

The "terrible" child from Treichville



Musical lives in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

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Summary

In this thesis I investigate modern music genres and performance practices in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. I worked with three band structures, within three different genres: The local pop genre zouglou, the dancehall genre and the reggae genre. I have especially concentrated on reggae, and I compare how it is played and performed in Côte d'Ivoire to how it is perceived in Jamaica. Interestingly enough, reggae sounds different in the two countries, and in my thesis I hope to show the various reasons for this phenomenon. I am interested in the questions: Why do Ivorians listen to reggae, and what do they do in order to adapt it to the Ivorian setting? I claim that a certain social environment produces certain aesthetical preferences and performance practices. In short it produces taste: History and taste go together. Thus styles are historically constructed identity marks. Christopher Waterman has linked various social histories to musical genres and tastes in Nigeria in interesting ways (Waterman 1990). The Ivorian setting creates a sound that is denser and involves a heavier orchestration than the Jamaican one, which is cut down to the core. The two countries have different points of departure and different histories, and one can hear the traces of this in the two versions of reggae. Global inspirations become local expressions to Ivorians. Singers must uphold their local credibility and authenticity, and thereby create a resonance between themselves and their audience. If the singer "forgets" local aesthetics, the very competent listeners heavily reprimand him. Globalisation here is about difference and sameness, and not merely about copying or reproducing an artistic expression. Global influences and local musical tastes are about continuity, contrast, self-representation and what Gregory Bateson has called "a difference which makes a difference" (Bateson, 1972:459).

I therefore link pragmatic everyday Ivorian musical lives to musical genres, and try to show patterns in how music is consumed. Ghetto life is harsh and people are constantly searching for the unpredictable, fluid good or gain. People are forced to have an expedient approach to each other, and this creates give-and-take relationships. They are used to running rather than queuing in order to obtain something, as demand is always higher than any supply. This is

reflected in people's behaviour during concerts, where they run to the stage, dancing and screaming. This is how they *consume* the musical event. One might also say that in this highly individualistic environment, this is how they *consume* togetherness and community feelings. The concert is an event during which they can lower their constant guard, and experience and share something with others. The concert is thus not only a happy event, but also a compensation for the lack of collectivity.

The expedient attitude people have not only affects their patterns of music-consumption, but also pervades the actual social organization of music making. Before the band gets together to play, various social processes take place. Who is present and how they have arrived, who is late and who is not invited to play, who sings if the singer is late, are all crucial questions. The musicians live in Abidjan, and are familiar with the repertoire of most singers. The power negotiations between them are not so much about the sound as about the hierarchical positioning of the band members, the singers and their managers.

Summed up in keywords, then, this thesis is about local musical preferences and aesthetical evaluations, ghetto discourse and pride, a predatory individualistic environment and concert togetherness, precariousness and extravaganza.

A Bianca Aya, sans qui rien ne serait

LIST OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VI
INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE TREICHVILLE NEIGHBOURHOOD.....	5
Geography.....	5
The live music scene in the 60's and 70's.....	7
Musical aesthetics and creations in the 80's. Nouveauté; the “gnama-gnama” dance.....	10
Musical politics and the State in the 90's.....	13
Pride: The streetwise ghetto culture and ghetto discourse.....	14
Expediency.....	16
Inventive strategies.....	20
Music as a way out.....	20
Crime.....	23
The “loubards”.....	24
The loubards and President Houphouët-Boigny.....	25
Dropping out of school as a strategy.....	27
The little drummer boy.....	29
A REVEALING CRISIS.....	37
Gender.....	46
Housing problems.....	51
Escalation.....	53
Social equality and cultural difference.....	57
ISMAEL ISAAC THE STAR.....	63
Background.....	63
THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF MUSIC MAKING.....	69
The pragmatics of ecstasy.....	71
Expediency.....	76
Pragmatism.....	82
Negotiating power.....	83
Unpredictability.....	88
Making oneself indispensable.....	89
Mutiny.....	93
A day in the business.....	95
AN EXTRAVAGANT ART.....	101
The 1 st of May concert.....	105
The concert as a ritual.....	113
Why hysteria?.....	116
REGGAE AND THE MUSIC OF ISMAEL ISAAC.....	127
Genre conventions in reggae music.....	127
Jamaican reggae orchestration.....	130
The spirituality of reggae.....	131
A brief move into the London studios in the past.....	133
Ismaël and Island Records.....	134
Globalisation and the local.....	135

The voice.....	142
Ismaël’s “sweet” songs	146
Message the belly	148
Language and lyrics.....	149
A mixture of drum and bass aesthetics	152
Change	154
CONCLUSION	157
Terrible aesthetics.....	157
Resonance	158
The local changing the global	159
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	161

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INTRODUCTION

I conducted fieldwork in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, (West Africa) throughout the year 2001. I studied modern popular music genres and performance practices. I worked with three bands, each representative of a particular genre: The local pop genre zouglou, the dancehall genre and, the reggae genre. In particular, I have concentrated on reggae as it is played and performed in Côte d'Ivoire. In my thesis I have tried to link pragmatic everyday Ivorian lives to musical genres, and I want to show that a certain social environment with a definite social organization and differentiation leads to specific aesthetics and musical preferences.

Chapter 1 starts with a description of a social history of a neighbourhood in Abidjan, known for its importance in the music history of the country as a whole. This neighbourhood, Treichville, still very much sets the trend when it comes to genres and styles. This is where the big discos are found, but it is also an area where people lead their everyday lower working-class lives. They claim to live in the ghetto, and ghetto lives are precarious. In this chapter I discuss the ghetto setting, how to survive, and how music might be perceived as a way up and out. People are constantly in search of the unpredictable, fluid good or gain, "fluid" both in the sense that it is transient and in the sense that it is ideally transportable and transferable to different contexts. They pursue their goals in an expedient manner, in an environment where people often have give-and-take relationships. To exemplify issues about the social history of this neighbourhood and musical genres, I describe a drummer's fumbling start into Ivorian showbiz.

Doing fieldwork in this highly individualistic atmosphere was challenging. In chapter 2 I discuss my social role as a fieldworker in Abidjan. My role as a young, European, white, middle-class, female student in anthropology was determinant for the kind of interaction I had with my informants, and for what material we produced together. In short, my role shaped, opened and closed my access to information. What I find particularly interesting is to what extent some of my informants were eager to show me that we were social equals but culturally different. To illustrate my role in the field, I describe a revealing crisis I experienced after some months' work. During

the crisis, a whole social world unfolded and afterwards, I became aware of different layers of social interaction, both between my informants and myself, and among informants. I call the event a crisis, but to my informants this was only part of their everyday search for the fluid good or gain. I became trapped in what to me was an unfamiliar web of social patterns.

In chapter 3 and 4 I discuss the fact that the expedient behaviour of the pragmatic ghetto life pervades the social organization of music making. The fluid good here is the band; the battle is about obtaining or upholding a position within the band. The frequently arising and evaporating conflicts that I will call power negotiations are seldom about the sound, but rather about positioning, as I exemplify in a case involving the singer Ismaël, his band and his manager. The music becomes something through which one obtains something. Fredrik Barth has written on these issues, and I am particularly interested in the concept of “entrepreneurs” and personal strategies. In Abidjanese showbiz the person who manages to make himself indispensable to others is powerful, and must constantly be on the guard to prevent others from challenging him. In social relationships one must be pragmatic so as to not get tied down by loyalties to others; relations must be open for business at all times, and if possible, be profitable.

The expedient aura is a heavy ingredient in music performances as well. In chapter 5 I formulate the criteria for Ivorian musical evaluation by showing informants’ and journalists’ approaches to the matter. These are linked to ghetto culture and ghetto references, which form “a difference which makes a difference” (Bateson 1972:459). I further discuss the ghetto consumption of music and performance practices. In an environment where the demand is always higher than the supply, people are used to running for things, quarrelling and speaking up for themselves on the way. In this context, even the concert is a fluid good, which they are after. In this “hot” setting, music must reflect the “hotness”. The music must provide extravaganza and greatness, because a "small" sound is simply not enough. I exemplify this with a case from a stadium concert. I see concerts as community compensations in this individualistic setting; one of the rare things people are able to share, are concert experiences. Victor Turner (1970, 1974) and Bruce Kapferer (1984) have written on community, sharing, rituals and reflection, and it is my opinion that their concepts can be applied fruitfully in an analysis of the Ivorian case.

In chapter 6 I concentrate on genre conventions in reggae music. I further discuss the early globalisation of reggae with Bob Marley and the Wailers, who signed with Island Records. Changes were made in the London studios to fit an international market. In this thesis I am interested in the social settings around the music, which determine the final sound. My argument is that certain kinds of social organization and differentiation lead to certain aesthetic preferences. That is why Jamaican reggae and Ivorian reggae sound different. The Jamaicans' stripped to the core instrumentation has been changed into heavy orchestration and extravaganza in the Ivorian version of reggae. Different points of departure, different histories and therefore different aesthetics lead to different sounds and concert performances. The singers must not lose their street credibility and authenticity among their fans, and must therefore constantly be in line with what the audience lives. That is how the global is seen through a local expression; some musical details are kept, some are left out, and some new ones are added to the sound. The socialized listener is then capable of evaluating the music in accordance with local genre conventions, and consequently of detecting small, pleasant musical deviances.

My concluding remarks concentrate on the "terribleness" in both the Jamaican rasta-talk and dread aesthetics, and in Ivorian star Ismaël Isaac. Both Rastafarians and Ismaël obtain political importance in a local context. They position themselves by taking on a social official role, they are not terrible by nature; it is a form of black empowerment. I further argue that the expedient environment in Côte d'Ivoire forms certain kinds of perceptions and performance practices within music. I argue that one can draw a line from my case to a general level and state that life and music go together as inseparable unities. There is a resonance between one's life and one's music. I end my thesis with some thoughts about the global and the local. In the first part of the thesis I deal with a neighbourhood's social history linked to its musicality and music preferences, while in the second part I write about the impulses to this music. These impulses come from far away, and my informants make significant changes to the sound in order to create an Ivorian or personal sound. "Sweet and cool" becomes "terrible".

THE TREICHVILLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Geography

My thesis is twofold. In order to understand the reasons why certain musical genres are listened to and enjoyed in Côte d'Ivoire, I have chosen to start my thesis with a detailed description of a neighbourhood called "Treichville". This social history will enable us to see patterns in human behaviours and relationships, and help us understand how people consume music in Côte d'Ivoire, and why Ivorian reggae and Jamaican reggae sound different. I analyse this matter in the last chapters. As everyday life and music are closely linked together I think it is necessary to start with this description. The Treichville neighbourhood is named after Maurice Treich-Laplène who was the French titular governor from 1889 to 1893, when Côte d'Ivoire was a French territory, and not yet a colony. The neighbourhood is one of the oldest Pan-African ones, near the harbour of Abidjan, next to the lagoon. Treichville is organised on a very "rational" grid, as the streets are built from west to east, and the avenues from north to south, and they intersect at 90-degree angles. The streets and the avenues do not have other names than numbers, starting at one end of the neighbourhood. This gives everything a very planned impression, and a very "un-African" one, as everything is so square and structured, as opposed to other neighbourhoods, like the popular Williamsville, where houses are built in a random manner. To an outsider, Treichville seems like a square labyrinth where every angle looks the same. To an inhabitant though, things are of course very clear. The houses are constructed in a special manner; they have two entrances/exits, one facing one street, and another facing the neighbouring street. From these entrances, narrow "couloirs" (pathways) lead to the centre of the "cour familiale" (the family compound) where there is an open space. Many "entrée-coucher", (single rooms), are located around this space, each room with a door. Families may use these rooms themselves or rent them out to others. Usually

there are some “chambre-salons” too, small flats with one bedroom and one living room. Cooking and washing is done in the open, this is where people, mostly women, gather during the day, and where they raise their children. Many women conduct some kind of commercial activity in this open space; they may for example open up a drinking place where men gather at midday and stay throughout the day. A strong alcohol is served, “coutoucou”, and if you are not used to it, you easily get drunk. Other women conduct their business on the streets at the entrances to the “couloirs”; they put up tables and sell soft drinks, food (for lunch and dinner), biscuits, spices, traditional “médicaments” and jewellery, or they open up a mobile telephone service, where people can make their phone calls. But above all, these cours familiales are places where people live. They are the meeting points where everyone can be found, or where relatives or neighbours can give you instructions about where to look for someone. This is where family meetings are held and secrets are told.

Geographically speaking, Treichville is situated vis-à-vis the economically powerful “Plateau”; the centre for business, embassies, regional headquarters for NGO’s, banks, expensive restaurants, the French bookstore and the Alliance Française (a cultural centre which quite often invites artists to perform and exhibit). Treichville is at some geographical distance from the residential areas Cocody and Riviéra, where the Whites first settled as colonial officers and later, as aid workers, business partners, traders and diplomats. Later, rich people from the black intelligentsia, industry and high functionaries also started to settle in these residential areas. As a contrast, many workers of different kinds could afford to settle in Treichville, and therefore a lot of different ethnic groups and even foreigners met in this neighbourhood. Jobs were close, in the huge harbour of Abidjan or in the industrial area Zone 4, and in the evenings people met outside their houses to talk and listen to music. From the 1960s and onwards, it was evident that Treichville had become the “hot” area where one could go out to nightclubs, piano bars, outdoor concerts in “maquis” (restaurants/bars), and where one could easily buy food, alcohol and sex.

Even though it is a predominantly working class area with rather run down houses, people are in general proud of having grown up there. Treichville is alive, and people never go to bed it seems. As one walks down the street, one hears different music being poured out at

hallucination-inducing decibel levels from different maquis that are located next to each other. They are competing for the audible space. It is known that the maquis that has the most powerful blast of sound will attract the most customers. The Treichville neighbourhood has a central nerve running through it; “La rue 12”. This is a rather broad street, where one can do all kinds of shopping; clothes, shoes, carpets, mattresses, music cassettes, the latest hifi-equipment and so on. People from different parts of Abidjan come here to do their special shopping. Treichville leads and is tuned into the latest fashions throughout the country. People coming from the inland know about this neighbourhood and its particular aura. Actually, Treichville is a neighbourhood with an urban narrative when it comes to authenticity. This narrative is a story about, among other things, what counts as authentically Abidjanese and authentic musical genres; it functions both as an evaluation criterion and a criterion for aesthetic judgement. Treichville is more than a neighborhood in which people live, dance and drink; it is a myth. With a Treichville origin, one obtains street credibility. Pride of origins and this stamp of credibility and authenticity are actively used in human relationships. Treichville as a social field with a definite social organization also produces certain practices and aesthetical preferences, as we will see.

