The second way in which popular music in Africa has been thought of as subversive is more pertinent to this chapter and concerns musico-cultural assertions of African agency in resistance to the hegemonic effects of colonialism in the context of nationalist movements during the peri-independence era, especially as implemented through cultural policies launched by the first generation of independent African governments.

President Sékou Touré led the way with nationalist cultural policies in Guinea, the first West African colony to gain independence from France in 1958. A passionate anticolonialist and fervent proponent of African nationalism, Sékou Touré launched a Cultural Revolution that sought to reverse the cultural alienation Africans were presumed to have suffered through decades of colonial domination. Touré's cultural doctrine promoted the return to pre-colonial African values and, contrary to the philosophical and

[43] Well-documented examples include the political resistance associated with Nigerian afrobeat musician Fela Kuti (Veal 2000) and the "protest music" of Thomas Mapfumo in Zimbabwe (Turino 2000). On the topic of music and resistance to South African apartheid, see, for example, Drewett (2003 and 2004) and Schumann (2008).

literary movement of *Négritude*, rejected European influences. His cultural development program built on the idea of "Africanization," which, in the arts, began to systematically develop various forms of artistic expressions including traditional and modern music, dance, theatre, and painting. Centralized artistic competitions throughout the country fueled creative productivity, and the country's best artists were presented at the *Quinzaine artistique*, the renowned arts festival in Conakry. Soon most of Guinea's thirty administrative regions had created their own artistic groups, including most prominently "African ballets," folkloric dance groups that featured choreographed representations of the dance traditions of some of Guinea's diverse ethnic groups, and a new form of dance orchestra music, the nation's new popular music, which integrated local musical elements into modern, especially Caribbean, instrumental arrangements. Sékou Touré nationalized five bands, of which "Bembeya Jazz," founded in 1961, achieved international recognition.

Somewhat in contrast to the example of Guinea, which involved a post-independence leader who pursued – at least initially – a liberal politics, a small number of studies has dealt with musical patronage structures in more oppressive regimes.[44] Bob White's work (2008) on the appropriation of Congolese *rumba* in the context of Mobutu's terror regime provides a particularly comprehensive examination of this phenomenon. White highlights the centrality of laudatory practices and portrays the

[44] A related yet distinct body of literature deals with the issue of censorship in music. However, this literature tends to focus on the control of song lyrics, the analysis of which falls more broadly into the larger category of censorship of speech. The compilation on *Popular Music Censorship in Africa* illustrates this point (Drewett and Cloonan 2006).

resulting relationship between musicians and the state as that of a client-patron relationship.

Similarly, in the context of Moussa Traoré's military regime in Mali, Ryan Skinner (2012) observes the rise of a clientelist relationship between members of the political elite and individual musicians who provided laudatory services in exchange for financial support and political protection. Skinner's article is particularly interesting as it juxtaposes the effects of Traoré's statist government on modern music with the effects of President Modibo Keïta's post-independence nationalist cultural policies, the latter of which resembled the policies implemented earlier by Sékou Touré in Guinea.

Whatever the precise circumstances, formal and informal sponsorship of music in the context of African post-independence governments has been largely associated with the promotion of modern music. The literature documents how musicians harnessed the politics-related patronage structures to secure and improve their livelihood as well as to advance their art, including in politically oppressive contexts. Rumba music, for example, flourished in Zaire under Mobutu, and the clientelist structure that arose under Traoré has been linked to the rise of individual stardom in Mali, a process most prominently exemplified by the career of singer Salif Keita (Skinner 2012: 526-529).

While Togo's Cultural Revolution was based on similar doctrines and involved the creation of comparable musical institutions as previously implemented in these well-document cases, cultural programs, especially the creation of state-sponsored modern orchestras in the context of *animation politique*, are locally perceived as having resulted in the stifling of musical creativity, a claim that this chapter sets out to examine. By exploring how and why musicians engaged in conditions that engendered what they

themselves perceived as the stifling of their art, this chapter also engages with the larger issue of power relations in postcolonial totalitarian regimes, and illuminates the complexities inherent in state-subject relations, which – as Mbembe reminds us – transcend "the binary categories used in standard interpretations of domination" (1992: 3).

I will begin by sketching the rise of modern dance orchestras in Lomé during the peri-independence era, which marked the birth of a new musical popular culture. Specifically, I trace their evolution from privately founded and owned orchestras, towards the emancipation and professionalization of orchestra musicians in the context of the newly established hotels and nightclubs. In this section I also explore the makeup and meaning of the eclectic mix of imported musical styles these orchestras performed. I sketch this history against the backdrop of the political events leading up to Togo's independence and the subsequent inception of power by Eyadéma. The following section explores the early history of Togolese cultural policy. It offers an understanding of the rise of Eyadéma's charismatic rule and explores the use of music as a propaganda tool towards the mobilization and indoctrination of the Togolese people in the context of Togo's Cultural Revolution. In Section 4, I examine the creation of official district orchestras and the effects of their incorporation into the state's *animation* program. Section 5 traces the shift from exclusively private to predominantly state patronage of Lomé's orchestras. I investigate the effects of this shift and assess the choices made by musicians vis-à-vis the new opportunities and constraints that arose during this period and how they articulated with state power. I close this chapter with reflections on how Togo's specific postcolonial political culture articulated with local modern music, and

how the musical evisceration that occurred in this context may reveal what Mbembe referred to as a "zombification" (Mbembe 2001: 104) of the Togolese people.

2. Peri-Independence Popular and Political Culture

Peri-Independence History

The late 1950s and early 1960s were important years in the history of colonial Africa: the vast majority of colonized countries gained independence between 1957 and 1960. Togo's formal independence from colonial domination in 1960 was preceded, like that of other French colonies, by a process of gradual emancipation, ideologically fostered by African nationalist movements and politically manifest in the formation of independent political parties. Within the initial division into a dozen political fractions, two parties began to emerge and to increasingly dominate Togo's pre-independence political scene: the "Parti Togolais du progress" (PTP) headed by the francophile Nicolas Grunitzky, and the "Comité de l'Unité Togolaise" (CUT), led by the more radical anticolonialist Sylvanus Olympio.

With the support of the French government and in alliance with a number of smaller parties, most notably the Union des Chefs et Des Populations du Nord (UCPN), a conservative alliance in support of Togo's northern regions, Grunitzky's PTP won in Representative and Territorial Assembly elections held in 1951 and 1952. The CUT boycotted subsequent French-supervised elections in protest of France's support of Grunitzky, effectively leaving the political arena to the CUT. In 1956, following a referendum, France established Togo as an autonomous republic within the French Union under Grunitzky's leadership as Prime Minister. In UN-supervised elections in 1958,

however, Olympio's CUT defeated the PTP, a surprising victory that ensured the CUT's influence in the crucial transitional period leading up to independence. On 27 April 1960 Togo gained formal independence from France, and Sylvanus Olympio was inaugurated as the first president of the Republic of Togo.

The euphoria that accompanied the declaration of independence, however, was overshadowed by violent outbreaks between Olympio's supporters and the opposition, outbreaks that anticipated the political turbulence that came to define Togo's first decade of independence. After three volatile years, during which Olympio's regime grew increasingly authoritarian and antagonized the north, Togo entered Africa's postcolonial history as the first state whose government was overthrown in a violent coup d'état. The coup, which resulted in the assassination of President Olympio, was executed by a small group of former French army soldiers from Togo's north, purportedly led by 27-year old Eyadéma Gnassingbé, who had felt alienated and marginalized by the government's bias towards the southern elite. Constructed as an act of national reconciliation aimed at averting an imminent civil war, the veterans put Grunitzky back into power.[45] This political move, however, initiated another 4-year period of political unrest as Grunitzky's unpopular administration not only struggled against its political opponents, but was also internally torn by power struggles between Grunitzky and his Vice President Antoine Méatchi.

In 1967, on the anniversary of the coup against President Olympio, the army struck again, this time to seize and retain power. Eyadéma, then Lieutenant Colonel and

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[45] See Toulabor on the construction of the threat of a civil law based on the portrayal of ethnic tensions, which Toulabor considers an oversimplification of south-north relations (1986: 36-40).

Army Chief of Staff in Togo's growing army, ousted Grunitzky in a bloodless coup and instituted – allegedly intermittently – the command of the military. All political parties were banned in the context of what was initially framed as a short-term military intervention aimed at the establishment of peace and democracy. Late in 1969, however, Eyadéma founded a single national party, the "Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais" (RPT), officially to unite the Togolese people and to discourage regionalism. During these transitional years, Eyadéma, the party's president, announced a number of times his withdrawal and the return to civilian rule, only to find "the people" allegedly gathered in spontaneous demonstrations expressing their support and requesting his continuing guidance. In 1972, after five years, a national referendum held in the absence of an opposition established Eyadéma's official presidency of the country. His first years in office were characterized by what Decalo described as a "pragmatic and easy-going political style;" however, within a few years, in an attempt to legitimize and solidify his power, Eyadéma's regime grew increasingly autocratic, a history to which I will return below.

Rise of Urban Forms of Entertainment

In light of the political instability that troubled the first decade of Togo's independence, cultural policy was secondary to Olympio's three-year, Grunitzky's four-year, and Eyadéma's initial governments. Although the promotion of culture was one of the initial attributions of the Ministry of National Education in the newly independent Republic in 1960, a national cultural program failed to materialize (Aithnard 1976: 18). At a time when neighboring states were deliberately shaping and promoting national cultural expressions through the arts, a variety of performance genres articulated freely

with the evolving identities of urban Togolese in the capital city. These genres ranged from gradual urban adaptations of rural musical traditions specific to Togo's various ethnic groups (Adéwusi 2010: 49-51), to the more recent introduction of syncretic entertainment forms that had emerged in major urban centers along Africa's West Coast and had spread from there to Lomé and other coastal towns.[46] These genres included the so-called "*cantates*," a form of popular musical theater originally based on biblical stories (ibid.: 105-112), and "concert parties" (ibid.: 113-120), a comedic event that blended several artistic forms of various cultural origins.[47] The music of dance bands, especially, gained rapid popularity and quickly reflected the array of musical tastes among urban Togolese.

In Togo, as elsewhere in Francophone West Africa, modern dance bands were referred to as "*orchestres*" ("orchestras" in Anglophone regions), a term borrowed from the European symphony-style orchestras that played European, American and Caribbean ballroom music prior to WWII in coastal centers in today's Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria (Collins 1989: 224). The typical African dance orchestra, however, derived its

[46] Such major urban centers included the cities of Accra and Lagos, located at significant historic cultural crossroads, where influences from Europe, America, the West Indies, and other parts of Africa had long forcefully converged and created breeding grounds for cultural syncretism, especially under the comparatively lenient former British colonial attitudes regarding the mixing of cultures (Collins 1992: 182). Lomé, by contrast, had been a small village until the German administration moved its headquarters there from the town of Aného in 1897. Located less than 30 miles east of present-day Lomé, Aného had been a commercial entreport and slaveport of only moderate dimension (operating in the shadows of the major slaveport of Dahomey, in current-day Benin), and was not occupied by permanent European presence until 1875 (Marguerat and Nyassogbo 2005: 527).

[47] For a detailed history and analysis of the Ghanaian Concert Party genre see, for example, Cole (2001).

instrumentation from Latin American bands and consists of stringed instruments (lead and rhythm guitars, bass), brass (trombones and trumpets), woodwinds (clarinets and saxophones), and an array of percussion instruments (particularly congos, local claves rhythm sticks, and maracas), in addition to several lead and background vocalists. The rise of dance orchestras throughout West Africa in the course of the early to mid-20th century socio-musically manifested the profound cultural transformations engendered in processes of urbanization and has been extensively researched and discussed as both a broader cultural trajectory as well as in a number of specific locales and contexts.[48]

In Lomé, dance orchestras emerged comparably late, in the early 1950s, after having been introduced to Togo by visiting orchestras from Ghana.[49] Initially associated with Lomé's African urban elite, orchestras soon served the evolving entertainment needs of the broader urban population, and by the early 1960s Togo was home to about twenty privately operated dance bands, most of which were based in Lomé (Adéwusi 2010: 138). Their repertory, at first heavily dominated by Ghanaian highlife, progressively reflected the eclectic mix Togolese heard and listened to on the radio and on vinyl records, as well as from orchestras and big bands passing through Lomé, increasingly also from Nigeria and Congo. Soon, local orchestras played a potpourri of musical styles, including

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[48] For discussions on the general evolution of modern dance orchestras, see for example Roberts (1972), Collins (1985), Coplan (1981 and 1982). More specific case studies include Collins (1977, 1989) and Coplan (1978) on Ghana, Mukuna on Congo-Zaire (1992), Waterman on Nigeria (1990), and Skinner on Mali (2009).

[49] Adéwusi traces the founding of Lomé's first dance orchestra, the Mexicana, as far back as to 1948 (2010: 73).

highlife, French chansons, American tunes, and Congolese *rumba*.[50] And while some orchestras specialized in one style more than another, Lomé's major orchestras, such as the All Stars, Mélo-Togo, Los Orphelinos, and Los Muchachos, were fluent in a variety of styles, from which they chose based on the musical preferences of their audiences and the occasion. Occasions included recurring dance events held in more than a dozen venues across Lomé, especially evening dance fests (*bals*) and "Tea Dances" (*Thés Dansants*), the latter of which were particularly popular among Lomé's youths (Adéwusi 2010:74). In addition to these regular entertainment events, orchestras performed at life-cycle celebrations of weddings, funerals, baptisms, at commemorations of important anniversaries, as well as during traditional regional seasonal festivities. Contrary to other orchestras across West Africa that played a supportive role in the pro-independence movements of their countries,[51] Lomé's orchestras remained largely disassociated from pre-independence (as well as immediate post-independence) politics.[52] Within the two decades between the rise of the first modern dance-bands and the founding of the RPT under Eyadéma, the role and status of orchestra musicians evolved, albeit unevenly, from

[50] Pop and rock sounds trickled into the country in the mid- to late 1960s and inspired the formation of a small number of mostly school-based bands that created their own renditions of pop and rock music, especially R&B, soul, and funk (Adéwusi: 2010: 153).

[51] See, for example, the active involvement of modern orchestras in the anti-colonialist and nationalist movement, resulting in the association of orchestras with specific political parties, in the case of Mali (Skinner 2009: 28-76).

[52] Adéwusi suggests that the political neutrality of Togo's modern orchestras during the years leading up to independence was the result of prescriptions imposed by the colonial administration (2010: 75), an interesting claim that should be further explored.

that of specialized amateurs working under the management of entrepreneurs, to that of salaried musicians in the private entertainment industry, a history to which I now turn.[53]

Rise of Private Orchestras

In their inception, Lomé's dance orchestras were considered the private property of their founding presidents, a property that was defined through ownership of the band's musical instruments and equipment, while its members were largely considered variable. In this early period, founding presidents were most typically musically-inclined entrepreneurs with the disposable capital to invest in the needed equipment, and with the ability to recruit music-makers and ensure their commitment. As specialized amateurs, musicians played for no pay. However, they enjoyed other benefits: musical training via informal apprenticeship within the orchestra, access to free meals at performance events and sometimes during practice, an occasional tip collected during a concert (although the bulk of the tips went to the president), and in some orchestras, financial support in case of medical need. In addition, presidents would sporadically distribute a share of their revenues to participants; however, these disbursements were unreliable and typically involved a disproportionately small amount of the orchestra's overall profit. Several former orchestra musicians with whom I spoke recalled how their respective presidents justified the withholding or lowering of promised disbursements through a variety of rationalizations, for example by declaring unrealistically high maintenance costs or by keeping a list of "misconducts" of each individual musician. As orchestra gigs evolved into a lucrative business, Lomé's more ambitious musicians felt increasingly exploited

[53] A similar development appears to have occurred in Senegal, where state-sponsorship of orchestras was equally absent (Counsel 2009: 152 and 158).

and, largely unable to negotiate better financial compensation within private orchestras, began to seek out new opportunities in Lomé's growing tourism and entertainment industry.

Within a few years, hotels and nightclubs assumed primary patronage of orchestras as well as smaller bands, replacing the role of founding presidents as primary investors, and shifting the ensemble's management and leadership to the founding musical director, many of whom had split off from local private orchestras. The typical arrangement in the initial phase of hotel and nightclub patronage was that the orchestra would perform in the establishment on a regular basis in exchange for the provision of the required and, for ordinary musicians unaffordable, musical instruments and sound equipment, as well as of a practice space. Many musicians also appreciated the privilege of hanging out in a place that would have otherwise been too expensive to visit. Most importantly, however, the musical equipment to which they now had access enabled musicians to accept private gigs, the income of which they could finally split informally among themselves.

By the late 1960s, Lomé's most popular hotel and nightclub orchestras were running a lucrative business with private gigs. The timing of these profitable gigs, however, sometimes conflicted with the orchestra's responsibilities at their affiliated establishment, a situation that caused increasing frictions, as neither party wanted to yield: orchestra musicians had begun to rely partially on private gigs for their livelihood, while their establishments depended on their house orchestras for the entertainment of their guests. As tensions grew, hotels and nightclubs began paying humble, but regular salaries in order to increase control over musicians' time and secure their commitment.

This new payment system established music-making as a wage labor and advanced musicianship to a formal profession.

The new socio-economic status, however, came with new constraints that some musicians were not willing to tolerate. Aspiring to increase their autonomy, they continued to push the boundaries within their employment, seeking out ways towards greater independence. In the 1970s, at least one orchestra in Lomé, the *As du Togo*, attempted to establish themselves as an independent orchestra with no institutional affiliation. Having no musical equipment, the musicians began renting instruments and a sound system for each individual gig. Eventually, however, overwhelmed by logistical and financial obstacles, the musicians gave in and entered a new relationship of dependence with a textile dealer who made the needed equipment available in return for the bulk of their revenues. Claiming that the musicians were merely paying off their debt, he assumed de facto the role and behavior of earlier orchestra presidents, as the debt never seemed to shrink. "We are like prisoners," reported one musician laughingly, describing the dependency they felt under this patronage.

It is in this moment, as Lomé's most accomplished musicians were either salaried in the entertainment industry or exploring ways to expand their independence as self-employed professional musicians,[54] that the state offered musicians new opportunities under state-sponsorship in state-affiliated orchestras. When these opportunities first arose, many musicians were aware of the special role and status that had been assigned to

[54] 30 years later, the successor of *As du Togo*, today's reputable *Sasamaso*, achieved the independence to which the *As du Togo* aspired in the late 1970s: they are a fully independent orchestra, which divides its revenues amongst its members based on musical status, commitment, effort, and seniority.

musicians of state-affiliated orchestras in other countries in the West African region. Many felt honored to be called upon by government officials, and especially the full-time orchestra musicians in the capital city of Lomé expected a stimulating environment and generous financial compensation. Most musicians' expectations and hopes, however, did not materialize. I will return to musicians' experiences after briefly outlining the history of early cultural policy in post-independent Togo.

3. Cultural Policies – From Nationalism to State Spectacle

Early Cultural Policy

The founding of the RPT, the sole national party, in 1969, marked the formal institutionalization of Eyadéma's politics, which was purportedly built on the ideals of unity, peace and national solidarity. The party's ideological principles, goals, and proposed measures – political, economic, and cultural – were outlined in the *Programme du Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais*, authored by Secretary General Edem Kodjo (RPT 1987 [1969]). Constructed as a complete departure from previous Togolese post-independence politics, this development program, idealized in a UNESCO study of Togolese cultural policy as bearing "an entirely novel, messianic message" (Aithnard 1976: 24), was in fact promoted as encapsulating the vision of, and hope for, a new nation-state, in which the party could serve as a lever of change against long-established dividing structures.

Accordingly, the RPT was to consolidate all groups regardless of ethnic affiliation, religion, or age, and to foster a new modern Togolese mentality that would result in a nation, diverse yet unified, in which all people were treated equally.

Highlighting the importance of liberty and freedom, the means through which the party claimed it would achieve this goal was through "persuasion and dialogue" (RPT 1987 [1969]: 10). To diffuse the implication of totalitarianism in single-party rule, Eyadéma said: "We flatter ourselves to be one of the rare countries in the world that does not have a single political prisoner. We inscribed into our statues fundamental individual rights: religious freedom, freedom of association, independence of mind, freedom of education, free enterprise. We conceive of politics as a dialogue in which interlocutors can defend their positions without threat of harm to the body, material or mind. We want the RPT to be the forum in which all ideas meet."[55]

It is in this document, popularly referred to as *Le Livre Vert* ("The Green Book"), that concrete ideas for a Togolese cultural politics were first outlined. Rooted in basic principles of African nationalist ideologies, especially the idea that a return to values from the past would strengthen the postcolonies by liberating them from their colonial mentality, the revival and incorporation of the local cultural heritage was considered central to the development of the "new march" (RPT 1987 [1969]: 6) upon which the party aspired to embark. Three years after these ideas were originally published, and within weeks of the 1972-referendum that confirmed Eyadéma's presidency, a Ministry of Youth, Sport, Culture and Scientific Research was founded and appointed with the implementation of a formal cultural program. To this end, a National Committee for Culture was put together consisting of four commissions, among them the Commission for Music and the Performing Arts (Aithnard 1976: 25).

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[55] Quoted in Feuillet (1976: 76, original source not indicated; [translation mine]). Feuillet, whom Toulabor refers to as the writer of Eyadéma's hagiography (1986: 48), uses this quote precisely to disassociate Eyadema's regime from a dictatorship.

Thus comparably late, 12 years into independence, the state set about enacting Togo's first cultural policy, broadly rooted in African nationalist ideologies, aimed at supporting the process of nation-building by reviving local traditions and by fostering the country's pride in its cultural diversity. This early program involved the creation of a number of cultural institutions that had become hallmarks of African postcolonial cultural nationalism across the continent, including national folkloric dance and theater ensembles, a state orchestra, country-wide arts and music competitions, and regular "Cultural Weeks." Togo's Cultural Weeks were organized on regional, district, and national levels, and involved performing arts presentations (theater, dance, and musical performances), as well as exhibitions of art and craftwork, costumes, and other symbolic objects central to the history and identity of Togo's numerous ethnic groups. Cultural Weeks also featured talent shows of popular art forms, including the earlier-mentioned concert-party, the cantata, and performances of modern singers, enabling aspiring artists to showcase their talents.[56]

All things considered, these state-funded cultural programs were of comparatively moderate dimensions. Unlike Guinea and Mali, for example, whose leaders exercised a more rigid control over the arts, and also founded and sponsored orchestras across their country's districts with the aim of musically "making African modernity" (Dave 2009), the Togolese government did not support any regional orchestras, nor did the state condemn or censor the musical influx from abroad. In alignment with the party's ideals to lead through "persuasion and dialogue," however, cultural events like the Cultural Weeks

[56] For a more detailed description of the conceptualization and implementation of Togo's Cultural Weeks, see Aithnard (1976: 34-39 and 42).

provided early on a context for political propaganda, where state officials promoted the party's ideals. This propaganda aspect of Togo's early cultural program grew rapidly into a grotesque large-scale personality cult, propelled by a series of events in 1974 that mark a turning point in the history of Eyadéma's regime.

