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Drumming for Money and Respect

The Commercialization of Traditional Celebration Music in Bamako¹

published 2005 in:
Jansen, Jan and Stephen Wooten (eds.)
Wari Matters: Ethnographic Explorations of Money in the Mande World
Münster: LIT, pp. 135–161.

In the context of the urbanization of celebration culture, some new commercial services and trades have become established in Bamako since about 1960, for instance chair, awning, and sound system rental services, and, more recently, video film production. Traditional services such as the griots' music and praising (Schulz 1998, 2001: 89, 151-59) and the dance music by drum ensembles studied here have become commercialized: Jenbe drummers have made a trade of their live music performances and transformed their work and service into commodities.

Yet, much unpaid work in preparation of celebrations such as weddings is still carried out in the context of the household organizing the celebration. The organizers recover parts of their financial expenditures from relatives, friends and neighbors. Moreover, woman's associations exist which help making the arrangements for their members' wedding, name-giving, or circumcision celebrations (Modic 1996). This means that local celebration culture has by no means been commercialized in its entirety. Its embeddedness in relations and institutions based on subsistence, reciprocity

¹ I would like to thank Gerd Spittler for his stimulating interest in my work, Stephen Wooten for editorial comments that hopefully helped to improve this paper, and, as always, the drummers from Badialan I, above all Madu Jakite, Jaraba Jakite, Jeli Madi Kuyate, Drisa Kone, Kasim Kone, Vieux Kamara, and the late Yamadu Dunbia, for their openness and respect.

and redistribution still is essential, and not least so as to allow for the financing of the commercial occupational specialists mentioned above, such as the drummers, griots and video producers.

However, the embeddedness of the market for celebration music in lasting social relationships and institutions has been greatly losing in importance for some three or four decades now. The social organization of musical work and services today is characterized by individualization, liberalization, and the motive of short-term financial gain, rather than by the search for social security that Elwert et al. (1983), among others, interpret as the main driver of informal economy at the capitalist periphery. The drummers' cooperative structures have been reduced in durability and liability, and efforts to create associative structures have failed to emerge.

How to explain these drastic changes in the social organization of urban musical culture? Theoretically, I pursue an interpretive understanding (Max Weber 1980: 1-11), and personally, an empathetic and embodied understanding of musical work, notwithstanding that I also find relevant (and later on will discuss) classical critical concepts by Karl Marx and Karl Polanyi, such as 'alienation' of commodified work and '(dis-)embedding' of economic practice. My approach is based on about 18 months of field research (1991, 1994, 1995, 1997 and 1998) with a group of professional drummers in Bamako; a couple of weeks of work with village drummers in the rural areas of Manden and Beledugu to the south and north of the capital allowed some comparative perspectives. In Bamako, I accomplished sort of an apprenticeship – as far as a foreigner going to an afro can do this – and during nine months in 1997/98 performed a study of work or "thick participation", as Gerd Spittler (2001) labels this kind of radicalization of participant observation: As a hired player of accompanying *jenbe* I performed in about 70 urban family celebrations, plus some 30 voluntary assistance appearances in Bamako and in rural Manden. I spent most of my time and energy working as a musician (as I have done before, and do at present, in Germany).²

² In the book based on my dissertation (Polak 2004), I discuss some of the methodological implications of such an approach.

The economy of urban celebration music

Village celebration music in southern Mali is organized in the context of family, communal, or religious institutions. Most rural jenbe players are farmers by trade. In the urban context, and particularly in the capital, however, drumming is self-employed wage labor organized as a trade (*métier*). This particular occupational group originally, i.e. around 1960, comprised no more than ten to twenty persons. Today, there are several hundred professional jenbe players in the city. While since the 1990s many teach foreign students of African percussion, sell drums, or mount them on behalf of export traders, and some manage to migrate temporarily or seasonally to some industrialized country to give classes and concert performances, most jenbe players in Bamako earn their living mainly by performing at wedding celebrations.³

Let me illustrate what a big difference it makes to drummers that their music is performed professionally and commercially in the city by quoting from a biographical interview I had with jenbe player Jeli Madi Kuyate in 1998. Kuyate was born into a musical family of Griot status around 1947 in Sagele (Arrondissement Sibi, some 40 km south of Bamako). But his desire to become a jenbe player was strongly opposed by his older relatives, since jenbe performance was neither a speciality of griots nor an activity of high status. When he came to the Bamako aged only thirteen in 1960, he started working as laundryman and babysitter, and later as a donkey cart driver. In a voice heavy with emotion, Kuyate reports on his first meeting with Yamadu Dunbia, a pioneer of professional jenbe playing in Bamako, which should become the turning point of his career:

In Bamako, I was attracted by the ballets. I have done everything, from cart driving to babysitting. But I haven't played jenbe. However, I have attended the theater, I have seen the *Troupe Yankadi*. I went back [to my home village] again. This year the harvest was very good. Therefore, together with Baru [jenbe player and age-mate], I put up a theater to perform at the celebrations. It became like a *ballet*, it became like *folklore*. I have sung and played jenbe. This was going on for three or four years, or so. I still haven't played jenbe [in Bamako] then. [...]

³ See Charry (1996, 2000) for a survey and Polak (2000) for a study of feed-backs of local, national and international contexts, and Zanetti (1996) for a rough guide to the major urban centres of jenbe playing in West Africa.

We came to Badialan [a living quarter some 2 km west of the city center] in the afternoon one day [about 1965]. We loaded firewood out of town and sold it twice the price downtown. Thus we made our way. But we were at the hands of our boss, we normally earned 300 per month, the carts belonged to him. In this afternoon Bani [Yamadu Dunbia] played with Samba [an old friend of Kuyate from his home village]. Bani played jenbe and Samba dunun [acc. drum]. I stopped the cart and tied my donkey's feet. Samba told him that we were friends and I would play the jenbe in our village. Yamadu was tired of drumming. He gave the jenbe to me. So, I have earned 300 per month, driving the cart. Now this afternoon, the performance turning out nice, someone gave 500 to me, someone else 500, another one 200 or 250: Thus I earned 3000 [Malian francs] in an afternoon. In just one afternoon. Yamadu said to Samba: "Your friend, this griot, I like him. I would want him to come and stay with me, we should cooperate." I didn't like this. I was afraid.

Kuyate was afraid of his families negative sanctions. Although he moved to Dunbia's compound, he first kept his new occupation secret from his relatives.

By the end of this month I already gave 3000 to my older sister and kept 1000 for myself. We ate, we went to see the movies. We bought things and went for a walk, just to look at things. After that I stayed with him [Dunbia].

Shortly thereafter, Kuyates relatives found out about the story and seriously opposed his choice, going as far as beating him up many times for some months. This could not stop him from making his way as one of the most successful jenbe players in town, becoming soloist in the national ballet during the 1970's and 1980's, and still working with Dunbia in 2000, some 35 years after.

Most of Kuyates colleagues as well had to stand up to similar experiences of disdain, for instance be being refuted when asking a family father for his daughter's hand for marriage, and outright opposition to their choice of profession. But the fact that one is employed (even if informally self-employed) and that one can earn money on that work greatly balanced its low social status in the course of the past decades – at least for its practitioners.