The live music scene in the 60’s and 70’s

In the 60’s and 70’s live orchestras used to play a lot, and people of all socio-economic levels came from all over Abidjan, from the rich quarters as well as the poor ones, in order to enjoy live music. One had to pay for most entrances, but where there were outdoor concerts, in maquis or in the streets, everyone had access and could listen to the bands. Treichville had lots of arenas for music, and was not really known for one special sort of music – “everything” was played and enjoyed; European pop/French “chanson” music, the Congolese rumba, the Cameroonian makoussa, Afro-American soul, and Ivorian “variété”, a sort of all round, guitar-based music, and the audience was made up of different people coming from different parts of Côte d’Ivoire and immigrants from the neighbouring countries. Treichville was an area where people met and exchanged musical preferences, among other things, and the neighbourhood still has this position in town, although other, richer areas have started to compete, with classy nightclubs and piano bars.

“As there were many open air “bar dancings”, (...) quite often young people would gather nearby. They listened to the music, and some of them tried to imitate the singer, for example. Others had small buckets, and they tried to imitate the percussions, and yet others had bigger cans and tried to imitate the trills from the drum kit. When you are young and talented, you tell yourself to take a chance, and often, by the end of the night, they helped the musicians to pack down the instruments. (...) Because of working their talent, they became musicians. And at the time in the 70’s, in Treichville, there were many orchestras; it was a temple in a way” (Jean Servais Bakiono, interview, 28.10.01).

In the late 70s, a French man named Albert Loude opened a record shop in la rue 12; a shop which was also a production and distribution company. Loude moved to Côte d’Ivoire in order to join his sister, Catherine, who had started a pressage company in the early 70s. Now, Albert Loude started to import the whole reggae wave that Abidjan and Côte d’Ivoire soon became so familiar with; that is U roy, I Roy, Delroy Washington, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Steel Pulse, Bunny Livingston Wailer – all the DJs, singers and composers from Jamaica came in a bunch. At the time, the cultural journalist Soro Solo was an apprentice at the national Radio, and he remembers Loude giving them reggae music and documentation so they could tell their audience all over the country about this new musical genre. Soro Solo says, “We grabbed all the albums and bombarded the radio, and reggae music started to have an audience” (Soro Solo, interview, 28.09.01). This wave hit Treichville and la rue 12 with particular force, as the record shop generating it was located there, as mentioned. Jean Servais Bakiono remembers attending the first live concert ever that the at that point rather unknown reggae singer Alpha Blondy gave, in the streets of Treichville in 1980. It was outside the Cultural Centre of Treichville, and the audience covered the nearby streets. This Cultural Centre was the first one in Côte d’Ivoire, and is now closed down, to the profound regret of local artists, musicians and journalists. Pépito, who is a young musician, pointed the building out to me several times during my stay in Abidjan, and expressed disappointment over the politicians’ lack of interest in reopening it. In the past, it had really been an important place for gathering and "musicking" (here I borrow Christopher Small’s book title from 1998).

Bakiono further underlined that what was special about Treichville was the cultural and artistic infrastructure one found there, after the Independence. Most of the popular cinemas were concentrated in the area, such as El Mansour, ABC, Le Rio and L'Entente. Treichville was also the area in which to find bar dancings and nightclubs such as Le Désert, where most African stars performed. In addition to the bar dancings and the cultural areas, there were often businesses, gastronomic restaurants, luxury boutiques with names recalling the French metropolis, such as the boutique "Boul' Miche" (after the famous Boulevard Saint Michel in central Paris) (Bakiono, interview, 28.10.01). One can still get "everything" in the shops in Treichville, whether one wants modern Nike sneakers, or the latest bathing suit fashions. "Le Désert" changed its name to Le Dopé, and was extremely famous because of its most well known "animator", the singer Amédée Pierre who performed his shows there. People danced until the morning hours, because this was a time when the country had money, especially from resources such as coffee and cocoa. Perhaps in line with the general, feverish coffee-and-cocoa optimism, Amédée Pierre's first album from 1960 was symptomatically titled "Bon Café de Côte d'Ivoire" ("Good coffee from Côte d'Ivoire").

In his early musical years in the 50's, Amédée Pierre imitated European, Zairian and Ghanaian music, "but in 1957 (...) I decided to stop doing the parrot in order to give a soul and a coloration to my music. To me, it was important to give my country a musical identity" (Interview in Ivoir'Soir, 15.02.01). He played at Le Désert from 1968 to 1989, and he always played live music for his friends dropping by after work to enjoy his show. These friends went on to become famous politicians, ministers and artists; one of them is the current President Laurent Gbagbo. Soro Solo compares Le Dopé of Amédée Pierre in the 70's' Treichville to The Shrine of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti in Lagos, Nigeria (interview, 28.09.01), because of its musical and social importance, both for Treichville and for the country. The late president Félix Houphouët-Boigny also enjoyed Amédée Pierre's music, and in the rich coffee and cocoa days after Independence, he wanted to support the national artists through ensuring that new orchestras were established in all the country's regions, and through giving the artists money. This helped to generate a self-conscious Ivorian pedigree opposed to foreign musical dictation. Amédée Pierre was one of the lucky ones to receive a heavy envelope that ensured

his being able to afford to buy instruments. Today, nothing is left of that fortune, and the instruments are lost. On Independence Day, the 6th August 1960, he was asked to sing at the Cultural Centre in Treichville in front of a crazy crowd of happy, partying people. This he recalls as a special honour (Interview, *Le Jour*, 12.05.97). Amédée Pierre is part of the Ivorian cultural heritage, and he made himself a name in the Treichville neighbourhood. He was one of the first singers to turn his music into an identity-marker for what was Ivorian in contrast to what was foreign. Other singers like Alpha Blondy and Ismaël Isaac were to follow in the future. It is my opinion that this description shows that music can develop a national identity process, and that music genres are linked to a social history, as mentioned in the beginning of this thesis.

Musical aesthetics and creations in the 80's. Nouveauté; the “gnama-gnama” dance

The inhabitants of precarious neighbourhoods like Treichville are in general very inventive and cunning when it comes to communication and survival. With lived experience of this setting of inventiveness and hardship in Abidjan, and with a basis in the movements of the martial sports they exercised, some of these inhabitants invented a dance, the “gnama-gnama”, which spread like wildfire in the mid 80's. These inventive inhabitants, who were called “loubards”, had been working as bodyguards in showbiz for a long time, and had been hired when the reggae legend Jimmy Cliff held his concert in Abidjan in the 70's, so they already had a feel for the music. This gnama-gnama dance is the dance of “les frimeurs”, the ones who show off their wealth in clothes, shoes, and jewellery – in short: in material wealth. These frimeurs are ghetto inhabitants who have obtained a certain amount of money, and who form a sort of nouveaux riche set among others. They are eager to parade their wealth, as this demonstrates that they have made it in life, and that they are independent. The Malinké word gnama-gnama means everything that is small, dirty, and negative that you throw away. The inhabitants of the ghetto thought it an appropriate name for a dance practised by the ghetto children, the ones the rest of the society did not care about, or despised. (Soro Solo, interview, 28.09.01.). The authentic roots to this dance are contested. According to Soro Solo, the movements of the dance existed among the young in the different neighbourhoods before the “loubardisme” became institutionalised (Ibid.). But in any case, the dance emerged from the

popular areas in Abidjan, the movements that are central to it came from martial sports, and the dancers put emphasis on their clothes and shoes, showing them off and pointing them out to the audience in a very self-confident manner.

The dancer maintains a central equilibrium of the body, from which he/she can add on small gestures such as eyewinks, head shrugs, hands in motion, facial expressions and so on.

According to Soro Solo, the name of the dance illustrates how to practise it: gnama-gnama, small things, in this case, small movements which are "added on to" a body in equilibrium, and this constitutes the whole dance. Whether or not the name designates the dancer, as the loubard Sahin informed me, or the movements, as Soro Solo upholds, is difficult to say.

Maybe it is both, at different levels. In any case it might be that these minimal dance steps express a sentiment of self-control and the assertion of being a cool guy. Through this dance the ghetto dwellers express their power with the help of small gestures, so an onlooker must in fact have a trained eye to discover these signs. The performer will not brag about his being able to dance such steps, he just does it. On the other hand, the dance is also a means to show wealth in an effective way. The dance became known throughout the country, not only through dancers in the precarious neighbourhoods, but through a nationally famous singer, Kéké Kassiry, who made an album in the mid 80's. The album was on the radio and TV, and the country's youth felt that what they heard was in perfect harmony to what they danced – this was in fact the gnama-gnama-music, and they enthroned Kassiry as the king of gnama-gnama. The important phenomenon here is that the dance with its particular steps appeared before the music later associated with it, and this is a common feature in modern Ivorian music and dance history. Kassiry's 2nd album was called "Gnama-gnama", and he had a song by that name as well. It was a sort of early "world music", a music with influences from different parts in the world. "Kéké Kassiry is a Bété, part of a tribe from the central west in Côte d'Ivoire, but he has grown up in the big city, has spent time in Europe, and he came back with a music coloured with various inspirations; pop music, bété music and Ivorian and African music. This gave an original sound, the Kéké Kassiry sound, the gnama-gnama sound" (Soro Solo, interview, 28.09.01). The ghetto dance was thus blasted out across the country, and had its star, and all this happened quickly with the help of the mass media. A

concept born in the poor neighbourhoods was nationalised and recognized as something modern and Ivorian.

The movements come first; then the music is added. This does not mean that the music and the melodies are insignificant, of course. On the contrary, the music is primordial, and this is where authenticity lies. You make music in line with the locality you come from, where your childhood and upbringing have taken place. It is clear that a musician or a singer who has grown up in an area like Treichville will make music that mirrors this kind of upbringing, as opposed to a rich Cocody or Riviéra upbringing. Treichville is an index for local authenticity.

During the 80's an important message was channelled through music and the gnama-gnama dance steps, namely an attempt to turn a lack of self-esteem into pride of the self. The message was both proclaimed and speedily accepted by those who actually experienced this problem on a daily basis; the inhabitants of various precarious neighbourhoods. The most important effect the gnama-gnama dance had, in my view, was that the inhabitants of deprived areas were listened to on a national level, and that other people recognized their existence. In addition, it was in tune with the wish to create something purely Ivorian in the midst of many music- and dance influences from abroad. This movement came from the heart of the country; a product of pure national creation, something expressed by the singer Amédée Pierre as well in the 60's and 70's, when he claimed he had stopped "doing the parrot". During these decennia, the State shaped itself after Independence, and started to become more confident about its own capacities in creating art, and especially art coming from the precarious neighbourhoods in the country.

The gnama-gnama dance and –steps were artistic signals to the exterior world that the inhabitants of poor neighbourhoods existed. It showed that something coming from these quarters was positive and worthwhile listening to. My thesis is, among other things, about this fact; artistic inventions, continuities and contrasts coming from deprived areas, which in turn become identity markers for a neighbourhood and for a nation in the making. The gnama-gnama description shows that music and dance steps are powerful means in this regard.

Musical politics and the State in the 90's

The political uncertainty during the last years of president Félix Houphouët-Boigny's reign continued after his death on the 7th of December 1993, as he departed without naming a successor. Though according to convention Parliament leader Alassane Dramane Ouattara was to become the interim president until new elections, this did not happen. Instead, Henri Konan Bédié from Houphouët-Boigny's own party was installed as president, and he stayed in this office for 8 years, despite the fact that on paper the country was now a multiparty democratic state, with an opposition. This lasted until the military coup d'état that took place on the 24th of December 1999. The whole country had to live with the consequences of this coup, and every sector of Ivorian society was affected by it. Not only were the common sectors such as banks and business heavily damaged; the artists' world collapsed altogether. Few people could afford to go out to have fun and buy drinks any longer, so the nightclubs went through a difficult time, and had to give up having live orchestras. From a certain period, they could only afford to pay DJs. Once, the drummer Pépito and I drove past Madison, a famous nightclub in Treichville, late at night, and he shouted, "This is what is left of the place! No taxis!" meaning that in the golden age there had been rows and rows of taxis waiting for the clientele to leave in the early morning hours.

Evidently, the military coup meant economic ruin for the musicians who wanted to live off their music, but who now found themselves unemployed. The year 2000 was one most of them want to forget, as they struggled hard to pay for house rents, food, clothes, and schooling for their children or nephews or nieces. As most orchestras had fired their musicians, and as jobs got fewer and fewer, some musicians started in other professions, or lived off relatives for a while. This must be why Pépito often claimed that if you call yourself a professional musician in Abidjan and Africa and you actually manage to live off it, you must be a really excellent one. But having a good network, and being a good musician, has another aspect to it; it means that access to Europe is the next challenge and possibility. That is why many musicians come to Abidjan from the province or from abroad "to do it", to conquer the market, and eventually, who knows, to go to Europe or the US. This is part of many musicians' dreams. Some get to realize it while to others it remains a dream. Abidjan

must be something of a myth, when musicians from Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville and Congo Kinshasa come and play here. They all have the same hope; to get more possibilities to play, to become more professional, to make a better living, and to get a bigger chance in the musical lottery of going to Europe. Abidjan is the interesting and tempting metropolis, it is where everything happens in showbiz, and it is where the big contracts are found. Abidjan is Africa's Paris. Often, one could read in the newspapers or hear people cry out that "Il n'a plus rien à prouver ici!!" ("He doesn't have anything more to prove here!!"), meaning that the particular artist or musician had to go abroad to conquer other worlds and scenes. Often, people would get annoyed if this did not happen, and express a certain fatigue when seeing the artist again and again; "Il faut qu'il parte! Mais qu'est-ce qu'il attend?" ("He has to leave! What is he waiting for?") Abidjan is the stepping-stone of the region.

This fact shows to what extent people are at the same time turned towards what is authentic Ivorian and towards possibilities in a global working environment with foreign impulses. In the latest chapters we will see that this phenomenon pervades today's singers' artistic scope, in which they take pride in a strong local identity and at the same time seek global inspirations.