The Cultural Revolution

The tale begins with conflicting interests over a phosphate mine on Togolese soil, which had been operated since a convention in 1957 by the Togolese Mining Company of Benin (CTMB), a company owned mostly by the French. In the early 1970s, phosphate constituted Togo's most valuable natural resource, and Eyadéma's government had increasingly considered to claim the mines as rightful Togolese property. Early in January 1974, following the sudden inflation of phosphate prices on the international market, President Eyadéma announced, much to the dismay of the French, that Togo would assume 51% of the phosphate mining company. When two weeks later Eyadéma's airplane crashed in Sarakawa (near the northern Togolese city of Kara), Eyadéma, the alleged sole survivor, claimed he was the victim of a conspiracy involving the international finance corporation, and that the French had wanted to dispose of him in retribution for his economically assertive move. Eyadéma retaliated just a week later by announcing the complete nationalization of the phosphate industry: "Resources in Togo have to benefit the Togolese people," he famously declared in the House of the RPT. "And since, after all, we have been underestimated, [accused of having] nationalized, of

having done this and that since that Monday, we decide to take also the remaining 49%."[57]

From that day onward, Eyadéma theatrically construed the nationalization of the phosphate company as an "economic liberation" from France, whose imperialist legacies, he argued, had continued to affect not just the Togolese economy, but also its culture. The date of the airplane crash was henceforth celebrated as Togo's "Day of Economic Liberation" and marked the inception of Eyadéma's anti-imperialist ideology based on the principles of *authenticité*. A cultural dogma coined by Mobutu but rooted in Sékou Touré's cultural doctrines, *authenticité* promoted the return to pre-colonial African values and the rejection of European influences. Some 15 years after Sékou Touré pioneered his Cultural Revolution in Guinea, Eyadéma launched his own version, based on *authenticité*, which, emulating Mobutu's implementation, ambiguously consolidated the celebration of presumably "authentic" African ideas and practices with a veneration of the head of state, who was portrayed as the personification of these values. Within a few months, Eyadéma, the self-proclaimed "father of the Togolese nation," became "the star of a system of which he [was] both the creator and the embodiment" (Toulabor 1994: 65).

Launch of Personality Cult

Every authoritarian regime seeks to legitimate its power through the construction of narratives and the projection of imageries that aim at ideologically reinforcing established power relations. As Toulabor has vividly illustrated (1986), the ideological legitimacy of Eyadéma's regime rested primarily on the exploitation of two events. The

[57] The speech is included in the Annex of Feuillet (1976: 144-145).

first event was the assassination of former President Olympio, which, framed as the "liberation" of the Togolese people from Olympio's tyranny, fostered the image of Eyadéma as a hero and savior said to fulfill the people's will. This narrative, identified by Toulabor as the "founding myth" of Eyadéma's regime, justified the creation of a one-party state and the monopolization of power in the hands of a single person. The second event central to the regime's legitimation was the airplane crash in Sarakawa. The narratives construed around the Sarakawa accident and the president's "miraculous" survival propelled Eyadéma's image to that of a half-god, and capitalized on the widespread local belief in, and respect for, those privileged by divine powers. In conjunction, these two events created the foundation for an elaborate mythology that featured Eyadéma as the "natural" and omnipotent creator and leader of a unified nation at peace.

The narratives of his sanctifying virtues and heroism – symbols of his *authenticité* – permeated the national media, and were reinforced in the schools' curricula and in propaganda literature, the production of which was elicited in national competitions. A particular curious example of propaganda literature, using the popular genre of comic book, is the 1976 state-commissioned "History of Togo" subtitled Il était une fois … Eyadéma ("Once Upon a Time there was … Eyadéma", evocative ellipsis is original), in which nearly 50 pages of colorfully illustrated panels recount the tales of a president who is ascribed with super-human qualities, reminiscent of the superheroes common in this genre (Saint-Michel and Fages: 1976). The cover image below illustrates several key elements in Eyadéma's mythology, including panels of the founding of the RPT and the launch of a "New Togo;" the people gathered spontaneously and holding up signs that

read “Eyadema stay! The Togolese people call upon you” and “The army with us;” and, of course, the plane crash in Sarakawa.[58]

Figure 1: Cover image of *Histoire du Togo: Il était une fois … Eyadéma.*

These and other key representations of Eyadéma’s mythology were commemorated as national holidays, including the anniversary of President Olympio’s assassination as “Liberation Day” on January 13th, the plane crash in Sarakawa as “Day of the Economic Liberation” on January 24th, and the anniversary of a failed coup d’état

[58] For a thorough analysis of how the book represents and reinforces through narrative and visual images the divinization of the Togolese president and the mythology that informs it, see Gary Wilder (1990). For an examination of national literary competitions see Midiohouan and Amouro (1991).

attempted in 1986 on September 23rd. Political and personal details of Eyadéma's life further imprinted the ruler's identity into Lomé's physical space in form of street and building names, such as the Boulevard du 13 Janvier, the Avenue Maman N'danida (the president's mother), and the Hotel du 2 Février (the day of Eyadéma's triumphant return to Lomé after the plane crash).

Eyadéma's image, too, was omnipresent: in addition to the erection of a 20-foot Maoist bronze statue of Eyadéma, his austere portrait greeted Togolese on the front page of the state's daily newspaper, and was displayed in all official government buildings as well as in most public places, including hotels, restaurants, and stores (see photograph xxx). Many Togolese extended this practice to the confines of their private lives, by hanging Eyadéma's portrait in a prominent place in their homes. Eyadéma's visual omnipresence took at times absurd forms: printed on fabrics for dresses and shirts (see photographs below), and featured on wrist watches whose background lit up twice a minute, Eyadéma's stern paternal gaze was everywhere. Eyadéma's name, too, was ubiquitous. All public speeches, including essentially non-political ones, had to incorporate intermittent praises of Eyadéma, requiring the audience to applaud each time the president's name fell. The praise names ascribed to Eyadéma in those years entailed paternalistic, sanctifying, and superlative connotations, among the more memorable ones, "Founding Father," "Husband of Husbands," "Nation's Helmsman," and the "Chosen One."

Figure 2: Fabric commemorating the diplomatic relations between President Eyadéma and President Georges Pompidou of France. Likely printed as part of the celebration of Pompidou's official visit in Togo in 1972.

Figure 3: Fabric of dress printed after Eyadéma's death in 2005. His portrait is encircled with the words: "Dear Daddy ["Papa"] We will never forget you!" (Photo by author.)

The anti-imperialist discourse and rhetoric of *authenticité*, both of which profoundly informed the representations of Eyadéma's heroics, were reinforced with the creation and implementation of a number of more radical cultural policies in 1974, including most prominently the changing of Christian colonial, and other foreign,

names[59] and the inclusion of local languages in schools and in the national media. The most influential policies regarding Togo's musical sector emulated those implemented by Sékou Touré in Guinea some 15 years earlier and included a radio ban on foreign music, the subsidization of musical recordings that supported the Cultural Revolution, and the creation of state-sponsored district orchestras. In addition to these institutions, and following Mobutu's example, Eyadéma launched a nation-wide performance practice referred to as *animation politique et sociale* (in short as *animation politique* or simply *animation*), a form of state spectacle in which his newly articulated ideologies and his personality cult converged most effectively.

4. Animation Politique

Animation consisted in essence of dances, songs, and slogans performed in support and celebration of a "new Togo." Imported from Zaire, where Mobutu had introduced *animation politique* a couple of years earlier, the RPT, Togo's sole party, launched its own version with the help of choreographers from Zaire and North Korea. *Animation* performances typically involved a group of male and female dancers, so-called *animateurs* and *animatrices*. Dressed in colorful matching outfits and lined up in rows, these dancers performed highly synchronized choreographies consisting of dance movements and symbolic gestures, while singing or reciting the praises of the regime and the tenets of the state. A group of musicians, ranging from small percussion ensembles to full-blown orchestras, provided the musical accompaniment, while the head of the

[59] Eyadéma led the way with the renunciation of his French given name "Etienne" and its replacement with "Gnassingbé."

ensemble, the *animateur principale*, directed the performance and shouted slogans. All official *animation* ensembles were supervised by so-called *commissions techniques* (Technical Committees), which guided and monitored the ensembles' activities to ensure adherence with the party's principles.

Officially conceived as a channel for "political and civic education," *animation* aimed at uniting the Togolese people and fostering "economic, cultural, and social integration." Its association with the tenets of *authenticité* was stated in an official document as follows: "*Animation politique* plunges its roots in *authenticité*, because it calls upon the intellectual energy, the moral energy, and the physical energy of the people; and because it is a privileged site of the eruption of authentic African values, which crystallizes and releases our need for dignity and real independence" (RPT 1979: 109, quoted in Toulabor 1986: 196-197). With its dual approach of simultaneously teaching about, and reviving "authentically" African practices and values, *animation* was considered the most effective implementation of the state's ideology, and evolved quickly into the most comprehensive and dominant component of the Togolese Cultural Revolution.

To ensure the permeation of *animation* throughout the entire nation, the state implemented the program through a system that paralleled Togo's administrative division into regions, districts, and municipalities. Several categories of state-mandated *animation* ensembles emerged from this system, including countless school ensembles (constituting the roots of the program and guaranteeing the involvement of Togo's entire youth), ensembles representing their districts, and the so-called *groupes chocs*, which were heavily sponsored ensembles that consisted of full-time professional *animateurs*. This

nationwide network of *animation* ensembles was fueled by an affiliated system of local, district, and national competitions, which, by encouraging a sense of rivalry, aimed at enhancing the performances and commitment of its participants, and at bringing together separate population segments in a shared celebration of the state. The competitions also facilitated the formation of more specialized *animation* ensembles, as the most skilled (and typically also visually most appealing) *animateurs* in the winning ensembles on one level were recruited for participation in ensembles on the next level. Over the course of the 1970s, the capital city of Lomé became home to three highly specialized *animation* ensembles whose members trained and performed full-time: the *Groupe du Lac*, Lomé's district ensemble, the *Groupe Choc de Lomé*, the city's professional ensemble (founded in 1972, prior to the launch of the nationwide *animation* program), and the *Animateurs de la Révolution Togolaise* (commonly referred to as ARETO), affiliated with the youth wing of the RPT (the country's sole political party).

Different ensembles were used for different occasions and transformed any public event into a political propaganda affair. For example, to display the state's commitment to nationwide education, the authorities would invite the ensemble of a small rural elementary school, while high-ranking officials where typically greeted by one of the specialized ensembles. Performance contexts and occasions included virtually all official public gatherings, as well as special occasions such as visits in villages by government officials and foreign investors, celebrations of national holidays, the arrival of high-ranking delegations and dignitaries, as well as galas and banquets. Furthermore, all public appearances of Eyadéma were supported by *animation* ensembles, including his visits abroad to which Togolese *animateurs* travelled along to set the stage for a pompous

arrival. Since the RPT called upon all Togolese to not only be good *militants* (activits), but also *animateurs* (Nambou and Agbetiafa 1981: 74),[60] many private companies and organizations operated their own *animation* ensemble to display their belonging to the party, and their loyalty and affection – genuine or feigned – for the leader.

On national television, too, *animation* spectacles abounded. Former Peace Corp member George Packer, stationed in a village in northern Togo in the early 1980s, depicted the continual *animation* programs as follows: "The evening's program starts with animation, and continues with more animation, at the airport, on the steps of the RPT palace in Lomé, under a baobab tree in a northern village. The music and singing don't change, the gestures don't change – only the backdrop, as if a kaleidoscope of locations is being projected on a screen behind the same group of *animateurs*" (1984: 110). While Packer's account captures a prime objective of *animation* broadcasts, namely the portrayal of the people's unified support across Togo's contrasting geographic and social landscapes, Togolese may not have agreed with Packer's representation of the performances as interchangeable. Contemporary witnesses and participants with whom I spoke commented often on the divergent characters, strengths and weaknesses of Togo's various *animation* ensembles. However, Packer's overarching impression of omnipresence relays an important reality in the experience of Togolese: within a couple

[60] In the *Education Civique et Politique*, a sort of textbook in public and civic education, a "*militant*" is defined as an activist who is a paying member of the party, possesses the "Green Book" (the *Programme du RPT*), and is intimately familiar with, and adheres to the tenets of, the party's "movement" (Nambou and Agbetiafa 1981: 73). An *animateur*, by contrast, is defined as *militant* who engages in public manifestations of the government in the specific context of events conceived of as *animation*. *Militant animateurs* are thus described as the "communication line between their compatriots and the movement" (ibid.: 74).

of years of its inception, the *animation* program had effectively perfused Togo's society, dominated the media, and governed its public sphere.[61]

French propaganda writer Claude Feuillet described the workings of and creative process within the *animation* ensembles with the following depiction:

> Every Wednesday and Friday evening, in public and private companies, in the administration, in agricultural collectives, in neighborhood associations, the activists ["*militants*"] of the RPT – of which the majority of voters are members – get together. They jointly determine a slogan, which watchword to popularize in order to accelerate production, to manifest solidarity with black South Africans, to welcome an allied VIP. The chosen theme will be turned into a poem, which will be hooked to a rhythm, the latter of which will be danced to. (1976: 111-112)

"Within a few years," Feuillet concludes, "Togo became a country of poets, musicians, and choreographers" (ibid.: 112). Contrary to this idealized representation, however, Togolese music advocate Basil Abiadé Adéwusi maintains that *animation* stifled musical creativity in Togo, and that in its framework "the creators ceased to create." Adéwusi's assessment resonates with an opinion that is today prevalent in Togo, which is that the Togolese Cultural Revolution, the *animation* program in particularly, adversely and lastingly affected the development specifically of modern music. In the next section I investigate this claim by examining the implementation of Togo's 1974 cultural policy and its impact on modern music, especially as it pertained to the creation and work of state-sponsored district orchestras.

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[61] Note also that in order to increase the dissemination of *chansons révolutionnaires* in the mid-1970s, the government temporarily prohibited the diffusion of music with "foreign connotation" on national radio, leading to the exclusive broadcasting of *chansons révolutionnaires* (Adéwusi 2010: 161).

5. *Authenticité* in Practice: Songs and Slogans

The creation of state-sponsored orchestras as part of the Cultural Revolution was an ambitious project. In compliance with Eyadéma's policy to provide the same educational and cultural resources uniformly across the country, each district was allocated a budget to create and operate its own orchestra.[62] The realization of this ambitious project, however, proved challenging as the appropriate material and especially human resources were not readily available throughout the country. As mentioned earlier, most orchestra musicians lived and worked in Lomé, where the state was able to draw on their expertise for the creation of state-sponsored orchestras and to recruit their services. The situation in Togo's less urbanized areas was different. These rural areas had merely enjoyed the occasional visits from small guitar-based bands, orchestras and big bands mostly from Ghana and Lomé, and relied otherwise for the performance of the popular African, Afro-Cuban, European, and American tunes on intimate local ensembles composed primarily of indigenous musical instruments.[63] The establishment of complete orchestras in these areas, while widely welcome, proved challenging and required the help of musical experts from the city. One such expert was Togolese musician,

[62] This policy officially aimed at valorizing all segments of the population, and at providing equal treatment of all ethnic groups. However, the government also attempted to discourage an exodus from the countryside (RPT [1969] 1987: 40-41) which, the government feared, would threaten the agricultural sector, on which 80% of the population relied for their subsistence (see Feuillet 1976: 89-90).

[63] Adéwusi describes these ensembles, which, "half-way through the traditional and the modern," featured a local lamellophone ("timbo"), a pair of Cuban-inspired cylindrical drums similar to the conga ("tumba"), and a variety of local percussion instruments (2010: 138-139).

musicologist and ethnologist René Akoussah, who later worked in various capacities for the Ministry of Culture.

Akoussah grew up in Lomé in a music-oriented family. His father was a missionary-trained choir director and multi-instrumentalist who exposed René and his sisters, among them nationally renowned singer Julie Akofa Akoussah, to music through the study of a variety of musical instruments. René Akoussah's vocation for modern music began in Lomé's legendary Mélo Togo orchestra, where he advanced quickly as a lead singer. To deepen his musical knowledge, as he said, he spent a couple of years in Accra in the late 1960s, where he studied musicology and ethnology. Upon his return to Lomé, Akoussah founded a dance band in a nightclub, Macina Loca, where he performed every evening, while completing a secretarial degree during the day – "to keep all avenues open," as he told me. After a couple of years, however, Akoussah felt that his training and growing musical reputation paid off, as multiple district administrations in the country's interior commissioned him with the formation of their state-mandated orchestra, an assignment which Akoussah was honored to fulfill.

Akoussah's responsibilities included the recruitment and initial training of orchestra musicians, the logistical establishment of a structure for practice and performances, as well as the nomination and initial supervision of a musical director. The most challenging task, Akoussah recalled, was the recruitment of apt musicians. While Akoussah was usually able to find a few locals who already possessed some musical knowledge and skills, other members were chosen solely based on their musical inclinations. Sometimes, a couple of more accomplished musicians transferred from Lomé's private orchestras to join the orchestra of their rural district of origin. "They were

anything but advanced," Akoussah described the overall competency of district orchestras in Togo's more rural areas, "but they were able to do the job."

In general terms, the job of district orchestras was to fulfill a variety of musical needs within their district, including performing at national holiday celebrations and seasonal festivities, and rehearsing with and accompanying solo singers at state-sponsored musical and cultural events such as the "Cultural Weeks." Most activities of district orchestras, however, soon revolved around the growing musical requirements of the *animation* program.

Emulating the role and function of the state-sponsored orchestras that had been founded previously in other West African states under the doctrine of "re-Africanization," Togolese district musicians were instructed to collaborate with regional traditional instrumentalists, and to work together on the revival and modernization of "authentic" musical traditions. In practice, however, little attention was paid to the quality and cultural heritage of the music they produced. The Technical Committees who oversaw and guided the production of *animation* performances, consisted of state officials who had typically no artistic or musical background. Their focus and efforts centered first and foremost on texts and song lyrics, which were considered the primary channel of communication between the people and its leader and through which the state's mythology was insistently reiterated. The thematic content of these songs and slogans fell broadly into three groups.[64] The largest group celebrated the head of state, praised his qualities and heroic deeds, naturalized his leadership, and expressed the

[64] This division overlaps with that Bob White observed in his preliminary analysis of song lyrics and political slogans associated with the *animation politique* program in Zaire under Mobutu (2008: 75-76).

people's affection and loyalty. A popular jingle that was frequently played during TV and radio broadcast provides a prominent example:

> "Be reassured, Eyadéma,
> You were crowned by God!
> Be reassured, Eyadéma,
> The people are behind you!"[65]

The second group of songs and slogans pertained to key ideas of Eyadéma's ideology and state policies. Echoing Mobutu's official state rhetoric, these key ideas were almost identical to those observed in Zaire, most prominently *authenticité*, *révolution*, *unité*, as well as, specific to, and of particular salience in, the case of Togo, *paix* ("peace"). The final group of lyrics was dedicated to the celebration of the country's cultural diversity and included depictions of cultural elements distinct to the ensemble's heritage. This third group of songs and slogans was performed to introduce the cultural heritage of a particular region to other regions in Togo as well as to foreign visitors.

Slogans, which could be anything between a two-word phrase and a short verse, were typically shouted by the principal *animateur* and recited back by the dancers or the audience. Sometimes the principal *animateur* seemingly elicited a slogan through an evocative question, to which the dancers responded in a rehearsed unison. Shouted during spectacles and printed on banners, some slogans and song verses became so popular that cultural anthropologist Gary Wilder, stationed in the mid-1980s as an American Peace Corp member in a rural Togolese village, remembers how children were inadvertently singing them while engrossed in play (1990: 121).

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[65] Quoted in the Economist (http://www.economist.com/node/3445136)

How effectively the propaganda content of any given song or slogan was phrased and delivered, determined its value and success. To author a song verse or slogan that was well received by the authorities (and thus "popular" with the people) was a goal of all Technical Commissions, not least because approval often resulted in money gifts disbursed by high-ranking government officials – sometimes by President Eyadéma himself. Nearly equal care was dedicated to the choreographies of the dances, whose defining visual elements – the participation of the masses, the synchronicity of the dancers, and the explicit exuberance – symbolically enacted the main message the party wanted to project of the Togolese people: that of a unified and happy nation.

The orchestras' job was to provide an effective melodic vehicle for the lyrics, and a suitable rhythmic accompaniment for the dances. As one participant put it: "They were only interested in the slogans. Musically, all that mattered was that you could dance." To ensure that *animateurs* "could dance," and to render the performances attractive to a wide audience, the usage of musical genres that were popular in Togo at the time, especially Congolese rumba and Ghanaian highlife, was frequently encouraged.[66] Akoussah explained: "For [the Technical Committee] it was about nice slogans; that it worked; that the head of state knew he was praised. We must sing! We must shout! You played what you were told to play. '*Faut mettre l'ambiance!*'" – "'You've got to put the '*ambiance*'!"

[66] The linkage between *ambiance* music and *animation* spectacles was likely established two years earlier when President Mobutu, accompanied by Congolese rumba star Franco, made a memorable entry into the capital city of Lomé. During this occasion, the authorities witnessed the appeal and sense of exuberance that modern music added to Mobutu's arrival spectacle, and in recognition of the growing popularity of dance music in Lomé, the RPT ordered the creation and institutionalization of a first state-sponsored orchestra in 1972, thus two years prior to the nation-wide launch of the *animation* program.

The quality in which the *ambiance* was delivered, however, appears to have been similarly secondary to the authorities, as the quality of the musical output has been locally widely described as subpar, particularly in the more rural districts. As one orchestra musician remembered: “Well, we produced music. It was enough that the people could dance. But you could hardly call that professional.” Similarly, Akoussa described: “The music had to be loud. Just loud. Real music has to also be gentle, include nuances and punctuations. In *animation* there wasn’t any of this.”[67]

A similar disregard for artistic standards has been observed in other cultural domains under Eyadéma’s Cultural Revolution, for example in literature, where a national literary competition, officially aimed at fostering the production of “authentically” Togolese literature, elicited contributions to specific subjects relevant to – that is, in support of – the government’s agenda. One of the first recipients of the award was Kossi Mawuli Agokla, whose novel *L’Aube nouvelle* (1982) narrates the story of a group of patriotic and idealistic soldiers who free a long-oppressed nation, essentially recounting Eyadéma’s mythology. Literary critics Midiohouan and Amouro, who examined “Francophone Togolese Writers under the Eyadéma Regime” (1991), observed that “Agokla’s novel is filled with grammatical errors, stylistic infelicities, and clumsy

[67] The de-emphasis of the orchestra’s contribution is also manifest in the video recordings of *animation* manifestations that were regularly disseminated on national television: the several hours of video material I reviewed (provided to me by TVT) that featured various district *groupes-chocs* and Lomé’s main *animation* ensembles, the camera moves through the rows of singing dancers, in some cases, capturing occasionally the group of main singers and slogan-shouting principle animators, that stood to the side of the dancing ensemble, next to the orchestra. The orchestra, however, is captured in only a few videos, and if so, only briefly and seemingly haphazardly.

narrative techniques," and conclude that it was "the author's loyalty to the regime" that earned him the "Prix Eyadéma" (ibid: 123-124).

The music during *animation* performances fell broadly into two categories. The first category involved the looping of melodic and rhythmic segments that supported the call and response between the principal *animateur* and the dancers. While many of these performances involved the popular *ambiance* music, regional traditional musicians occasionally provided a musical accompaniment that consisted of established local rhythms. A true collaboration between the two groups of musicians, however, rarely occurred. The second category of *animation* music consisted of more structured, typically strophic songs, still, however, involving call and response between a solo singer and a chorus. This latter category was referred to as "*chansons révolutionnaires*," in reference to their pro-government, pro-Cultural Revolution lyrics. These songs were often extracted from the larger *animation* context, recorded in the *Colibri*, the government's state-of-the-art studio (and only recording studio in Togo at the time), and disseminated on national radio. Because many principal *animateurs* underwent training in Zaire, the Zairian *animation* repertory, rooted in Congolese rumba, served as an important source of inspiration for Togolese *chansons révolutionnaires*. The melody of Togo's popular *animation* song "*Il est né roi*" ("He was born King"), for example, was borrowed from an *animation* song from Zaire.

To fuel the production of *chansons révolutionnaires*, the government subsidized their recordings, a policy that propelled a sudden emergence of solo singers, and an avalanche of propaganda songs. In addition to singers who had recently sprung off from the Cultural Weeks (to which I will return in the section section), countless new song

writers emerged, who Adéwusi describes as "opportunists with no musical predestination," among them "teachers, farmers, soldiers, temporary workers, state officials, executives, sales women, the unemployed, and students" (2010: 161). For their musical backdrop, this generation of newly-converted singers most frequently resorted to melodies that were familiar to them. Melodic sources were manifold and included anything that had circulated in the Togolese soundscape in recent years. Thus, adding to the stylistically largely un-innovative *animation* music, a large repertory of unoriginal *chansons révolutionnaires* arose,[68] consisting mostly of recycled melodies from a variety of styles and genres, including rumba, highlife, reggae, Christian hyms, and – particularly paradoxical, given the alleged anti-colonial sentiments and doctrine – French folk tunes. Only a small number of *chansons révolutionnaires* constituted original compositions, among them most prominently *Unité Nationale* ("National Unity"), a *chanson révolutionnaire* that became Togo's national anthem in 1979.[69]

When I asked Akoussah if and how the policy of revalorizing and modernizing the local musical heritage was implemented, he explained: "Our supervisors didn't have these ideas in mind. Of course there was folkloric diversity, but instrumental arrangements were never in question." The low priority given to the musical output of state-sponsored district ensembles also manifested itself in the meager allotment of services and funds these ensembles received. The initially planned training opportunities

[68] According to Toulabor, in 1974 alone the RPT released 24,000 45 RPM records (1986: 202).