Exchange

The distribution of celebration music basically takes the form of a market in which a musical performance is exchanged for a fee. There are no intermediate agencies

placing musicians with clients. The drummers themselves do not actively canvass for business or advertise. They will rather wait until they are addressed directly by prospective clients, either at home or during performances. However, *jenbe* players do improve their business prospects by means of diverse strategies: They try to stimulate their fortune by magical aids; they cooperate with professional singers and dancers in that one sees to the other when a client is looking for an artist. Of course they also try to increase their popularity by presenting themselves as excellent musicians. And last but not least they try to build up a clientele. Some drummers are frequently visiting people in order to maintain their customer base and position themselves as candidates for future engagements. Yet, while the customer relationship between a family and a drummer may last for years, it is neither personally binding nor socially institutionalized. There are several reasons why a client would want to engage a foreign drummer for an event; among these, the fact stands out that some contractors, i.e. the professional drummer who is awarded an engagement for a performance on a freelance basis by an organizer ('client'), agree to take on an engagement for a price far below the normal level. Especially the rising generation of up and coming young drummers manages to secure engagements in this way.

Celebration music performances are compensated for with a fee and with a so-called "cigarette payment" (*sigareti sòngò*) agreed between the client and the contractor; in addition, an unforeseeable amount of so-called "fairground money" (*kènèkan wòri*) is gathered on the spot. The fee makes up the biggest portion by far. The amount depends on the length of the celebration, the size of the ensemble and the negotiation strategies of either side.

Table 1: Usual fees for celebration music performances in Bamako (in Francs CFA)

| Performances | Fee |
|--|-----------------|
| Wedding day | 10 000 – 15 000 |
| Extended sequence of wedding celebrations (2 evenings, 1 day, 1 afternoon) | 20 000 – 35 000 |
| For comparison: village celebrations south of Bamako | 0 – 2 500 |

Source: Author's own observations, Bamako and Sagele (arrondissement Sibi), 1997/98.

Some self-confident drummers may take into account their own popularity and charge a relatively high fee, while the majority tends to consider their need for any reasonable job and content themselves with a lower fee. In addition, the market situation

plays a role. Surplus labor and the stagnating demand for celebration music have resulted in an ever increasing reduction of prices in real terms since the 1980's.

It is the custom in Bamako to provide a certain number of cigarettes for the musicians right before their appearance and irrespective of the performance fee agreed upon based on market prices. For example, four packs of Marlboro given an ensemble of four drums at a full wedding celebration sequence (two evenings, one all-day and one morning round) is customary. The equivalent value may also be given in money or candy. The drummers take this income absolutely seriously. The contents of every packet is exactly calculated and divided among the musicians. Some even carry empty packs with them specifically for the purpose to take their share home safely. The drummers do not, however, haggle over the cigarette payment but generally accept what is offered. This form of remuneration thus is not as unambiguously a kind of commodity exchange as is the fee. It also shows aspects of a gift which is instituted not in the market, but rather in a relationship of reciprocity and mutual respect which I will deal with in more detail later. Today's cigarette payment has evolved out of the cola nut payment that had been paid until well into the 1970's. The establishment of the fee, which was tantamount to the innovative introduction of commodity form and market exchange, was hinged on the introduction of a modern all-purpose currency. In contrast, the transformation of the cola nut payment into a cigarette payment shows that at the same time a different, more gift-like form of exchange has persisted and, even if of less importance than before, has even been 'updated' in a quite creative way through conversion into a new currency in greater demand by urban males today.

The commercial transactions between the organizers of a celebration (clients) and the drummers engaged for the performance (contractors) are central to the distribution of celebration music. However, some commercial aspect has developed between the drummers and the the guests and audience as well, in the form of the so-called "fairground money": During a performance, the drummers leave their line-up to step up to individual honorable guests at particular moments which are typically defined by the praise performances of female griot singers. They take up position directly in front of the addressed person and most infectiously play for her until she comes forward with a banknote. Depending on the success of the celebration and the guests' and organizers'

wealth, the drummers thus may considerably increase their earnings. As the following example shows, they regard this gift of fairground money as a source of income which they calculate rationally and go for with full intent:

"Let us make this wedding into a truly good celebration", the jenbe soloist Drisa Kone addresses his ensemble at the beginning of a wedding celebration. Somewhat unusually, he plays standing upright, with much commitment and enthusiasm, from the outset. He seizes every opportunity to approach the people praised by the Griot singers and directly address them with their drumming. When Kone receives a banknote for the first time, he laconically comments: "Numéro un." All the musicians hand over the money they receive during the day to a trusted partner of the ensemble leader for safekeeping. This man properly folds each bill and keeps all the bills in the pocket of his shirt. The other performing musicians evidently count all the money given during whole day: When it comes to sharing the fairground money in the evening after a full day's work, they know exactly that thirteen 500 CFA-Franc bills were collected. (Lafiabougou, Bamako, 28/12/1997)

Addressing individuals for fairground money is not a market transaction in the strict sense: While the drummers indeed play with a view to earn the exchange value of this service in the performance situation, they have not agreed with the consumer on the sale of the service at a certain price. If the honored person is unwilling or unable to give anything, she will be ashamed and might be morally blamed, but not legally. Some features of the fairground money are reminiscent of a gift in that there is a social obligation for a personal reply. Moreover, the gift has symbolic qualities. Ideally, it only consists of bills hot from the press. It is presented conspicuously by sticking the bill on the drummer's sweaty forehead or putting it between his teeth. But clearly it is not a pure gift either. There is no lasting personal and reciprocal relationship between the parties to the transaction, as is expressed in the counting of the bills by the drummers. The musician and the addressee do not even know each other in most cases.

It seems reasonable to propose differentiated and integrative perspectives on the various forms of exchange which occur within one society, and even within one specific social context.⁴ The exchange of celebration music for money takes diverse forms, some of which clearly fall between the two extremes or ideal types of commodity and gift. On the other hand, it is equally important to note that the more commodity-like fee makes up the biggest portion and the central motive for the musical action, and that all—even

⁴ See Appadurai (1986), Bloch & Parry (1989), and Carrier (1995).

the more gift-like—of these forms are treated with a commercial rationale on the part of the professionals and their clients.

Production

The organizers of a celebration always put a single drummer in charge. It is the contractor who takes on the job and is responsible for the organization of all the work involved, i.e. providing the instruments, putting together an ensemble, collecting and sharing the payment. I will begin the description of the relations of production with this last step, since it is the expectation of remuneration that precedes and shapes the organization of the work.: very

Two different modes of exchange of money for labor mesh with each other: The fee, which forms the biggest portion of the payment, is distributed by the contractor according to the market principle and in a performance-related way to only those participants whom he had engaged for the occasion, but not among colleagues who voluntarily joined the ensemble. A scheme of distribution is applied whose ratio considers the individual musicians' roles which form a hierarchy from the lead jenbe down to the accompanying dunun (cylindrical drum), the age and the level of training, and the ownership of the instruments that were used.