Pride: The streetwise ghetto culture and ghetto discourse

Historically, the word ghetto comes from the Warszawa ghetto and the 2nd World War, when thousands of Jews were segregated into an extremely small, fenced area that was controlled by the Nazis. The reason for this segregation was strictly racial, and followed a Nazi logic of worshipping the white, Germanic Aryan race. This logic saw the Jews as an inferior human race. It is clear that this historic dimension of the ghetto word has only lent its naming to the Treichville neighbourhood, without including the racial and segregating aspect of it among its inhabitants.

People in general, and especially musicians and artists, call Treichville a ghetto, but there are concrete houses, most roads are paved, there is running water, and in comparison to the state

of things in other countries in the region, the garbage is mostly taken care of. One can also compare it to even more deprived neighbourhoods in Abidjan, such as Boribana, Williamsville, and some areas in Adjamé and Abobo, which all are located on the other side of the lagoon and the bridges in relation to Treichville. These areas are precarious in the sense that they have few paved roads, people live in barracks that are put up in an unorganised manner, electric lines and poles, if any, are put dangerously near people, unemployment is higher than in other neighbourhoods, and there is a garbage and security problem. So the hardship is greater, and people from Treichville will probably agree that growing up in one of these neighbourhoods is more problematic.

But life is precarious in the Treichville neighbourhood too, and many people do not know when they will have their next meal. The unemployment is evident, as one can see young men in the streets during daytime, with absolutely nothing to do. However, the feeling of pride at coming from Treichville is important, and is illustrated by a situation I witnessed in Yamoussoukro, the political capital of the country. I was there with some friends and informants, and when we were going home, we got in trouble. We missed a bus, and found ourselves in the middle of nowhere, at a police checkpoint. Some male adolescents encircled us, and started to get closer. This is a known strategy for mugging. I did not realize this was happening, until one of my friends shouted at them: “Vous ne savez pas d’où je viens? Je viens de Treichville! Treichville!” (“Don’t you know where I come from? From T.”). From there, we took a taxi back to the centre of the town. Nothing actually happened afterwards, but my friend was very upset that youngsters like that would dare to threaten him, he who was from Treichville, and had been in the business for ages. As I see it, being from Treichville in this situation meant that he looked upon himself as a clever, cunning “débrouillard”, from the verb “se débrouiller”, (to manage, to cope with), who people just did not mess around with. He detected their plan before the attack, cunning and perceptive as he was. In line with the Treichville urban narrative, he was a survivor.

This pride is part of the myth about Treichville and its strong inhabitants. People from the ghetto are to be respected. Ismaël Isaac sings about this, but he also tells people to behave well. He says that even if you are from the ghetto, you do not need to steal in order to be a

respectable human being (communication with his fans in between songs during a concert in Bouaké). The pride concept covers the self-sufficient man/woman who is capable of managing life without depending on anyone. It also covers the aura of authenticity.

Expediency

According to the drummer Pépito, it was in the late 1970s that one first started to call the Treichville neighbourhood a ghetto. The significant element is that it was named a ghetto, not by its own inhabitants, but by the inhabitants of neighbouring quarters, people who would actually enter Treichville in order to steal and create disorder. They would tell the taxi drivers on their way, “On va au ghetto”, which means, “Let’s go to the ghetto”, and so the taxi drivers soon found out that the ghetto equated Treichville. Pépito explicitly said that from then on, Treichville became a meeting point for mugging and stealing, and therefore very dangerous. “Before that, Treichville was a sane neighbourhood”, he says. After the thieves had named the area, others started to use the name as well, so it spread rapidly. Now, the artists use the appellation with certain bravura.

What people are referring to when they call Treichville a ghetto, is probably the way of life they lead there. The image that especially the musicians and the artists want to adopt and express to others is the Afro-American black inner-city way of life, characterized by its tough, streetwise male behaviour. This is the Black Ghetto, and not the Jewish one. The Black Ghetto is violent and dangerous, and covers a whole social system. Since these neighbourhoods are seen as dangerous, violence is accepted in self-defence and even in attack, and one has to show an iron hard macho façade, and be prepared to strike at any moment. One has to constantly be on the guard for possible attacks from others. This means that you always have to scrutinize people and be able to display a decisive and expedient attack when the situation demands it, otherwise people will call you weak and describe you as “peureux”, (“afraid” in the sense of “coward” or “chicken”). Being a “peureux” in the Treichville neighbourhood is not good for your survival.

This Black Ghetto discourse further claims sexuality as a weapon, a necessity and a threat. The human body is a potential site of exposure, for both men and women. Men have to show their sexual competence and endurance by displaying several women at the same time, in different arenas; in this context the women become jewellery and the very proof of the masculinity of their companion. The man upholds the image of his being capable of satisfying and entertaining different women. At the same time, the woman is seen as sacred and as a proof of the continuity of the human race. She is seen as more pure than the man; my informants often told me that even if a man has different women, this was not a reason for his girlfriend to hunt other men. “Why should the woman sink down to the man’s level?” they would often ask me. From this perspective, the man is seen as uncontrollable; he just has to follow his sexual desires because he cannot help it, but the woman should remain serene in her sexual behaviours.

Another aspect of the Afro-American ghetto discourse is the victimization of the self. Inhabitants of deprived areas are seen as victims of the surrounding system, both by the middle-classes and by the inhabitants themselves. They are seen as being stuck in the ghetto without any hope for the future. They do not have access to stable revenue and cannot easily make plans for the future when it comes to food, schooling, housing and equipment. But despite this perception and experience of victimization, there is the dream and ideal of getting up and out of the ghetto, which is also part of the American dream. So there is more a feeling of energetic will than of fatalism. Everything is possible if you play your cards well.

The Black Ghetto produces a specific kind of social system, which I also found in Treichville and other precarious neighbourhoods. This social system is characterized by certain patterns of social organisation. The expedient and pragmatic manner in which people engage with each other, and the reasons why relationships last or break, are significant. Everybody constantly revises their social relations in search of a beneficial outcome, in search of access to resources. People seek each other out for a specific reason; what is my gain in this relationship? If both sides think it convenient, they continue the relationship, but if it is too much of a one-way-system, the relationship is likely to break. Both parties must be interested, and must receive something from the other party. Pragmatics pervades all social relations. The

perception is that as there are not enough goods and resources for everyone in this social system, one must do one's best to get hold of whatever is within reach. That is why there is such an expedient approach to others, both when it comes to being prepared to attack and for attacks, and the readiness to answer with a strike, and in situations where the target is some resource one may get hold of. The degree of individualism is extreme in this respect. If one stands back and is polite, nothing will come out of it. It is the insufficient amount of resources that is the reason why people are forced to set aside moral scruples in their relationships with others. They do not behave in this way because they are particularly bad in this part of the world; they do it in order not to succumb in life. It is human to choose your own survival first and think of your neighbour second. The Treichville neighbourhood incorporates this kind of social system because it is composed of people from the lower working class, among which one finds a lot of unemployed persons, especially among the youth. This generates a social system characterized by expedient relationships as well as a certain tendency towards the development of gangs among young people.

Because of the constant revision of relationships, one gets a rather chaotic impression when one wants to know who is friend with whom at any given moment. There is a continual risk of atomisation of all human relationships; it is as if each person drifts around and attaches him/herself to others in a transient, unpredictable way. A high level of daily information is required in order to stay up to date of the latest fissions and fusions. The relations are vague because the resources emerge and disappear in a random manner. Even though a man might despise or be frightened by another man, the thought of irrevocably ending the relationship is unlikely, as he never knows when he might need this other man in the future. The ideal is to let go of an angry feeling towards a person from a particular situation and not let it pervade any forthcoming interaction, but instead start from scratch. The sentence "J'ai pris sur moi" ("I controlled myself" or "I composed myself") is often heard from people who have been in an argument, but who have not smashed the other's face in altogether, for the sake of the future. In Treichville, people often have a lot of acquaintances they can make use of when they want to obtain something. By pointing out the potentials for gain, a man can convince another to do his will. As long as there is a gain for both, it might be an interesting plan to engage in, and both parties are aware of and understand this pattern in the social system. The

cunning person knows how to present a case to a friend as involving gain for the friend, as being nearly an act of altruism, although in reality it is a favour to oneself. Expediency and pragmatism lie behind every endeavour. If you do not follow the logic of the ghetto social system, people gravely take advantage of you, because you are supposed to behave in this way yourself, and fight back. If you do not, the result will be that you will never improve your life, neither for yourself nor for your family, which is a part of the ghetto dream: to get yourself and them up and out.

An echo of this ghetto approach to life and its denial of fatalism is seen in a recent Ivorian newspaper interview with Ismaël Isaac, where he says that even though he has managed to move out of Treichville and has built his own residence, he has not lost sight of the ghetto, and that his fans themselves should strive to copy this achievement. When one moves out and builds a house, it means that one is independent and responsible for oneself. Actually, the residence “should constitute the pride of all the people who have supported me”, and when it comes to the inhabitants of the ghetto, and especially the handicapped, Ismaël claims: “I dedicate this house to them. In order to tell them that in life, hope is permitted to everyone” (*www.abidjan.net*: L'intelligent d'Abidjan, 14.01.04). Ismaël sees himself as an example to follow, his dream has come true, even though he is polio-handicapped and comes from a deprived area. He wants the youth to believe in themselves and not “baïsser les bras” (which symbolically means “to give up”).

It is important to be familiar with the social setting and the social history of the Treichville neighbourhood and similar quarters. The now described expedient focus of the inhabitants of deprived areas also pervades their very pragmatic way of making music and their “hit-and-run” way of consuming it during concerts. It also affects aesthetical taste and what one perceives as good music. In turn, this influences greatly how musicians and singers adapt reggae and other genres to a local audience, as we will see.

Inventive strategies

Because of the relatively high number of unemployed people, many of the inhabitants of Treichville make a tremendous effort to create their own money-earning occupation. This is “débrouillardisme” (again from the verb “se débrouiller”) and it means that people are creative and inventive about their situation. They know that nobody has paved the way for them, so they had better shape their destiny themselves. Often they open their own businesses by borrowing money from family or friends – for example to start a business like a “vidéothèque”, which means to buy video films and a TV and video set and organize shows, taking entrance fees from the audience. Other businesses are small boutiques where they sell clothes or shoes, and this can become a relatively significant income, especially if they are located at la rue 12 or nearby. Another cunning plan to survive is to open a maquis. A maquis is likely to work well if the owner has an impressive hi-fi set with a powerful sound and if he/she has a large social network. Customers generally like to go where they are known, as they can get better service there and have a better time.

Young men in Treichville, and neighbourhoods of the same standard, also create their own set of odd jobs, for example shoe cleaning or hairdressing. Some are very mobile, like the ones who walk around with their sewing machines, nail polishing equipment and plumbing tools. One common feature of these businesses and odd jobs is that you have to barter for everything you buy and sell, so a quick analysis and judgment of people is necessary to make a good deal. It is perhaps not by chance that one finds the black market for money in Treichville, where one can change any kind of currency to and from the local cfa-franc – young men stand at a specific street corner at la rue 12, calculators in hand, waiting for customers. Again, an expedient focus in quickly changing situations must prevail in order to survive in life.

Music as a way out

It should be stressed that the prospects of a secure future were, and still are, not common in Treichville. There are not many options for young people. So even though young people are committed to the music domain, it also constitutes a pragmatic chance to survive in life. Their

musical skills, the possibilities to listen to live music in their neighbourhood, and their personal network, make it possible for them to become professional musicians. Another element is that their parents accept their becoming musicians, even though it is not looked upon as honourable work in the surrounding society. To people who grow up in rich areas such as Cocody and Riviéra, with intellectual parents working as high State functionaries, in industry or as teachers, and who have high aspirations for their children, a life in showbiz will not seem attractive or very likely. Being a musician means that your monthly income will be unpredictable, without any possibility of making plans for the future, and rich parents just will not let their children become such unrespectable “outcasts”. Music often is linked to alcohol, sex and drugs, too. Treichville parents, however, do not have much to say in their children’s choice of work, as they are poor themselves. My informants said that if a man cannot afford to pay his son’s meals, then how can the son possibly respect him? He is forced to find some money-generating enterprise in order to eat. This often results in children quitting school at early ages, and seeking employment instead. Thus the children in Treichville and similar neighbourhoods quickly become independent. When they understand that their parents cannot provide for them economically any longer, they tend to seek other possibilities for survival. “Se chercher” is a local expression for this, which means that someone chooses the best options to obtain something. It is an opportunistic attitude, which is common among ghetto dwellers, but also among people coming from other places in Côte d’Ivoire; it is about organising life as best one can.

In situations where the parents cannot afford to care for their children’s needs, some children become “bakromen” (according to Soro Solo, interview, 28.09.01). “Bakromen” derivates from the Malinké word, “ba”. This means a man, a woman or a people, according to Pépito. “Kro” means “to sleep”, and the “man” is an Anglicism. The joint word “bakroman” is a street language word (a so-called “nouchi” word; I’ll explain the term “nouchi” later in the text), which might be translated as “bum”, “homeless person/child”, which designates the children who have run away from home and sleep in front of the lagoon in the Plateau area, facing Treichville on the other side. Other young people stay in their home area, but do as they please, out of their parents’ reach. Of course, they can become what they chose to themselves; musicians, traders, football players, thieves, hairdressers, videocassette showers

and so on. According to Soro Solo, these parents have never accepted their children becoming musicians, because they were never asked. In sum then, there are possibly more reasons and strategies for becoming a musician than only “musically wanting” to be one, as I mentioned earlier. “S’en sortir” is another local expression, which means to manage, to get a grip of things, and choosing an artistic path can be seen as “s’en sortir” in a precarious situation.