[69] *Unité Nationale* replaced the Togolese anthem *Terre de nos Aïeux* ("Land of our Ancestors"), written in 1959, which, however, was reinstated as Togo's national anthem in 1992. *Unité Nationale* continues to be considered the hymn of the RPT (Adéwusi 2010: 165-166).

for musicians, for example, never materialized, while principle *animateurs* and selected groups of *animateurs* and *animatrices* were sent to Zaire for training. The lack of musical training thus compounded the lack of consideration and guidance in the failure to implement the state's musical policy to modernize the local musical heritage. In Akoussah's words: "How were we going to make instrumental arrangements? There are several forms of rhythms. You have to know how to do that. But there weren't any music schools. There was no money." In this environment, Akoussah remembers, musicians had neither enthusiasm nor initiative. "They weren't thinking of anything. They didn't care to produce anything potable. They were just gaining their bread." Similarly, Adéwusi describes the musicians of district orchestras as "over time regressing," and links their "laziness" to the musicians' salaried status (2010: 164).

It is true that state-sponsored orchestra musicians in Togo's rural districts had little to lose. Since the responsibilities of district orchestras in the less developed regions were comparably light, many of the musicians maintained their original occupations, while receiving a small monthly compensation for their services to the orchestra. Moreover, the *animation* program had introduced an infrastructure to these districts that allowed state-sponsored musicians to accept private gigs, the income of which further increased their earnings. However, the situation was different for musicians in the city, who had given up salaried positions in the entertainment industry to join state-sponsored orchestras, although this transition most often involved a cut in financial compensation. In spite of the financial drawback and the musically largely uninspiring environment described in this section, the state successfully drew musicians away from the private sector in what Adéwusi described as a "hunt for musicians" (2010: 162-163), which left

Lomé's private orchestras "deserted and weakened" (ibid.: 163). This phenomenon, I argue, must be understood in the context of the increasing state-centric political culture, in which power and access to resources were concentrated in the hands of President Eyadéma. In the next section I explore the impact of this political culture on the political economy of the *animation* program and how this culture articulated with musicians choices.

6. Between Patronage and Paternalism

In the capital city of Lomé, where performance contexts for *animation politique* abounded and included dignitary visits, banquets and gala dinners, the capacity of a single district orchestra was not able to fulfill the numerous musical requirements. To address this greater need, the government founded four state-sponsored orchestras in Lomé between 1972 and 1979: two district orchestras, one of which primarily supported the musical needs of Lomé's *groupe-choc*, the orchestra affiliated with the youth wing of the RPT, the *Jeunesse du Rassemblement du Peuple* Togolais (JRPT), and finally the orchestra of Radio Lomé, the state's studio orchestra, which recorded the bulk of *chansons révolutionnaires* and also accompanied officially visiting musicians from abroad.

Prior to the *animation* era, the only state-affiliated orchestra was that of the *Forces Armées Togolaises*, the "Togolese Armed Forces" (FAT). Founded originally as a military brass band in the 1960s, the FAT orchestra accompanied Eyadéma on diplomatic missions and provided musical entertainment at official state events. Its reputation as Togo's "National Orchestra," however, began to fade in the mid-1970s as the orchestra of

the JRPT became increasingly the president's orchestra of choice to perform at banquets, national holidays and other official festivities. The orchestra of the JRPT also accompanied the president on several diplomatic missions to, among other destinations, Gabon, Libya, North Korea, and Zaire (2010 : 163), responsibilities originally ascribed to the orchestra of the FAT.

The orchestra of the JRPT owed its inception to a rivalry between two Lomé-based *animation* ensembles: the *groupe-choc du Lac*, Lomé's highest-level *animation* ensemble, and the ensemble of the JRPT, the latter of which increasingly challenged the popularity of the former. The members of the JRPT, many of whom were children of government officials (Decalo 1996: 250), were known for their ardent support of the president, and their enthusiasm was most tangibly manifested in their animation group known as the *Animateurs de la Révolution Togolaise* (ARETO). In their early phase, the ARETO relied for their songs and dances primarily on the accompaniment of a simple percussion ensemble. In 1974, however, when officials announced an inter-city contest in which Lomé's greatest animation ensembles were to compete against each other, President Eyadéma ordered the creation of a dedicated orchestra for the ARETO, to enhance the youth group's competitiveness by adding the popular *ambiance* to their performance.

Thanks to his success in having launched several district orchestras in the country's interior, René Akoussah was commissioned with the formation of the orchestra for the ARETO in Lomé. In light of Eyadéma's personal involvement and interest, the project was given great importance and received generous financial support. A trip to Lagos, Nigeria, where Akoussah purchased the required musical equipment, was carried

out in a vehicle of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – “with diplomatic license plates,” as Akoussah remembers with palpable pride. “The Nigerian police considered us a diplomatic delegation, and escorted us with sirens through the streets of Lagos.” Upon their return to Lomé, and equipped with a large assortment of brand-new musical instruments and sound equipment, Akoussah recruited some of the most accomplished musicians from Lomé’s private orchestras.

Considering the importance given to the creation of the JRPT orchestra, the resources invested into securing musicians were comparably meager. Salaries ranged between 10,000 and 15,000 CFA – a pittance that was considerably lower than the salaries offered by leading private orchestras, such as the hotel-affiliated *As du Golfe* or the *As du Benin*, whose monthly compensation at that time ranged between 30,000 and 40,000 CFA. While some musicians were salaried as ensemble members, others joined for no pay, hoping for future salaried employment or substantial money gifts. A few individuals who already had ties to the government, among them Akoussah, were appointed as civil servants in the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Culture. However, at the Ministry, too, musicians tended to be at the bottom of the payroll, as the salary of civil servants was strictly based on formal diplomas, which Togo’s state musicians generally did not possess. “Since the JRPT was the state, I believed that the money would eventually come,” Akoussah echoes the sentiment of those, who, in anticipation of better conditions, transferred from private to state orchestras.[70]

[70] Akoussah’s statement incidentally also illustrates how the state benefited from people’s traditional way of approaching compensation for provided services, namely that a service is provided first in good faith that compensation will follow.

Especially during the 1970s, a period of sudden economic growth brought about by the nationalization of the phosphate mining company, the state exuded great economic confidence with the launch of an ambitious development program across the country.[71] In this climate, being affiliated with a state-sponsored institution evoked in many a sense of access and opportunity. As the government grew increasingly autocratic, however, the display of its economic prowess as a symbol of the state's magnificence became paramount. In Lomé, expensive construction projects were launched, either hastily conceived as business enterprises – frequently doomed to fail – or aimed solely at displaying the state's prosperity. Infamous examples of such wasteful "white elephants," as Togolese frequently refer to them today, include a large petroleum refinery, completed in 1978 outside of Lomé, in reliance on donations of crude oil from Nigeria (Togo has had no natural oil of its own), and the 1980 completion of the vastly under-utilized luxurious *Hotel du 2 Février*, Lomé's sole high-rise building.[72]

In addition to its export revenues, Togo was the recipient of substantial financial support from foreign donors throughout the 1970s and 80s, especially from France and the United States. This money was exclusively channeled through the state and the political elite used it increasingly to enrich itself. Eyadéma's style of regime emulated that of Mobutu, whose concept of *authenticité* found its perhaps most cynical application

[71] This program focused on the modernization of the rural north and its integration with a rapidly developing urban south, and involved the building and paving of a North-South axis and a massive enlargement of the port of Lomé.

[72] The inaugurations of these projects were customarily scheduled on key dates of Eyadéma's regime, in celebration of the state's leadership. Note also that the hotel's name commemorates the date of Eyadéma's 1974 declaration of economic independence from France that followed the airplane crash in Sarakawa.

in a paternalistic mode of domination, purportedly rooted in authentic African societies, that legitimized his totalitarian politics. As Mobutu professed: “In the traditional society, the head of clan was at once political leader, religious chief, and the person in charge of the social and economic life of those he governed” (quoted in Toulabor 1986: 169 [translation mine]). Similarly, Eyadéma claimed supreme power, and the implementation of policies and allotment of funding were frequently biased and personal, and soon translated into a broader regionalism and nepotism among high-ranking officials of the RPT.

Working for the government implied especially being closer to Eyadéma, who, in his role as the “Father of the Nation,” took the liberty to erratically disburse state funds as he pleased. This practice of presidential gift-giving, common in other paternalistic postcolonial governments as well (most notably in Mobutu’s Zaire, Bokassa’s Cameroon, and Houphouet’s Ivory Coast[73]), was a prime motivator among *animation* participants. While the government gave great importance to the *animation* program as the state’s primary indoctrination and propaganda tool, Eyadéma’s occasional interventions were frequently biased and personal, and echoed the broader regionalism and nepotism of the RPT, which, especially in this early phase, completely contradicted the state’s rhetoric of national unity.

Eyadéma’s cronyism frequently played out within the *animation* program, for example when Eyadéma’s native district of Kara came in last at a high school *animation* contest, Eyadéma made additional funds available to propel the group’s development, thereby aiding their victory in the following year. The people involved in this victory

[73] See, for example, Schatzberg (1988: 78-79)

were not only generously compensated, but experienced a launch in their individual careers as well. Fousseni, for example, then a 23-year old high school teacher at the *Lycée de Kara*, was promoted to headmaster after assisting in the coaching of the dancers, while the headmaster was offered a post as a minister.

Eyadéma's interest in, and preferential treatment of, the JRPT had an important personal dimension too: ARETO dancers were between the ages of 12 and 18, an age group much to the liking of the president. As Akoussah explained suggestively: "The head of state held the youth in high esteem. The women in Lomé's *Groupe Choc* were older and already married, so they couldn't do what they wanted. For young women, however, everything was permissible." The reputation of *animation* dancers was indeed notorious; so much so that the people referred vernacularly to female animators as "entertaining wombs,"[74] alluding to Eyadéma's reputation of having fathered nearly one hundred children over the course of two decades. *Animation* manifestations in general, but especially those of the JRPT, served as abundant source of subjects to satisfy Eyadéma's unbridled sexual debauchery. Ex-Ambassador to Germany, Mamah Fousseni, witnessed the president's female selection numerous times and described it to me as follows: "Eyadéma had a technique. Sometimes, when he got very happy while the group was dancing, he would get up and go very close. He'd have his walking stick, stood there and scrutinized the girls; then he'd tap his stick on the floor. That was the sign. First number of taps indicated the row, and the second number of taps indicated the girl in that

[74] The reference is playing on the similarities between the French words "*animatrice"* and "*anime matrice*". See Toulabor (1994: 67).

row. The people in the back understood which girl he had chosen, and in the evening she was waiting for him in his residence."

The dancers Eyadéma chose in this ritual for his personal pleasure were compensated extremely generously. Fousseni remembers: "The girls hoped to be selected because they arrived poor and left as millionaires. Many former *animatrices* own great houses and drive great cars, to this day. I have a doctorate, but I don't own a house." While the last remark was explicitly humorous, it is true that people in certain faculties were more likely to benefit from the president's benevolence than others. Within the *animation* program, this included dancers, the visual focal point of performances, as well as chief *animateurs*, whose slogans and song lyrics circulated the official narratives and reinforced the images the government wanted to project (as elaborated in the previous section). Furthermore, the extraction of *chansons révolutionnaires*, described above, resulted in the emergence of an auxiliary dimension of *animation*, in which the practice of presidential gift-giving evolved into a clientelist patronage system that supported a small emerging class of solo singers.[75] Accompanied by one of the city's state-sponsored orchestras, most typically the radio orchestra, these vocalists performed at political and state-sponsored events and festivities, including gala dinners, banquets, as well as seasonal and national holiday celebrations. While these singers benefitted from generous

[75] According to Adéwusi (2010: 151), the concept of *vedetterie* (solo stardom) was first introduced in Togo in the 1950s with the emergence of modern talent shows (see Adewusi, 2010: 151). It was only the late 1960s, however, that individual vocalists who aspired to establish themselves as *vedettes* (as stars) began to emerge from church choirs, *cantates*, district competitions, and modern dance orchestras. This emergence was greatly inspired by the career of Togolese singer Bella Bellow, who originally sang in *cantates* and who was produced by Gérard Akuesson, a Paris-based Togolese musician and music producer. To this day, Bella Bellow is cherished locally as Togo's greatest singer. She died in a car accident in 1973, just at the onset of the *animation* era.

money disbursements by high-ranking officials, the accompanying orchestra rarely received additional money.

Orchestra musicians coped as best as they could, while holding on to the hope that things would change for the better. As state spectacles and other state-sponsored cultural events took over both Lomé's public sphere and the media, the city's state-affiliated orchestras were eventually able to capitalize on their increased public visibility and audibility to secure the bulk of private gigs for the various life-cycle events wealthier Lomé residents continued to celebrate with *ambiance*.[76] This benefit, however, did not apply to the orchestra musicians of the ARETO, who, as the President's orchestra of choice, rarely accepted private gigs so as to remain available at all times to play at the president's order. Orchestra musicians thus found themselves as curtailed in their independence as orchestras had been previously under hotel and nightclub patronage. Their ambiguous financial circumstances, however, were more reminiscent of the earlier dependence specialized amateur musicians had with their founding directors, the latter of whom had similarly relied on musicians' hope for better compensation in the future.

7. Conclusions

In summary, the creation of state-sponsored district orchestras in the context of Togo's Cultural Revolution halted the emancipation of orchestra musicians by monopolizing the cultural sphere, thereby preventing dynamics of supply and demand. It drew musicians away from a recently emerged professionalism, and subjected them to

[76] By contrast, those private orchestras that survived the "hunt for musicians" were now frequently condemned to the confines of their affiliated establishment, a trend that ironically appeared to confirm that working for the state was favorable.

conditions similar to those they had recently overcome in the private sector, while providing them with an inferior compensation. Furthermore, as the previous section illustrates, the hasty creation of a large number of district orchestras without the provision of adequate training opportunities resulted in a relative inferior level of musical competence across these orchestras, which lowered the overall musical standard. The approach to, and expectations of, the fulfillment of musical responsibilities within the context of the *animation* program discouraged musical creativity and originality. In some ways, the launch of state-sponsored district orchestras thus bore some similarities with the state's above-described creation of "white elephants," whose grandiose creations or acquisitions stood in stark contrast with the subsequent neglect.

The *animation* program officially came to an end in 1992 with the establishment of a multi-party system. However, it began losing its vigor around 1980 when rising economic pressures began altering the political economy in the country. The economic stress that the government's costly excesses – including the *animation* program – and Togo's wasteful development program had incited was compounded in the late 1970s by the falling prices of Togo's main agricultural export products (cotton, coffee and cocoa) and of phosphate, the country's most significant income-generating commodity. The resulting budget deficits were soon addressed with first Structural Adjustment Programs by the World Bank and IMF, programs which arguably thrust Togo into a deeper economic malaise. "Africa's Switzerland" – as Togo had been called for its small size, opulence and cleanliness – started a downward spiral, which, exacerbated by dwindling post-Cold War international economic policies, had transformed this once economically

promising post-independence state into one of the world's poorest nations by the end of Eyadéma's regime in 2005.

As the glorious façade the government had projected throughout the 1970s started to crumble with Togo's economic decline, the politico-ideological climate across the country began to shift, along with the changing material and cultural landscape. In the capital city of Lomé, these transformations were particularly palpable as the government reimposed the previously abolished solidarity tax and began reducing the budget for the public sector. The pompous large-scale construction projects were halted, and the maintenance of the existing infrastructure began diminishing. The grandiose state spectacles rapidly decreased in scope and frequency, and the government's autocratic and increasingly oppressive nature grew more notorious. As a result of these transformations, tourism, a small but thriving industry throughout the 1970s, quickly declined, a process that further accelerated the dissolution of the glamorous profile of a city also nicknamed Petit Paris.[77]

Within a few years, by the early 1980s, the state-owned material infrastructure that supported popular music practice, including musical instruments, sound systems, and recording technology, ceased to be funded, and the disbursement of musicians' stipends was gradually suspended, often after months of agonizing uncertainty and delays. Some state-affiliated musicians who recognized the trend in its early stages sought out additional sources of income. René Akoussah, for example, the founder of several district orchestras, transitioned gradually from his position as Musical Director of the ARETO,

[77] In the 1970s and early 1980s, Lomé had also been a popular destination for weekend visitors from neighboring Benin and Ghana.

and finally made use of his accountant degree by taking a salaried job at the port, where his monthly paycheck was not only steady, but also substantially higher. Within a few years, most major music institutions, among them Lomé's professional orchestras and the OTODI (the state's recording studio) shut down. By the mid-1980s, the structure that had supported the grand aspects of the *animation* program, specifically its large-scale spectacles and the popular competitions, had effectively collapsed, leaving Lomé's popular music makers, the majority of whom had relied on this structure, without income. The private sector offered barely any opportunities anymore, as the entertainment industry, thriving in the 1970s, had equally declined due to the increasingly notorious oppressive practices of Togo's autocratic regime. The city of Lomé, home to over 20 orchestras prior to the launch of state-patronage of music, was left with a single private orchestra by the end of the animation era in 1992.

In a 2008 paper on "*Authenticité* in a Global Age in Francophone West Africa," ethnomusicologist Graeme Counsel concluded: "Though the era when *authenticité* was the official policy has passed, West Africa's artists still benefit from it. Musical styles which emanate from the local traditions remain very popular" (2008: 6). As this chapter illustrates, however, the *authenticité* doctrine that defined the Togolese Cultural Revolution had no such impact. On the contrary, the incorporation of modern music into Togo's political machinery under President Eyadéma has had decisively stifling effects on the development of modern music and related institutions. It halted, and in some ways reversed, the level of professionalization and extent of self-determination musicians had previously achieved; it lowered the overall quality of orchestra music, the dominant popular music at the time; and discouraged musical originality. Central to these effects

was the appropriation of modern orchestras into the government's *animation* program, in the context of which modern musicians were relegated to the accompaniment of dance spectacles and so-called "revolutionary songs" purportedly aimed at mobilizing and unifying the Togolese people. Their participation articulated in complex ways with the political culture of a paternalistic regime, in which power was consolidated through a combination of indoctrination, financial incentives, and the instilment of fear.

When Togolese talk today about *animation*, they generally discredit it as the government's attempt to brainwash and subdue the people. Togolese writer and activist Ayayi Apedo-Amah depicted *animation* as a "foolish stupidity" ("*des conneries*") humiliating to the Togolese people, and contemptuously describes the choreographies as "a sort of obscene gesticulation of the pelvis, accompanied by idiotic songs praising the Nation's Helmsman."[78] However, notwithstanding the pervasive critical sentiments, in many conversations I personally had with eyewitnesses (most of whom were also participants), I frequently observed various degrees of nostalgia for a time associated also with hope and splendor. I remember particularly vividly my conversations with Mammah Fousseni, former Togolese ambassador to Germany, who I have known since my childhood. Having earned a doctorate in ethnology in Germany in the 1970s, Fousseni has long been analytically critical of the *animation* program. Nevertheless, during our conversations about *animation* he more than once interrupted his otherwise critical accounts and raved about the magnificence of the spectacles: "Das war ganz toll!" he once exclaimed. "It was so great!" Similarly, Packer described how, in the village in

[78] http://www.diastode.org/Echos/invit11181.html accessed August 5, 2013. Translations mine. In September 2015 this was no longer online.

which he was stationed as a Peace Corp volunteer, an *animation* spectacle suddenly "ceased to be political" and turned into a party where "[p]easants and children were enjoying themselves as they would at an all-night funeral" (1984: 113-117).

I want to suggest that such mixed perceptions, ranging from repulsion to attraction, often incorporating elements of both within one experience, are representative of the complicated dynamics surrounding the participation in the program – and attitudes towards the regime more broadly. Especially during the country's comparably prosperous economic 1970s, many Togolese felt optimistic about the course their country had taken, specifically with regards to economic prospects and social stability, a perception which, of course, the state actively promoted. Wilder, for example, who resided in Togo in the late 1980s, still believed that "there can be little doubt that most of the people of Togo [were] proud to be Togolese because of their high standard of living and economic development relative to their neighboring countries" (1990: 122). And although Wilder acknowledged that "many people [were] frightened and unhappy under the current president," they "seem[ed] to be genuinely proud of *La Paix*." What may then seem like a case of effective cultural hegemony in the Gramscian sense is, however, put into question by other reports that indicate hidden, low-profile forms of resistance, to which, as James Scott (1990) argues, people resort when forced to feign consent in contexts of extreme oppression. Toulabor, for example, studied what he referred to as an "underground political language" through which Togolese expressed their dissent by coopting the government's numerous acronyms and famous slogans and turning them into mocking parodies, often by merely shifting the syllabic emphasis. Examples from Toulabor's

"lexicon of political derision" include the famous adaptation of "RPT," the acronym of Togo's sole party, into "*air pété*," which translates into "farted air" (1981: 67).

As Mbembe argues, such obscenity paralleled (as well as inverted) one of the modalities of power used by the "*commandement*" (2001: 133), that is, the vulgarity it proudly displayed, manifest in a "total lack of restraint [and] a great delight […] in getting really dirty" (ibid.: 108). Although Mbembe recognizes the significance of what he calls "popular humor" (ibid.: 109), he refuses to read the relationship of domination and subjection under postcolonial "*commandements*" in terms of resistance or collaboration (2001: 104). Instead, he argues that the dominant and subaltern are caught in the tensions of a complex "conviviality" involving "dynamics of domesticity and familiarity," in which "each has robbed the other of vitality and left both impotent" (2001: 104). Mbembe refers to this phenomenon as a process of "zombification."

While I am hesitant about the claim of mutuality in the idea of postcolonial "zombification,"[79] the musical effects of the incorporation of orchestras into the political machinery, essentially lethargy and creative anemia, do indeed match the images of lifelessness the idea of a "zombification" evokes. Through their participation in a performance in which ideology and practice were in a perpetuate state of contradiction, musicians suffered the full impact of what Mbembe further describes as a "hollow pretense" characteristic of African postcolonial autocracies (2001: 108), in which, as Midiohouan and Amouro describe, the governed and those who govern "[play] at deceiving the other, while pretending not to be duped" (1991: 121). This "hollow

[79] Mbembe does in fact point out that the material base of the ruling elite remained unaffected in this process. However, he identifies the "zombification" of the "*commandement*" in its demystification and the erosion of its legitimacy (1991: 111).

pretense," as this chapter illustrates, revealed itself in the Togolese Cultural Revolution, which, patched together from popular African nationalist ideologies, produced fictitious practices that served the lavish personality cult of an autocratic leader. The government's *animation* program served as an example par excellence of this condition, in which conformity and compliance with the state were pursued under the pretense of people's "unification;" where indoctrination and stultification of the mind were termed "education;" in which mythology replaced history; and where dancing masses increasingly obscured the mounting paralysis that caught a population living between promise and fear. "Happy are the people who dance and sing" proclaimed the one-party state (echoing Mobutu's famous maxim), and enforced, with violence if necessary, "the fiction of a society devoid of conflict" (Mbembe 1992 b: 105).

In the next chapter I continue to explore the articulation between state power, political culture, and modern music throughout the 1980s, a transitional period marked in Lomé by a culturally neglected and politically increasingly challenging public terrain. I focus on musically-mediation notions of belonging, as manifest in the appropriation and negotiation of music styles associated with places located outside of Togo, which I investigate as sites of disguised ideological subversion.