Table 2: Sharing the fee among trio ensembles (in Francs CFA)

| | 1st jenbe player | 2nd jenbe player | Dunun player | Total |
|-----------|------------------|------------------|--------------|--------|
| Example 1 | 6 500 | 4 500 | 4 000 | 15 000 |
| Example 2 | 6 000 | 3 000 | 1 000 | 10 000 |
| Average | 43% | 30% | 27% | 100% |
| Range | 33–60 % | 20–33 % | 10–33 % | |

Source: Author's own observations, Bamako 1997/98. All musicians in Example 1 belonged to the same generation (20–30 years old) and were about equally skilled and acknowledged as drummers; all were playing rented instruments. In Example 2, the soloist was a well established contractor who provided all the instruments. The poorly paid dunun-player was an apprentice approx. 13 years of age. The individual shares are usually rounded to 500 F CFA, the smallest bill in the currency.

The cigarette payment and fairground money, however, are shared out among all drummers present. The shares are all equal, so the takings normally have to be divided to the last coin of 25 centimes, or single cigarette. Voluntary, even temporary helpers are considered without any cuts. Even musicians who did not play a single tone, e.g. because they are aged, count as regular ensemble members: The simple presence at the

fairground alone is regarded as enough of a commendable contribution to the common work in the musical service.

Jenbe celebration music is ensemble music. Drummers work in ever-fluctuating line-ups which the contractor puts together some days (or sometimes only hours) before the performance from a wide open network of freelance cooperators. The contractor tends to cast his ensemble rationally with regard to maximum utility, i.e. he will not use more and no higher skilled musicians than absolutely necessary. For example, when an ensemble of three drums was agreed upon with the organizer, the contractor will as a rule engage three musicians, regardless of the fact that working in fours, i.e. with a substitute player, is more agreeable in many situations: Preparing a round of tea, sparing a finger that hurts, and simply relaxing for twenty minutes are luxuries during an all-day performance that typically includes two non-stop runs of three hours each. But with every additional laborer engaged the individual player's share of money is reduced. Typically, the contractor, a highly skilled drummer of middle age, will tend not to engage colleagues of the same generation and quality, because, firstly, the pay for younger and less experienced musicians can be kept low, and secondly, musicians of rank tend to regard each other as personal rivals.

At many performances colleagues join spontaneously, though, and offer their assistance. This is partly motivated by self-interest, for they count on earning some fairground money and cigarettes, which tends to damp the joy and gratitude of the drummers in the official ensemble. They often find this kind of assistance importunate and pushy.

Not a few contractors, and typically the more successful ones, hold information about their engagements back as long as possible. Despite their need for at least preliminary planning, they tend to inform their cooperators without explicitly naming dates and places, and very late, often only at the evening before an appearance. Thus fewer 'assistants' will turn up, and payment will be better.

Occasionally some engaged musician tries to refuse spontaneous help. This shows that the drummers are conscious of the ambivalent character of this type of help offered

both in solidarity and self-interest. However, it proves difficult to reject assistance, because this public disparaging of the professional spirit would be qualified as inconsiderate and inappropriate. Thus spontaneous assistance on the spot is normally accepted as a matter of fact by the officially engaged ensemble members.

The musical instruments represent the second basic factor of production after labor. Many successful contractors own three to five drums, while accompanying musicians or apprentices have only one or two, or even none of their own. Yet, even the most successful contractors do not possess more than those five or six instruments required to equip one ensemble of the largest size in common practice.

The money invested in drums pays off because drums are rented out for about 10% of the average pay a drummer can earn by using the drum in a performance. In other words, private ownership of the means of production functions as profitable capital, or: the social organization of celebration music is based on a capitalist mode of production.

On the other hand, the fact that drums can be rented gives the great majority of financially weak musicians the chance to take on jobs of their own and to become self-employed. Also, an accompanying musician's average weekly wage (or maybe two weeks' pay) is enough to cover the initial costs of the materials and parts needed to manufacture a new drum. True, the capital input required for obtaining the means of production has considerably increased in the urban context: The production of instruments is cheaper in the countryside because of the availability of trees and hides, the cheap work of the carvers, and less ambitious ways of fixing and tensioning the drumhead. Moreover, instruments are partly provided by lineage and youth associations, which means that the disposal rights but also financial expenses are communally shared. For most individual drummers it is by no means easy to pay for a *jenbe* drum. On the contrary, it is not uncommon for a *jenbe* player to sell his only instrument during *ramadan*, when no weddings take place and income shrinks severely. But the required capital is still relatively low when compared, for example, with the technical equipment required by pop musicians or with the capital necessary for the industrial production of audio cassettes, not to speak of music videos. Due to this rather low intensity of capital input and the highly permeable separation of capital and labor, the capitalist aspect of

production is of comparatively limited practical and social significance. No owner of drums, not even the most successful contractor of all Bamako, can afford to live predominantly on the profit. Every individual drummer in Bamako is, on the one hand, forced to earn his share by his own hands' work, and on the other hand tries to install himself as a self-employed contractor and independent entrepreneur, or at least wishes to do so.

In a nutshell, playing *jenbe* in the urban context has acquired exchange value in addition to its utility value. Essential aspects of the engagement of musicians for performances, the organization of work and instruments, and the forms of payment have been commercialized. The service of celebration music performance is exchanged for money on markets for musical labor, tools, and engagements.

Institutional change

How did the commercialization of celebration music come about? First came the exchange of the total musical performance for a fee, i.e. only the relationship between organizers and contractors was concerned. Only after that has the commodity form pervaded the relations of production. Commercialization, seen from the perspective of the musicians' professional group, proceeded from the outside to inside, from exchange relations into the organization of work. In a small scale, or more precisely in relation to but one social group and context, this substantiates a basic hypothesis of political economy, namely that market economy arises at the borders of communities or societies, in the context of foreign contacts, where restrictions on commodity formation and exchange are relatively weak, and expand from there to the inside.⁵

Exchange

Family, communal and religious entities, for instance lineage, youth, or initiation associations, have lost importance or have disappeared completely in Bamako. Many of

⁵ Marx (1961 [1859]: 35), Weber (1980: 383), Polanyi (1944: 58f), Meillassoux (1971: 82f).

the institutions which, among other things, used to organize celebration music in rural peasant society are gone.

Musicians of the so-called voluntary associations took a first step in the direction of commercialization and professionalization of urban celebration music in the 1950's. These urban associations, which have been examined in urban anthropology mainly with respect to social integration and modernization,⁶ also played an important role in shaping urban celebration culture. They contributed with money, presents, work, and not least with music and dancing to the family celebrations of their members. Instruments were bought, and musician were paid with monthly membership dues.⁷ In the context of some associations in which the *jenbe* was played, a differentiation took place between young performers coming from the lower class, who started to earn their living in music, and the richer members, who engaged and paid the association's *troupe* in order to liven up their family celebrations.⁸

Celebration culture blossomed and boomed in the context of weddings sumptuously provided with food and music by traders' and functionaries' families in the 1960's. Members of the new post-independence elites typically gave 'their' drummers large sums of money from time to time, and occasionally rights of residence or real estate as well. These remunerations did not, as today's market exchange does, represent equivalents of single musical performances. They rather were generalized gifts, and attempts of the new elites to bind *jenbe* players, like griots, in enduring and personalized relationships to their families.