As we have seen, words like “se débrouiller”, “se chercher”, “s’en sortir” are crucial to people, as they have something to do with pride and self-respect. If you manage to get up and out from the ghetto, you are a local hero, someone others will admire. As we saw above, this is the case with Ismaël Isaac, and people take a personal pride in telling their stories, starting off with nothing, and ending up with a fortune, or at least a decent life. The most famous and telling example of this is perhaps the international reggae star Alpha Blondy, who used to beg for money and meals, but who now lives in a sumptuous palace. If you manage to live by your own devices, not borrowing money from friends and family, you have made it. This is the Treichville social system, a codex apparent in other popular neighbourhoods as well. That is why people become inventive about their situation and create their own employment. Their setting forces them to exploit their own mind and body, as they have no powerful relations to rely on and trust in. The fact that there are so many words that mean the same thing, namely being able to cope in life by oneself, is proof of this attitude among the inhabitants. Actually, one can widen the validity of this concept a bit. Some of my neighbours told me about a woman who had been taken to the U.S. by her husband in order to join him there. They were both Ivorians. The husband had managed to get a green card for himself and for his wife. Once there, she did not settle with him at all, but went to live by herself somewhere else. She sought the best pragmatic option to manage life, “elle s’est cherchée”, even overseas. The story was told by a man, and was accompanied by grunts and sounds that clearly stated the fact that he was annoyed with this woman for being so ungrateful, but he also explained to me that this was not uncommon really, it was rather a feature of the Ivorian soul. You cannot easily trust people; even the closest of relationships are exposed to atomisation when there is a possibility for one of the parties to gain something significant elsewhere. Again, strategic pragmatism, expediency and individualism are important qualities in this kind of social setting.

Crime

Abidjan is known to have a security problem. Thieves are often armed and dangerous, and often rape or kill people, leaving their victims in despair and fear, or dead. In Treichville, however, people have come to an arrangement as to how to handle them. A local system has developed, where people run after the thieves, and beat and kill them without delay. If a burglar is caught, he often prefers to be handed over to the police and be beaten by them, rather than face the violent fate at the hands of the inhabitants of Treichville. Cartoon papers often make jokes about this, with drawings of poor burglars nervously begging to be handed over to the police, as they run through the streets with the inhabitants pursuing them, sticks in hand. People in Treichville are used to handling things themselves, and do not wait for help from the State. This is perhaps generally the case in poor areas that are forgotten by the State; you cannot trust the State apparatus and the police force to help, because they themselves are frightened. When I lived in Yopougon, another popular neighbourhood, four or five armed men attempted to burglarise the house I lived in during the night. The neighbours were awake, but they did not dare to peek their heads out. If this had happened in Treichville we could have shouted, and some heavily muscled men would probably have come to our rescue. In this way, I suppose one can say that Treicheville is a ghetto, as there is a sort of guard up all the time – in fact, people wait for such occasions to show their strength and vent some pent-up frustration.

Smaller occurrences illustrate this, as well. Once, I had asked one of my Treichville informants for help, because I wanted to buy a stereo (yes, a ghetto blaster...). He had previously said that he knew people in the business, so he could get me a good deal. He went to see his guy who worked in a shop near la rue 12, and made a mutually beneficial deal with him. But when he went back to pay him, one of the other employees had blabbed to the boss, so the deal was off. My informant was furious with this employee, and to me he said “je ne l’ai pas manqué en sortant”, meaning that he had punched him on his way out. His respect as an inhabitant of Treichville had been offended, and he must rectify it straight away. Actually, local custom states that if you are not able to fight back or stand up for yourself or for a

woman who is accompanying you, you are a chicken. Offences must be intercepted in the right way, and often there is a fine balance in these situations – you certainly will not bother to get in a clinch with some youngster under your level, but you certainly will bother if your offender is your equal, or if he is bigger or older than yourself. In fact, this goes for women, too. I quite often saw women shout loudly at each other, or strike each other. People here deal with their problems through using verbal- and muscle-force, and this phenomenon has a historical dimension to it.

The “loubards”

As mentioned, from the 70's and onwards, there was a certain market for body-guards in the country, but especially in Abidjan. The loubards, young muscle-heavy men from the ghetto, took jobs as “garde rapprochée” for important business people, national politicians, foreign dignitaries and tourists, in addition to doing the guarding during concerts held by national as well as international stars; thus they were in close cooperation with show business. This was seen as honourable work, and they managed to live off it. However, in the late 70's the loubards had formed powerful gangs, each representing a neighbourhood. In Treichville, the “Mapless” were on top, whereas in Abobo “Nous Black” were in power. “Everybody wanted to get through in life, and everybody exercised some sort of martial sport. Fights between them were organised. Some got themselves a name, that is, they went to other neighbourhoods to test their own power” (loubard Sahin, interview, 31.08.01). Then, they expanded the guarding business to nightclubs, and they did it in a very cunning way; they visited the clubs and started to steal from the rich youngsters and attack the guards. The owners understood that these were the stronger and more perfect men to hire, so the loubards received job offers from the clubs. The loubards made a point of ruling their neighbourhood, being strong, exercising their bodies a lot, and being respectable men, and were always opposed to the rich people and the rich residential areas where “les boss” lived. For example, Sahin and his friends would not miss the chance if they passed a clothes-line with chic and expensive clothes hung out to dry. Quickly, they would jump over the fence, grab the clothes and run off at a high speed.

They developed a kind of coded language, le nouchi, and every neighbourhood had its own nouchi, slightly different from the others'. In fact, it was a mixture of French and Malinké words, Anglicism and neologisms. It was an ever-changing language, where they quickly changed words when outsiders caught on to their meaning. Le nouchi is an efficient way of communicating secretly, and still has this function among ghetto dwellers. What is special about a singer like Ismaël Isaac, is that he employs numerous nouchi words in his texts, giving a powerful signal to the world about where he comes from. Not only is he from the ghetto, but he is from Treichville. He sings for Treichville. However, it is important to emphasize that the loubards existed not only in Treichville, but in all the poor neighbourhoods in Abidjan that have a strong identity, and in all the Ivorian cities. The nouchi language became a national street language with its internal differences. As a general fact, one can note that it is in and around Abidjan the most popular nouchi is generated, here the new words are produced and are later spread to the rest of the peripheral corners of the country. The nouchi language from the centre is more fashionable than the ones from the outskirts that "lag behind" in their incorporation of the latest terms.

The loubards and President Houphouët-Boigny

“Being a loubard is a total concept. It can mean a thief, a style, but first and foremost it is someone sporty, who likes his body, who by his own strength fights in order to obtain what he has not. Houphouët realized that” (Sahin, interview, 31.08.01).

In the year 1990 in the social historical outline, it is as if a bomb bursts. It is the year when President Houphouët-Boigny launches the multiparty democratic state. It was an entirely new system to everyone, to the leaders as well as the people. The ones who were the most angry and the most dangerous in this new situation of increased freedom were, according to Sahin, the ghetto dwellers (Ibid.). As Houphouët saw that the loubards had great influence in the ghetto, he decided to tie them closer to him, in order to keep the peace in Côte d'Ivoire. He thus formed the “V.S.”, the “Sécurité Volontaire”, a scheme that heavily involved the loubards. Sahin says “When we were to meet the President for the first time, we were not informed about it. It is not sure we would have accepted, maybe we would have thought they

might kill us, because the country was really on the verge of something. We thought that the Government only wanted to conclude another guarding contract (...)." The meeting was held at the maquis "Bléissa" in Treichville, but the loubards were soon driven in a gbaka (a minibus), to the Presidential Palace. By then, some of them were crying with emotion, because Houphouët was a national father, like a myth. "He said that he had heard it was us destroying schools etc. But we told him we never interfered in politics, and just did guarding (...). He said he would help us, and pay us 25 000,- per month, and he then gave us 5 millions so that everyone could go home". The loubards went home to their neighbourhoods to make lists, naming all the loubards in the country. Their task was to keep the country calm, not to join the political scuffles, not to be "bought" by anyone from the opposition, but just keep the country out of the flames during the transition period from the one party state to the multiparty state. Houphouët did help them, but he definitely helped himself, too. He was very visionary when he got the ghettos on his side. When the second meeting took place, the press was there as well as the generals. Houphouët then said that as no one had objected to the amount of money last time, he had decided to pay them each 50 000.- per month. "He said that we were the plain, and he the mountain, and therefore had the view over what we did, who we were" (ibid.).

Ismaël Isaac sings about the governmental "V.S." programme in his song "Joe Black", where he says "V.S. vous a maîtrisé", ("V.S. made you calm down"), meaning that President Houphouët-Boigny really helped the loubards in a difficult situation, at a time when they were accused of making trouble in the country. As a true ghetto dweller, Ismaël has hired several of his loubard friends from Treichville as personal bodyguards. There is especially one huge loubard, Khorodjo Sylvain, who follows him wherever he goes, sometimes even on international tours (despite the fact that Khorodjo Sylvain is horror-struck at the thought of flying: "Have you ever heard of badly injured people after a plane crash? No! They all die!", he commented after the 11th of September attack on the World Trade Centre in New York). He takes on a role as a security guard, throwing strangers off the stage during concerts. He is also someone who speaks out when a musician has done something that displeases him, and once, when one of my informants and I met him in Treichville and asked him when the next gig with Ismaël would take place, he answered "L'enfant est fatigué" ("the child is tired"). So

Khorodjo is also the caring, father-like person, even though he is younger than Ismaël, and therefore under normal circumstances would be obliged to listen calmly to him.

This description of the loubards shows how a deprived group of people became powerful in the country in a transition period. The loubards had all the ingredients of authentic ghetto dwellers; they were impressive verbally and physically speaking, they stood up for themselves and paved their way in the society. Ismaël Isaac is also part of this movement, although not a loubard himself. Through his artistic path, Ismaël pointed at them, again showing to everyone that something good comes from the ghetto. He acknowledges their position. This is ghetto pride.

Dropping out of school as a strategy

Against this backdrop we now have to consider why there is such a high number of school drop-outs in these popular neighbourhoods. When a pupil from a popular neighbourhood like Treichville fails an exam despite having worked hard and efficiently, local conviction and theory easily reaches the following conclusion: It is not normal to fail in such circumstances, only rich pupils must be able to do well on exams. Local theory claims that often, success is paid for under the table by the richer layers of the population, and this is frustrating for everyone else. Often, jobs are "bought" as well, or they are distributed between friends or family. According to this logic, school does not get you anywhere, and you might as well drop out in order to seek a job and at least gain an income. Further, even if you do have a diploma, you will face great problems without powerful friends. One of my neighbours without a diploma came up to me and told me about his problems getting a job. He had previously been fired from a pharmaceutical factory where he had worked on the floor. Now, without any references or network, he stood no chance of getting hired anywhere. The demand for jobs is so high that working-class people without diplomas and relevant networks have a very hard time. My neighbour asked me if I knew of someone for whom he could work, but being new in the country, I couldn't help him.

No jobs are waiting for young, poor people. This is why people from Treichville and similar neighbourhoods do not rely on schooling and diplomas but from an early age start relying on themselves instead. Dropping out of school might be a strategy for survival in an immediate crisis, or as often is the case, pupils may be forced to do it, because they cannot afford to pay for the fees, books and uniforms. Ismaël Isaac has a song, “Magno Mako”, about a “mad” man walking in the streets, tossing his head, and speaking to himself, seeming quite foolish. The truth is that he has a whole range of diplomas, but still cannot get any job offers, so he has become desperate and crazy. The song was widely understood in this way by people in general, and they told me it is true that many people walk around with high-level diplomas that they never get to use. Thus, even when you obtain a diploma, you are not guaranteed to ever be able to use it in a professional context. I once talked to a girl who was studying to become an accountant and asked her what jobs she aspired to, but she just snorted and laughed. She said that she would love to work in her country, but she was sure the options were better for her abroad.

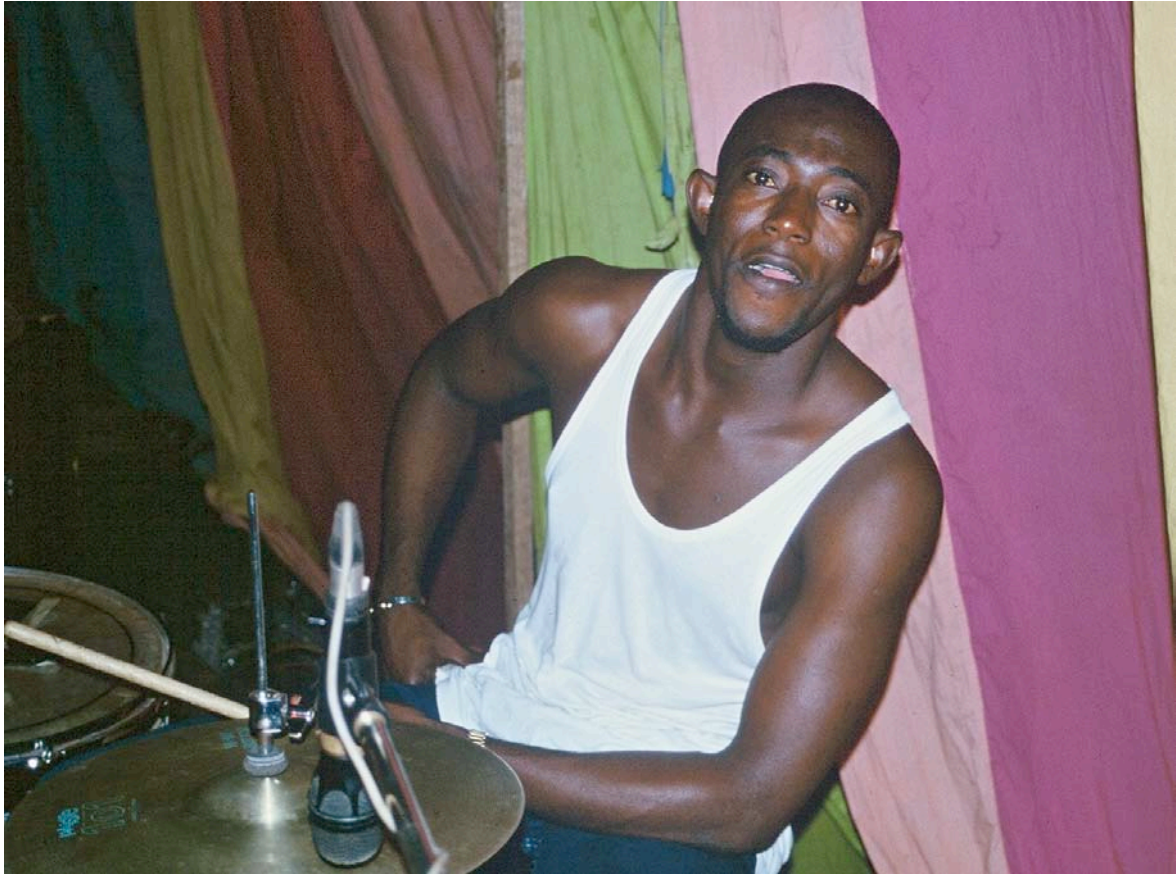
This situation has a historical explanation, because during the time the late president Houphouët-Boigny was in power (from 1960 till 1993), he emphasized the importance of education, wanted every Ivorian to go to school, and stressed the high rank of bureaucrats in the State machinery. He wanted to transform the country into a key base of knowledge in the region, where foreigners would come to attend university classes, and where people could meet and join in Houphouët’s Pan-African integration idea. After the Independence, having a diploma could save a person’s entire family, economically speaking. It was seen as the ultimate security to have employment in the Administration, and many parents looked to their neighbours who had succeeded, and decided to persuade their children to do the same. Education was seen as a possibility of getting out of poverty, meaning that poverty was not a fatality. New schools had to be constructed in order to accommodate all the pupils, including specialized, vocational schools. More and more people received diplomas and were absorbed into the Administration. However, this could not last forever, and at a certain point there were simply too many job seekers, and too few jobs. In addition, the State had not facilitated the African entrepreneurial sector, and so the businesses that had started were mostly foreign (French and Lebanese). They employed some nationals, but they could not in any way absorb

the entire wave of job seekers. The farming sector in the country could not absorb them either. Therefore, many intellectuals were shocked to find themselves unemployed. This had its repercussions, especially in neighbourhoods like Treichville, where people did not have the required network to get employment. That is why they had to come up with individual inventive solutions about everyday pragmatic survival. The situation demanded that they change their hopes for the future, and quickly made other plans. This is in line with the above mentioned streetwise ghetto culture and ghetto logic. As we will see, this setting creates certain aesthetical preferences and practices.