III. MUSICAL STYLE – BELONGING AND DETACHMENT

1. Introduction

Among the few short accounts that have been published about Togolese popular music in world music guides and popular music encyclopedias, a single critical statement disrupts an otherwise predominantly celebratory prose: "the continuing influence of […] foreign genres as well as Ghanaian highlife and Congolese rumba, has led critics to argue that Togo has *not yet succeeded* in creating its own national popular music"[80] (Seck and Clerfeuille, 2005: 182, emphasis mine). While the reference to "critics" is vague and raises the questions of who and where these critics are, their alleged concern illustrates the widely held presumption (discussed in chapter 1) that locally-rooted hybrid popular music styles are omnipresent across Africa, by depicting their absence as a temporary lapse in need, and process, of correction. Around the turn of the millennium, a similar rhetoric entered the local discourse on popular music within Togo. As indicated in my introductory chapter, especially young Togolese had begun to deplore the lack of a unique national popular music, and their sentiments frequently involved the contrasting of this lack with the prevalence of prominent syncretic music styles from other West African nations. As one interlocutor once remarked: "Congo coined *soukous*, Senegal *mbalax*, even Ivorians came up with their own, *mapouka*. Where is our music?" For some

[80] Note that Seck and Clerfeuille assuage their discernibly unfavorable observation by adding the optimist assertion that "Lomé remains a thriving center of popular music" (2005: 183). Of interest is also how Seck and Clerfeuille rely on and reinforce the idea of Africa as a unified entity by juxtaposing genres "foreign" to Togo, on the one hand, with Ghanaian and Congolese genres, by implication native, on the one.

the lack of a national sound was so absolute that they maintained that Togo had "no music at all."

Togolese music advocate Abiadé Basil Adéwusi discussed the issue of a "missing" national popular music in his 2010 publication *Histoire de la Musique du Togo – De la Tradition à la Moderne*. He, too, was troubled by a perceived absence and conceptualized hybrid popular music styles from Africa poetically as the product of a musical "rendezvous" between "local rhythms" and "urban melodies" – a "rendezvous" that, as he observed with regret, Togo had "failed to attend" (2010: 72). He attributed this "failure" to what he described as decades of admiration of, and reliance on, imported music styles, for which he blamed the public's preferences and behavior, especially a dismissive attitude towards the local cultural heritage. He argued that in an attempt to satiate their audiences' desires for "foreign" music, local music-makers became "masters in the art of interpretation," and thereby contributed to a Togolese "habit" of consuming music styles from abroad (2010: 73 and 295). While Adéwusi's discussion is heartfelt and involves valuable observations, it yields little insight into the nature and meaning of the local popular music trends he observed. His representation of the interrelationship between musicians' stylistic choices, on the one hand, and audiences' musical preferences, on the other, remains circular, and fails to acknowledge any political, social, and ideological dynamics that may have been at work as Togolese, musicians and audiences alike, made sense of and engaged in musical practices.[81]

[81] Adéwusi's disappointment about the lack of a national popular music, and interrelatedly the value he attaches to geo-cultural musical indexing, need to be understood in the context of a short-lived surge of nationalist sentiments in Togo around the turn of the millennium that followed the population's increased exposure to, and growing awareness of, the world beyond Togolese borders. These developments were

In this chapter I revisit the meaning of transnational popular music styles and, interrelatedly, the absence of musical nationalism during the 1980s, the early years of which witnessed the collapse of the *animation politique* program, described in chapter 2. Stressing the role of popular music practice in the propagation of a sense of self and others, I am interested in stylistic choices as a tool of musically mediated belonging. Central to this process in the specific case of Lomé, I argue, were a mutually constitutive absence of coherent local popular music scenes (that is, of vital communities whose members shared beliefs, values and attitudes through discourse on and performance of musical practice), on the one hand, and the centrality of remote, and thus primarily imagined, musical communities, on the other. This dual phenomenon, I believe, must be understood in the context of Lomé's highly controlled and politicized public terrain, where it encompassed seemingly contradictory elements of both submission to, as well as, subversion of, the oppressive forces exerted by the increasingly autocratic government.

I begin by sketching the political landscape during the 1980s, to capture the complex socio-political environment in which Lomé's population was caught between political domination and social and cultural neglect, a condition that stifled creativity in some ways, but also opened new sites for individual artistic expression, as long as they were deemed politically innocuous by the authorities. From here I turn to the case of Jimi Hope, a Togolese musician who has occupied a singular place as "Togo's rocker" among only a handful of musicians considered musical professionals in Lomé during the 1980s.

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musically negotiated in popular music discourse and practice, the processes of which I will examine in the next chapter.

The discussion of Jimi Hope's musical journey focuses on the evolution of his ideas and practices, especially his musical imaginings and concepts of musical artistry. While these descriptions are specific to his personal case, Jimi Hope's career illustrates how musicians in Lomé reached for remote musical trends to locally enact artistic self-identities whose underlying codes and ideologies were highly meaningful to them personally, but maintained a significant disconnect from local social and cultural currents. I read this process as a form of "musical teleportation" to describe musicians' typically lonesome attempts to imaginarily transcend the local social, cultural and political malaise, a transcendence that involved both a longing for belonging to a distant and seemingly more desirable world, as well as a distancing from the local. In the last section I focus on the latter aspect, the disengagement from Togo as a cultural home, musically manifest in the de-emphasis of local cultural elements, and discuss the deeper meanings of this disengagement, which, as I will show, may be located in an ambiguous space between compliance and defiance.

2. The 1980s – Domination and Neglect

Politically, the 1980s mark the transitional decade between the heyday of Eyadéma's charismatic rule during the 1970s (described in the previous chapter) and the onset of political unrest in the early 1990s. It was the time of Togo's Third Republic, launched late in 1979 with the introduction of a mixed civilian and military cabinet. In practice, however, Eyadéma, who recurrently emerged as winner in uncontested presidential elections, maintained supreme power with the support of the military over which he retained total control. Contradicting the over 99% of votes Eyadéma allegedly

garnered regularly, the public opinion of Eyadéma, already artificially inflated throughout the 1970s, had grown less favorable towards the end of that decade. The economic downturn, especially, had tarnished Eyadéma's public image, which had been built to a great extent on a rhetoric that portrayed Togo's ostensibly prosperous economy as evidence not only of Eyadéma's accomplished leadership, but also of his personal benevolence.[82] Consequently, the growing frustration over the gradual loss of the nation's dream of economic prosperity rendered Eyadéma vulnerable to criticism, and the clientelist mode and kleptocratic practices of his government grew increasingly infamous.

In response to the rising political discord, the Togolese government became progressively more insular and relied increasingly on terror and violence to solidify its power. With the economic downturn and the growth of a hardline politics, the state's commitment to the arts and culture sector, previously substantially centered on Eyadéma's personality cult, rapidly declined. As described earlier, the *animation* program – the government's primary tool of mass mobilization and politico-ideological indoctrination – gradually disintegrated. This process created a void in Lomé's cultural sphere and left the predominantly state-sponsored modern musicians economically stranded.

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[82] This portrayal, and its underlying paternalistic rhetoric, is well illustrated in the following lyrics of a popular *animation* song from the 1970s:

Heureux, heureux le people togolais!	Joyous, joyous are the Togolese people!
Heureux, heureux les paysans!	Joyous, joyous are the peasants!
Des Années Durant, pas de taxe civique.	For years no head taxes.
Et pour les fonctionnaires, 25% de solde.	And for state employees, 25% increase of salary.
Et pour cela, le people togolais	For this, the Togolese people
Dit trios fois merci	Proclaim their gratitude three times
A son Timonier G. Éyadéma.	To their helmsman, G. Éyadéma.

Togolese musicians were not the only ones in Africa who struggled economically after losing their livelihood with the collapse of a patronage system furnished primarily by the state. Across Africa, many national cultural programs founded by their countries' respective first republics lost their funding with changes in government, as the new leaders attempted to disassociate themselves from the previous ones.[83] This politico-ideological trend was compounded by the economic recession that began afflicting much of the continent in the 1970s and 1980s. In Mali, for example, modern orchestra musicians, who had been sponsored by post-independence cultural policies under President Modibo Keïta, lost the government's formal support with the end of Mali's first republic in the late 1960s and the onset of Moussa Traoré's regime. After a brief transitional crisis during which some musicians sought out opportunities abroad, others entered a clientelist relationship as laudatory artists with Mali's military and political elite. However, when state clientelism began to falter in the 1980s with mounting economic pressures, Mali's rich popular music tradition, which had long enjoyed great popularity at home and had already begun stirring the interest of international audiences, rapidly attracted private investors whose business ventures aided the shift in music patronage from state clientelism to the private sector. The Malian government fostered this process by encouraging musicians to be open to the transition, and by embracing the rise of a commercial music industry as part of a broader move from a statist towards a neo-liberal political economy.[84]

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[83] Ethnomusicologist Graeme Counsel examines this trend in the contexts of Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and The Gambia (2009: 173-188).

[84] This brief summary is based on the work of Ryan Skinner who examined this history in detail in Chapter 2 and 3 of his dissertation (2009), in an article on "Cultural Politics in

In Lomé, by contrast, the end of state-sponsored popular music did not incite the development of vital alternative structures of music patronage, private or otherwise. The predominantly unimaginative popular music heritage, a legacy of the *animation* period (as elaborated in Chapter 2), lacked wider appeal. Moreover, Togo's continuing autocratic government and its ambiguous economic policies created a politically tense and economically uncertain terrain in which private sponsors, local and foreign, were hesitant to invest. These musical and economic conditions, however, account only partly for the Togolese case. More subtle, but equally important were the socio-psychological effects of nearly a decade of ideological indoctrination and the confining realities of living under an increasingly intimidating government, effects that resulted in what several writers have identified as a "culture of silence and passivity." Midiohouan and Amouro examined this phenomenon in the context of literary production during the 1970s and 1980s, when they observed a widespread resignation and passivity among Togolese, who, subjected to the state's overbearing power, responded with "indifference, silence, and unquestioning acceptance" (1991: 121, 132). In literature, they argued, this response translated not only into an absence of politically and socially critical sentiments, but into the stifling of all forms of creative writing, including those involving fundamentally apolitical themes. They remarked that the few Togolese who were writing during these years seemed "terribly alone and struggling to cope with an oppressive reality," and that their poor literary output constituted "a fitting monument of the culture of silence, fear and renunciation that cannot speak its own name" (ibid.: 122). A similar culture was

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the Post-Colony" (2012), as well as in Chapter 2 of his recent book, *Bamako Sounds*, on the "Afropolitan Ethics of Malian Music" (2015).

noted earlier in the same context by Togolese literary critic Apédo-Amah, who observed that the troubled state of Togo's literature was "symptomatic of the impoverished cultural life in which [Togo's] intelligentsia are evolving" (quoted in Midiohouan and Amouro 1991: 122 [citation is not included in their bibliography]).

It is in this politically anxious and stifled social and cultural environment that Togolese musicians operated after the collapse of *animation*: an environment culturally neglected by the state, yet ambiguously laden with the threat of an ever-present government. In this environment only a few individuals pursued music with professional ambitions outside of the sheltered framework of Lomé's remaining couple of orchestras. These musicians can be divided into three categories. The first group consisted of a couple of former *animation* singers, notably Julie Akoussah, Fifi Rafiatou and Agboti Mawuenam; these singers withstood the downfall of the *animation* apparatus and continued to enjoy a limited, and in the changing political climate sometimes contested, local popularity. The second category included a couple of similarly seasoned singers like Jimi Hope and Afia Mala, who had started making music during the 1970s, but remained on the margins of the dominant *animation* machinery. A third group consisted of a small number of singers who emerged in the course of the 1980s, and who, due to their age, knew little more than the culturally impoverished and oppressive reality of the post-*animation* 1980s. This new generation included Ola Lade, Jad Fozis, and Dee Kwarel. In this chapter I am interested in the last two categories of musicians who had no prior ties to the government, and who claimed an innocuous niche in the newly arisen cultural void that the collapse of the *animation* program had left within the local public sphere. To my knowledge, and with the exception of Afia Mala who sustained herself with a regular gig

in the bar of the luxury hotel Sarakawa, these singers maintained their musical activities primarily through secondary sources of income. Notwithstanding their socio-economic status, these musicians have been considered locally the main protagonists of Togolese popular music throughout the 1980s and beyond.

Like their literary colleagues, musicians' journeys were marked by a considerable degree of artistic solitude, a condition which is reflected in the stylistic potpourri they collectively produced, which included reggae, highlife, soukous, afrobeat, rock, pop, blues, rhythm & blues, and salsa. While the fragmented state of popular music in Lomé appears, because of the absence of tangible group dynamics, difficult to grasp from an anthropological perspective, across musicians' lonesome journeys there emerges a significant socio-musical trend: an emphasis on music as a personal endeavor coupled with a sense of belonging to remote, and thus primarily imagined, communities. This trend, I argue, yield insights into previously largely undocumented, disguised micro-dynamics of political resistance, where alienation, musical and otherwise, constitutes both a symptom of, and active response against, the malaise of domination by an autocratic regime. I therefore argue against the reading of Midiohouan and Amouro, who portray the Togolese response of silence as a deep lethargy, indicative of the people's submission to power. And while I acknowledge the trauma associated with decade-long oppression and indoctrination, I join a number of scholars (among them James Scott 1990) in their quest for a deeper reading of responses to domination, one that looks beyond apparent quiescence and withdrawal. To do this effectively, I now turn to the case of singer-songerwriter Jimi Hope, whose journey illustrates the trend of lonesomeness

and imaginary belonging among musicians during the 1980s, and provides rich data for my subsequent analysis and interpretation of its meanings.

3. Imagined Belonging – Longing and Alienation

In his *Histoire de la Musique du Togo*, Adéwusi dedicated a short chapter to a small group of six musicians he denotes the "*Gotha de la Chanson des Variétés Togolaises*" – the "superstars" (literally: "aristocracy") of Togolese popular music. Among them, and notably listed first, is rock singer Jimi Hope, indisputably one of Togo's longest-standing and most prolific popular music personalities (2010: 247-258).[85] Born in Lomé in 1956, Koffi Senaya, alias Jimi Hope, has been musically active in Lomé for nearly four decades.[86] He has released a total of eight records, between his first cassette in 1986, *Rock'n Roll Man*, and his latest CD in 2012, *Blues for Hope*. Most of his records were made in France, where Jimi has spent extended periods of time since his naturalization as a French citizen in the 1990s.

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[85] In addition to Jimi Hope, Adéwusi lists as part of this "aristocracy" Afia Mala, Fifi Rafiatou, Agboti Mawuenam, and Dee Kwarel, who were musically active during the 1980s, as well as King Mensah, who emerged in the 1990s.

[86] His alias is a composite of two names that arose in different times and in separate circumstances. Jimi's grandfather, an Anglophone Ewe from Ghana, called his grandson by the name "Hope" to express his wish that Koffi would succeed in life. Years later, when Koffi began learning the guitar, people began calling him "Jimi" in reference to Koffi's musical idol Jimi Hendrix. Eventually the two names were consolidated to "Jimi Hope" and became a fully established alias, which Jimi, as he once laughingly put it, "was obliged to assume."

Figure 4: Jimi Hope in front of one of his paintings at an exposition of his works at the Centre Culturel Français in Lomé. (Photo courtesy of Jimi Hope.)

Today, Jimi enjoys a true celebrity status in Lomé. He is widely admired and praised for being a successful musical professional, an image that is reinforced by his cosmopolitan lifestyle and by what appears as a high standard of living. He resides markedly above average local standards in a "*villa*" (a modern, urban single home), whose entry gate is guarded by security personnel. Inside the plot, a "*payotte*," the traditional round straw-covered patio common also in Lomé's wealthier homes, has in recent years served as a gathering place for young musicians, painters, and sculptors, who seek Jimi's presence and experience for inspiration and guidance. Inside the house, his paintings adorn the walls of every room, and a state-of-the-art multimedia system in the living room frequently plays Jimi's audio and video recordings. The house strongly commemorates Jimi's artistic persona, which in Lomé has become somewhat legendary: Jimi is considered Togo's "first rocker" and one of the first – and few – who "made it" as a solo singer.

Jimi's fame, standard of living, and cosmopolitan lifestyle, however, mask the hardship and degree of alienation Jimi experienced throughout most of his career. The house he so predominantly occupies belongs to, and is financially maintained by, his brother, a successful businessman involved in operations at Lomé's port (one of Lomé's principal sources for lucrative business). As the "*maison de famille*" (the family house), it provides shelter to several members of Jimi's family, including his mother. Despite his self-conception as a musical professional, Jimi has never been able to consistently gain a living off his music. Though he considers himself first and foremost a musician, his paintings – which, unlike his music, draw conspicuously on formulaic references to Africa – constitute an important, though also sporadic, source of income. (The photograph above shows Jimi in front of one of his paintings.) Jimi's artistic persona has relied on projections of sounds and ideas that were derived from remote musico-cultural currents and rooted in imaginary notions of belonging to a community that was locally largely non-existent. Jimi Hope has not only been Lomé's *first* rocker in the collective memory of Togolese, but has remained the country's *only* rocker.

Jimi's initial involvement with music occurred in the context of school recitals for which his teachers recruited him as a vocalist. In his teenage years Jimi developed an interest in Western popular music and began singing in small bands. At a time when Lomé's local recording market was dominated by Ghanaian highlife and Congolese rumba, Jimi accessed American and European rock and pop sounds primarily through recordings brought along by visitors who passed through Lomé on business or leisure. Driven by what he described as an "insatiable appetite for new musical sounds," he frequently struck up conversations with foreigners whom he met on the streets to inquire

about the music they listened to. “That’s how I discovered John Lee Hooker, Sam Hopkins, B.B. King, and Memphis Slim,” he recalled. Another source of foreign popular music recordings was Lomé’s hotel night clubs, which, having to keep up with the musical tastes and demands of their international guests, had the largest local selection of contemporary Western popular music. Sometimes, when Jimi was able to gain entry into one of these clubs, he waited until the early morning hours when DJs would occasionally copy a selection of their records onto cassettes in exchange for a small charge. While blues was his earliest and most fundamental influence, Jimi absorbed all British and U.S. music accessible to him, including Frank Sinatra and Bette Midler, as he once emphasized. Among the musicians who lastingly influenced him he lists a broad range of rock musicians, including Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, Otis Redding, and Wilson Pickett, as well as Joe Tex, Van Morrison, The Who, and Led Zeppelin.

Emulating his distant musical idols, and initially taking most sonic and visual cues from recordings and their packaging, Jimi began assuming the hybrid identity of a rocker and bluesman. He visually projected this identity by modeling his clothing and demeanor to the images he saw on cassettes. The photograph below shows Jimi in the early 1980s posing with studded leather bracelets and holding a V-shaped electric guitar.

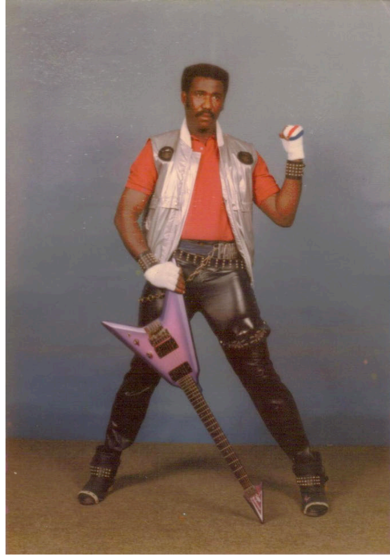

Figure 5: Jimi Hope in the early 1980s. (Photo courtesy of Jimi Hope.)

With his bands Jimi initially played reproductions of his favorite rock songs, and frequently took it on himself to teach his fellow musicians, most of whom were less familiar with rock music, their instrumental parts: “I learned their solos in my head, and sang them to my musicians the way they should play. That helped me too, because I learned the whole piece including the arrangement.” As Jimi familiarized himself with the stylistic vocabulary and formulas of the rock music he admired, he began writing his own song-based music. Centered on the electric guitar, his music mirrored the characteristic rock and blues inflections of his musical idols, and his many melancholic songs echoed the power ballads that arose in Anglo-American rock in the early 1970s.

In Lomé, at the time a comparably small city of 400,000 inhabitants, Jimi carved out a microcosm in which he enacted his evolving rock identity, initially in schools and community centers, and increasingly on improvised stages on street corners across the city (see photograph below). Over time, Jimi worked increasingly alone, as many of his band members did not share his commitment. For some of them music was merely a

fleeting pastime, while others gave it up because of the lack of financial prospects. Jimi sustained himself on his evolving musical journey by selling small sketches to tourists, the modest income from which enabled him to dedicate himself to what had become his passion. “I refused to give in,” he later said, describing the hardship that accompanied this endeavor, “even though I had to learn to eat simple flour with water.” To be musically self-sufficient, he started teaching himself the guitar: “I didn’t want to excel as a guitarist, but since I often found myself alone, I wanted to be as independent as possible,” he recalled. He became what he denotes as an “*auteur-compositeur-interprète et arrangeur*” (a singer-songwriter who also takes charge of musical arrangements for accompanying musicians), and only cobbled bands together when needed for a concert or a recording session. The musicians he intermittently recruited included locals and, when present, visiting musicians from other African countries and occasionally from Europe and the US. In 1986 he recorded his first cassette, *Rock'n Roll Man*, in collaboration with a visiting musician from Paris, using a portable 4-track studio that another Frenchman who lived in Lomé had brought along for his personal entertainment. “I’m coming from a country where there were no means, so I was forced to fight to find my way around the obstacles,” he later told me, adding proudly in English: “I’m a self-made man.”

Figure 6: Jimi Hope in concert in Lomé, most likely in the 1980s. (Photo courtesy of Jimi Hope.)

As Jimi began making a name for himself, he gained access to more formal concert venues, especially Lomé's *Centre Culturel Français*, a cultural institute sponsored by the French government, which readily supported Togo's few local artists active during that time. Jimi also gained sponsorship from the French cigarette company *Cigarettes Fines*, which organized several concert tours for him across the country. In spite of his frequent performances, however, Jimi remained artistically solitary, as neither his fellow musicians nor his audience members constituted a community with whom he shared a common path. Although Jimi was instrumental in shaping local conceptions of rock, his performances did not involve, or instigate the creation of, a community of like-minded peers engaged in the mutual enactment of shared beliefs and values through musical practice. Rather, his concerts provided a context in which Jimi produced an artistic identity that he derived from a sense of belonging to a community that was physically virtually absent in his environment. He considered himself a descendant of a

rock lineage that he traced along his Western musical idols, and dreamed of inclusion into its canon. His fantasies, highly meaningful to Jimi, sustained a distance between him and his fleeting audience members, who, as spectators rather than participants, appreciated Jimi as a somewhat idiosyncratic curiosity.

By the time I first met Jimi in 2002, his conceptions of rock had been shaped over three decades through numerous encounters with ideas, images and sounds, initially in Lomé, but increasingly also during extended stays in France and shorter visits to other countries, including the United States. As a result of his encounters, Jimi was well-versed in the Western rhetoric and ideologies that have informed global discourses on rock, and had internalized tropes fundamental to rock culture. Vocation, non-conformity, genuineness, originality, and personal integrity were central themes Jimi frequently invoked when speaking of his artistic journey. He self-identifies as an artist with highest standards of integrity and has frequently highlighted the significance of having remained artistically true to himself. “In music it is very important that you believe in what you are doing,” he often maintained, so as to assert the connection between personal genuineness and artistic integrity. Framed in the context of these tropes, Jimi conceptualized his artistic journey as an inherently personal endeavor, the (self-)marginalization of which he romanticized as a token of what he thought of as his true inner artistry.