Market relationships between organizers of family celebrations as individual members of a demand group and freelance drummers as suppliers were established in the course of the 1970's. Successful *jenbe* players started to ask prices instead of waiting for what would be given to them after the performance, as was the custom before. Price levels gained acceptance citywide. These standard prices could be surpassed by particularly popular drummers, but not easily undercut. Remunerations beyond market rates and generalized from single transactions have disappeared by now. The personal

⁶ See Meillassoux (1968) concerning Bamako, and Little (1970) for West Africa in general.

⁷ Villien-Rossi (1966: 355).

relations between professional musicians and clients have lost complexity, stability and obligation when compared to the drumming performances instituted in village associations, urban associations, or elite households. The musicians' clientele has grown in numbers instead. Today most reasonably successful contractors gets no more than 5% of a year's engagements from a single client family.

One of the pioneers of professional jenbe drumming in Bamako remembers:

Modibo said we shouldn't demand money. Prices were not asked then. Now, under Moussa's rule, I could say my price. In case [the organizer] agreed, you would have got it. (Yamadu Dunbia, 8/1/1998)

Dunbia's reference to the anti-commercial principle prevalent during the rule of Mali's first president Modibo Keita (1960–1968) indicates that the replacement of this socialist government's ideology under the regime of Moussa Traoré (1968–1991) unleashed the professional drummers' commercial interest. The decline of the state's cultural politics and support for artists in the same context was a more practical impulse for the stronger market orientation of the musicians.⁹ And yet another factor was the fact that the market situation looked promising during the 1970's when demand was considerably increasing, because the population grew rapidly and jobs for jenbe players even faster, due to the successful urbanization and popularization of their style and repertoire.¹⁰

The commercialization of the distribution of celebration music which occurred in the 1970's was still in progress in the 1990's. For example, until well into the early 1990's it was uncommon for a drummer to accept a job if he was unable to organize the performance himself. Today a drummer accepts the job, and takes care to pass it on to another drummer on a commission basis. A few drummers still find this to be reprehensible, but in everyday practice it is widely adopted, so that no longer the agent's fee as such is discussed, just the question, whether a moderate 10% or an outrageous 20% of the fee is to be accepted as the 'normal' price for such a service.

⁸ Meillassoux (1968: 90-112); compare Little (1970: 60) concerning urban centers of Ghana.

⁹ Cf. Schulz (2001: 194ff) on the case of the griots.

¹⁰ See Polak (2004).

Production

The mode of production of professional celebration music in Bamako initially was strongly determined and controlled by the masters of the trade, or 'closed' in Weber's (1980:23) term, that is to say that the professional group's subjective meaning, binding rules and relationships of power excluded certain persons, restricted their participation, or subjected it to conditions. This has radically changed towards the formation of free markets for musical labor and engagements since the 1980's. The striving of accompanying musicians and apprentices for emancipation and sources of income stands out as a force that repeatedly opened areas or aspects of work for transformation into commercial labor.

The first generation of full-time jenbe players established itself in Bamako around 1960. Most of them were distinct individualists and already quite experienced then, between 35 and 50 years of age, widely traveled, and well versed in diverse musical and other trades. For example, two of the most successful jenbe players in Bamako during the 1960's, 'Menjani' Daba Keita (born around 1920) and 'Woloso' Yamadu Dunbia (born approx. 1917), had been working as drummers in Fodeba Keita's famous Ballets Africains and in the French colonial military, respectively, but also had guarded colonialists' houses, laid railway sleepers, procured ritual objects for ethnographica traders, and more. They succeeded in regulating the emerging market: They exercised stern authority over their apprentices and accompanying musicians, monopolized the ownership of instruments, and defended territories by preventing competitors from other city districts and their own recruits from performing independently in their wider surroundings, for instance by using the threat of witchcraft as a means of deterrence.

In the 1970's, the members of the first generation had so many engagements that they could provide a lot of younger musicians with work on a regular basis and make them dependent on them. These musicians received little pay but food and lodging and did everyday chores in their masters' households, for instance making firewood, cleaning, washing clothes, going to the daily market, and the like. They regularly performed in their masters' name and on their masters' instruments. Thus, to some extent, capitalist firms developed whose entrepreneurs successfully applied monopolistic strategies.

In the course of the 1980's this system started to disintegrate. First, large numbers of musicians of the second generation set up on their own and stood up to their former masters' anger on the spot—i.e. in their neighborhood and within their cooperative association—instead of moving away and starting up somewhere else as it had been the custom before. The marginalization of witchcraft in the public sphere, commodity exchange and urban sprawl made it more and more difficult to exert market control over persons and places. Let me illustrate how conflict-loaden and painful this process proved to be, in this case for a person who wanted to be released from the role of an apprentice. The following excerpt refers to events in 1986. After more than twelve years of apprenticeship, jenbe player Drisa Kone from Badialan/Bamako didn't yet possess an instrument of his own and was regarded as his master Yamadu 'Bani' Dunbia's most talented and loyal follower. He was about 26 years old, then, already an eminent soloist, and was just about to start his international career as a concert musician and drum teacher.

Have a look at Bani. He had many pupils. Some left, they argued about money matters. Many. Many split because of financial questions. Because in former times, when you had gone to a master for mastery, and you accomplished it, then your master released you. He takes an instrument and gives it to you. Or he even sees to give you a woman for marriage, in order to release you. You then can set up on your own. However, today, since it once became a financial question, many break away from their master because of the financial question and split off. [...] Everybody is urgent concerning money. This is so for quite a while now, but only recently it has destroyed everything. [...] Otherwise, Bani really is a humane person. It started at my time. Otherwise, we went to play for him and handed over the money. Bani had hoarded the drums with him. Whichever pleased him, he bought and kept it. Yet, since now money was earned with celebration music, you wanted to get one of your own now. So, when you went through apprenticeship with somebody and want to leave, you better say: Well, I am ready, I would like to go. This is better than dispute. I, for myself, I have never argued. I have bought my jenbe and have shown it to him, I have not betrayed him. Otherwise, we certainly dissociated from each other. One year it was said he is away and whoever takes his jenbe: 10.000! [An enormous amount then, equivalent to about twenty times the standard rent of today.] All of us, me, Madu Keita, Musa and the rest. I couldn't support this. We were giving to his wife from the money we earned by playing anyway. But three months and each who took his jenbe to pay 10.000! I borrowed money from my mother and from a friend and bought a jenbe. We had disputes on this, later. Well, in this year, all resigned from his jenbes, many kept away from him, then. [...] It all became money. We all left him. Because, here in the city, you can't settle here without money. Otherwise, I have played for five years without seeing even a penny, as an apprentice. Money might come out or not, I was not interested in that. I loved the jenbe and played it.

The time when it was said that jenbe playing is for earning money, this time came only after I arrived in Bamako [1974]. I played and gave the money to him for one more year, because he was my master. He certainly has exploited many people. But Bani had really trained me. I will never forget this. I have left, but I never could oppose him.