The little drummer boy

Treichville is the kind of neighbourhood and local logic in which the drummer Pépito was raised by his mother and female kindred in the 70's. His sister, aunts, nieces and nephews are still living in the cour familiale in Treichville, not far from la rue 12, and this is where he turns when he needs advice, or when he has to deal with a family problem. Sometimes his late aunt healed him when he was sick and the sickness could not be cured in ordinary hospitals; for instance when he suffered from strange and heavy stomach pains that they claimed someone has cast on him. This did not happen very often, but when it did his aunt helped out by informing him of which medicines to purchase and how to take them. She was also clairvoyant, and cured other people as well as family members. Pépito has a very close relationship with his female kindred, and of course, he pops in for a visit several times during the week, just to make sure everything is ok.

Like other young people from Treichville, Pépito took on odd jobs during his childhood. He used to fill people's water basins, and he also used to cut people's hair rather well, and both these jobs would earn him money. He chose the best option to manage life. He left home at the age of 12, and paid for his own food, rent and schooling till the age of 18, when he failed the final exam for the baccalauréat. When Pépito failed, he analysed this occurrence in line with the local theory on school and exams, and dropped out. He did not think it worthwhile to try again the following year. It would most probably lead to the same result, and he would have wasted money and energy on something useless.



P pito behind a professional drum kit

From an early age, P pito was into music, and two of his elder brothers were musicians; one was a bass player, and one was a drummer, and he soon started to think about how to become a musician himself. He thought best to ask professional drummers for lessons and videos; instruction videos you can buy in order to teach yourself. However, this seemed a bit difficult, as everyone in the business kept their secrets to themselves, and did not want to teach some small boy how to become a competitor. They all made appointments with him that they did not keep, they “forgot” about them. P pito kept trying to learn this way for a while, until he felt it was such a waste of time that he just started to play by himself. One of the reasons why he had contacted the drummers was that this would have given him access to the instrument, which was obviously out of his economic reach. Now he had to organize something on his own.

At home, he had gathered some metal boxes of different sizes; one of them became the bass drum with a homemade pedal, another box became the snare. When it came to the hi-hat (the

instrument with two joint cymbals on it, that can be opened and closed by stepping on a pedal with one's foot, giving a shivering metallic sound), he used an empty metal box (which had contained tomato purée). He cut out the bottom and the top of it, and the result was a hyatt. He used the same system for the cymbals. Now he had a drum kit, and could start rehearsing as best he could.

Pépito's friend, Thomas, had chosen a more difficult instrument to obtain, namely the trumpet. It was far too expensive, just as the drum kit was. He would spend hours just watching the trumpet players in the orchestras in the area; until he lost courage, and went home to Pépito and asked him if they could play music together. So Pépito sat down behind his drum kit made of metal boxes, and Thomas put his hands in front of his lips, positioned them in a trumpet player fashion, and made trumpet sounds "toot-toot-toot!" This was their rehearsal routine for some time. They would go to concerts together, to see how it was done. If they knew the owner of the clubs, they would perhaps be let in, but the outdoor concerts in the maquis were brilliant occasions to practice with the eyes. Sometimes the entry was really expensive, and the young and poor could not afford to get in, but "they skipped in and rounded up about 25 –30 000 cfa to pay a bottle of whisky inside the club, and then they were let in. So I think the cultural and artistic melting pot favoured the unfolding of a generation of artists, musicians and singers. (...) When the artists tell you they are from Treichville, it is normal, because it was the modern, African neighbourhood" (Bakiono, interview, 28.10.01).

After their adolescence, which was committed to their early musical exploration and training, Pépito and Thomas lost touch, until one day Pépito saw Thomas playing the trumpet on TV. He could not get over the fact that Thomas had actually made it. Pépito, for his part, had started to build a network, too. Thus each of them had invented their own employment. A bit later, someone called Thomas who was dressed in full military gear visited Pépito's house, and his sister greeted him, but did not recognize him. So she said he was not in, thinking it was best to take every precaution and leave the military out of their lives. In the end, Thomas persuaded her to go and get Pépito to come out from his room, even though he insisted that he did not know anyone in the military, and that it did not interest him one bit. He eventually came out, and there was his childhood friend waiting for him, saying they needed a drummer



Trumpet player Thomas on stage

in the military orchestra. “You know I do not like military people, Thomas, there is no chance of me becoming one!” he said. Thomas promised that he could keep his civilian status and that the band just wanted to see what he was capable of musically speaking, and off they went.

During the past years, Thomas had ended up resigning from freelance work, because there were not enough offers. In order to have a stable monthly income, he had enrolled in the army. In this way he could survive off his art. As a musician in the military orchestra, he was exempted from the ordinary tasks like patrolling the streets – the orchestra was something different. Quite often they would play for national and international dignitaries. The discipline was still military though, and the conductor of the orchestra was very demanding. All the musicians respected him, and everyone was on time for the rehearsals. Once, the conductor had to go away on a mission, but he had called back to the caserns and told them to wait for his return. When he finally did return, it was late, but all the musicians were still present. He walked up to them after having landed in his helicopter, and told them they were dismissed. The musicians asked him why he had kept them waiting, and he said that this was part of their

military training. Pépito accepted the job and kept it until he felt the pressure to join the military became too great. The conductor wanted him to sign up for several years, but in the end he could not take it any longer and so he quit. Thomas is still in the military, but he now plays with civilian bands as well. This is his strategy to make his "ends of the months" remain bearable.

It can be stated that Pépito once more “s’est cherché” (which means “to choose the most favourable option to obtain something”), when he left the military orchestra. He chose to leave in order to obtain more freedom, but also obtained more uncertainty. He preferred staying alone and seeking different jobs to signing a contract with the military. His personal strategy was to trust his network of relationships to provide him with a job. This was during the period when there was economic optimism in Côte d’Ivoire, and he trusted that people still wanted to listen to live music. After the job in the military orchestra, Pépito worked in several nightclubs, piano bars, and accompanied different artists. But his last contract-regulated job was at the very famous nightclub Madison, where rich people used to go out to dance, drink and have fun. The work for the musicians was well organised. They would play about four nights a week, from 23.00 to 02.00, and during the days off they were free to do as they pleased. But that contract-based life came to an abrupt end after the coup, as previously mentioned. It was after the military coup that Pépito accelerated his move towards other musical spheres. As the salary was suddenly lowered considerably at Madison, at the same time that he and some of the other musicians received an offer to play with Ismaël Isaac, a national and regional reggae star, he accepted this offer. The reason the offer was made was that the Madison orchestra had at one time accompanied Ismaël when he made a live performance there, and he had been so thrilled by the manner in which they coped with his reggae feeling, that he now wanted them as his personal band. This was his chance to get hold of professional musicians, who at the time were looking for better options. They started to accompany Ismaël on tours, but no contracts were signed between them.



Pépito has often said that what really matters in life is the survival of his two sons, who he cares for both economically and as a father. He sees to their schooling, food and housing, and underlines the fact that if he had been responsible only for himself, his monthly income would mean less to him. That is, if he had been alone, he would not have bothered seeking employment all the time, instead, he would have been happy to play his instrument whenever he could, and the rest of the time he would have “resté dans son coin” (“kept to himself”).

Bandleader Pépito reading over the set list before a concert with Magic System

Musicians and artists who are also fathers, but who do not take such a responsibility seriously, are spoken ill of by others, or they are laughed at. The social codex, also that of Ivorian society in general, demands that a father must be mature enough to ensure the well being of his nuclear family. If he is not, he is looked upon as someone who is still a child and who lacks the sense to settle down and put together a home. To be irresponsible is bad, and to spend money on women and alcohol rather than on your family will ensure your being heavily reprimanded by others. However, when this sort of thing happens there is very little friends or family can do, other than trying to talk some sense into the ill-doer – there are

few actual sanctions. There was especially one musician the others loved to discuss; they criticized him for being about 40 but still living with his parents despite having several kids here and there, with different women. He usually treated his girlfriends really badly and was excessively violent with them. I remember once, when he had beaten his primary girlfriend, my musician friends were appalled by such behaviour. They said over and over again: “il faut qu’il se range”, which means, “he has to get himself organised”.

The story about Pépito shows inventiveness, débrouillardisme, self-confidence and responsibility. People from deprived areas do not take no for an answer when it comes to paving their way to improvement, as was the loubards’ case, too. The story also shows to what extent people stand alone and trust only themselves. One’s success is an individual exploit. This creates certain patterns in the formation of relationships that also affect the musical sphere.

A REVEALING CRISIS

An anthropological fieldwork is about getting involved in social life, often without initially having much knowledge about its social codes. One might think one is doing something specific together with others, but the understanding of the interaction will very likely differ between the anthropologist and her informants. My experience in the beginning and in many ways throughout my fieldwork was that I was a stranger and an underdog. I was very much on the defensive, trying to handle the various situations as they occurred. Clearly, this greatly influenced my methods in the field, which I had to change, adapt and improvise throughout my stay.

In this methodological chapter I want to discuss my social role as a young, European, white, middle-class, female student in anthropology. I conducted fieldwork in a male showbiz setting in post-colonial Côte d'Ivoire, and I used my identity actively to provoke the social codex in order to obtain information. These characteristics dominated my field in a pervasive manner, and I could hardly ever speak to someone without being reminded of them in some way or other. In practical life I had to face up to different themes like gender, power, respect, money and visa demand, due to these characteristics. I believe that my identity in the field was so important and dominating that writing about it will help the reader understand what sort of methodological challenges I faced and what methodological choices I made, and consequently what sort of field data I was able to produce with my informants.

Ania Loomba has written interestingly on gender, sexuality and colonialism, and claims: "Women on both sides of the colonial divide demarcate both the innermost sanctums of race, culture and nation, as well as the porous frontiers through which these are penetrated. Their

relationship to colonial discourses is mediated through this double positioning” (Loomba 1998:159). Her historical analysis deals with the idea of race, purity of race and encounters across continents; especially encounters between people from colonial and postcolonial countries. According to her, the Martiniquan psychoanalyst and scholar Frantz Fanon does not take into account the female world in his writings, and she claims that “Both black and white women remain, in his account, the terrain on which men move and enact their battles with each other (Loomba 1998:162). Speaking of the French Caribbean, Frantz Fanon claims that many black men have a serious lack of self-esteem, and dream of being vaulted up a hierarchical level through using white people’s manners. They thus mask themselves behind civilized behaviour. From this perspective, the very proof of success is their being loved by a white woman. The white woman’s love leads to deliverance and total freedom of thought (Fanon 1952:53). The black man seizes the white civilization and dignity as he caresses a white woman’s breasts (ibid.) In my opinion, Loomba’s characteristic and criticism of the women remaining a battlefield in Fanon’s texts, points to something which is in fact still very much a reality in today’s postcolonial Côte d’Ivoire. Through an analysis of both my empirical findings and my personal experience, I will try and show how men still enact their battles on the female terrain.

Before arriving in Côte d’Ivoire, I had somewhat naively thought that since the big city of Abidjan is extremely modern and proud, and since the country at large has had a close and “successful” relation to France after colonialism, I as a white young woman would not receive that much attention. But I soon found out that I had been wrong; despite modernity and a heavy French civil and military presence, I was still on the African continent with African social and behavioural rules. Certainly, on a specific diplomatic and business level, Ivorians interacted with white people, but this remained within a small chic circle. To everybody else, I was a stranger with physical features that were markedly different. By no means could I “go” native; therefore I used my difference actively to obtain information. As it turned out, my informants also used me actively to their own ends.

I discovered certain patterns when it came to interaction with my informants, and in this chapter I try to reveal some of the logics and practices of the setting. Peoples' attempts at



Calm lagoon south of Abidjan

trying to localize and get hold of various scarce resources characterized the Abidjanese setting, and was therefore one of the most important "logics" of interaction. The unpredictable conditions people lived under created specific attitudes when it came to competence in handling individualism, pragmatics and aggression. This in turn created certain practices within personal relationships, in which there was a pervading aspect of utility and expedience. A low degree of trust and loyalty characterized the relationships I witnessed, because people needed to hold their extensive networks open for business at all times. They could not permit themselves to engage in

moral or emotional bonds, because then potentially hampering loyalties would have been created. If you are loyal to someone, you cannot manipulate him/her as easily.