The pride with which Jimi assumed his outsider status is illustrated in the autobiographical narrative he has constructed over time to assert and naturalize his belonging to rock culture. He has done so by linking his personal experiences to values associated with rock culture, especially vocation, non-conformity, and defiance. In this narrative, the emergence of his artistic self goes back to his elementary school years in

the 1960s, prior to his involvement with music, when Jimi began feeling alienated by what he today refers to as “the common path” (“*le chemin de tout le monde*”). Having developed an early passion for drawing and sculpting, Jimi remembers experiencing a constant urge to draw, an urge he compulsively pursued wherever he was. His artistic inclinations were met with stern disapproval, both at school and at home, and Jimi recalls having been spanked frequently in an attempt to cure him from “this nonsense” (“*ces bêtises*”). In spite of all condemnation, Jimi felt unable to suppress his creative urges and dejectedly suffered the consequences. Over time, however, he observed that being different, while not earning him admiration, evoked a certain curiosity, a realization that gave him increasingly a sense of satisfaction and empowerment. Once turned into a source of strength, Jimi made the conscious decision to resist adaptation and to more deeply explore his creative urges and unconventional sides. “They did everything to make me conform, to make me do their thing,” he today concludes, “but I continued, little by little, to pave my own way.” Note that Jimi’s tale of defiance, as manifest in his assertions of artistic integrity contrasts the social and political disengagement inherent in his emphasis on music as a personal endeavor, a contradiction that I will explore more deeply in the next section.

In tandem with the idea of music as an inherently personal endeavor, Jimi disassociated his creative output from his geo-cultural affiliation. Although his music eventually became the site through which he explored the meaning of his African heritage in the wider world, Jimi refused to let his evolving pan-African identity become

a musically distinguishing factor.[87] "I want people to judge me in relation to this," he told me one day, singing the opening of Hendrix's version of the rock standard *Hey Joe*. Remaining culturally unclassifiable, sounding "international," as he called it, was central to his self-identity as a rocker. "My music is an international one," he condensed this sentiment. "What I bring to it is my personal feeling; that's what makes it unique."

Although many aspects of Jimi's experiences and conceptions are specific to his particular case, his emphasis on music as a personal endeavor and the interrelated disassociation of music as a socially or politically salient cultural practice appear to reflect more broadly the attitude of musicians active in Lomé during the 1980s. Unlike other documented processes of musical borrowings, by which musicians appropriate the music of others and deliberately rework it in new contexts,[88] Lomé's musicians did not import foreign styles to create local, socially vital, practices, but rather appear to have transported themselves into imaginary cultural narratives. They appropriated musical sounds, behaviors, and ideas to create a sense of alliance with remote communities, which allowed them to partake – imaginarily – in alternative social and cultural worlds. Significant to this process of "musical teleportation," I believe, were not only its objects

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[87] As Jimi's understanding of rock culture and history expanded, he discovered the history as well as the social and cultural legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and became cognizant of the role these legacies played in shaping popular music in the West. Through his growing appreciation of the evolution of black music, Jimi recognized his "roots" – that is, his African heritage – in the music he loved, a recognition he primarily harnessed to validate his sense of belonging and to reaffirm his membership in the community to which he related. "Blues originated here," he expressed this sentiment. "It's my breath."

[88] To emphasize the creative forces that underlie this process, and to deconstruct persistent beliefs about a presumed homology between music, people and/or places, Georgina Born refers to this process as one of "co-creation."

(and subjects) of desire, but also that which it omitted: engagement with the local (socially, culturally, as well as politically), an omission that reverberated with a larger culture of silence and disengagement, and manifested itself in the realm of popular music in the noted absence of musical nationalism. I argue that the interrelated imagined sense of belonging with a remote other, and the disengagement from the local, articulated in subtle but important ways micro-political dynamics involving simultaneously both submissive as well as subversive elements vis-à-vis the oppressive forces of Eyadéma's autocratic regime. I develop this argument in the following section.

4. Avoiding the Nation – Compliance and Defiance

As noted earlier, the instilment of fear constituted one of the primary methods the Togolese government used during the 1980s to keep an increasingly disenchanted population under control. Aware of the lingering critical sentiments, the government closely monitored public conduct and speech, and was quick in crushing any hint of political dissent. Enveloped by the terror of a volatile regime that arbitrarily imposed penalties for any threat – imagined or real – to its authority, the Togolese people withdrew into silence. A central aspect of this silence was a widespread political disengagement, which manifested itself not only in a withdrawal from political cheerleading, but also in a larger absence of any overt political discourse or action. The people "stayed out of politics" ("*ne pas rentrer dans la politique*"), a phrase I have heard many Lomé-residents use to describe the prevalent (a-)political attitude during this period. "The security forces had instilled a fear so pervasive as to discourage any discussion of politics, particularly in the capital city," describes Ellis, thus drawing a

causal relationship between the instilment of fear as an authoritarian form of intimidation, and the people's withdrawal from politics.

An alternative reading of the silence is offered by exiled Togolese historian Comi M. Toulabor in the context of his examination of a group of young college graduates in Lomé in 1984, who had relied on a government's promise to offer employment in the civil service to all students upon graduation (1985). With the economic downturn and shifting political climate, however, the government abandoned this commitment, and a generation of graduates who had worked towards what had looked like a secure and prosperous future found themselves unemployed, victims of a failing economy and a government that they felt had turned its back towards them. Among these "discontented and anguished" graduates, Toulabor observed a "dominant attitude of apathy and fatalism," and an omission to politicize their predicament. He contrasted this collective response with that of a group of young Ivorians in Abidjan, who stirred up an insurgence after feeling similarly disregarded by their government. Toulabor conceptualized the Togolese response as a notable "non-passage to politics," and although he acknowledged the powerful effects of ideological, material, and physical domination in Togo (an impact he elsewhere metaphorically described as that of a straitjacket), he argued that in the context of a regime that had originally aspired to a complete mobilization of the people, political apathy may indicate a silent form of resistance, that is, a "strategic demarcation" of choice, that subverts in subtle ways the existing order.

Toulabor's argument represents a distinct strand in the debate about power and resistance, a strand whose theory has been developed most prominently by anthropologist James Scott (1990). Against the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony, which denotes a

state in which subordinate groups internalize a dominant ideology and may be seen as consenting to the established uneven distribution of power, status, and wealth, Scott contends that compliance and quiescence are often feigned in socially and politically oppressive environments in which power relations prohibit overt forms of resistance. In such environments, he posits, resistance takes the shape of what he refers to as "infrapolitics," that is, practices and discourses of resistance that are concealed, either hidden from the public or disguised and in plain sight. He differentiates between three types of domination – material, status, and ideological – and identifies corresponding forms of infrapolitics, among them "everyday forms of resistance" such as poaching or foot-dragging, hidden discourses of anger or aggression, disguised discourses of dignity, and the creation of autonomous social spaces (ibid.: 198). In spite of the disguises that characterize them, Scott believes that infrapolitics are "always pressing, testing, [and] probing the boundaries of the permissible," and constitute therefore important precursors for more overt forms of resistance (ibid.: 200).

Central to Scott's argument is the distinction between what he termed "public transcripts" and "hidden transcripts." "Public transcripts" refer to verbal and nonverbal actions that establish and reaffirm formal relations between dominant and subordinate groups, and constitute the "official record" that preserves the existing status quo. "Hidden transcripts," by contrast, denote that which subordinate (or dominant) groups do and say away from the public eye; they are the "offstage record" of true sentiments shared only among people with common interests. Though often inaccessible, the hidden transcript constitutes the text that gives infrapolitics its meaning, says Scott. Without this text, he explains, the detection of infrapolitics must rely on a scholar's ability to "read between

the lines," that is, "search for noninnocent meanings using our cultural knowledge" (2005: 65).

Within this theoretical framework, Toulabor's reading of the quiescence of Lomé's unemployed college graduates as a veiled act of resistance implies the existence of a "hidden transcript" whose content gives their silence a subversive meaning that remains largely obscure to the authorities. In the absence of the actual "transcript" of such a hidden discourse, however, Toulabor's interpretation remains not only provisional, but offers no deeper understanding of the workings and effects of an alleged act of resistance that could equally well be read as either genuine acceptance or as a response of fear to intimidation.

The case of Lomé's musicians, I believe, yields new insights into the dynamics of power and resistance in Togo's capital city during the 1980s, specifically into the ambiguous nature and meaning of the political disengagement so prevalent during this transitional decade. Like most Togolese in Lomé, musicians, too, "stayed out of politics." However, contrary to Toulabor's graduates, whose disengagement involved a withdrawal from the public, musicians were operating in plain sight. In contexts of oppression, Scott says, "things are not exactly as they seem" (1990: 200). Public exposure – or the lack of anonymity, as he puts it – requires "elaborate" forms of disguise that allow for two readings, one inoffensive, if not compliant, and the other one oppositional and defiant. He also maintains that "relations of domination are, at the same time, relations of resistance," and that "nearly all public action by subordinate groups is pervaded by disguise" (ibid.: 182). If we accept Scott's premises and subject the trends in musicians' modus operandi – their emphasis on music as a personal endeavor and their imagined "teleportation"

through borrowed musical styles – to a deeper analysis within this theoretical framework, a "public transcript" emerges that accommodates two such contrasting readings.

In the first reading, musicians' modus operandi reflects a larger attempt to project the kind of innocuous profile required to secure their safety and a prolonged public existence. Their exposure made them inevitably part of the public fabric and subjected them to heightened observation through formal as well as informal modes and channels of surveillance. "The more visible you were," Jimi later described the repercussions of this condition, "the more problems you had." While musicians displayed the same political disengagement as most urban dwellers, their public exposure added complexity and an element of risk to their conduct that ordinary people no longer faced. According to Scott, "[a]ny public refusal, in the teeth of power, to produce words, gestures, and other signs of normative compliance is typically construed – and typically intended – as an act of defiance" (ibid.: 203). He differentiates between a *failure* to comply, which "does not necessarily breach the normative order of domination," and a *refusal* to do so, which, he says, "almost always does" (ibid.). Viewed in this light, the widespread political disengagement of ordinary people was acceptable precisely because it involved a withdrawal from the public sphere that could be conveniently overlooked (as in the case of Toulabor's graduates). By contrast, musicians carried their political disengagement into the "public transcript." Their overt – because highly visibly – omission to act in support of the government was difficult to ignore and required attenuating measures to be considered innocuous rather than offensive. The strategy musicians deployed, I argue, was to deemphasize the social significance of their publicity and to project explicitly

apolitical objectives and motivations that stressed the centrality of other values that did not upset the reigning ideology.

In this context, musicians' emphasis on art as a personal journey reads as an attempt to abstract their artistic personas from a political, and more broadly public, domain. The case of Jimi Hope illustrates this well. When Jimi said "music is my life" and "my aim is to do what I love," he not only stressed that his activities and aspirations were personal, but also achieved a symbolic retreat into the "private" within the "public." It was in fact his focus on personal journey and artistic integrity that fostered locally a perception of Jimi as an introspective yet apolitical musician, one who "lived for his music" and "did his own thing." The social alienation that accompanied his personal quest was reinforced through his assertions of belonging to a remote musical community, a sentiment that signalized that he was neither part of, nor aspired to foster a local community that could have become a hotbed for ideological sedition. Without the force of social unity, and with audiences consisting of spectators rather than participants, the public performances of Lomé's musicians' posed nearly no threat: while peculiar, they appeared institutionally insignificant and thus politically harmless.

In a second – contrasting – reading the same discourses and practices used to accommodate the "public transcript" served as a conduit for disguised counter-hegemonic contents. Though this reading also involves Toulabor's representation of disengagement as refusal, central here is what Scott refers to as "symbolic forms of resistance"[89] through which subordinates resist the humiliation of domination and negate "symbolic taxes"

[89] Scott contrasts "symbolic" forms of resistance to "practical" ones, the latter of which occur in response to material exploitation and include down-to-earth strategies that sabotage or curtail material appropriation (see, for example, 1990: 188).

extracted by the dominant "in the form of deference, demeanor, posture, verbal formulas, and acts of humility" (2005: 68). In this context, musicians' emphasis on art as a personal endeavor reads as a counter-ideological text, a veiled "discourse of dignity" that stressed the validity of individualism and exemplified that an existence disassociated from the state was possible. Following explicitly their personal aspirations enabled musicians to assert themselves and to thereby restore a sense of dignity compromised by the humiliations integral to any form of domination. Contrary to the first reading, in which musicians' alienation represented a token of insignificance and disempowerment, under the radar it functioned as a source of pride and fostered a sense of civil personhood that contradicted the civic identity promoted and celebrated throughout Eyadéma's regime. Similarly, their sense of belonging to remote musical communities – albeit imagined – provided a social, as much as musical, reference point that validated their existence and enabled musicians to virtually project themselves into a world beyond the local oppression and social malaise. Their imagined refuge may be viewed as an "onstage" equivalent of what Scott described as a hidden autonomous social space within which subordinates cultivate an alternative social experience aimed at neutralizing the indignities associated with their subordination.[90]

In correspondence with this reading, Jimi Hope, who is today an outspoken social and political critic, frequently portrays his apoliticism during the 1980s as an expression of dissidence, and takes great pride in never having participated in *animation politique.* In addition to such narratives of empowerment, however, I have also heard Jimi

[90] See for example Scott's Chapter 5 on "Making Social Space for a Dissident Subculture" (1990: 108-135).

occasionally voice resentment and a sense of defeat about the implications of the domination to which he was subjected: “I, too, was a victim of politics,” he once affirmed with palpable regret, “because art isn’t worth anything, if it isn’t engaged.” Midiohouan and Amouro raised a similar concern in the context of Togolese literary production, as they deplored writers’ failure to openly engage with the social, cultural, and political status quo, and describe the resulting literary output as “a fitting monument of the culture of silence, fear and renunciation that cannot speak its own name” (1991: 122, 127).

Yet, Jimi Hope had an important assertive moment in the mid-1980s, when his sense of personal and artistic integrity clashed with the authorities – and thereby entered the political arena – when he refused to replace his Anglophone alias with a local name in accordance with Eyadéma’s appeal to eradicate all foreign names.[91] Jimi Hope’s overt refusal – de facto a transgression of the “public transcript” – was sanctioned with a cutback of his public visibility: the singer was banned for several years from national television, the only television at that time. The media ban, Jimi Hope claims today, caused severe professional setbacks, among them, the loss of his sponsorship with *Cigarettes Fines*.

This story of Jimi Hope’s disobedience illustrates not only how keenly the authorities watched over the “public transcript,” but also supports Scott’s thesis that every overt act of defiance has a silent equivalent by which it is preceded. Giving up his alias constituted for Jimi Hope an unacceptable surrender of his dignity – a challenge to the essence of his disguised discourse – that he was not willing to endure.

[91] The appeal to eradicate all foreign names was formulated as a measure towards *authenticité* in the context of the Togolese Cultural Revolution (see chapter 2).

Just how challenging it was for musicians to maintain an inconspicuous profile within Lomé's highly politicized social environment is illustrated in the account of an incident involving Togolese Salsa singer Afia Mala in the late 1980s. Like all publicly performing musicians, Afia Mala had always emphasized the idea of music as a personal rather than social or political quest. Nevertheless, in 1989, the authorities accused her of having used ideologically seditious lyrics in her song "*Tout le monde est coupable*" ("Everyone is guilty"). Notwithstanding the undeniably suggestive title and conspicuous timing of the song's release in the wake of overt social unrest, Afia Mala vehemently asserted her innocence. However, the disapproval that she attracted with the song subjected her to a menacing scrutiny by the authorities. In response to this traumatic experience, Afia Mala later affirmed her political disengagement on her official website where she declared her belief "that music and politics make bad bedmates."[92] While this example demonstrates the centrality of assertions of apoliticism in musicians' attempts to secure their safety in Lomé's public sphere, it also shows that the projection of a depoliticized persona did not guarantee immunity from governmental interference.

Jimi Hope's twofold sentiments and the tale of Afia Mala's acquiescence demonstrate the dilemma inherent in disguised forms of resistance, which positioned musicians in an ambivalent space between compliance and defiance, or, to borrow Midiohouan and Amouro's phrase, "between resignation and refusal" (1991). That musicians' ideological resistance was (with the exception of Jimi's one-time

[92] Previously on http://www.afiamala.com/Bio.html, last accessed in 2010. Note that this reference has now, in the more favorable political environment, been replaced with the assertion that Afia's lyrics deal also with "love, injustice, and peace." http://www.afiamala.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=80, last accessed on 10.13.2014.

disobedience) neither overt nor hidden, but embedded – and disguised – in the very "public transcript" that secured their existence, complicated and frequently blurred the division between consent and dissent. Social theorist Hewson identified three properties that give rise to human agency: intentionality, power, and rationality (2010: 13-17). Musicians' discourse of dignity was intentional and rational; however, their continuing experience of domination, in particular the necessity of accommodating the public transcript, entailed a factual powerlessness that persistently challenged the sense of agency they aspired to foster through their musical practices and imaginings.

The ambivalence that troubles low-profile forms of resistance relates to the essence of an established critique that questions the extent to which infrapolitics constitutes a valid, that is, effective, means of resistance with real-life transformative potential, capable of subverting existing structures of power. In response to this critique, Scott acknowledged that "[n]o matter how elaborate the hidden transcript may become, it always remains a substitute for an act of assertion directly in the face of power" (1990: 115). However, he objects to the inference that infrapolitics therefore involves "empty posturing" or a harmless release that ultimately preserves existing power structures. Instead, he argues that "[e]ach of the forms of disguised resistance […] is the silent partner of a loud form of public resistance," and that the former constitutes the breeding ground for the latter. As a precursor of open confrontations, low-profile forms of resistance may therefore explain and potentially predict outbreaks of mass defiance that would otherwise appear sudden and unexpected.

If we accept Scott's thesis, musicians' low-profile resistance in the form of refusal and counter-ideological discourse was reflective, as well as constitutive, of a changing

political climate, and reveals the kinds of subversive dynamics that provided the fuel for the social eruptions that shook the city of Lomé in the early 1990s. None of the musicians can be considered heroes or revolutionaries; however, their musical practices, discourses and imaginings can be viewed as having contributed to change on a micro level, where, as Scott says, “new political forces and demands germinate before they burst on the scene” (ibid.: 199).

5. Conclusions

On Musical Resistance

As the analysis in this chapter has shown, Musicians’ discourse and musical practices offer a rich text – verbal and non-verbal – that documents the ambiguous nature of political disengagement as a site of simultaneously both submission and resistance, while revealing some of the complex dynamics involved as infrapolitics widen the realm of the permissible, and ultimately alter the fabric of oppressive power relations.

While this analysis clearly expands our understanding of the meaning and significance of the predominance of borrowed musical styles beyond the notion of “failure” projected today by many Togolese, my findings also challenge pervasive assumptions – scholarly and popular alike – about how resistance operates in the context of popular music in Africa. As elaborated in Chapter 1, African music is broadly viewed as a “good” transformative force, and is especially celebrated in its connection with political rebellion, the examination of which has resolutely focused on performances with overt expressions of dissent. Contrary to the social sciences where the discussion of resistance has become increasingly differentiated, away from a focus on “visible

'headline-grabbing' protests" (Scott 1990: 14) towards an attention to more subtle and ambiguous forms of defiance, musical practices involving low-profile resistance, such as those of Lomé's musicians, have been largely overlooked in ethnomusicology.

A second, interrelated assumption that the case of Lomé's musicians challenges is the idea that the transformative power of resistance in African popular music is intimately tied to the usage of local musical elements. Just as hybrid styles have been celebrated as the quintessential musical vehicle for African agency, the inverse is true too: musical practices that do not overtly signify an African place of origin are anxiously avoided, primarily, I believe, because of a longstanding and complex convention to conceptualize Africans' appropriation of Western cultural elements as mere imitation, a notion that runs contrary to the popular narratives of cultural empowerment.[93]

That the very genres and musicians that revealed themselves as carriers of subversive ideological contents in Lomé constituted the kinds of outlier and seemingly unremarkable musicians scholars of African music tend to overlook, serves as a reminder that significant dynamics may be at work in surprising sites least associated with them. By identifying disguised counterhegemonic currents in local popular music, the perhaps first under Eyadéma's regime, and locating them in such sites, my findings not only shed light onto some of the "under the radar" political micro-dynamics specific to the

[93] Apparent imitation may furthermore evoke what Ferguson describes as a form of embarrassment "that is associated with the old question of how to analyze cultural dynamics of African cities," specifically, urban Africans' interest in adopting Western lifestyles (2002: 552). A similar embarrassment may be at work among ethnomusicologists as they encounter Africans indulging in the musics of their historical oppressors. Thomas Turino's book on *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (2000) is a noteworthy exception, in that Turino writes openly and factually about Zimbabweans' interest and engagement in imported musical styles, including rock & roll and country (2000: 234-255).

Togolese case, but contributed more broadly to an understanding of how musical practices may articulate with power and resistance outside of official cultural state machineries in contexts of military dictatorships and other forms of extreme tyranny – a realm of inquiry that remains, in spite of the prevalence of such regimes, understudied to this day.

On Togolese Nationalism

The absence of a musical nationalism described throughout this chapter, which mirrored a general decline in, and omission of, nationalist sentiments among Lomé's population in the course of the 1980s, should briefly be placed in the context of the larger history of nationalism in Togo.

This history has been complicated, and begins in the early 20th century with the territory's uneven colonial past, involving different administrations and multiple territorial divisions. The evolution of a Togolese nationalism was further challenged during the peri-independence years by rising ethnonationalist sentiments among the *Ewe*, the currents of which continued to trouble Togo's first post-independence government.[94] It was not until Eyadéma's inception of power in 1967, that a large-scale nationalist project was launched that officially aimed at uniting the Togolese people as one nation under one leadership. Gradually appropriated into Eyadéma's personality cult in the 1970s, however, the idea of a Togolese nationhood became inextricably linked to the state, itself defined through its leader. In this logic, as elaborated in Chapter 2, the connection between the leader and the nation was inseparable, as the paternal leader (the

[94] For this early history of nationalism in Togo see Lawrence's comprehensive study of "Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland" (2007).

"Father of the Nation") looked after and disciplined the Togolese people (his "children"). In the 1970s, this inseparableness was manifest in that the propaganda songs of the *animation* program were promoted as Togo's "national music." Similarly, Togo's "national literature" constituted a collection of propaganda literature elicited through literary competitions in which nationalist themes were to be tied into the tales of Eyadéma's heroism.

Although less passionately invoked by the government throughout the 1980s, the generation of Togolese who came of age during this time, as did the musicians described in this chapter, had grown up equating a nationalist rhetoric, and by extension nationalist sentiments, with a statist agenda. In light of this legacy, engaging in nationalist projects, musically or otherwise, would have been to associate oneself with the state, an association that increasing numbers of Togolese omitted, in favor of a civil, as opposed to civic, sense of personhood.

The people's disengagement from nationalist projects, in music and otherwise, evident in the creative output of artists in Togo throughout the 1980s, entered the local consciousness and discourse in form of a cultural identity crisis towards the end of the 1990s, a period of significant socio-political, -economic, and -cultural transformations. It is to this history that I now turn.

IV. POPULAR MUSIC, CRISIS, AND THE END OF A REGIME

1. Introduction

In this chapter I trace the musical developments through the last period of Eyadéma's regime, a period of profound ideological, social, and cultural change. I cover the years from the official end of the animation program with the establishment of multi-party rule in the early 1990s through 2005, the year of Eyadéma's death and the inception of power by his son Faure Gnassingbé. It was during this time, around the turn of the millennium, that the perception of musical absence, introduced in the opening chapter of this dissertation, emerged and dominated the Togolese discourse on local popular music.

The first section sketches the political events that occurred during the transformative 1990s, and captures three important phases within this eventful decade: first, the political struggle for democracy in the early years; second, Eyadéma's perseverance under the cloak of democracy; and, finally, the implementation of neoliberal reforms, which involved the propagation of new print and broadcast media and the proliferation of information and communications technology. The latter evolution, I argue, led to an interrogation of Togo's place in the wider world, especially among younger Togolese, whose feelings of national invisibility translated into a search for a Togolese identity, in music and otherwise, and sparked off a quest for distinguishing national musical characteristics.