Also in the 1980's, a third generation of professional drummers started to radicalize the second generation's endeavors. They aimed partly at emancipating musical education from its institution within a broader form of apprenticeship. All these young drummers were born in Bamako. Unlike their predecessors—the second generation apprentices who were all former rural migrants—they did not live with their masters but with their own families and later on in shared apartments of their own. Thus, they were much less exposed to the masters' authority over all areas of their life. The former integration of apprentices into the master's household and life quasi as kin had involved. On the other hand, the masters were no longer obliged to provide for the welfare of their people. The apprentices no longer were given a roof over their heads and three warm meals a day, but neither were they any longer obliged to work without pay as accompanying musicians, or to do household chores. Rather, the apprentices began to get an idea of the price for their work just as their masters had asked prices from their clients ten or fifteen years before. Work, including trainees' and recruits' work, became a commodity in an increasingly free labor market. The institution of apprenticeship was more and more confined to musical education, and the masters' considerable socio-economic power and music-cultural hegemony faded.

The dissolution of territories and the apprentices' and recruits' emancipation liberalized labor and weakened the regulation of the labor market and the market for performance engagements. Finally, means of social power were given away in favor of short-term financial interests even by the former monopolizers themselves. For example, the ownership of instruments, which still predominantly lies with the older drummers today, does not serve a long-term monopolistic interest any longer, but is used to earn a couple of hundred CFA francs a day by renting the drums out. Teenaged musicians nowadays regularly perform as musical leaders and contractors in their own right, playing rented instruments, engaging their peers for accompaniment and mutually training themselves in the process.

As the masters' power declined and the markets became more and more liberal, the operational structure and social organization of work changed dramatically. Cooperation today is no longer instituted in what seemed to be the initial stages of firms based on traditional authority three decades ago, but in broad and complex, widely open and strongly fluctuating professional networks. While economic competition and personal rivalry have been present ever since the profession emerged, the social relations of production within these networks today are characterized by stark individualization and generational conflicts.

The commercial rationality of professional action

The commodification of labor, the musicians' orientation towards the market and the motive of individual profit have pervaded many, though not all aspects of urban drumming. The institution of fairground money, for instance, was shown to have aspects of both the gift and the commodity form of exchange. While the professional drummers perceive their occupation essentially as a means of livelihood, the fact that they never would play without being paid does not mean that earning income is their only motive to work. For example, most jenbe players enjoy drumming a lot and are proud of being employed and working, even if they regard monthly paid, employed labor higher than their own occupation. Still, financial gain is the essential motive for them to work. If you ask a jenbe player coming home from work whether the performance was a success, you can expect one of two types of answer—the one referring to whether or not skilled dancers were present, and the other, more frequent response, informing you if good money was to be made. If you talk with jenbe players about the reasons for their choice of occupation, 'making some money' is the most prominent reason given.

Indeed, the musicians' professional activity is first and foremost directed at earning income immediately. They rather try and get hold of a sum of money than invest in a long-term project or relationship. For example, drummers who play for spirit possession cults or with a ballet troupe regularly let these kinds of engagements slip if they were able to get a commercial engagement for a wedding on the same day, because of the

better money they could make there on the spot. This is a customary and accepted thing to do even for musicians who personally hold ritual cult drumming or staged ballets in high esteem for cultural or musical reasons.

In this section, I will address the relationship between the commercial rationality of individual musicians and the institutional change of celebration music as described before. As in the previous sections, the aspect of distribution is examined first. I will show how the urban professional musicians' interest in financial gain—as opposed the great importance of acquiring respect in the village context—corresponds to the socio-economic trend towards more impersonal market relations and a strong emphasis on the act of exchange.

Earning money and respect

Jenbe players are paid respect for their work. Respect in the sense of the Bamanankan (vernacular language and lingua franca of Bamako) term *bonyà*, which also means abundance, fatness, greatness, and gift, can take the form of welcome, hospitality, gratitude and the presenting of gifts. In the context of village celebrations, the drummers are formally received with words of welcome. They are offered a room of their own where they can rest and perhaps spend the night, as well as a bucket of hot water for having a bath in a cultured manner. They are formally honored by the organizers who, during a pause taken specifically for this purpose, publicly address the drummers with gifts and words of thanks. The drummers then answer just as formally that "we are all one", that therefore their musical service is a matter of course and so forth. If one of these points is not observed since not every host conforms to the ideal of respect, the musicians' reactions range from slight annoyance and complaints to delaying tactics and passive resistance to work.

Even in Bamako, the respect for jenbe players demands that they are not forced to incur any financial expenditure in the context of their work. Most customers pay for the musicians' traveling expenses. In no case should the drummers have to pay for food if the organizers of the celebration take any pride in themselves. It is obvious, though, that the aspects of remuneration based on respect have considerably lost importance in the urban context. While urban professional drummers still consider it right and proper to

have their meal at the place of performance, other, more specific attitudes concerning their catering are nowadays out of date: the musicians no longer judge the celebration as a whole on the basis of the quantity of meat coming with the dishes provided by the organizers, and they no longer carry home as much of the food as possible. If an older drummer still does so today, one lets him pass and suppresses a smile. The practice of presenting produce has almost completely disappeared, as has the public proclamation of the social and cultural context in which the musicians' performance is embedded. The promoters' and their relatives' and supporters' names, genealogies and achievements are called out, they are praised by the Griot singers and by the drummers. The names and origin of the drummers, however, which are likewise called out and praised in village celebrations, remain unmentioned and of no public interest in the urban celebration context. The musicians' fee is negotiated and handed over in private. The appreciation for their musical service is already covered by the market relationship with the customers. It is thus regarded as already settled and requires no further form of public acknowledgement or respect. Even welcoming the musicians on their arrival at the celebration ground no longer follows any formal or specific public protocol. The drummers arrive unobtrusively and simply announce themselves to the responsible organizer. They are offered neither chairs nor a room, but quietly see to themselves. They usually have their breaks and meals in a special corner out in the street, almost unnoticed by the members of the family and their guests from inside the compound. Nobody pays attention to them as long as they do not play. The professional drummers, however, are not bothered by this and do not complain. They rather regard this relatively impersonal relationship with their customers as something normal. They feel sufficiently respected by the organizers if they are treated in accordance with the general standards of politeness, if they get an ordinary meal and, most of all, if the organizers do not attempt to cheat them out of the full payment agreed upon for their labor.

Self-interest and professional community

Correlations between the commercial rationality and institutional change of urban drumming as have been shown in the context of market exchange are also apparent in the professional production of music. The individual musicians do not feel that they belong to a cohesive occupational group based on common interests. They do not even consider organizing themselves in professional associations, syndicates or firms.