After three months in the field, I still had not met a band that I could work with. I had tried to find and get to know several reggae- and zouglou bands after my arrival, but some of them were too busy, others not interested, and yet others moved to France. As some of them kept moving back and forth to France, I soon understood that these musicians performed within a wider post-colonial field of action, given the opportunity. So I was relieved when a friend of mine introduced me to a reggae band, Rastafari, who lived in a village at the Atlantic coast. My friend Pierrot, also a reggae artist who had an album on the market, wanted to sing with this band during the MASA festival, "le Marché des Arts et Spectacles Africains", in the beginning of March. His wanting to perform with them might have been his objective all

along, although nothing was said overtly at the time. I was totally dependent on Pierrot, who recommended me working with these musicians, especially the lead singer, Terry. Pierrot had previously said he would help me find a band. This can be analysed in two ways: he wanted to be kind to me, but on the other hand he wanted me to be dependent on him, by introducing me to all his acquaintances in Ivorian showbiz. He was very inventive and had ideas for many solutions when it came to my mission in the Côte d'Ivoire, and he kept reminding me of the advantages of his acquaintance. He made himself very useful to me by sharing local codes with me, that is; he helped me navigate in the Abidjanese labyrinth of social relations. It is evident that he had power in every way here. He offered me help, and I was too frightened of staying alone in a setting I did not understand to decline it. I was also frightened of not ever being accepted into the field that I had come to study. I chose to put all my trust in Pierrot and his cunning plans. His gains in the relationship were of course the following; a young, white woman spending time with him and paying for things for him. I was from then on part of his expedient focus, because he needed me, too. Our relationship had a symbiotic character. It was only months later I understood to what extent we had an economic give-and-take relationship rather than a friendship. This was when I learned that my scope must be wider than just one person, and that being dependent on one man only is problematic, and does not constitute a very smart or fruitful anthropological method.

I started to spend time with the band Rastafari, and after a short time I moved into their house in their village by the coast. There, I did some long interviews about the band's history with the bandleader Terry, in order to start a professional relationship. I also had many conversations with the other band members. I thought that this was it; I had found a reggae band and my fieldwork would become a success. I was saved, I thought. What I did not sense, was that this was the beginning of a relationship which would cause me a lot of problems and fear, but from which I would later draw many lessons and much information.

Rastafari started to rehearse for the MASA, and I followed them whenever I could. They used to rehearse in their village, where there was a sort of a rehearsal room equipped with some instruments and amplifiers, owned by the municipality. Terry was the one who directed it all, socially and musically. Sometimes during rehearsals, he would shout at the others if they were

out of tune or held the microphone too far away or too close. "How do you play, man? You're out of tune, man! Your keyboard, what's your problem anyway?" Sometimes he would put down his guitar, walk over to the musician having committed the fault, grab his instrument, and show him how he was supposed to play. Once, one of the backing voices was terribly out of tune, and Terry then walked over to him, removed his microphone, and put it in front of the keyboardist. The drummer would sometimes show up for rehearsals, sometimes not. If he did not, Terry would play the drums himself and let someone else do the singing. Rather frequently, Terry would then bang on the drums in order to get people to do what he wanted, and quickly. He once did it to get the assembled crowd of gawking youngsters out of the rehearsal room. They disappeared, just to peek in through the windows later on.

Terry was in power; this was his band. Although he had not started the band, the others let him go on bullying them. At first I thought it was because of his musical skills, but then I realised there was something more to it; he had psychological power over them because in some way he took on the traditional role as their older brother or father. His preferences and his opinions tended to become those of the band, also when it came to religious belief. It is important to notice that it was not only the band members who formed the group, but also the singer's "little helpers" (or "petits"), the manager, and various girls who were all groupies. The little helpers were boys who for some reason had left their homes for some time in order to join in this sort of rasta community they all formed. They helped out in the house as much as they could, cleaning and fetching water from the neighbouring well. They were errand boys who were sent out to buy cigarettes and the like. I often heard them repeat the same sentences that the singer had just said. This was when they wanted to explain something to me, be it about rastafarianism, music, the Côte d'Ivoire, or about the lack of respect the band suffered from among the rest of the Ivorian showbiz crowd. Everyone was eager to convince me that they were the true rasta band in the country, and that I had to concentrate on them for the success of my thesis. They tried actively to become my gatekeepers. It was clear from the beginning that they had something that I wanted from them; they both excelled in the local codex and had access to Ivorian showbiz.

However, after a while I realised that the band was actually ostracized and boycotted by most professionals in showbiz, and I was later told that as I was seen together with Rastafari I was classified as a girl who smoked ganja (marihuana) all day and who had low morals. These other professionals looked upon Rastafari as irresponsible kids who did not know what they wanted to do in life, and who usually fooled everybody they came in contact with. Because I was with them, other serious musicians did not bother to talk to me, as they had already classified me. This shows how, as a recently arrived anthropologist in this kind of field, I was bound to meet different people, and to have problems in foreseeing the consequences my choices had at that stage. I was trapped by eager informants as well as by the lack of other cooperative bands. It was difficult to break out of their network and make other contacts through which to enter other networks.

After the first three or four rehearsals, I noticed that Pierrot started to complain about the band's begging for money for this and that. He was really angry, and said that he could not afford to give out all his money like this. He had to pay his own rent, transport and food too, I was informed. And he also started to show some discontent about the way the rehearsals were conducted; often he had to wait a long while before Terry would let him rehearse. Things came to a head between the two of them one evening when Pierrot had been summoned to rehearse. He was told that there was a rehearsal, and that he was to sing. However, he was never given the opportunity to do so. He had waited a long time and was extremely frustrated. In the end, when he realised that the rehearsal was actually over, because the band was packing their gear, he vented his frustration and anger.

They got out of the rehearsal room, and Pierrot started to make a scene. "I will not accept being treated with this little respect, man! If I knew I was only to watch the others play, I would never have shown up in the first place", he cried out. Furthermore, he claimed that they had called him only in order to get transport money from him. This discussion went on in the streets, in two separate groups. First went the lead singer, Terry, and two of his musicians; then at a distance came Pierrot with the rest of us. He yelled that this was the end of their cooperation for the MASA, he did not need them to get promotion, he already had his production company, and actually he had been singing with them just because they asked him

to. Terry, on the other hand, claimed that he did this for Pierrot, so that he could present himself to interesting foreigners during the MASA, and that the rehearsals were conducted only for Pierrot. Pierrot countered that he would not accept that the lead singer controlled everything and yelled orders at him. In Pierrot's opinion, he could shout at his own musicians, but he ought to respect him, Pierrot, a little more. "I have a good voice, although I do not know music", he said. I think he meant that he knew how to sing, but not how to read music or how to play an instrument.

In this row I was asked to intervene and negotiate between the two parties, and I really did not know what to do. I just walked along, trying to calm them down. I felt I had a strong loyalty problem, having been introduced to this band by Pierrot, but at the same time I wanted to conduct a successful fieldwork and I wanted to keep my friendship with the band.

As we were walking along, Pierrot and the others, we suddenly caught up with the singer and his two loyal musicians. Then, as if by magic, the situation changed all together. Pierrot went over to Terry, greeted him heartily, and they became friends instantly, it seemed. They smiled and talked for a while, taking their time, until Pierrot and I went home. In the taxi, the situation changed back again: Pierrot started his criticizing speech again, with new force. I was appalled. I sat half a meter away while he shouted loudly about lack of respect – "How can it be that other artists, stars, show me respect, but not this little singer? I will certainly not accept this behaviour! What do they think I am? Someone they can bully? I don't think so!" He was outraged, and did not calm down during the 30-minute ride back home.

The social frames for interaction changed back and forth during this incident; things changed both emotionally and strategically. The actions and reactions in this context must be understood as situational. Pierrot allowed himself to express his intense feelings of entitlement to respect and disgust at the lack of it while with me and the other band members. We were to understand and sympathise with his point of view. When he found himself in front of Terry again, he must be able to show that the fight was about a specific matter. He must be able to change his antagonistic attitude after the row, and show that he is able to set the matter aside when the situation demands it. Now they were in a friendly setting again,

Pierrot must demonstrate that being a fighter about respect is not a dominant feature of his personal nature in every social setting. Emotional tone is a cultural pattern, not a question of human character. I think this quarrel happened because it is the only way someone can show his or her discontent in the ghetto. It is a sort of a game in which Pierrot puts his foot down, in order to be respected. Pierrot felt powerless, and the fight over respect can be seen as a last resort to rearrange the power balance; it is something that is put into action when nothing else is within reach. Pierrot did not have any money or social rank to use in order to obtain what he wanted: to sing. So he must employ the respect discourse in a last attempt to stop Terry's execution of power over him. Pierrot felt threatened, but he made his opinion clear; he would not be messed around with, if he was he would withdraw from the MASA project. The fight over respect channelled his anger and let Terry know he existed; it did not end the relationship altogether, and this was not its purpose, either. On the contrary, the fight helped to solve a relational problem so they could go on with the rehearsals later on. In fact, some days later they all rehearsed again, and things went smoothly between them.

Generally, situations like this are produced when one or more persons claim an attack on their self-respect. The incentive for the dispute might vary to a great extent, it can be over money, women, deceit or tricks; but the reason for dispute and the need to answer back in an expedient way is most often respect or lack of such. This manner of reaction is a social pattern in Côte d'Ivoire, which I will call the tantrum codex. There seems to be a constant question of who eats whom, and who strikes first; this is the social world among urban ghetto dwellers in Abidjan. If one does not have this sort of confrontational attitude, one is "bouffé" (eaten) psychologically, socially and financially. There is an ideological do-or-die mentality. One has to stand up for oneself, or else one loses respect in the eyes of others. People are used to this kind of behaviour, they act and react instantly. To them, these tantrum states do not cause great self-examination or questioning, rather they are part of everyday life. People have to add this behaviour to their personalities, as it is an extremely important feature in the local social codex.

Coming from a middle-class setting in Norway, where nearly all sorts of problems are discussed among friends or partners without necessarily losing one's temper, this argument

between Pierrot and Terry was startling to me. The rather unproblematic switches from friendliness to a tantrum and back to friendliness again, made everything look unpredictable and scary to me. How could I now foresee when a person would lose his temper at me, I wondered. In my upbringing, I have been taught that friendship is a close and sincere relationship, where one must be honest and loyal to each other. In Côte d'Ivoire, friendships are different; my informants had to manoeuvre between the different social relations they had access to. They experienced a shortness of resources on a daily basis; they did not earn a predictable monthly salary. That is why they could not engage in morality and loyalties in their network relations. They needed to hold all relations open for business at all times. They had to eat, "bouffer", where it was possible, as the saying goes. Their idea of trust is very different from the Western middle-class one. While one in the western middle-class context builds trust with others by staying with the same person through different settings, in the Côte d'Ivoire context one builds trust by showing one's ability to change, by having a "modifiable" character and analysing any situation strategically in order to always find access to resources. This makes people think, "this is a survivor, he will not be "bouffé"; he bites back and is trustworthy". This is what creates the expedient behaviour in social relations in the field.

As I was not familiar with the tantrum codex, I found it hard to engage in such an eruption of emotions as this seemed to me to involve. I saw that I was being used and "bouffée", but had difficulties in turning it into the sort of fight I saw Pierrot engage in. This made my initial methods hopeless - I could not go on being kind and gentle all the time, but had to become more streetwise and quarrelling with people about respecting me. In this kind of relational landscape, either you respect a person and treat him/her well, or you do not, and behave harshly towards the person. I saw it happen to me, but particularly during the beginning of my stay I was unable to speak up for myself. Part of this disability was of course my dependence on these informants; I needed them in order to get information. If I were to make a scene the consequence might have been that they would have just left me alone. I believed I had to prevent this, for fear of not having a field to work in. But maybe I should have started engaging in these outbursts, too. The evident risk involved was that I did not master the local codes that dictated what quarrels to engage in, and when to let things slide. I never quite understood why people would sometimes all of a sudden say; "Oh, I leave him with his own

conscience. God will deal with it later”. Often, I realized this happened in situations where the ill-doer was younger than the offended person, and should show respect for the latter. People would say to the older person; “It is only a child, it’s nothing. It’s not worth it”. As I did not master the tantrum codex, I let many things slide, although I sometimes knew it was wrong to do so within the local codex.

Gender

In an expedient and flexible environment like this, I did not know when to say a firm “no!” to things, and I seldom initiated the right confrontations at the right time. The result was that people in the band, especially Terry, put pressure on me. As I did not react in the expected way, he could go on exercising power over me. I also understood that my presence was somehow involved in the clash between Pierrot and himself. I had told Terry that I did not want to have a sexual relationship with him, and he was upset because of this. Now nobody was to have access to me. I think he saw all male approaches as difficult and as not only a contest, but also as an insult and a threat. His own respect and pride were offended. As I spent a lot of time with Pierrot, this constituted a danger to his rule in the band and the larger group. I did not know whether to tell Pierrot about it or not. I did not think it was necessarily his business, and I thought that I was a grown up who could manage things by myself, like I do in Norway. I was wrong. I was not sufficiently familiar with the idea that as he was the one who had introduced me, and therefore was my mentor in every relational problem, I was supposed to tell him “everything”. When I finally decided to tell Pierrot about it, he said; ”So that’s why Terry behaves like this. Why didn’t you tell me before? I am the one who brought you there, and I am responsible for your well-being. Terry knows the two of us are only friends, and he wants to take his chance on you. Now he knows that he hasn’t got access to you, but he is still jealous of me”. Claiming a desire for brotherhood and friendship then did not work well. Maybe I could have escaped Terry’s information control and pressure by telling Pierrot what was happening. Sharing information and thus including Pierrot could probably have created a different relation with Terry, in which he would be less powerful.

According to Pierrot, Terry took out his jealousy on him and other men that I talked to. Considering the fact that Ivorian showbiz is composed nearly exclusively of men, Terry had made himself a hard job trying to keep them away from me. This could be an answer to why he gave Pierrot such a hard time. Of course, being a woman in the field caused both tensions and possibilities that being a male anthropologist would not have caused. My presence created wishes and intentions among the band members which I could not control, but which I had to handle when different situations occurred. My problem emerged when I wanted to slow down the pace of things without causing an end to the friendly working relationship. I do not know how many male informants escaped after I had told them in a nice, but frank Norwegian way that there was no chance of us having sex with each other. Instantly, they were off in search of other possibilities. I constantly thought of my research, of course. I desperately wanted to go back to Norway with a solid set of data material, but the same problem arose time and time again as different men found out that I was not sexually available to them. The typical pattern of this gender problem was that I realised the problem was occurring too late, handled it too frankly, and lost informants. I was taken off guard several times, just when things had started to become professionally interesting to me. I had to become more cool and firm, which corresponds badly to my personality. The trick would be to stay friends with my informants without ever giving them a clear “no” to sex. In the hope that sex might occur, it seems they were interested in having me as a friend.