In the following section I develop this argument by examining the musical efforts of a group of musicians who drew on a musical tradition from Togo's north in a joint mission to create a popular music style distinct to Togo. I am particularly interested in

how their efforts articulated with their evolving cultural identities and a desire to claim membership in a larger world, which in turn resulted in the conception of musicians as cultural ambassadors. I also explore why a tradition associated with Togo's ruling political class was chosen as a cultural emblem of Togoleseness in the *Ewe*-dominated city of Lomé among musicians from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The last section examines the stifling social and economic conditions modern musicians faced more generally in Lomé during the early 2000s in their quest for musical success. I focus on musicians' experiences of, and battle against what was locally referred to as musical "amateurism." I first explore musicians' concern as they related to their personal social and economic experiences. I especially investigate their frustrations about access to musical training and a continuing social stigmatization of the profession, two interrelated themes that musicians frequently brought up as factors that were holding them back. I then turn to musicians' material constraints and the dearth of music industrial services and infrastructure, while also exploring the dynamics brought about by the rise of a market for pirated recordings and the effects of a partial enforcement of local copyrights regulations. As their efforts to launch a distinct national popular music largely failed, Lomé's musicians joined into the larger lament among Togolese about a state of crisis, a lament that reverberated across much of the African continent during this post-Cold War moment.

This chapter thus captures the specific Togolese predicament characteristic of a larger moment of crisis of modern music across Africa, a moment that Skinner describes in Mali as a "fraught socio-professional nexus," that is, "the contemporary tension between the cultivation of local artistic lifeworlds and the 'miserable' state of artistic

livelihoods" (2009: 81). In spite of the shared moment of crisis, however, the nature of the Togolese struggle for inclusion and the depth of socio-musical disjunctures in Lomé differ from places like Bamako, where "artistic lifeworlds" continue to remain socially vital and culturally privileged.

2. The 1990s – Dissolution and Reconfiguration

Economic decline is commonly viewed as the Achilles' heel of dictatorship. With Togo's gradual economic decline throughout the 1980s, the wave of democratization that swept through Africa late in that decade had a great impact in a country whose population had grown increasingly disenchanted with its government. By the late 1980s a cautious critical discourse had arisen in Lomé, and when students from the *Université du Benin* initiated anti-government protests and demanded democratic elections, Togolese began to "cast off the strait-jacket" (Toulabor 1994: 60) they had been bound in under Eyadéma's authoritarian regime, and overtly supported the students' demands for democracy. Over the course of several months, demonstrations and riots led to a series of violent confrontations between the security forces and supporters of the growing opposition. And when the bodies of over one hundred civilians were found floating in Lomé's bay, an estimated quarter to half a million Togolese, mainly from the city, fled the country to neighboring Benin and Ghana in fear of further massacres.

Compounding this internal unrest, the government rapidly lost the support of the international community, especially the political and financial backing of its two main allies outside of Africa, the United States and France. Because of the respective interests these countries had in supporting Eyadéma's regime (its political alliance with the US

during the Cold War, and ongoing economic collaborations with its former colonial power), they had turned a blind eye to the regime's autocratic nature. With the end of the Cold War in 1989, however, dynamics changed and loyalties shifted, and the tiny country of Togo lost its significance on the large scale of global geopolitics. Without political leverage, Eyadéma's regime not only lost crucial financial funding, but also the tolerance of the international community for its ruthless and oppressive modes of governance. With pressure mounting from within the country as well as from abroad, the Togolese government could no longer ignore the demands for democracy. In the summer of 1991, a national conference was held that formally terminated Togo's one-party system and set up the framework for a transition to democracy. Eyadéma's continuing influence and control over the army, however, enabled him to undermine the transitional government and to retain control through a combination of force and strategic manipulations of the constitution. In 1993, following a 9-month general strike launched by the opposition, contested presidential elections were held from which Eyadéma surfaced as the winner. Five years later, following continuing tensions and intermittent violence, history repeated itself: withstanding all pressure, Eyadéma once again claimed victory in equally contested elections and remained in office until his death in 2005.

The political and social unrest that marked the 1990s profoundly affected Lomé's public sphere, including the socio-musical realm. The strikes, curfews, violent outbreaks, and growing economic hardship immobilized the already meager local cultural life, robbed Lomé's few popular music makers of their already minimal performance opportunities, and led to an exodus of its few major musical players.

The members of the Sasamaso, Lomé's sole orchestra to have survived the downfall of the *animation* program, left the country for Ghana during the general strike in search of performance opportunities that would allow them to support their families, whom they had left behind in Lomé. Sasamaso only returned to Lomé in 1999. Music-related projects that had begun taking shape as the population arose from its passivity around the turn of the decade were stifled before they fully materialized. In 1990, for example, Adéwusi had launched Togo's first popular music magazine – called *Alooacio* – which aimed at raising public awareness of local popular music with the goal to foster musical growth. With the rising political turmoil at the beginning of the decade, however, the magazine was discontinued after the release of only two issues.

Jimi Hope, who had spent much of 1991 and 1992 in France recording *Africa Rock*, was scheduled to launch his new recording in Lomé the very day the opposition called for the general strike.[95] René Akoussah, too, remembers the onset of the general strike as a traumatic and transformative event. As Commissioner of music for a Ministry of Culture with virtually no budget since 1989, Akoussah attempted to support local musicians by soliciting donations from abroad. He claims to have received overwhelmingly positive feedback and that his German and Japanese contacts had confirmed the donation of various materials, including several pianos. The onset of the general strike, however, compelled Akoussah to physically abandon his post, and, upon his return to the office nine months later, his contacts had severed all communication as part of the general embargo imposed on Togo in response to the political turmoil. Such

[95] Jimi hastily made alternative arrangements and introduced his recording in Conakry, the capital city of neighboring Benin, an opportunity he embraced in retrospect as it enabled him to expand his fan base into Benin.

tales of missed opportunities and broken promises, I argue, served as a way to articulate a growing sense of doom, and how the fight for democracy had taken a toll on the people perhaps more so than on the government.

In fact, the unsuccessful battle for the establishment of a true democracy left a profound impact on Lomé's population both socio-psychologically and economically. What had started as an enthusiastic popular revolt, fueled by a newly-awoken sentiment of empowerment, gradually gave way to a deepening sense of defeat. Each political setback required increasing personal sacrifices under growing economic hardship. Especially the prolonged general strike, during which Lomé's economy came to a complete standstill, as well as lengthy government-imposed curfews, decimated the local economy in lasting ways. Additionally, as a result of the forged elections and continuing human rights violations, remaining international donors withdrew one by one their monetary aid. With the loss of its long-term financial support, the local economy was thrust into a steep recession. By the mid-1990s, Eyadéma's continuing power in conjunction with the economic crisis had led to a widespread sense of resignation (Toulabor 1996). Alain Macé described the shift in climate in Lomé between the two elections in 1993 and 1998 as one from "Hope to Disillusionment" (2004). Similarly, Charles Piot observed in 1998 a "growing sense of hopelessness" and a "deep antipolitics cynicism" (1999).

In spite of Eyadéma's political perseverance, the Togolese government was forced to initiate a gradual process of liberalization, involving the establishment of a multi-party system and the implementation of a series of neoliberal reforms, which, by

the end of the 1990s, had led to substantial change in Lomé's socio-cultural landscape.[96] The rapidly evolving mediascape, especially, had highly transformative effects. Following the privatization and liberalization of Togo's print and broadcast media, numerous private newspapers and radio and television stations had been founded and began disseminating a previously inconceivable variety of ideas, images and sounds.[97] In addition, the exponential growth of information and communications technology, especially the proliferation of cell phones and the advent of the internet (accessible to the masses in a rapidly growing number of internet cafés), facilitated communication with people across the globe and compounded the influx of an unprecedented abundance of information.[98] After decades of ideological indoctrination and virtual socio-cultural and intellectual isolation, the iron curtain had finally lifted.

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[96] These reforms included the decentralization of the economy, involving the privatization of previously state-owned industries, as well as constitutional provisions establishing new freedoms, including the freedom of speech, the press, and religion. I will return to the effects of some of these adjustments in Chapter 5.

[97] It must be noted that despite its establishment in the constitution, freedom of speech and the press have remained largely restricted in Togo. The independent print and broadcast media are constantly scrutinized by the authorities and are subject to a range of repercussions when information is deemed too overtly critical of the government. This scrutiny has been legitimized by the 1998 "Press and Communication Code," which in principle declares freedom of the media, but whose over 100 articles impose severe restrictions to this freedom. Repercussions have included harassment by the security forces, temporary shutdowns of radio stations, suspensions of shows, various criminal charges and fines, interference with distribution of newspapers, ban of interactive radio and television programs, and the intimidation, investigative detention, and incarceration of journalists. As a result of these repercussions, and to avoid confrontations with the authorities, many journalists practice self-censorship (Freedom House, reports from 1999 to 2012; Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor, 1999; Deutsch Karlekar, 2009).

[98] For a history of the early Internet in Togo see Louassi and Robins (2002) and Bernstein and Goodman (2005)

The wider world to which Togolese awoke in the late 1990s was markedly shaped by processes and ideologies of globalization, the growing awareness of which considerably reconfigured local opinions, behaviors and attitudes. For young Togolese in Lomé, the internet, more than any other medium, contributed to and embodied the growing image of global interconnectness, an image which, to them, projected a sense of new, and seemingly limitless, possibilities. As young people began surfing the internet – navigating the flood of visual, sonic and verbal messages and expanding social encounters beyond geographical limits – they not only grew cognizant of a world beyond national borders, but also began examining their own place in it. They soon discovered that many countries possessed a certain capital, cultural or otherwise, through which they gained a transnational reputation, a realization that raised questions about their own cultural currency and about what it meant to be a young Togolese in this expanding world. This "crise d'identité," as it was identified locally, gave rise to a wave, albeit short-lived, of national consciousness among Togo's youths, which for the first time in Togolese post-independence history, arose in dissociation from the state.

Among Lomé's musicians these dynamics were tangibly manifest in changing attitudes towards local popular music. The increased exposure to and understanding of the workings of the transnational music industry, especially of the aesthetics that inform the "world music" market, reinforced the belief in the importance of nationhood, and reconfigured ideas about musical style, locale, and belonging. It is in this moment, in the context of the growing awareness of the wider world and the interrelated search for a national identity, that a sense of musical absence – that of a distinctly Togolese popular music – first entered the local consciousness. This moment, I believe, is best captured in

the efforts of a group of young musicians who, drawing on a musical tradition from Togo's northern region, attempted to create a distinct popular music style that would not only articulate their newly emerging identity as Togolese, but would also enable them to both be represented and participate in the recently discovered globally interconnected world. It is to the story of their efforts that I now turn.

3. *Kamou* – Claiming the Global through the Local

A Struggle for Inclusion – Musical Style and Belonging

In the early 2000s, a number of young musicians in Lomé, among them *country* singer Lelengon, *reggae* musician Wilfried, and pop singer Santy Dorim, decided to tackle what had notoriously become known as the absence of a Togolese national modern music. Inspired especially by the recent rise in popularity of Ivorian *mapouka* (the most-frequently evoked example of the kind of music they wanted to create), young music-makers in Lomé told themselves and each other: "If they can do it, why shouldn't we?"[99] Their goal was to "develop" and "advance" Togolese music in ways that would allow them to participate in and make a unique contribution to global cultural flows – like other African countries had done before them – and to gain the visibility (and audibility) in the media and beyond, which this young generation of Togolese longed to have. The best way to achieve this goal, musicians agreed, was to engage in a communal effort. In Wilfried's words: "Like Ivorians, Togolese artists have got to work together!"

[99] They thus optimistically countered the frequent earlier-mentioned laments that equally centered on *mapouka* (see opening of chapter 4).

Musicians' common cause was fueled by a newly emerging rhetoric that promoted musicians as messengers and cultural ambassadors. Santy Dorim, for example, explained: "In my view, being an artist means being the ambassador of one's culture. As such, I owe it to myself to valorize our traditional heritage ["*le folklore*"] across the globe."[100] Similarly, singer Lelengon stressed the importance of music as a medium of intra- and trans-national communication. "In music," he told me, "you should not confine yourself. Fame is important, since you are transmitting a message. And the message will serve your country as much as it will serve other countries." Wilfried, too, wished to introduce his heritage to the wider world: "I told myself that one should promote one's own cultural traditions, not *reggae*, which is already internationally recognized." Thus committed to a common cause and filled with a sense of social purpose, these musicians consciously moved beyond the social and political alienation that characterized the rhetoric of musicians in the 1980s who predominantly projected a view of music as a personal endeavor (as elaborated in Chapter 4).

The two themes that inform Wilfried's last quote, innovativeness and recognizability, were indeed central concerns for this new generation of modern musicians, and the reason for their joint efforts. As Lelengon explained: "When an Ivorian sings, one knows that it's an Ivorian. Why can't Togolese sing in a way that people sense it's a Togolese who sings? We have several good rhythms,[101] but we need to

[100] Santy Dorim's quotes stem from an interview published online on togoforum.com in 2008 (http://www.togoforum.com/Ap/Interviews/santi030508.htm).

[101] The concept of a "rhythm" ("*rythme*" in French) is used in francophone Africa to capture a meaning similar to that of a "musical style" in English, in that it delineates a specific kind of music defined through musical characteristics, while simultaneously evoking a connection with a larger culture or community.

focus on modernizing one, so that each time a musician uses it, people know that it's from Togo." Lelengon's view, which reflects that of other musicians I have spoken to, illustrates how the shift in conceptions about the interrelationship between musical style, belonging, and locale was inspired by the intensified local circulation of global popular discourses that link culture with place, especially that on African popular music as elaborated in Chapter 2. However, while musicians' enterprise was distinctly directed towards success in the transnational music industry, it also involved what I frequently perceived as a genuine and heartfelt search for a sense of self in the larger world, which in this particular historical moment took the form of a wave of emerging nationalist sentiments. As former *reggae* musician Wilfried explained: "I was comfortable in *reggae*, but then I discovered that *reggae* didn't belong to me. It didn't belong to Togolese. It was brought to us. I had to return to the source, see what was there, what was going on at home. The tradition we exploit today, I can say that it is mine, it belongs to the Togolese people."

Strictly speaking, however, *kamou*, the musical tradition on which this ethnically-diverse group of musicians chose to focus their joint efforts and to express their emerging pan-Ethnic Togolese identity is associated with the *Kabiyè*, a northern Togolese ethnic group to which not only Wilfried belonged, but also President Eyadéma. This choice, I argue, was a curious one, considering that the country was only just recovering from simmering ethnic conflicts (which regularly flared up again during election times) between primarily Togo's northern people, most notably the politically dominant minority ethnic group of the *Kabiyè*, and Togo's southern *Ewe*, the country's largest ethnic group and intellectual elite, notoriously neglected by Eyadéma's government. The

next section pauses my narrative to explore this choice further, before returning to musicians' efforts – and their project's ultimate failure.

***Kamou* and the "True Togolese"**

Kamou constitutes an important musical pillar in the cultural heritage and mythology of the *Kabiyè*. The term *kamou* derived its name from the single-headed, funnel-shaped drum (made of a marmite), that is central in this tradition (see photographs below), but also denotes the associated dance, music, and large-scale event in the context of which it is traditionally performed. Other instruments used in *kamou* include castanets, whistles, and horns. Originally associated with funeral ceremonies for the elders held in *Kabiyè* villages during the dry season between January and March, *kamou* had evolved already in the rural context also into a purely recreational event.

Figure 7: Photograph of the marmite that constitutes the main body of the *kamou* drum. (Photo by author.)

Figure 8: *Kamou* drummer during during an urban *kamou* of in Lomé. January 2005. (Photo by author.)

The tradition of *kamou* followed a wave of urban *Kabiyè* migrants during the late colonial period from the northern villages to the city of Lomé. Throughout the last decades, the Lomé-based offshoot communities of *Kabiyè* villages in the north[102] have taken turns hosting *kamous* during the dry season. These events take place across the city in a variety of public squares, reserved and blocked off for the event ahead of time with the help of the state's security forces, most of whom are *Kabiyè*. The venue is typically divided to mark off an official area, in which the Lomé-based chiefs representing the northern cantons in the city of Lomé sit in a row according to rank and seniority. In spite of the formal aspects of *kamous*, engendered especially by the presence of the elders in this inherently cross-generational event, *kamous* are extraordinarily exuberant and free-spirited events.

[102] See Piot on north-south relations between the *Kabiyè* "diaspora" in Lomé and the northern "homeland" (1999: 156-171).

Figure 9: Lomé-based *Kabiyè* chiefs representing their respective northern cantons, gathered at an urban *kamou* in Lomé. January 2005. (Photo by author.)

In the center of the square, a small ensemble of musicians gather around the *kamou* drummer, who is in turn surrounded by dancing men and women, most of whom carry or wear eccentric props and costumes serving either as mere adornment or playfully expressing individuals' desires and aspirations. (See, for example, on the photograph below, the man's likely wish to travel, indicated by the suitcase he carries on his head, or, further below, the young man showing his support for Eyadéma by wearing a t-shirt that reads: "*Votez pour Eyadéma*.")

Figure 10: Collage of photographs showing participants at an urban *kamou* in Lomé. January 2005. (Photo by author.)

Dance styles during *kamous* are explicitly free, and uninhibited expression of individuality is not merely tolerated, but expected. However, many young *Kabiyè* men include dance movements associated with the *evala* festivities (the first of several *Kabiyè* initiation ceremonies that lead the passage from boy- to manhood), specifically the alternating rapid rhythmic contractions of the pectoral muscles, typically displayed by a

bare upper body.[103] In recent years, urban *kamous* have enjoyed an increasing popularity among Lomé's youths across ethnic boundaries. When I attended several urban *kamous* in Lomé during the 2004 and 2005 seasons, some of the most involved and eccentric dancers with whom I spoke self-identified as *Ewe*. Similarly, some of the first musicians who have been credited with incorporating *kamou* elements into their music are not *Kabiyè*, including King Mensah and Peter Solo, who are *Ewe*, and the self-declared first female singer to have done so, Santy Dorim, who belongs to the northern *Losso*.

Kamou was thus indeed popular. But so were other traditional and neo-traditional dance-drumming practices in Lomé, especially those associated with the dominant *Ewe*, including *akpesse, agbadja* or *bobobo*. When I questioned musicians about the reasons for their choice, they typically stressed that the preference for *kamou* was purely musical, and was unrelated to politics. As one young *Ewe* put it: "We know it's from the *Kabiyè*, but that's as far as it goes. It entertains everyone."

[103] Note that, as a symbol of *Kabiyè*-ness, this dance style is also frequently featured in music videos of modern *kamou* adaptations.

Figure 11: Participant at an urban *kamou* in Lomé with T-shirt reading: “Vote for Eyadéma.” January 2005. (Photo by author.)

Kamou was especially consistently praised for the physical effects it presumably had on people. “Everyone dances [to *kamou*] because it’s the kind of rhythm, when you hear it, you are carried away, you are inevitably carried away. You just have to dance, in your own way: since it’s a popular music everyone is free to dance in their own way.” Similarly, when I asked a middle-aged man at an urban *kamou*, who self-identified as *Ewe*, why he attended a *Kabiyè* celebration, he raved: “*Kamou* draws you in. It’s enticing; it makes you move, it makes you dance, and it invites you to dance.” To emphasize just how inclusive and universally appealing *kamou* was in his opinion, he

added that “even Westerners” got carried away by the sound of *kamou*. Over time, “irresistibility” became a popular trope that informed nearly every conversation about *kamou*. “Kamou, it penetrates you,” said likewise singer Finiki[104], who also embedded the trope of irresistibility in her 2010 music video, in which an overweight middle-aged man jumps out of a car in the middle of the street at the sound of *kamou*, and, already dancing, pulls off first his t-shirt then his undershirt, to display the characteristically *Kabiyè* play of his pectoral muscles.[105]

While the alleged stimulating properties of *kamou* were clearly an important factor, *kamou* fulfilled another important prerequisite for serving as a vehicle of a pan-ethnic Togoleseness, one that none of the other musical traditions seemed to offer. “You can find *kamou* only in Togo!” people would proudly assert, a claim that bears great significance in a country in which much of the cultural heritage is shared with – and frequently overshadowed by – neighboring countries, in particular Ghana, but to a lesser extent also Benin.[106]

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[104] http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x30gkw_finiki_music, (2007 [2006]: 12:30), last accessed on 28 March 2016.

[105] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnP-tqC6H0M, (0:35-0:55), last accessed on 28 March 2016.

[106] Their shared cultural heritage leads occasionally to a conflict in which Togolese and Ghanaians compete in claiming authorship for some of the shared musical traditions, many of which are widely associated with Ghana. A relatively recent example regards the rise of the highly popular neo-traditional *bobobo*, an urban adaptation of *agbadja*. While Ghanaians claim that *bobobo* arose on Ghanaian soil, Togolese attribute its inception to the *Ewe* living in the southern hills of Aneho. Needless to say that US music scholarship, which has heavily focused on the Anglophone *Ewe* in Ghana, at the neglect of their Francophone counterparts in Togo, reinforces the centrality of Ghana, who enjoys its status as the cultural cradle of all things *Ewe*.

The assumption of *kamou*'s uniqueness, however, is deeply rooted in Togolese postcolonial politics, and goes back to the idea that the *Kabiyè* are the country's "true" Togolese, not only indigenous to the land, but also unshared with neighboring nation-states. This idea, disseminated as part of Eyadéma's state propaganda, has been founded on an early *Kabiyè* myth of origin, according to which the first *Kabiyè* are thought to have descended in the mountains of today's Kozah and Binah. The physical proofs for this early descent are indentations engraved in the local mountain boulders, believed to be the footprints of those first *Kabiyè* (Kao 1999: 15-16). According to mythology, early conflicts among *Kabiyè* led to several waves of their dispersion. This dispersion is believed to have occurred in three areas and to have led into the division into three northern Togolese people: the *Tem* (also called *Kotokoli*, my own ethnic group of origin) south of the mountains, the *Lamba* in the north, and the largest group around the mountains, which Kao refers to as the "autochthonous *Kabiyè*" (ibid.: 17).[107] This myth, and the portrayal of Eyadéma as "authentic" Togolese leader, assisted not only in the legitimization of Eyadéma's power and in the privileging of the northern region, but also provided the grounds for ethnic policies that discriminated other ethnic groups.[108] In spite

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[107] In the context of a short history of *Kabiyé*, Piot, too, examines this origin myth. His version, collected in the field, differs in small details, but is essentially the same: a single *Kabiyè*, a man named Kumberito, descended from the skies and landed in a mountain region, the homeland of today's *Kabiyès*. His descendants spread into and founded communities in the surrounding areas (1999: 29-35).

[108] See Piot on the refusal to provide public assistance to ethnic groups considered to have immigrated to Togo (1999: 182). Piot also suggests that Eyadéma's government actively upheld the notion of the *Kabiyé* as Togo's indigenous people by discouraging any research suggesting otherwise. In particular, a running theory that the *Kabiyé* may have derived from an ethnic group living in Ghana, if proven, was silenced by the government (ibid.: 33-35).

of the regime's favor of the *Kabiyè*, however, Eyadéma's regime never attempted to adopt *Kabiyè* tradition as Togo's official national culture.

There is thus a certain irony in that this distinctly pan-ethnic nationalist project that was emerging strictly from below among an ethnically diverse, yet *Ewe*-dominated urban population, drew its meaning from the very origin myth that had been instrumental in backing up Eyadéma's authority and in fostering ethnic inequalities. The rise of *kamou* as a widely embraced symbol of the Togolese nation can be read either as a tale of ethnic reconciliation, or as an example for the effectiveness of a cultural hegemony exerted over the course of several decades by a powerful minority, which established itself as representative of an ethnically highly diverse nation-state. However one chooses to read this phenomenon, however, the rise of nationalist sentiments manifest in the musical appropriation of *kamou* was heartfelt, albeit short-lived.