In sociological discourse, efforts to shut off and control markets are regarded as an essential social function of professions in a market economy.¹¹ The thesis of socially embedded economic behaviour is not restricted to industrial societies but, on the contrary, is central to a sociological and anthropological understanding of the so-called informal sector of the economy in developing countries. Economic activity in this context is said to be characterized by the search for social security as an essential motive for embedding market relationships in corporate or cooperative institutions.¹² Indeed, other occupational groups have managed to establish organizations aimed at reducing oversupply and ruinous competition on the market. The association of *chauffeurs de taxis collectifs*, for instance, tries to control the supply of lines, vehicle density, orders of taxis on obligatory tours and, by means of formalized apprenticeship, also access to the labor market.¹³

So how are we to interpret that *jenbe* players do not even try to make similar efforts and always seem to pursue their individual self-interests in the first place? For one, the musicians manage to avert fatal consequences of the market by multiple income strategies: Professional celebration music is cross-subsidized by additional earnings in the international market for African percussion (mounting *jenbes* for export, teaching foreign guests, going on concert or workshop tours in Europe) which has replaced the state-run scene of national, regional and communal ballets in this respect, or by second jobs in completely different sectors such as bricklaying, joinery, refuse collection or traffic in drugs. Consequently, the pressure to change the institutional context of celebration music production is reduced.

Secondly, individual drummers have grave doubts about the chances to enforce and finance the common interests of their occupational group. This doubt is not related to the practical questions of how to control the market for live celebration music, but, more principally, to their competitors' will to give way to any form of commonality. Each individual drummer assumes that the great majority of his competitors are driven by a distinctive tendency to pursue self-interests before group interests. And because the occupational group has no experience as a professional community but rather as an

¹¹ Weber (1980: 201-204), Beck et al. (1980: 35-41, 75-87).

¹² See Elwert et al. (1983).

¹³ Pradeilles et al. (1991).

aggregation of loners and free riders, the advance concessions required from each individual in favor of a professional association are considered to be futile considering the minor benefit to be expected for all. Due to their distinctive self-interest and lack of faith in their colleagues, most commercially oriented musicians are hardly inclined to grant authority and financial resources to a professional association yet to be established.¹⁴ Moreover, the weaker members would be the first to profit from such an association,¹⁵ while the stronger members' initiative would be particularly necessary for its establishment in a context where the national or communal governments cannot be expected to implement the appropriate measures by administrative force.

The urban musicians' rationale is quite bluntly commercial. Their individualization and striving for immediate gain might seem irrational in view of the resulting economic risks and social hardship. Max Weber (1980:378f, 1986:4f), for instance, regards unrestrained striving for maximum financial gain as an irrational drive. The spirit of modern capitalism, according to Weber's classic analysis, precisely consists in the rational taming of greed instituted in the economic enterprise which strives for continuous profitability. By contrast, from the drummers' own perspective, their short-term interest in maximum gain is fully rational. They neither perceive alternative strategies for livelihood as more promising than the one they pursue, nor do they expect the socio-economic conditions of their profession to change within the foreseeable future.

Commerce and culture

The customary notion of commercialization in Europe would suggest that *jenbe* celebration music in Bamako must by definition be of poor aesthetic quality and of little cultural value precisely because it is commercialized music. While many anthropologists and cultural critics today defend popular culture and consumer society against elitist and bourgeois accusations of this kind—lack of aesthetic and cultural

¹⁴ Granovetter (1990: 102ff) discusses the same problem with regard to the foundation of firms.

¹⁵ See Olson's theory of collective action (1968: 8-15, 32-35).

value–,¹⁶ only very few of them would extend this defense to explicitly including the commercial aspect of most of the popular culture they are defending. Yet, the bad reputation of commercialism is neither self-evident nor implausible. It should be treated as a hypothesis which calls for empirical study, not only as far as the mass culture of industrialized societies is concerned, but also with respect to manual and personal services, such as commercial *jenbe* celebration music in urban West Africa.

On the mediation of musical form

In this section I will focus on the interaction between musicians, organizers and audiences as one of the various aspects of commerciality which influence the music. This means that other aspects of the commercial context shaping style and repertoire will not be further dealt with in this paper, although I would like to mention one of them briefly. The emergence of the market for celebration music from the 1970's onwards has attracted musicians from various backgrounds. Consequently, the overlapping of personnel and the borrowing of stylistic elements and repertoire between different genres and groups has intensified: first, between the genres of *jenbe* drumming for local celebrations, for state-sponsored ballet (national, regional and communal) and for international *jenbe* concert music which is practiced in the West; and, second, between these *jenbe*-related genres and the genres of the griots which used to be rather distinct from the practice of *jenbe* music.¹⁷

An initial and rather general consequence of the urban musician's commercial rationality is the fact that their eagerness to work has grown. In the rural context, it is the organizers who ask–if not to say: who beg–the *jenbe* players for their service. The drummers are often formally engaged by a gift of cola nuts weeks before the event and then repeatedly reminded by the organizers to actually show up and play, and not without reason: Sometimes village drummers use hidden tactics of refusal. They will arrive too late, forget a drum-stick or will have had no opportunity to replace a torn drum-head. It may also happen in the course of village celebrations that the drummers press and hurry the gathered community to come to an end. They will point out tired muscles or injured hands, or will insist that they are otherwise engaged. When talked

¹⁶ See, for instance, Willis (1990) or Shusterman (2000).

¹⁷ See Polak (2000, 2005 [forthc.]) for more details and analysis of feed-backs.

into playing on, they will perform one more piece and then again start to make excuses. Urban professional drummers, on the other hand, refrain from such resistance tactics. If they are engaged for an event, the prospect of financial gain is enough of an incentive for them to actually show up and perform. It is sufficient to briefly call on them once. Beyond that, it is neither customary nor necessary to emphasize their obligation with any special measures. As a rule, they perform their service in a way that should recommend them for further engagements. This implies that they will avoid disappointing or provoking their customers. They very rarely admit exhaustion or pain and hardly ever voice any complaints. They would never delay their arrival deliberately or ask the audience to stop an ongoing celebration and usually keep their drums in good shape. How do the drummers deal with a crowd that is too small or not interested in dancing, and particularly with a lack of skilled singers? What if the interaction at a celebration is without enthusiasm? Situations of this kind are especially revealing for the typical attitudes of rural and urban musicians. Non-professional drummers almost naturally react aggressively by rejecting the responsibility for the awkward situation and assigning it to the community: "Sing a song! Come on, sing a song now! After all, it is you who called us to come and play, so you better take up a song now and dance!", village drummer Baru Traoré from Sagele once exhorted at a wedding party; in the semi-commercial context of an urban spirit possession dance (*jinèdòn*), where most drummers are not engaged via sort of a labor market but are initiated into the respective cult groups, Jeli Madi Kuyate once asked polemically: "So you are already exhausted? You seem to be hungry, maybe we should take a break first and have a meal?" Urban professional drummers hired for family celebrations will act much more unobtrusively in comparable situations. In contrast to village and cult celebrations, drummers at a Bamako wedding will take on responsibility and start performing on their own initiative if no singer calls to dance. Hot drumming and solo dancing alone certainly cannot keep the flow of action going for hours on end. Without the initiative of songs and interplays of slow-paced formation dancing, the celebration will often falter and come to short halts. But it will be seen through to the end and not be a complete failure. By contrast, in the village and cult contexts a celebration without songs and the drummers and audiences firing each other up is absolutely inconceivable.