However, the gender dilemma facilitated the possibility of obtaining a certain interest from and closeness to the informants. This, in addition to their willingness to spend time with me, was a great advantage. I felt that I could easily contact people and ask them all sorts of questions, and that they seldom turned their back on me straight away. Often, I was invited home for dinners and visits, where people received me very well, and where I felt welcome. This is an important part of the gender discourse in which a young, white woman is a prize not everybody has access to. In some relations I saw myself as a walking trophy that my informants and acquaintances showed to people; in others I think the friendship was more genuine. But in any case, both my informants and I wanted to make the most out of things when we had the chance; even though our goals at times differed widely, of course. Often however, I could come along to rehearsals and clubs and stay as long as I wanted. I could join

PR-tours and discussions regarding concerts and the like. And most of the time, I could talk to the people I wanted.

I am very much aware that I, as a white female student, was allowed access to settings where black women were absent. In my daily interaction with my informants, I rarely met women, and I made only a few female friends. All the members of all the bands that I met were men. The only girls I met several times were some of the members' girlfriends, mostly in their homes or in maquis, and I also got to know the choirgirls. The latter occurred in a professional setting, and even during rehearsals and tours, they kept very much to themselves in their hotel rooms, and they kept a low profile during organisational or musical discussions. One of the choirgirls that I met, Oumou, was known to talk and complain a lot, and was therefore considered to be a nuisance among the men.

I think she was seen like this because she was different from the local ideal woman. This ideal woman might be powerful and intelligent, but not talkative and slandering about everybody else. A woman should not be present in a loud way, but rather remain more serene and respectable. In many men's view, she should show understanding, and even if the man was known to be a notorious woman-hunter, she should remain on her serene level and not fall down ("s'abaisser") to the man's level. According to several men I talked to, a man being unfaithful did not mean that his woman could do the same thing. By nature, she was cleaner than the man; she gave birth, and could thus also get punished in a heavier way. Most women I talked to in my neighbourhood claimed that they had no confidence in their boyfriends and husbands when it came to them being faithful. According to the men and the other choirgirls, Oumou spent her time speaking ill of others, being really mean and self-assertive. This was not really reprimanded, but was talked about among the others. As she had a strong position within the band; she had a beautiful voice and was a dear friend to the bandleader; she was accepted and loved, perhaps even feared. Though Oumou was special, it was not my impression that she was constantly and incessantly in opposition. She also kept much to herself, or within the girls' group.



Choirgirl Thérèse in discussion with bass player Oloh

Generally speaking, then, I think the other choirgirls kept a low profile because they knew their male friends and colleagues very well; they knew about the quarrels and the tantrums. And they knew they risked losing their position as serene and respectable women if they engaged in these tantrums. They knew about the expedient character of the men when it came to relations, and they did not trust them. Normally, the local woman had her own female arenas like her house, the house of her friends, and the market. If a woman flew around here and there, not keeping the house or looking after her children, she would be categorized as having low morals, and consequently be looked down upon. There are local expressions for this, “Elle est dans la nature” or “Elle se cherche”. No man wants such a woman for a wife, so she has to mind her steps, and calculate where she goes, and with whom. One thing is the women, wives and girlfriends not bothering to attend rehearsals and concerts; another influential aspect is that the men do not want them there, either. Sometimes the reason could be a security problem, for example during outdoor concerts, but other times they simply wanted to enjoy a male arena.

As a contrast, I could to a large extent escape this sort of local female ideal and categorization of low morals, as I was a network marginal. As an anthropologist, it was my mission to make myself a place in the midst of the decision-making process, discussions, and the ensuing crises during rehearsals and concerts. I was a woman, but as a white one, I was not categorized in the same way. I could make myself a private category, and this is what made my entry into the male music arena possible. As a female student I therefore found myself in male situations, which were centred round male behaviour and crises. In this sense I was one of the guys. My initial access to the field was therefore rather quick and easy, but the problem manifested itself when I did not know how to handle the consequences.

An overall rule was that the person (the man, that is) who brought me to a place was responsible for my well-being there, and should bring me home safely. I could not escape this local rule when it came to gender difference. Of course this subject is double-edged, as was the case when Pierrot made himself indispensable to me. I could not leave the place for some other area without telling and/or asking my "guide". The power aspect is intrinsic here; while being friendly and responsible, the man introducing me had power over my movements. The others knew this, and often reminded me about it when I wanted to change plans as a means to obtain specific information. There were rules not to be broken. Some of the singers and musicians had a secret body language between themselves when it came to whom of them I "belonged" to. I was later told that a certain handshake would tell the others whether or not I was "his" woman or free to take. The man introducing me would touch the palm of the other man with his ring finger and middle finger, like a tickle, but this would all look like an ordinary handshake to the onlookers. If it happened that I was presented as free to take, many people would approach me and would want to talk to me. In the beginning, though, I certainly did not know anything of my being classified like this; everything was decided above my head. While it is true that the gender aspect helped me gain acceptance in various social settings, nearly every new acquaintance and setting changed rather quickly from being about music, rehearsals and professional talking to concerning my mentioned social role in the field. For example, I had been working with the band Rastafari and Terry for about six weeks when I noticed a change. It became clear that we had certain problems in communicating what we

actually wanted from one another, and that is when I chose to give him my “no”. With other male informants, it took only a couple of weeks before the relationship came to an end.

Throughout my fieldwork, the gender aspect was therefore simultaneously my most valuable asset and the most difficult card to handle, but I could under no circumstances escape it; it was in the forefront of every interaction. It took me a long time before I understood and accepted that I had to actively use it to the best effect. I went through two phases in this respect; after some months in Abidjan I became so fed up with the constant demands for sex that I bought myself a wedding ring. Not a very romantic thing to do, but I had heard of girls doing this in order to ward off interested men, and I thought it might work in my case, too. What happened was that the ring frustrated men, and they asked me all sorts of questions about it; whom I was married to, where he was, and when it had happened, was he an Ivorian? These frustrated men let go of me, and were not interested in having me as a friend or spending time with me at all. The other sort of reaction the ring produced was that the men saw it as a challenge; they wanted to put the horns on my “husband”. It was obvious that my "ring-approach" to the field had failed altogether, and I took it off. It was then I started to rethink my identity in the field. It was clear that I had to take some major steps in order to obtain information, and so I learned that I had to actively play out my role as a young, white, European, middle-class, female student in anthropology in a post-colonial country and male arena by all possible means. This was a risky endeavour, as I did not manage to foresee the consequences, tantrums and crises within the various networks I was engaged in, but I had to accept the role I was given by my informants and neighbours, and put aside my normal Norwegian role and personality. This I saw as a last methodological turn when it came to my gender identity in the Ivorian showbiz setting.

Housing problems

As the weeks passed, more issues than the gender problem became apparent. Spending days and nights in somebody’s house makes other aspects of daily life surface: how and when one eats and sleeps; in short how one organises the daily routines. Rastafari were musicians who had little stable income, and I found it hard to meet their expectations of me paying for food,

drinks, transport and illness. As previously described, Pierrot mentioned that the demands for money had started to constitute a problem to him, too. In this logic, the one who has the most money in a given situation is supposed to pay for a rather large number of persons. It might have been the case that as Pierrot was my friend, the members of Rastafari looked upon him as rich, too. They thought that they had an absolute right to ask for money, as sharing with others is evaluated as a good thing to do. Not receiving from someone richer than oneself is spoken ill of and categorized as stinginess and unfriendliness. In the Rastafari logic, one must give what one has. The trouble in Pierrot's and my opinion was that this was a clear one-way giving and sharing system.

I felt that I had my turn when it came to the financial and social situation. I was the milk cow to be exploited as efficiently as possible. Terry constantly asked me for money, and I later understood that things did not cost as much as he claimed. This started to get on my nerves. Pierrot was also really annoyed about how things developed. Once he said that; "Even though I have a job, they must not think that I am rich!" He found the demands tiring. Then I became ill and had to get treatment in Abidjan, so I temporarily left their village while they continued the preparations for the MASA. When I came back, I noticed that some of my things were no longer there. I was told that someone had broken into the room and stolen them. I noticed that someone had slept in my bed, and torn apart my sheets. Terry accused the percussionist of the theft, although he himself was the only one with the keys. He explained that sometimes he left the room unlocked. This disappointed me even more, and I started to see clearly, or clearer. Actually, the percussionist had received my "no" to a sexual relationship, as well, and I suspect that Terry took his revenge on him with the accusation of theft.

Again, and this is what made it so difficult, nothing was said overtly at the time, but later I had indications that my suspicions were correct. It took me some time to admit to myself that I had been fooled and exploited all the time. So I decided to leave their village house and get my remaining things out: my mattress, ventilator and a few other belongings. Terry said no, I could take out my things only over his dead body; I would have to wait till Pierrot was there. He was the one who had brought me there and introduced me, and he was the one who could bring me out, he said. Again, this is in line with the social rule, which says that the person

who introduces you to someone, is responsible for you in that setting. I then left the house with the question unresolved. What I should have done was simply to follow the introductory logic and invite Pierrot to come to the house to solve the problem. However, I thought that I must be able to come up with some solution all by myself at this point. I was tired of asking permissions for this or that, as if I were a child again. I also started to suspect Pierrot of using me when it came to money. Often he claimed to obtain a better price for things when we were out; so he suggested I give him some money to pay for it, instead of me showing my rich white face all the time. Of course this was true, but Pierrot also no doubt took his share of the amount, and I think I therefore often ended up paying even more. Again, it must be noted that he deliberately and cleverly made himself indispensable to me. He could do so by not giving me sufficient information as to how to behave in certain settings, and not teaching me how to barter in the right way. This was Pierrot's favourable position that I was about to discover in a dramatic way. In fact, he did the same thing to me that he criticized Terry for doing to him. This is a social pattern, and as such not a surprising fact. The social pattern is control of information, which leads to power for the holder of this information.

Escalation

After a couple of days I went to the police, after having consulted a friend who was with me in the coastal village the day I wanted to move out. The police gave me a paper they called "convocation", and I was to give it to Terry so that he could present and explain himself at the Police station. This was to take place together with me, the next morning. When I confronted him with the fact, he calmly said "Well, Bente, do you remember signing a contract with us? Remember, we signed a contract so that your journalist friends could take some photos of us. You owe us 2,5 million cfa." This is the equivalent of 25 000 FF, what I am supposed to live off during a term as a student in Norway. He showed one of my friends the "contract"; I did not see it myself. Apparently, they had falsified my signature, and had recruited a third person to sign as a witness. The so-called witness was no other than one of the lead singer's sweetest little helpers! How could he? On their part, they had gone to the police, too, and had organised their convocation for me. They had claimed that I had bought drugs to them. They had been preparing themselves for this sort of verbal and judicial confrontation. My friend

saw some of my missing clothes in a plastic bag. This was part of the blackmailing. However, I did not receive them, and I thought it unwise to make a claim for them in an extremely anxious situation. The escalation of the conflict was swift, as if it followed its own path. It was as if it was all about being ahead of one another, when it came to preparing oneself for the worst. I who thought I had put myself ahead of the situation by going to the police, found myself trapped by a blackmailing scheme of even more dramatic proportions.

This is quite common, from what I saw throughout my fieldwork; one is supposed to be prepared for the worst, both verbally and physically. It is not smart to be surprised by the adversary. I learned this in a very crude way during this crisis. And from then on, I had to prepare myself for all kinds of strange situations and relational turns, and respond in a more expedient way to challenges and verbal attacks. To accept being bullied was not wise, and hindered my work. This was the model for interaction and the social logic that pervaded Abidjanese showbiz life. As mentioned above, this is part of an everyday behaviour that people have to add to their personality in order to survive within this logic. This event did not affect the members of Rastafari as much as it did me. To me, this was a crisis; to them it was part of everyday life.

As Pierrot was home in his apartment, he did not know of this escalation yet, and became alarmed when I told him: “How could you possibly do this without consulting me?” he shouted. “I am the one responsible for your well-being in the village; I introduced you, and if you ever have a problem, we are to solve it together!” He was scared of what would come out of this. He was scared of his own career getting ruined by the news being caught up by the press. His name would become dirty if associated with this affair. He said he would certainly not make a testimony in my favour at any police station. In addition, he thought that the musicians’ organization would probably take the band’s side in the matter, and that I possibly would have to pay up the 2,5 million. It is difficult for me to say whether or not this was true. It might have been true in this corrupt setting, but Pierrot might have wanted to scare me, too; he might have noticed that he no longer controlled me as he used to do, and realised that this was his chance to make himself indispensable again. These are my speculations, and it shows how uncertain I was and still am when it comes to confidence in human relations in the

Ivorian showbiz setting. What I can say for certain is that I was very, very scared during this event, and I felt trapped in a plan that I did not know anything about. I had been in the field for three months, and I felt insecure when it came to everything; my personal security, my field work and my life in Côte d'Ivoire. I wanted to go to Cameroon, where I had happy memories. My methods in the field were simply not working the way I intended. The field as such now had power over me, it controlled my movements and solutions. I had certainly read about anthropologists being trapped in the field, but was this a mandatory experience or faze? I asked myself if I would I become a better anthropologist thanks to this problematic event. I reasoned that in any way, I had to change my attitude when it came to methods; I could no longer go on living with musicians as if we were a big, happy family. Clearly, we were not.