Modernizing *Kamou*

Togolese distinguish between two forms of syncretism associated with modernity: "*musique traditionelle modernisée*," on the one hand, and "*musique d'ambiance moderne*," on the other. The former involves the adoption of a traditional musical genre or style from its broader cultural context and its transformation into a modern, typically technology-based representational form of musical entertainment. This genre of "modernized" or "popularized" music, however, continues to be considered "traditional" by most Togolese. Senegalese *mbalax*, for example, is considered a modernized traditional music by Togolese. Modern *ambiance* music, by contrast, is thought of as a modern popular music style with a distinct traditional infusion. *Makossa* from Cameroon

is widely considered a modern *ambiance* music. It was this kind of music, a distinctly Togolese modern *ambiance* music, that was considered absent in Togo.[109]

Adéwusi believes that the two types of syncretic music differ with regards to their international appeal. He explained his theory to me as follows: "Modern *ambiance* music, especially, spreads rapidly globally. But it never lasts. If, instead, you look at modernized rural music, that's the kind of music that lasts a long time, but it doesn't create any international buzz. People want to dance to the urban *ambiance* music. They dance to that in the nightclubs." And, to be sure, he added, "That's my analysis as a musical expert, it's not everyone's analysis."

Although musicians involved in the *kamou* project with whom I spoke did indeed use the terminology somewhat inconsistently, the above-described divide clearly informed the debate as to how exactly *kamou* should be popularized. Much discussion centered on how to move beyond the mere incorporation of *kamou*-related musical instruments, which some musicians considered sufficient (among them King Mensah, who is otherwise considered a rather "traditional" musician). The music of other *kamou* musicians, by contrast, appeared to some too "traditional," evoking the category of modernized traditional music" rather than the modern *ambiance* music, the latter of which musicians generally aspired to produce in order to break into the international market.

[109] Note that this emic distinction is reminiscent of ethnomusicology's earlier differentiation between "westernization" (of local music) and "indigenization" (of foreign, usually "Western," music) in the rise of modern syncretic musics in Africa. Either musical outcome, however, belonged broadly to the same category of "African popular music" (Nettl 1978: 134).

For a couple of years, everyone concerned with the evolution of local modern music seemed to speak about *kamou* and about the changes its imminent success would bring to the local popular music scene and industry. Through this discursive process, the notion of "*kamou*" had evolved not only into a signifier of Togoleseness and a pan-ethnic emblem of national pride, but had also become a fashionable term used to evoke a sense of liveliness and the idea of local contemporaneity. References to *kamou* burgeoned: King Mensah founded a band with a group of primarily *Ewe* youngsters, who, in spite of their repertoire consisting predominantly of remakes of highlife songs, were named the "Princes du *Kamou*." Pop singer Santy Dorim, was affectionately nicknamed the "Queen of *Kamou*" ("*la Reine du Kamou*") although her music incorporated a variety of local traditions, while singer Finiki became the "Princesse du Kamou." Even the bar of the luxury hotel Sarakawa, located a few miles East of Lomé, took the name "*Kamou*."

Musicians thus succeeded in creating a musical concept that articulated with their newly awoken identities as contemporary Togolese, while also establishing a local discourse that might have supported the style's promotion in the transnational music industry. The larger realization of the project, however, proved significantly more challenging, as musicians struggled against a stifling set of conditions in an overall hostile cultural, material, and economic environment. In the next section, I explore these conditions as they were experienced not only by musicians who focused on *kamou*, but by modern musicians more broadly.

4. "Amateurism" – A Twofold Struggle

In the early 2000s, the conditions young aspiring music makers faced in Lomé as they worked towards their dreams of establishing themselves as modern musicians revolved around a set of issues that included inadequate musical training, lack of infrastructure, social stigma, absence of music producers, and the problem of music piracy. "Amateurism" was the concept Lomé-residents often used to capture the effects of these conditions on the state of local popular music, a concept that depicted local popular music practice in socio-economic terms as well as in evaluative terms.

Socio-economically, "amateurism" referred to the inability of musicians involved in popular music to make a living as independent musicians.[110] In Togo, "la musique ne nourrit pas son homme" ("music doesn't feed its artist") was a common phrase that expressed this prevalent condition: musicians had either private sources of income (Jimi Hope and Afia Mala), worked steady jobs, such as tailoring (Santy Dorim), airport police (Nicholson), or school teacher (Lelengon), got by on occasional jobs. Singer Laurence Motcho described the latter category, when she explained: "Togolese musicians do other things, little jobs here and there, jobs to at least keep up the image, to stay afloat."

In evaluative terms, "amateurism" referred to what was widely considered a subpar quality of the music that was locally produced. Looking back on these first years of the new millennium, Rachida, an aspiring Lomé-based singer told me in 2009, "musically, it was a mess. The music didn't go well together with the singing. Musicians

[110] The only musicians who appeared to gain a living through their music in Lomé at the time were the couple of orchestras that were hired at private life-cycle celebrations and for the accompaniment of solo singers who could afford to pay them, as well as the handful of small bands that were hired in Lomé's couple of nightclubs.

were only copying, just not very well." And Santy Dorim still remarked in 2008: "There is a lot of work to be done before [Togolese music] is competitive."

Stories of musicians' personal journeys, and their battle against "amateurism," typically involved a breakdown into three stages, each involving its own distinct, yet dialectically connected, sets of obstacles: (1) musicians' early formative years, affected by inadequate musical training opportunities and social stigma; (2) the struggles of trying to launch one's career by making a recording and giving concerts within the context of a virtually absent music industry; and (3) the attempted conversion of their creative efforts into an income-generation commodity within a fraud local music economy. This division was also largely manifest in the goal of the Europe-funded project mentioned in the opening of this dissertation, which aimed at fostering the "professionalization" of Togo's modern music sector through a threefold program consisting of *"formation, creation, et diffusion,"* a division that shall provide the framework for the discussion of musicians' experiences in this section.

La Formation **– Social Stigma and Inadequate Training**

The formative years were typically considered the origin of what Togolese thought of as a subpar acquisition of musical skills among musicians involved in the performance of popular music locally. Musicians frequently raised two issues they felt were particularly inhibitive to the musical upbringing of youth in Togolese society. The first issue pertained to prevalent negative images associated with musicians. As singer Laurence Motcho explained: "For people in Togo singing is as if you hadn't found anything better to do. It's because you weren't any good that you ended up singing." And

Akoussah remembered "the old days" when people said, "it is the thieves who sing, and the thugs who play soccer."

For musically inclined young women, especially, the social stigma was burdensome, as female musicians were widely associated with vagabondage and lax sexual morals. As a result of this stigma, most Togolese families discouraged a musically inclined female relative from pursuing her ambitions.[111] Santy Dorim, who launched her career with the help of her first husband and against her parents' will, remembered:

> [My father] didn't approve my wish for a musical career. The prejudices and ideas about musical artists [in Togo] are such that cleaning the streets is considered more respectable than being a singer. So, I took on a challenge: not to conform with the reductionist scheme that equates a female singer with a frivolous woman. Being a singer is not incompatible with the image of a virtuous woman. This is what I am trying to prove in my daily life.

Siminarly, *kamou* singer Finiki reported how difficult ("*c'est pas facille*") and painful ("*j'ai souffert*") her decision was to pursue a musical career: "The family will say that you are lazy and [inaudible], and that this is why you make music" (2007 [2006]: 6:40).

The second – arguably interrelated – issue for young aspiring music-makers pertained to musical training opportunities. Most musicians with whom I spoke between 2002 and 2005 felt that their musical training had been inadequate. Typically, modern musicians in Lomé received their initial musical exposure and training informally in the context of one or more of the following institutions: church choirs, *cantates*, modern orchestras, and traditional and neo-traditional societies. And while such informal training models are characteristic for musicians not only in Africa, but among popular music-

[111] The social stigma attached to music making in Togo, however, was ambiguously coupled with an overt admiration of musicians who appeared successful. This ambivalence is well illustrated through the case of Togolese singer Bella Bellow, who died in the early 1970s, and who, to this day, is widely held in high esteem in Togo.

makers in many musical traditions across the globe, Togolese felt that these contexts did not offer adequate opportunities for musical growth and the acquisition of the technical skills they desired. Laurance Motcho described the sense of stagnation she experienced with the following words: “As an artist, you are there, just like this. You can’t do anything about your improvement, maybe go to a music school. There are no structures in place.”

Like Laurance, most musicians thought that formal training was necessary to break through the cycle of what was perceived as a pervasively poor musical performance standard, a condition widely considered a legacy of the *animation* period. Adéwusi, too, observed in his 1993-report on the “State of the Professional Artistic Domain of Music in Togo”[112] that “many musicians play their instruments badly,” and, he added, would benefit from “solfège and singing lessons” (1993: 14).[113] However, Togo, unlike other post-colonial states, including neighboring Ghana, did not establish

[112] This 29-page manuscript on the “State of the Professional Artistic Domain of Music in Togo” was commissioned by the Conseil Francophone de la Chanson, of which the SARIAC represented the official “Bureau de Liaison” (Adéwusi 1993).

[113] Adéwusi’s reference to solfège, while curious, is not an unusual one in Togo. A musician’s knowledge and mastery of solfège (a vocal exercise technique that uses specific syllables for each note of the diatonic scale) is frequently used as a marker for musical competency among Togolese music-makers. As musician Nicholson told me: “I was singing, but told myself I had to know more. When you are a musician and you can’t play an instrument, you aren’t well evolved. And if you don’t know solfège what kind of musicians are you?” The importance Togolese musicians attribute to the study of solfège in the context of popular music training is peculiar from a Euro-American perspective, where solfège is a training tool associated primarily with the European classical tradition. Some national pedagogical traditions, among them Germany’s, have long abandoned the practice; however, solfège remains central to a classical music education in France, Italy, and to some extent in the United States. But while the usefulness of solfège for any musical training, including Western classical, may be controversial, what is relevant in the case of Togo is musicians’ genuine desire to deepen their musical proficiency.

any music conservatory, nor were there any private music schools in the early 2000s.[114] While music was not a subject taught in Togo's universities either, it has been offered in six high schools across the country as "Epreuve Facultative," an elective for extra credit, in the context of the *baccalauréat*, the prestigious French secondary school degree.[115] Jean-Paul, a French-trained ethnomusicologist, choir director, and one of only a handful of high school music teachers across the country, explains the lack of formally trained music teachers as follows:

> Music teachers are a bit of a rare treasure ("*perle rare*") in Togo, because during my time[116] people didn't think of sacrificing their *baccalauréat* to then go on and study music. People preferred medicine, agronomy, – I myself wanted to do agronomy, but didn't find any scholarships [abroad] for agronomy at that time. But I did find a scholarship for music, and since I was involved in music I seized the opportunity [to study abroad].

While the low priority given to music education appears to have perpetuated the lack of qualified music teachers, the reverse might also be true: the lack of credentialed music experts reinforces the image of music as a mere pastime and thus illegitimate as a profession. Akoussah makes this point by highlighting the importance of formal degrees in postcolonial Togolese society: "The problem is that musicians don't have degrees. Even if you know music, even if you play well the piano, what's your degree? On which

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[114] In recent years, a couple of small private music schools have opened.

[115] The exam is fourfold and includes Western music history, solfège, musical dictation, and, in recognition of the indigenous musical heritage, the singing of traditional Togolese songs. This exam is, with the exception of the last component, an obvious legacy of colonial curriculum, and also reflects the training of the few of music teachers who currently work in Togo.

[116] Jean-Paul was in his early 50s when I conducted this interview with him in 2009.

official qualification will you be hired? They will say: ‘Well, present your diplomas!’ but you don’t have any. It’s because here in Togo it’s the diploma that counts.”

Musicians who overcame this early set of obstacles (typically against the wishes of their families[117]) and asserted themselves in their pursuit for musical professionalism were faced with new challenges as they entered the next stage of their journeys: “*se lancer*” – “to launch one’s career,” a process most Togolese musicians aspire to initiate by recording an album.

***La Creation* – Launching One’s Career**

That “music in Togo doesn’t feed its artist” was only one aspect of the economic predicament musicians faced in Lomé’s undeveloped music industry, in which formal music producers and investor were virtually non-existent. Musicians confronted major financial obstacles at a much earlier stage in their creative journeys, for example, as they attempted to come up with the funds to make a record, considered a prerequisite for launching one’s career. Making a record, however, required the renting of a studio space, the hiring of musicians and a sound technician, the duplication of the master recording, and the printing of cassette sleeves and CD covers – a financial (and executive) project that many musicians could only dream of realizing. As Togolese music vendor M’Bolo asserted: “Money! To put it plainly: it’s money that influences the artists’ work. Artists need money in order to produce themselves. It’s an industry into which one needs to invest.” And, alluding also to the social stigma associated with musicians, he added, “but here in Togo they don’t care, people don’t care about artists.”

[117] René Akoussah and Afia Mala, both of whom grew up in families of music makers, are the only musicians I spoke to whose families fully supported their musical journey.

In the absence of formal support structures, musicians had to raise funds privately. And while raising money in support for one's musical aspirations is a struggle shared by many fledgling musicians across the world (especially prior to the advent of comparably inexpensive digital home recording equipment and social media), in the Togolese social and economic environment shortly after the turn of the millennium, in which many people faced real poverty this challenge proved nearly insurmountable.

Even musicians with steady incomes, like Lelengon and Nicholson, struggle to put the funds aside necessary to make a recording in this time of widespread economic hardship. One financial obstacle is that Togolese with steady incomes are expected to also care for their extended family. Denying financial support to the family, while putting money aside (for whatever purpose, let alone one's musical aspiration) is considered unethical in Togolese society where most people live by the day. Kamou singer Lelengon joined the police force in 2005 because, as he explained, "otherwise one doesn't have the funds to launch himself." In 2009, however, he was still hopeful: "I can't stop [being a policeman], but I'm still making music. I still want to launch myself." And, indicating again musicians' often unsuccessful struggles for their family's approval, he added: "In all honesty, when I will launch myself I will perhaps explain to my seniors that I am a singer."

Getting a contract with a music producer who finances the musical product and takes on the task of putting together a competent support team would be the dream of every aspiring popular music maker in Lomé as elsewhere; however, no such structure exists in Togo. As a result, musicians feel deserted and overwhelmed. As Laurance Motcho, who had found someone who "produced" – that is, financed – her record,

explained: “I was alone. Completely alone. Because, well, I couldn’t rely too much on my producer. Local producers don’t know the business well. They produce you, but the rest is up to you, you’ll have to manage all alone. What I mean is that the promotion doesn’t follow the recording! You’ve got the album, but you need to spend more money to promote it, to make it known. Also outside of the country.”

Nicholson illustrates the professional multitasking required of musicians in Togo by describing “*le staff*” that musicians in Togo, as elsewhere, would need: “Musicians should have a producer, a manager, a presse-attaché, and distributors. They shouldn’t have to go out and sell by themselves. It diminishes the artist. It’s not honorable.” And, dreaming of the perfect outcome, he added, “It’s your manager who should for example tell you “you have a concert in the United States.”

The lack of any support system, financial and otherwise, was a major source of chagrin and a frequently discussed issue among young aspiring musicians in Lomé. During these discussion, musicians frequently made reference to the Togolese mindset, in which the concept of investing in music was practically non-existent. As Nicholson put it: “They don’t know that one can live from music, that music could actually feed its artist! That it’s a whole enterprise. What you could earn in music could easily supersede what you earn in office administration.” Changing the culture, overcoming the stigma and prejudice was thus part of the battle against “amateurism,” a battle musicians hoped to gradually win by proving their musical worth and financial value.

For those musicians who managed to circumvent all obstacles and produce a recording, a new quandary awaited them as they hoped for the conversion of their creative efforts into an income-generating commodity at home and abroad: music piracy.

La Diffusion – Piracy and Copyrights

Similarly to many urban places in Africa and other so-called developing regions, vendors of counterfeit recordings are numerous in Togo. In the streets and markets of Lomé there are four basic types of music vendors. The most widely visible are peddlers roaming the streets with a box or a handful of CDs, followed by those who set up a temporary vending point, usually a foldable table, at predictable times in a strategic location (for example during lunch hours in one of the popular local restaurants along the *Boulevard du 13 Janvier*). Other vendors own a "kiosk," a small permanent stall at a highly frequented location, for example at one of Lomé's *gares routières* (the bus stations). The most firmly established music vendors own one of the "boutiques" in Lomé's *Grand Marché* (the city's central market), crammed in between the characteristic fabric, perfume, and tobacco stores, some of which operate another, illegitimate, business in their back room, such as currency exchange or money lending. Boutiques carry the largest selection of recordings – CDs, cassettes, VCDs, and DVDs – all typically stacked in shelves along the walls. Many boutique owners are also involved in the peddler business, either by hiring young men to walk the streets of Lomé in search for someone with a small disposable income, or by operating as a depot from where independent peddlers buy their supplies.

JAT Musidis, the only importer of licensed CDs, established in Togo in the mid-1990s, was forced out of business in 2001 by the rapidly growing influx of pirated recordings from Asia, variably claimed to be manufactured in and imported from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, or Dubai. In Togo this influx began in the late 1990s (Steinglass, 2002: 40). The importers and vendors of these recordings established

themselves quickly across the country as what Adéwusi called a "club légal de malfaiteurs," "a legal club of criminals" (2010: 292).

Togo's state bureau officially in charge of the formulation and implementation of rules and regulations pertaining to artists' copyrights is the *Bureau Togolais du droit d'auteurs*, in short BUTODRA. Modeled on the *French Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique* (SACEM), the BUTODRA functions also as the collection agency for royalties. Founded in 1991 during the height of democratic negotiations,[118] the BUTODRA fulfilled, for several years, more of a showcase function. Its "Battle Against Piracy," aimed at reducing the circulation of illegal music copies, was purportedly constrained by inadequate funding. As Komi Badja, former assistant chief of the BUTODRA, asserted in 2002: "We can't simply go into the market and seize everything. We don't have the resources for that" (Steinglass 2002: 49).

Nicholson, since 2007 the Artist Representative of the BUTODRA, described the ambivalent tolerance towards vendors of illegal copies as follows: "There is a law that prohibits piracy. But there is no structure to implement it. If there was a structure, a commission, you would think I could just call and say I see someone selling illegal copies. But everywhere you walk, they sell. That means that, on some level, they are officially recognized. Somehow. If they weren't somehow recognized, would they take the liberty to circulate so openly? This means that somewhere there is negotiation; but I don't know on which level." And as if on cue, a peddler stopped at our table in the

[118] Music activist Adéwusi headed the delegation of musicians that brought their issues to the attention of the National Conference. After two days of "tough discussion and negotiation," as Adéwusi recalls (2010: 291), Eyadéma passed Togo's first copyrights law to be coordinated and implemented by the newly founded BUTODRA.

"buvette" (a small outdoor bar) in which I conducted my interview with Nicholson. Nicholson chased him away with an impatient gesture, shook is head and said: "I am working for the BUTODRA but I have no authority to stop him." Many musicians in Lomé, and indeed across the African continent, share Nicholson's incredulity and outrage about the paradoxes involved when the illegal becomes the new norm.[119] Skinner describes the anger of Malian musicians about the public presence of illegitimate vendors and quotes a musician who rhetorically asks: "[H]ow can un-masked individuals continue to live from the works of others in the plain site and full knowledge of the authorities" (quoted in *Les Echos* 04/20/05, in Skinner 2009: 139)?

Such publicly operating illegitimate industries must be presumed to operate within a set of clandestine rules that ensures a minimum – or calculated (that is, predictable and acceptable) amount – of interference with the authorities. The catch in Lomé since the early 2000s has been that unauthorized recordings of local artists are off-limit. That is to say, as long as a vendor sells only pirated copies of foreign recordings, their business remains unobstructed. It is unclear how this rule came into effect, but it is largely observed. Although some musicians report that peddlers occasionally do sell pirated copies of local music (apparently by compiling individual songs from multiple artists into less identifiable compilations of local music), my personal experience proves that if black market copies of Togolese music do circulate in public, they must be few and far apart. Between 2002 and 2009, I tried many times, and in diverse circumstances, to purchase illegal copies of Togolese music to test the reaction of the vendors. But the

[119] See Skinner's theoretically rich discussion of the dynamics involved when informal sectors push formal economies to the margins in corrupt postcolonial African states (2009: 164-170).

reaction is always the same. “Non, non, non – we don’t have any Togolese music. Take this instead,” they would say most typically, and hand me any possible array of popular music recordings, mostly, but not exclusively, from other West African singers.

Prior to the suppression of illegal copies of Togolese music in Lomé, the few local musicians whose music was released on recordings took the issue into their own hands. Jimi Hope, for example, told me that he seized illegitimate copies of his music personally whenever he saw them being sold. Several witnesses have indeed described to me what Jimi’s spontaneous interventions looked like: Jimi would calmly walk up to a kiosk or a boutique that sold pirated copies of his albums, and quietly collected them all, always unhindered by the intimidated vendors. While fear of physical altercation might have prevented vendors from protecting their counterfeitmerchandise, they also felt that they were at fault. This awareness of guilt contrasts the attitude of illegitimate vendors in other parts of the continent, for example in Mali, where Skinner reports that vendors feel entitled to sell counterfeit recordings, and will protect their merchandise even from the very artists whose music they sell (2009: 136-137).

The exclusion of Togolese music recordings from massive copyright infringement locally, however, does not render them immune from adverse collateral damage caused by Togo’s illegitimate music market. First, and most importantly to many musicians with whom I spoke, as a result of this informal rule, Togolese music recordings are largely absent in the streets of Lomé, as these are dominated by illegitimate vendors. Foreign recordings are at the center of public visibility and access. The resulting lack of presence of Togolese music has an obvious adverse effect on the promotion of local musicians, who find themselves pushed to the margins of visibility within their own country. As a

result, Togolese musicians are ambiguously torn between despising the informal music market and resenting their recordings' absence in that very market. Jimi Hope makes this point when he remarks: "They say that Togolese music shouldn't be pirated. But if the music doesn't circulate, that's also not good. It shows the state of the country. It's a country of contradictions."

Secondly, Togo's informal music market has had a direct influence on how local authorized recordings can be priced. The cost of a pirated CD (approximately 500 CFA, less than one dollar), has forced Togolese musicians recently to lower their prices to 1,000 CFA in private sales, leaving them with only a minimal profit at best. While the difference in price is in itself a significant impediment that puts local recordings at a disadvantage, another aspect complicates the dilemma: local music is frequently perceived as qualitatively inferior, in both musical and technical regards. As Nicholson incisively describes: "Imagine you have a choice between a Michael Jackson CD, which is well-refined, and that of a Togolese musician. Michael Jackson costs 500 CFA and the Togolese three or four times more. Which one would you choose?" Needless to say that in a socio-economic context in which most people have no disposable income, the limited funds of many consumers go into a counterfeit article of perceived superior sound (and musical) quality.

Finally, in spite of the ban on illegal copies of local music observed among informal vendors, local music is not immune against alternative, more private, channels of illegal duplication, similar to how Europeans and Americans frequently "share" their recordings. D.J.s, in particular, who have access to duplication technology, copy music for and among themselves and disseminate it further, sometimes for free, and sometimes

for a small charge. In addition to those channels, unauthorized copies of Togolese music circulate in neighboring Benin and Ghana, where a similar ban exists on the duplication of their respective local recordings. In those countries, Togolese music is sold unscrupulously together with the bulk of other foreign merchandise.[120] Because of the vital cross-border relations, illegitimate copies of Togo's most popular local musicians return frequently to Togo, without, of course, benefitting the artists.

Royalties and Legitimate Sales

Variably accused of corruption, indifference, or inefficiency, the BUTODRA has recently – under its latest leadership – made new efforts, particularly in the collection and distribution of royalties. Twice a year, BUTODRA agents comb through the streets of Lomé to negotiate and collect royalty payments in public venues that disseminate music, including bars, kiosks, hotels, and the countless small "buvettes," barracks of more or less solid constructions, that sell beer, sodas, and sometimes small snacks, such as the popular "brochettes" (meat skewers). Most typically, these establishments acquire a blanket license that allows them to play music freely without logging each individual track they play. The cost of a blanket license varies according to the size and revenues of the establishment, but averaged in 2009 for the most common smaller-sized establishment between 5,000 and 10,000 CFA bi-annually (approximately $10 to $20).[121] The total royalty payments received from these agreements are distributed according to

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[120] It should be noted that illegitimate vendors in Accra and Cotonou are markedly less pervasive and visible than they are in Lomé.