The urban professional drummers have extended their traditional role of rounding up the crowd and accompanying interaction into a more one-sided performance, i.e. the

presentation of their skilled service to an audience, which also implies an advance of enthusiasm or "heat". This new task is difficult for them since they are absolutely missing the dense interaction with singers and especially dancers so important for their own enthusiasm. It requires a lot of self-discipline from them not to show their own feelings about it. However, the professional musicians accept this extended responsibility and in this way make themselves indispensable to the organizers and the guests of celebrations. Their eagerness to perform their service as required by the audience is intensified by their commercial interest, while it also sustains demand for this work and underpins their commercial claims.

Commercial rationality and professional ethics are closely intertwined and confirm each other in the urban context. This is a first and rather general aspect of the context that relates the commercialization of work to musical practice and style. A second, more direct aspect of the same commercial relationship consists in the negative sanctions that organizers and audiences may impose against the drummers, and the way the drummers interpret these.

Urban professional *jenbe* players point out that in everyday practice they are dependent on performing just like people demand them to do. If, for example, they arrive with only three drums for an evening celebration which demands a standard ensemble of four, their pay is likely to be cut. Moreover, the drummers will be criticized openly even during their performance. The participants loudly express their wishes and may ask for a larger ensemble, specific rhythms, or higher tempo. The musicians have internalized the participants' and promoters' positive expectations and negative sanctions, and not without reason. They must in fact fear to be passed over for future engagements if their playing fails to please. The distinctive sense of competition among the drummers adds to this pressure. Indeed, a drummer may quickly lose regular customers if others sell more cheaply. However, it is not impossible for the drummers to take countermeasures against the organizers' or audiences' demands. For instance, it may be observed from time to time that a drummer deliberately accompanies an older woman's solo or a solemn formation dance to the end even if this publicly exposes some younger women to ridicule who usually demand more tempo and heat and are already pushing and falling over themselves to step out for their solo performances. But,

all in all, this way of working against the audience's predominant taste is extremely rare. Instead, the professional drummers rather humbly and pro-actively obey to the perceived expectations of the participants and organizers.

The commercial context of musical practice gives rise to a dialectics between stylistic distinction and stylistic homogenization: On the one hand, the different generations, the proponents of different genres, each ensemble and each individual musician are interested in standing out stylistically to present their labor uniquely on the market. As newcomers on the market for performance engagements who have not yet established a clientele of their own, young soloists and ensemble leaders are particularly interested in both pleasing the audience and displaying stylistic characteristics which differentiate them from their older, established competitors. Actually it is this subgroup which has initiated much of the innovations that have shaped fashions but have also developed into a drastic musical change during the last three decades. On the other hand, stylistic differentiation has its limits in commercial practice: Divergent, new or newly composed stylistic elements only help the musicians achieve economic success when they become popular, i.e. gain city-wide recognition with as many consumers and other musicians as possible.¹⁸ Except for some unique "characters", every drummer wishes to appear as a proponent of the latest popular styles, and thus tends to follow contemporary innovations and trends that seem to be promising. While commerciality stimulates stylistic creativity and shifts of fashions, innovations are often quite speedily adopted in all of Bamako. Commercially conditioned fashions are more than mere expressions on the surface. They often initiate, and develop into, a qualitative change of the musical tradition. In general, the commercial context stimulates creativity and difference, but at the same time sustains the relative homogeneity and integrity of the urban repertoire and style even in times of drastic change.

This interpretation of the market for jenbe celebration music in Bamako comes strangely close to the western model of the free market as an institution of mediation between consumers and producers: Demand and supply groups rationally follow their self-interests; demand wins relative power by the possibility of choice, which intensifies

¹⁸ Compare Gudeman's (1992: 289-293, 2001: 146-148) discussion of entrepreneurial innovation as an aspect of social relationships between people mediated by the distributed goods or performances, rather than as achievements of individual genius.

competition among suppliers, which again increases their readiness for innovation, adaptation and rationalization.¹⁹ Stylistic differentiation and innovation are rightly stressed as characteristics of popular commercial culture in urban Africa. However, it is misleading to describe the popular, urban art forms as generally free of formal conventions, or "low in normativity", as Fabian (1978:329) formulated in a pioneering paper.²⁰ Commercialization does not work *only* as an incentive for conformity and standardization, as the common prejudice against commercialism and consumerism in industrial societies assumes, but it surely does so in parts. In the case of professional drumming in Bamako, the commercially stimulated readiness for cultural innovation is directly linked with a dependence on demand, i.e. with economic pressure and social constraint. The relatively free market neither turns out to be simply a catalyst for artistic or individualistic liberation nor does it mark the end of creativity or authenticity. In stark contrast to both of these extreme assumptions, it rather turns out to be a new social institution that frames new possibilities, but at the same time articulates and implements new norms and sanctions in the field of cultural practice.

Commercial practice and anti-commercial ideology

The commercialization of celebration music can be seen as a successful process in two regards. Firstly, a service trade has emerged which contributes to the livelihood of several hundred urban households—which is quite something in an economy as precarious as the Bamakoian one. Secondly, a local musical genre has flourished, not least because of the professional skills of its commercial practitioners, which provides an opportunity for entertainment, interaction and identity formation for large parts of the urban population. In sharp contrast to this interpretation, commercialization is judged extremely negatively with regard to its cultural consequences by the majority of local musicians. Phrases like "jenbe playing has become a money matter" or "jenbe playing nowadays means mere searching for money", which I first heard from elder Bamako jenbe masters such as Yamadu Dunbia and Jeli Madi Kuyate in the early 90s, later turned out to have become commonplace in everyday conversation among musicians in Bamako. And they are definitely meant derogative. They imply that the musical quality and cultural value of celebration music has been drastically reduced or even fully

¹⁹ See Carrier (1997) for a concise description of the free market model from an anthropologist's perspective.

²⁰ See also Barber (1987: 30-39).

destroyed in the course of its commercialization. In the drummers' view, the style of drumming has lost its gravity just as the individual drum rhythms have lost their distinctiveness.

How are we to understand the musicians' critical attitude, their acerbic tone and sense of utter loss? How can it be explained that the cultural producers articulate such critical value judgments about their very own practice while the clients and audiences fail to perceive any breach with tradition or musical quality but rather keep on going for and to the celebrations and guarantee the continuing popularity of *jenbe* music which has been in high demand now, amazingly enough, for about four decades in the Malian capital and many other urban centers of West Africa.

The musicians' judgment, I maintain, certainly does not lack an objective basis. Having started more than two decades ago, the trend towards ever larger ensembles, excessively high tempi and excessive ornamentation (rich and often unspecifically sweeping rolls) is both functionally and aesthetically problematic.²¹ The musicians' negative view of musical change and its commercial conditions, however, is not only founded on cultural and music-aesthetical considerations, but also driven by socio-economic reasons:

Commercialization is empirically based on the fact that each musician, each generation and each subgroup wants to please the audience and earn an income. But the tenor of everyday discourse among professional drummers is to accuse other drummers, the following generation or rivaling professional subgroups of their selfish and socio-culturally destructive pursuit of gain. In the older drummers' view, it is all the youngsters' fault, while the specialists in local celebration drumming think the specialists in national ballet and international concert drumming are to blame, and vice versa, and so forth. The talk about commercialization, I argue, is stimulated by the wish to reproach competitors for the willful sell-out of their music, and thus to delegitimize their work and exclude them from the market.