[121] These numbers were given to me by BUTODRA's Artist Representative, a musician who goes by the name of Nicholson.

the current popularity ranking of Togo's musicians. Lomé's Radio stations and TV networks, by contrast, pay on a per program basis, and record all disseminated tracks on play logs distributed by the BUTODRA. Here again, however, the government's protection of local artists and its simultaneous infringement of foreign artists' intellectual property rights, adversely affects the promotion of the work of local musicians, whose airtime – and royalties – are limited as a result of this arrangement.

In 2009, the annual royalties for individual Togolese musicians ranged between 13,000 (less then $30) and 300,000 (approximately $650). These developments are positive, if one considers that just a couple of years ago, musicians were not paid any royalties at all; however, skepticism towards the BUTODRA continues. While rock musician Jimi Hope confirms that the "BUTODRA is active," he voices the distrust of many when he says: "They collect enormous sums, but what they give to the people, that's worth nothing. Because those who are behind the BUTODRA, that's the state. So, there are people who eat on the back of the artists." Adéwusi, too, writes suggestively: "If it's true that the users of the works don't pay their dues the way they should, so too, however, does the redistribution of the little that is being collected leave room to desire."

Skinner opens his discussion about music piracy with the explicit claim "that Malian artists' concerns about piracy have more to do with their status as 'political subjects' and the formal salience of their socio-professional identity as 'artists' that they do with lost revenues or infringed rights. In other words, the problem of piracy – more than a problem of material or intellectual property – is a problem of personhood" (2009: 130). This assertion is partially based on Skinner's claim that artists' copyright revenues are too insignificant – "negligible or non-existent" (ibid.: 146) – to justify musicians'

involvement in the in Mali at times dangerous battle against piracy. In Togo, by contrast, people's concerns about piracy are predominantly framed in economic terms, and musicians appear to, perhaps naively so, consider royalties as their most realistic and perhaps only chance at improving their financial situation locally.

In recent years, the BUTODRA has provided small silver-colored hologram stickers that designate legally produced recordings. The stickers are sold for works that are registered in their office, of which there were 2607 in 2009. The BUTODRA retains half of the income and distributes the other half to the artists. Until recently, however, the only place to purchase such legal copies in Lomé was the "Etablissement M'Bolo," which is unique in its emphasis on a broad stylistic variety of Togolese popular music. The owner, Monsieur M'Bolo, operates three boutiques: his first boutique on the *Grand Marché* (see photograph below), a second on the Boulevard, and the most recent in his home neighborhood, Bé.

Figure 12: The “Etablissement M’Bolo” in Lomé’s *Grand Marché.* (Photo by author.)

M’Bolo does not perceive himself as a vendor. By his own definition, he is a music distributor as well as a producer. His first boutique on the *Grand Marché* functions simultaneously as M’Bolo’s office, production and distribution center. It is divided into three areas: an open storefront similar to the permanent kiosks of other vendors (visible on the photograph), a small interior front showroom in which hundreds of CDs, cassettes, DVDs, and VCDs are displayed and stored in shelves along the walls, and an equally small back room, M’Bolo’s office. His office doubles as his manufactory, where M’Bolo takes the duplication of the recordings he sells into his own hands, literally, duplicating recordings one by one with his home equipment stored underneath his office desk in the *Grand Marché*.

M’Bolo used to also distribute his recordings nationwide, driving around in his car and wholesaling recordings to other retailers. But he disliked the dangerous drive up to the north, where atrocious accidents occur on a regular basis, especially at night, when frequently overloaded vehicles travel in poor visibility on hazardous roads. Within a year, M’Bolo’s rides had become too strenuous and ended up not being profitable. When I asked M’Bolo about distribution of Togolese music outside of Togo, he answered optimistically: “I want to first be fully established nationally before venturing beyond the borders,” thus contradicting his earlier claim that he no longer aimed at nationwide distribution.

All recordings sold in M’Bolo’s store are authorized by the musicians, but not all are registered with the BUTODRA. M’Bolo’s store mostly represents artists who he has not produced and who approached him with a finished master recording. With these artists, M’Bolo makes a “distribution contract,” which grants him the rights to reproduce their music and sell it in his stores. The terms of these contracts are negotiated case-by-case and depend on, among other factors, the local popularity of the artist. The musicians M’Bolo represents in his store are mostly Togolese, with a few exceptions from Ghana and Benin. He knows all musicians personally and has negotiated the sale terms with each one individually.

Today, only about ten percent of M’Bolo’s sales constitute cassettes, while the rest are CDs. While this could indicate that digital playback technology is widespread among Lomé’s population and has been pushing the usage of analog cassettes to the margins, the proportional sales are not representative of Lomé’s population, nor of the country as a whole, as M’Bolo’s store attracts a privileged urban clientele, which not only

appreciates Togolese music, but can also afford the elevated prices. In fact, the cost for a CD in M'Bolo's boutique is steep for local standards: the average price lies at around 2,500 CFA, but some CDs cost as much as 4,000 CFA. M'Bolo explains that the selling price is set based on the terms of agreement with the artists whose recordings he sells: "Some artists feel they can afford a higher price." But as Laurance Motcho points out during our conversation about M'Bolo's business, "most people feel that there is a large gap in price and they tell themselves, well, I prefer buying the foreign CD on the street, given my standard of life."

When I inquired about the issue of music piracy, M'Bolo uttered a short spiteful laughter: "Piracy. Ha! It's a word that holds me in a stranglehold ["*me tient à la gorge*"]. … It's worse than AIDS. It kills us; us, the producers, the artists, and all that is invested in the music." Yet, in the midst of the corrupt and shady black market, the contested relative protection of local music from copyright infringement in Lomé has provided the very foundation of M'Bolo's business. The profit he turns might not be significant in Western terms, however, his expanding business indicates that the capital investment he makes does pay out. M'Bolo's profit, while facilitated by the low cost of his business operations, results primarily from the quantity of artists he represents in his stores. Individual artists, however, whose music M'Bolo sells do not have any significant revenues.

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The social, cultural and economic dynamics at work in Lomé's local popular music scene towards the end of Eyadéma's regime, outlined throughout this section, created an environment which musicians increasingly perceived as a vicious circle from

which they felt they could not escape. The Togolese music industry, or relative lack thereof, did indeed seem deadlocked: material constraints and ideological stigma interfered with the ability of individual musicians to dedicate themselves to their art, making it difficult for them to realize their musical aspirations, which were further obstructed by limited opportunities to collect revenues in an economy that privileged the sale of counterfeit recordings of foreign music, and thus prevented the conversion of their creative efforts into an income-generation commodity. This, in turn, further stifled chances for musical growth, affecting the musical output, which ultimately discouraged the interest and involvement of global investors and obstructed access to the transnational music industry.

Not surprisingly, the few Togolese musicians who were considered musically proficient and whose recordings were technically sound were those with access to services and infrastructure abroad, among them Jimi Hope, Afia Mala, and, more recently King Mensah. These musicians, however, did not gain this access through their music, as the young musicians involved in *kamou* had envisioned the process. Instead, their access depended once again on money, but in the long run especially also on travel privileges, most typically gained through the possession of a European passport.[122]

In 2005, conditions in Togo's severely underdeveloped music industry felt so dire that even Jimi Hope, whose ambitions had always been oriented towards home, looked back on this period in 2009, and said: "I was always here, even during and after the general strike [in the 1990s], but five years ago I decided to turn the page. I realized I'm

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[122] Jimi Hope and Afia Mala are naturalized French citizens. While I do not know about the citizenship status of King Mensah, his travel activities and prolonged stays in Europe, typically in France, suggests that he, too, holds a dual citizenship.

54 years old today, and I will not die without realizing my dream. My dream is to travel and establish my music abroad. I already established myself here, but I couldn't think like this anymore. What could I do here? Who will I sell music to? Where will I play?" In spite of his shift in orientation, however, Jimi continued to feel dedicated to the development of a Togolese music industry: "I will not give up the fight. I want musicians here to be able to live from their music. If one day I can achieve that music feeds its artist here at home, that will be my life's work."

5. Conclusions: A State of Exclusion

As this chapter illustrates, the increased access to translocal intellectual and cultural formations that the neo-liberal reforms had introduced in Togo in the late 1990s had nurtured new visions and fostered new dreams, which, subject to local dynamics and constraints, created new incongruities and paradoxes. Especially the younger generation, which was coming of age during these transformative years, was ambiguously situated between the world they knew was out there and the social, economic, and material realities at home, to which their financial and geo-political position physically confined them.[123] The dilemma experienced in Togo illustrates a predicament that anthropologist James Ferguson viewed as characteristic of much of the African continent at the turn of the millennium: "the combination of an acute awareness of a privileged "first-class" world, together with an increasing social and economic disconnection from it" (2002: 559).

[123] Airfares are entirely out of reach for most of the population, but even if sufficient funds are raised, European and American countries have strict Visa restrictions for Togolese citizens.

Although a widespread contemporary African phenomenon, the nature and extent of this predicament were contingent on specific local historical circumstances and conditions and therefore differed from one place to another. In the Zambian Copperbelt, for example, where mineworkers had experienced a sense of global inclusion during Zambia's economically prosperous post-independence period, Ferguson describes the dominant sentiment three decades later as one of "abjection." He explains that "abjection refers to a process of being thrown aside, expelled or discarded. But its literal meaning also implies not just being thrown out but being thrown down – thus expulsion but also debasement and humiliation" (1999: 236). In Togo, by contrast, as the case of the efforts of the musicians presented in section 3 illustrates, the perception of global disconnectedness was initially not felt as a disempowering state of exclusion, even less one of degradation.

Having recently emerged from a decades-long state of isolation, Togolese were pained by the realization of their global invisibility and apparent insignificance (cultural, political and economic) abroad. However, they were also hopeful and eager to find – and define – their place and meaning in the larger world. Togo's young music enthusiasts negotiated these sentiments by dreaming of, and aspiring to, achieving visibility and claiming a place in the imaginary map of global interconnectedness through popular music, which was viewed as a virtual (and actual) ticket to a belonging to a wider world.[124] Their story thus captures a brief moment of hope and national consciousness among the younger generation that is otherwise easy to overlook.

[124] Ferguson refers to this larger world as a new form of "world society," a notion he borrows from Anthropologist Godfrey Wilson's 1942 discussion of a "world society," evoked by the promises of modernity in colonial Zambia (Ferguson 1999: 234).

As musicians' efforts failed to materialize, however, the enthusiastic discourse of *kamou* as Togo's imminent groundbreaking modern music went largely silent, and with it the nationalist sentiments that had informed it. A number of musicians continued to work *kamou* elements into their music, however, *kamou* – the project – distinguished by the shared passion and vision of a community of local music makers to give themselves a musical identity and to transform the local music industry in the process, had died away in a growing disillusionment, not so much with the idea itself, but rather with the inability to realize it. The "African predicament" had caught up with Togolese musicians, and altered once again the socio-ideological climate, giving rise to a new discourse on popular music, this time one centered on the idea of "crisis."

The struggles of musicians within Lomé's troubled music industry mirrored the struggles of people more broadly in Togo towards the end of Eyadéma's regime. Lomé's popular music crisis was indeed but one facet of the country's larger socio-political and -economic predicament and sense of crisis. It is precisely this correspondence with the larger predicament, however, that I find important to establish: that popular music in Africa is not, as still often subliminally presumed, an all-defying force, unencumbered by conditions otherwise associated with, and de facto present in, Africa, such as disease, famine, war and poverty. Instead, adverse cultural, economic, and political conditions can – and do – effectively interfere not only with the profitability of local popular music practice (as has been increasingly established in recent years), but also with musicians' ability to engage in modern musical practices that are locally vital and musically "competitive," to borrow Santy Dorim's term. Establishing this not only rectifies the few accounts that do exist on popular music in Togo claiming that "Lomé remains a thriving

center of popular music" (Seck and Clerfeuille 2005: 183), but also tackles the underlying assumptions of musical resilience, discussed in Chapter 2, that continue to inform such reductionist statements.

When I was in Lomé early in 2005, I observed that people envisioned different ways out of the local dilemmas. Some put their hopes into the growing rumors of Eyadéma's declining health, believing that a change in leadership after nearly four decades would offer new prospects, others harbored the wish to leave the local problems behind once and for all by emigrating to Europe or the US.[125]

[125] As anthropologist Piot observed a couple of years later, this emerging dream had evolved into what he described as a "near-universal desire on the part of Togolese to leave their country for what they imagine are greener pastures in Europe and the US" (2010: 94).

CONCLUSIONS

The Fall of the Baobab Tree

On 5 February 2005, I was sitting with my friend Nita, a radio hostess and hotel manager, in her small bungalow in Lomé's "*Habitat*," a moderately privileged neighborhood in a central district near the *CHU*, Lomé's university hospital. I had returned to Togo with my younger son for his first birthday, hoping to reconnect with my field research and to restore a sense of normalcy that my son's premature birth in Lomé the previous year seemed to have permanently shattered. Nita had graciously offered to share her house with us during our planned three-month stay. We were chatting while the television was running, when the program was suddenly interrupted with the announcement of a "national catastrophe:"[126] "The president of the Republic, his Excellency Gnassingbé Eyadéma, [had] passed."

Almost immediately phone calls started coming in from friends and family who wanted to share the news and who urged us not to leave the house. The country was presumed to have entered a state of emergency, and people expected the worst. Exhilarated and petrified at the same time, Nita and I spent a good part of the night anxiously discussing the various possible scenarios, speculating about the political short-term effects and long-term implications of Eyadéma's death, fearing the imminent reactions of the military, and more broadly wondering about the civil responses to the death of a man who, loved by some, hated by others, and feared by all, had ruled the

[126] Then Premier Minister Koffi Sama announced: "Le Togo vient d'être frappé par un grand malheur. Il s'agit d'une véritable catastrophe nationale. Le président de la République, son Excellence Gnassingbé Eyadéma, n'est plus."

country for as long as many could remember. Indeed, throughout the next days hardly anyone I spoke to remained detached, and a certain graveness seemed to always resonate as people reiterated: "*Le Vieux est parti*" – "The elder is gone."

The land and aerial borders had instantly been closed, we learned later that night, officially to avoid mass flights. However, the border closings also prevented the president of the National Assembly, Fambaré Natchaba, who was on a flight from Paris to Lomé at the time of the announcement, from re-entering the country and assuming office as Acting President, as decreed by the Togolese constitution. Within hours, and purportedly to ensure stability in this critical transitional moment, the military installed Eyadéma's then 39-year old son Faure Gnassingbé as Head of State.

I moved out of Nita's house the next morning and went to stay with my father in Dévikinmè, a small village some 20 miles east of Lomé. Throughout the next two days, however, I spent much time at the Hotel Sarakawa, just outside of Lomé, where Togolese and expatriates interested in the continuous stream of international news coverage via satellite TV were lounging in the lobby, bar and restaurant areas, starring at the news feeds and nervously awaiting how events would unfold. A few riots of moderate extent broke out in individual neighborhoods, but were rapidly controlled by Togo's armed forces, whose intimidating presence throughout the city had taken on extreme dimensions. On the third day the borders reopened and tens of thousands of Togolese fled the country, mostly to neighboring Benin and Ghana, in continuing anticipation of violent clashes between factions of the population or between civilians and the military. At the urging of my family, my son and I took one of the first flights to Europe. All in all, however, the large-scale outbreaks that had been expected widely failed to materialize.

The "baobab tree," as Foreign Affairs Minister Kokou Tozou proclaimed at Eyadéma's funeral a month later, had "fallen,"[127] and it had done so surprisingly silently.

On February 25th, yielding to the pressure of the African Union who criticized his unconstitutional assumption of power, Faure Gnassingbé resigned, but reemerged two months later as the winner of contested presidential elections. The Eyadéma era had come to an end; however, a post-Eyadéma age never truly materialized. Not only had the power remained within Eyadéma's clan as it was transferred from "le Vieux" to "le Jeune," the shift towards neoliberal political, economic, and social policies that have come to characterize Faure's government since, was already well underway during Eyadéma's last decade in office.

On Absence, Presence, and Disjunctures

Although the end of Eyadéma's leadership failed to initiate the dramatic political change many had expected of hoped for, Eyadéma's death concludes the timeframe of this dissertation: 1967 through 2005. My work focuses on three distinct periods within this timeframe and examines how the practices and ideas of modern musicians in the city of Lomé articulated with shifting manifestations of state power. It is structured around the theme of "absence," which, rooted in Martin Heidegger's ontological interpretation as the "not-finding of something we have been expecting as needed" (outlined in the introductory chapter), inspired a methodology that focused on the exploration and juxtaposition of "presence, absence, and disjunctures" – as affirmed in the title of this dissertation – in both discourse and practice.

[127] Tozou said: "The baobab ... whose leaves, fruits and roots nourish the people, has fallen" (quoted on bbc news: 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4345493.stm).

The theme of “absence” informs my work in several ways. “Absence” was the dominant concept in the local discourse on modern music in Lomé in the early 2000s. Especially the absence of a distinctly Togolese popular music preoccupied young people during this time. The Togolese perceptions of “absence” were echoed by my own bewilderment as an ethnographer at the absence of a vital local popular music culture, as well as the prevalent lack of musical skill and originality among modern musicians. As I have argued, these perceptions of absence were informed by images engendered by dominant discourses on popular music, which in turn involved the exclusion – that is, the absence – of Togo in the ethnomusicological literature as well as the popular press. Finally, the disjointed history of popular music in Lomé is reflected in the absence of the kind of linearity that has dominated postcolonial narratives on popular music in Africa. Since I consider the Togolese perceptions of absence as distinct from my own as an ethnomusicologist, my analysis follows two often distinct yet often interwoven lines of analysis.

One line of analysis focuses on the Togolese experience. I historically and ethnographically examine the uneven evolution of modern music over the course of President Eyadéma’s nearly four-decade long rule, and divide this era into three distinct periods of political domination, each of which I discuss in a separate chapter (Chapters 2-4). Taking the predominant perceptions of absence in the local discourse on popular music in the early 2000s as an investigative point of departure, I chronologically probe various political, economic, cultural, ideological, and discursive trajectories that led up to, and informed, the emergence of these perceptions shortly after the turn of the millennium.

Another line of analysis engages critically, and loosely comparatively, with the aggregate knowledge produced in Africanist ethnomusicology on the subject of popular music. Chapter 1 provides the foundation for this analysis by identifying and historicizing the emergence of a paradigm that engendered a bias towards linear historical narratives featuring hybrid forms of popular music as quintessential musical manifestation of African modernity. It also illustrates how such narratives have inadvertently reinforced more widely prevalent images of African popular music as vibrant, subversive and resilient, images that the findings in the subsequent chapters on Togo challenge in several ways.

In Chapter 2, I disrupt the prevalent narrative that has associated African post-independence cultural policy with the promotion and advancement of modern music, and also raise the question about an absence of a music of resistance. In Chapter 3, I destabilize the naturalized correlation between hybridity and political and ideological subversion by identifying subversive dynamics in seemingly unremarkable generic stylistic choices. That these dynamics were observed among socially largely alienated musicians also invites a reassessment of ethnomusicology's fundamental concentration on manifestly present socio-musical trends, at the exclusion of outlier musicians, which, as the case of rock musician Jimi Hope illustrates, may be part of larger, less tangible, yet socially and ideologically significant processes. In Chapter 4, I debunk the image of popular music in Africa as a resilient and all-defying force, by exploring the stifling social, musical and economic conditions musicians faced around the turn of the millennium in their quest for musical professionalism. In this chapter, the themes of absence converge as I expose how the Togolese perceptions of absence that emerged in

the early 2000s, articulated with the same overlapping discourses on African popular music in which Africanist ethnomusicology has been implicated, partially via the very scholarly exclusion of places like Togo.

Looking Ahead: *Gospel* and The End of Postcolonialism?

While more work needs to be done to explore how Africanist ethnomusicology can expand the scope of its theoretical frameworks and methods to produce knowledge on the full spectrum of socio-musical experiences in Africa, the profound social and cultural transformations that have taken place in recent years across many parts of contemporary urban Africa further challenge the efficacy of the postcolonial paradigm for Africanist ethnomusicology. Concerns about the inadequacy of postcolonial theory in analytically grasping the current moment have indeed emerged some time ago in other fields of African Studies. Anthropologist Charles Piot, for example, observed:

> [T]he end of the Cold War has changed the sociopolitical landscape in ways that demand new theoretical tools. Today, a diffuse and fragmented sovereignty 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. Postcolonial theory's focus on hybrid culture, on the ways in which pasts haunt the present, on the cultural impulse to appropriate and indigenize that which is outside, stops short in analyzing this new – post-postcolonial – terrain. (2010: 16)

Musically, this "post-postcolonial" moment is perhaps most strikingly manifest in the accelerated proliferation of a genre of Christian popular music referred to as *gospel*,[128]

[128] Unlike gospel music in the United States, where the designation refers to a clearly defined musical style derived from African American spirituals and rhythm and blues, in West Africa the term *gospel* denotes a stylistically highly variable genre of popular music solely distinguished by the use of Christian-themed lyrics.

which has accompanied the rapid propagation of Pentecostalism across the African continent.

In African Studies, the remarkable propagation of Pentecostalism has become a major area of inquiry that resulted in a substantial body of research.[129] One such work has dealt with various associated forms of popular culture, including film, photography, and paintings.[130] However, the study of *gospel*, arguably the most prominent form of popular culture associated with the Pentecostal movement in Africa, has generally lagged behind – for some parts of Africa more than for others. In the East African context, for example, the *gospel* phenomenon has undergone a considerable amount of scholarly analysis, especially in Kenya and Tanzania.[131] On West Africa, by contrast, the literature has been limited to a couple of largely descriptive articles on the historical rise and contemporary state of *gospel* in Ghana and Nigeria.[132]

The comparative dearth of ethnomusicological in-depth studies on *gospel* in the context of West Africa appears disproportionate to the musical predominance, cultural relevance, and commercial success of the genre in that region. Like the absence of Togo

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[129] On the propagation of Pentacostalism in Africa see, for example, the edited volumes by Engelke and Robbins (2010), Freeman (2012), and Lindhardt (2014), as well as Gifford's work on Ghana (2004) and Kenya (2009). For the specific case of Togo see Piot's chapter on "Charismatic Enchantments" (2010, Chapter 4). On the global spread of Pentacostalism see Anderson, Bergunder, Droogers, and van der Laan (2010), Hefner (2013), Miller, Sargeant, and Flory (2013), as well as Coleman and Hackett (2015).

[130] See especially Meyer's work on popular culture and Pentecostal-charismatic churches in Ghana (2002, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2015a, 2015b).

[131] See the work of Nyairo (2008) and Kidula (2000) on Kenyan *gospel*, and Sanga's work on *muziki wa injili* in Tanzania (2007, 2008, 2010).

[132] See Collins (2004 and 2014) and Atiemo (2006).

in the ethnomusicological literature, I attribute this lacuna at least in part to the continuing legacies of the postcolonial paradigm and the narratives it has engendered, and suggest that the widening disconnect between this paradigm and the realities ethnographers increasingly encounter in the field has become an urgent concern. The *gospel* phenomenon, I argue, is a subject of inquiry that invites – because it necessitates – new analytical frameworks, while offering the potential of grasping how the spread of new ideologies has reconfigured cultural identities in many place in Africa. These processes may be especially important to ethnomusicologically document in the context of West Africa, a region whose popular music practices have, perhaps more than in any other region, articulated with – that is, responded to, and shaped – the tropes of "African popular music" identified in this work.

While Christian popular music has swept urban centers along the West African coastline since the 1980s, in Lomé the genre began capturing the imagination of a few local musicians only around the turn of the millennium and was initially widely criticized and largely rejected. Over the past decade, however, *gospel* has grown rapidly in popularity, a trend that has propelled the genre to the most widely listened to, and most lucrative, local form of popular music. My preliminary research indicates that although the Togolese *gospel* scene shares fundamental dynamics and features with other *gospel* scenes across the West African region, the rapid conversion of Togolese music makers from secular to religious music has also constituted a distinct response to the particular nature of the musical crisis observed in Lomé in the late 2000s, itself a product of the history described throughout these pages. I therefore hope that this work has not only removed Togo lastingly from its position on the margins of ethnomusicological

scholarship, but that it will also provide the historical foundation indispensable for further research on the contemporary moment in Togo.

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