²¹ For details and empirical evidence of my interpretations of musical change, see Polak (2004).

There is evidence for a link between the market situation and the assessment of musical change. As long as the market was largely favorable for the musicians, i.e. from its emergence in the 1960's into the early 1980's, they usually valued their innovations highly, as for instance the integration of a supra-ethnic urban repertoire, the differentiation of musical form with regard to the communication with individual solo dancers, and the dignified and economical, almost minimalist style in terms of ensemble size, tempo, ornamentation and improvisatory freedom. Obviously, the commercialization of forms of artistic expression does not necessarily imply the loss of socio-cultural values, but can also result in aesthetically and socially convincing change.

The era of decadence, as the musicians see it, only began in the mid-eighties with the continuous deterioration of the market situation due to an increasing oversupply of labor in times of stagnating demand. The musicians apparently were better able to align the customers' and participants' stylistic, repertorial and formal demands with their own ideas and standards as long as their socioeconomic position was more favorable. But as market power shifted in favor of the customers, the producers began to perceive the required adaptation of their product to demand as pressure from the outside, as a socioeconomic constraint on the aesthetic quality and cultural value of the music. The socioeconomic context is thus externalized from, but definitely seen in relation with the music as far as the more recent changes are concerned, which are overwhelmingly condemned, while the more distant changes perceived as positive are not seen in the context of commercialization at all. The commercialism of music production became a primary issue in the musicians' arguments and way of thinking particularly as their own economic situation within the commercial context became more difficult. Their experience of the loss of cultural and communal values began to come to the fore in the historical moment when their sources of relatively stable economic income began to vanish.

Conclusion

Jenbe celebration music has become a service trade of some importance in Bamako and other urban centers of West Africa. I have interpreted its commodification,

marketization and rationalization as aspects of a general process of a quite drastic, complex, and socio-economically and socio-culturally ambivalent process of change, namely commercialization. From the perspective of the professional musicians, commodification and marketing have again and again suggested themselves as practical means to serve their distinct interest in financial gain. In various historical and institutional situations, various strategic groups recognized social emancipation and economic liberalization as advantageous with regard to their chances of earning a livelihood. First the founder members and established masters and then the larger, less privileged subgroups of apprentices and accompanying musicians put these strategies into practice against more or less resistance from the respective partners and competitors in the market.

Celebration music is manual work. It is a personal service that is not industrialized, and mediatized and capitalized only to a very limited extent. Its meaning lies mainly in the immediate perception by the persons present. Its production and consumption take place at the same time, and in the same space and social situation. They represent aspects of personal relations and interactions, in contrast to industrial commodities whose production and consumption typically form distinct social fields and are connected only through complex economic circulation.

The character of celebration music as a personal service implies that the processes of social disembedding and cultural estrangement that come along with its commercialization are generally limited, as compared, for instance, with the complex context of work in high-tech and highly capitalized sound studios and industrial sound carrier and video production, of music cassette retailers and their customers, and of radio and TV broadcasts and the wider public these media integrate. Nevertheless, in the case of live *jenbe* playing, disembedding and rationalization of economic action have also emerged as typical characteristics of commercialization. The musicians certainly continue to interact personally with each other, with their customers and audiences, but the meaning of lasting social relations and their embeddedness in broader institutions have increasingly lost importance to the individual interest in market chances and financial gain. The relations among musicians are shaped by almost all-out competition, drastic individualization and fierce generation conflicts, whereby the occupational

group's economic standing, social integration and cultural influence is weakened.²² The group has proved to be largely unprotected and helpless against the increasingly deteriorated market situation and has little means and ideas of how to counter their dependence from demand. These structures finally contribute to the musicians' estrangement: The majority of professional celebration drummers—not only those of advanced age—don't identify positively with their profession and their music. They grumble and moan to an amazing extent, they long for "real" employment which is paid monthly and not self-employed, and they long for "real" music which some see in past traditions and others in future artistic liberation, but nobody ever in present practice. While from a cynical perspective this might be considered kind of natural, I argue that, though possibly widespread, it is not natural but the result of social and historical processes. It is to be understood as kind of estrangement, founded in the same process of commercialization which is the base of the agents' livelihood—a contradiction which is central to the individuals' social life-world and the state of their profession in general.

It is interesting to note that the antagonistic processes of estrangement and appropriation appear to be closely connected in this context: The mediation of the music, both through the market and in the performance context, provides the customers and the consumers with good opportunities to legally and culturally appropriate the music. The very same social process, however, implies the producers' alienation and estrangement. That the professional cultural producers' estrangement is particularly strong becomes evident, for instance, in the fact that criticizing commercialization as a topic of discourse is much more pronounced among the producers than among customers, consumers and the wider public.

While in the last three decades or so cultural studies, the anthropology of consumption, and other subdisciplines have definitely succeeded in going beyond the concepts of a passive and manipulated *consumer* society,²³ it is open to question whether the meaning of commercialization for the practice and relations of *production* can equally be revised with a more positive regard to agency, creativity, and identity. In

²² Compare Colloredo-Mansfeld (2002: 113f, 123) who, by contrast, conceives of competition between commercial artisans not as individualization but as positioning in the first place, and thus as a kind of social relationship which in the long run rather sustains the common market and profession than to weaken it.

²³ See, for instance, Willis (1990) and Friedman (1994).

any case, one-sided views of either production or consumption, of either estrangement or appropriation appear to be insufficient for coming to grips with the social process of commercialization. Its understanding rather requires perspectives that include both aspects. While the anthropology of consumption emerges as a leading subdiscipline, the ethnography of commodity production and wage labor, meaning commodified work in the widest sense, should be taken seriously, too. The classical concepts of Max Weber, Karl Marx and Karl Polanyi have proved useful in the present case study for coming closer to an understanding of commercialization from the perspective of production. Rejecting the claim to universality of Western models of the market, of production, and of individual action has certainly been among the more important projects of the anthropology of consumption and of economy for some decades. It has been shown that commercialization does not refer to disembedding, rationalization and estrangement alone.²⁴ Binary oppositions—commodities vs. gifts, market vs. community, commerce vs. culture, individual rationality vs. social liability, short-term self-interest vs. long-term morals—are no longer seen as exclusive principles that characterize whole societies. They are rather regarded as aspects of economy in every society, aspects that are definitely often associated with tensions, but nevertheless coexist in variable, contingent, and sometimes complementary relationships.²⁵ However, this does not necessarily imply that the classical notions of rationalization, disembedding and estrangement have become obsolete. As the example of professional drumming in urban West Africa shows, these concepts can come amazingly close to social practice, even in a context apparently far off the core domains of (post-)industrial capitalism and neoliberal politics.

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²⁴ See, among others, Carrier (1990, 1995) on appropriation, Elwert et al. (1983) on the search for social security, for instance through "informal" market regulation, and Granovetter (1985), Plattner (1985, 1989), and Elwert (1987) on the meaning of trust in market transactions.

²⁵ See Appadurai (1986), Parry & Bloch (1989), Friedland & Robertson (1990), Gudeman (2001: 1-20), Slater & Tonkiss (2001: 174-196).

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