Pierrot and I had to make a plan in order to get out of this dilemma. We both felt a psychological stress. Pierrot told me to just forget about the police business – this had to be dealt with in the African way. I said ok, as long as you get us out of this. I did not want to be forced to leave the country, or see his career ruined, so I accepted whatever Pierrot advised me to do. Not only was I dependent on Pierrot when it came to meeting musicians and bands, but he also had to rescue me from the band members' well-planned crisis, which was the consequence of these encounters. I had no influence over the outcome of the problem, and this is what made it so difficult for me. Pierrot decided that we should get it all over with during the same evening, by going to the nightclub where the band would perform. So we did, and on our way, we went over the scheme: I was to say hello to the band and sit down and have a drink on some couch, while Pierrot would go outside to have a talk with the leader. On a signal, I would go out to join them. This all happened quite quickly. On our way out of the nightclub, Pierrot said word by word what I was to say. I thought I would die. We joined Terry who had gathered a few helpers, witnesses, and I started on my speech. I told them in an awkward and excusing way that "Really, I don't know what has come over me these days, but I probably have listened to advices from the wrong people, so really, please excuse me." In fact, I excused myself for something that they had done to me, a strange and extremely humiliating feeling. I felt a total lack of power; there was no chance that I could control my life. My self, my social person, was completely eradicated. This is perhaps what the local black women are aware of, and therefore avoid: their brothers' way of behaviour towards

people, and their constant search for an economic or relational benefit. I, as a fieldworker, could not escape these dramatic situations. On the contrary, I created them by not understanding or respecting the local social rules. And by experiencing my consequent defeat, I started to see through the system. This defeat was very informative, though extremely painful to me.

The anthropologists Jean Briggs and Paul Rabinow have written interestingly on the matter of being trapped and used by informants, and how the anthropologist's presence alters the field (Briggs 1970 and Rabinow 1977). Rabinow writes the following about how aspects of friendship vary between one of his informants and himself:

“Despite all the conflict, he knew that the more he did for me the more I was dependent on him, the more I would reciprocate, the more I became “his” anthropologist. This possessive type of relationship is quite common in Morocco. How to limit and control the tendency of informants toward possessiveness was a central problem throughout my fieldwork” (1977:75).

Rabinow links his relational problems with the informants to the fact that many of them were unemployed and were therefore “ready to pursue any potential source of money” (1977:34). Both Rabinow and Briggs shed light on the fact that it is through crises the social life and codex unfold before you, and that is an opportunity for learning and subsequent analysis. In short, one must not stop with the defeat, but rather continue to investigate an interesting interpretation of the field. An important aspect of this is that events that seem unbearable to the anthropologist are part of a daily routine among the informants. They do not necessarily think of the antagonistic aspect during crises as a problem, as they have to face up to it every day.

The informative defeat in the Abidjanese field changed into what seems like much the same scenario as when Pierrot and Terry had their clash on the street: everything was “forgotten”. We might call this a relational logic in the field, which forms a pattern. Terry said that it was nothing, and we started to talk about how difficult it is being in a foreign country when you obviously do not know the rules, and do not know who to listen to. Then I paid, via Pierrot,

for a bottle of red wine, and we drank it all together, to make up. We sat there and chatted nicely and calmly together for about 30 minutes. Later, when we came in to the club again, they did another set, and I sat down to breathe out, and to talk to a reggae star in the Côte d'Ivoire named Ismaël Isaac. During our conversation, Terry came over to us, and greeted Ismaël in a nice way, and told me they were old friends and then dragged me on to the dance floor. Out there, I pretended to have the time of my life. I sat down for a little while, but the percussionist, "the thief", asked me to dance again, and so I did. I played happy and nice to everyone in order to get freedom in the future. This was survival. I became a hypocrite and cynic myself, and a very good one, too. I had learned the "trick".

After this incident, I left my remaining things in their village house. I did not care about it any longer. I also stopped spending time with them and working with them. As we lived quite far away from each other, I did not risk running into them very often, so the relationship just faded out. We happened to meet occasionally during my fieldwork, but by accident, and always in a musical forum, where I had changed focus. They no longer interested me, and I no longer interested them, I guess. From my point of view, there was absolutely no chance of us functioning together again. I could not make of this incident something that could be forgotten or repaired by changing the frames of the setting. It was over. From their point of view, I believe they understood that I had stopped my part of the deal, giving money that is. They had by then changed their expedient focus to something more income-producing.

Social equality and cultural difference

I think the overall theme when it comes to the incidents above, is the wish among some of the informants to show that we were social equals on the one hand, but that we expressed cultural differences on the other. The members of the band, and especially Terry, wanted to show me in an efficient way that we were social equals, that there was no hierarchy between us in that respect. We could talk and discuss various matters like two equal persons meeting up somewhere in the world, without regarding colour, background or social rank. I was one of the guys. However, we also had significant cultural differences, ones that he was eager to underline. This is deeply related to the fact that after all, we were in his country. I had

travelled of my own free will for my studies, and because of this it was evident that I was interested in the place. He knew everything like his own pocket, and he wanted to show me that he excelled in this, that I did not know anything about it, but that he could help me get settled as an “insider”. I certainly could not just appear from nowhere and think that everything was fine. I was to learn the hard way, by respecting the local social arenas, which is perfectly understandable. Terry’s, as well as Pierrot’s, power and control lay in that only they were in control of essential information, and they therefore made themselves indispensable to me. They were cunning and streetwise. In this sense, they were the directors of the play that was about my survival in the field, and my learning the local codes.

My other informants watched these relationships develop, but did not tell me how I could avoid the problems beforehand, as I was to see for myself (“Voir clair dedans”, as the expression goes). They would certainly not speak ill of someone; I could perceive it as if they wanted to keep me to themselves. So they preferred me to create the crisis and learn from it without their intervention. Afterwards, they would come up to me and tell me about their knowledge, in accordance with the local codex one might call the non-interference in other people’s businesses. One must rely on oneself in a highly individualistic world. The norm is to share only the very necessary information and stand back and watch what happens. Not in the laboratory sense of it, but in line with the non-interference logic and also because of the general lack of trust between people. It is clear from my thesis that I mostly experienced this kind of relationship construction. People did this among themselves, too. Everybody was to see for himself/herself, seemed to be the adage. This means that the alternative to the information control within relationships could have been to include me by sharing knowledge and information. Thus there are various ways of creating social relations, depending on the scale of information distribution. The other possibility could have been to guide people, to share a large amount of information to prevent many crises to arise, and in that way create relations.

I think the balance of power is evidently and overtly presented in the crisis, and consequently of methodological interest. While I was trying to figure out by my fumbling steps what Ivorian showbiz was like, Terry and the band were both my guides and were watching me.

This I feel was a methodological challenge, as I did not conduct fieldwork “at home”. In the beginning, then, I made a lot of social blunders. I was bound to do that. People understood that I needed information from them. This is where the power question seriously enters the stage, with all the bargaining as a compulsory ingredient. The bargain was about what I could give them and what sort of information they could offer me.

Give-and-take relationships pervaded my fieldwork, as I represented a potential good or gain many people wanted to get hold of. I knew that amongst themselves, Ivorians give and receive amounts of money and gifts that are rather valuable, also by Western standards. The idea of redistribution is omnipresent, and many wealthy people spread signs of material wealth around when they have the chance to. This gives them a social position and prestige among their friends, admirers and women. However, I as a fieldworker did not categorise myself in any such position of wealth redistribution. Therefore, I found it particularly hard to know when to start giving something, how much to give, and when to stop. It was difficult for me to know how much to pay for a service in a local setting. How much is a dialogue or an interview worth? In the first phase of my stay, I had a broad scope of interest, and I was in a constant search for whatever I could call music, musicians, singers and audience. Because of my wanting to obtain something, I was in the lower scale of the hierarchical power balance.

After the Rastafari experience, I could start the analytical process. This was a crisis from which I drew many lessons. One of the first things I recognized as positive was that during the crisis a whole social system unfolded before my eyes. By breaking the social rules, I suddenly became aware of their existence. But it must be underlined that my awareness occurred somewhat too late. This kind of late awareness occurred time and time again during the fieldwork, and was extremely frustrating. It was as if I could foresee troubles, but I could still not manage to avoid them. This fact must be seen together with the codex of non-interference in others people’s businesses. However, this specific case produced reflection, understanding and enlightenment when it came to my informants’ behaviour and social codex, and my own ability to cause this situation. It became a valuable gain for me.

As a methodological consequence, I learned that I would have to quickly and efficiently work with new acquaintances before the question of money, sex or residence permits could arise. I do not mean to say I did not pay my share for the information I received; I truly and thoroughly did. I just understood that I had to change my working methods from only “hanging out” with or living with people, to a mixture of traditional anthropological participatory observation and formal and expedient interviews. I had to make my field notes overtly so that everyone could see I was professionally busy with something. For example, later during fieldwork, one of Ismaël Isaac’s little helpers repeatedly said in a rather surprised and concerned way that “Bente wrote in her note book all night!! How can you write like that?” He was assured that my task really existed, and that I did in fact produce something, although it was incomprehensible to him. In addition, I compared my mission to journalism, and said that I had come to gather information for a “book”. People were then able to categorise me.

This change in my methodological approach was strictly combined with my role in the Ivorian society, or the total lack of such. I had no official job; I did not have the format of some technician or specialist having a well-paid developing job in the region, demanding respect from everyone. I wanted to escape this kind of stereotyped version of a European. However, the Rastafari experience made me reflect and convinced me that maybe I was “bouffée” (eaten) just because I did not behave like a “real” European, in a society in which much of your social rank comes from your professional position. As I was only “Bente” in the field, I represented only myself, although I found myself alternately executing different roles like the clown, the moron, the trophy, the prize, and the intelligentsia. Despite my efforts I soon found myself in the role of a rich European, which in a sense is a true and undeniable fact, of course: I had paid my return ticket while having a student status.

I learned that I had to rent an apartment for myself, and even hide its whereabouts in order to create some peace during the field period. I had to become more secret about myself. I learned that I had to shut up and become less outgoing, which is in contrast to my personality in general. I imitated what the musicians did; they lived very calmly somewhere, and met up in town. Of course the closest friends knew where they lived, but they seldom organised

meetings, dinners, parties, rehearsals or the like in their homes. They preferred to gather in “maquis” (outdoor bars/restaurants) in order to conclude deals and be social. So I understood that I had to stop behaving like the “European Bente” did, and create an “African Bente” by copying local social and practical tricks in order to survive. This means that I tried to imitate the expedient approach my informants had to other people, be it friends or strangers. I very much accepted the give-and-take sort of relationships I experienced in the interaction with others, instead of thinking that we were all a happy group of friends having a good time. I never forgot to be on the look out for possibilities of working and getting information from someone in my gradually extending network. I also to some extent tried to include the tantrum codex in my personality. As often as possible, I showed my anger in various situations, but without ending the relationships all together, in the same way that I had seen several informants do this earlier. I had learned that experiencing a crisis with someone does not necessarily mean that you stop working with or seeing this person. It was just an outburst because of lack of respect, and after a while we would work together again. I learned that I had to avoid as much as possible getting deeply involved in people’s lives, in order to escape emotional bonds and loyalties, although I found this particularly hard and experienced it as going against all my personal convictions.

These were the methodological and personal changes I had to go through during my stay in Abidjan, and they are related to what I briefly mentioned in the beginning of this chapter; that the social setting was characterized by people trying to localise scarce, unpredictable, fluid goods or gains at all times. There is a logic associated with this, which demands certain competencies and attitudes in life, which again produces a specific handling of social relations. One competence is individualism; one survives by one’s own cunning. One must be capable of building an extensive network with a lot of acquaintances, which enable one to pick up information from far away about jobs and resources. Within this extensive network, none of the relations must be of an emotional or loyal kind; rather, the relations should be possible to manipulate symbolically. Further, one must excel in the art of information control. The idea of holding valuable information means a powerful position; people will understand that one is in the in-group. What one knows, one does not talk about, otherwise one is no longer interesting as a possible acquaintance.

A second competence is pragmatism; both parties in a social relation seek a beneficial outcome. Personal relations are pervaded by this search for a benefit. That is why one is expedient in one's relationships, and endures a high level of intensity. Further, front stage is very important as there are many public places where people meet up, the maquis, the narrow pathways in front of the houses, the streets etc. Every place is good to test each other's capabilities in code competence, which takes a lot of time. Adjustments of codes are proof of local knowledge. All relations must be open for business at all times, and even though one does not want oneself to become trapped in loyalties, one tries to spin a web around others so as to obtain their loyalty. One must attract people's interest.

A third competence is aggression; there is no security net into which to fall, the risks are great. A certain amount of personal toughness and cunning is necessary in order to cope with this world. One must be streetwise with a specific style in which the symbolic aspect of the façade is extremely important. One must look like a king and behave like one. If one is threatened, one must be able to strike back both verbally and physically, and be a tough bloke. One must not fear violence.

Now, if someone is in the position that he manages to obtain another person's trust, and this other lets him inside his sphere of information, the question becomes whether or not there is room for two, or if he can grab the information or the fluid good or gain and get away with it without the other person's knowing. This is the cunning and streetwise attitude of many people in Ivorian showbiz. It is clear that in a setting like this, I as an anthropologist was used as a fluid good and gain, and my trust was cultivated and nurtured so as to obtain resources from me without my knowledge. Terry and Pierrot did nothing else but follow this obvious logic that consisted of creating a central position for themselves in my life in Abidjan and making cunning plans before I could react. And when I finally understood one plan, they were already on the second and the third.

ISMAEL ISAAC THE STAR

Background

Ismaël Isaac was actually named Diakité Issiaka by his parents. But when he grew up, he chose the names of two of Abraham's sons, Ismaël and Isaac, because he is a Muslim. Ismaël has never put his feet in an ordinary school, though he attended koranic school for some time, where he very much enjoyed the liturgical songs, according to Ivoir' Soir (01.02.2001). His parents did not consider schooling as something that would yield advantage in the near future, and in addition to this they were poor, so that was it. As a result he is part of the group of children in the ghetto who never attend school. However, Ismaël did receive one sort of effective schooling, namely "the school of the street", which never failed to teach him what it was necessary to know in a life in the Treichville ghetto. Certainly it was the streetwise way of life the elders in the neighbourhood taught him, where everything was about being cunning, clever, independent and strong.

Consequently, Ismaël has an inferiority complex when it comes to speaking French with journalists, or me for that matter, as we were considered "intellectuals" and difficult to talk to. He does not speak grammatically correct French, and he is aware of it. Once I saw him giving an interview in Senegal, and he would often look down at his shoes while explaining the show or the songs. Not only was he shy, but also tremendously awkward about not speaking French properly, which made the interview setting difficult for both parts. I wanted to conduct an interview with him, too, and it took me some weeks before I understood that it would never take place. Even to put the question "when can we meet?" was difficult, because he was so occupied with dealings and talking to others. I then finally realized that I could just stop running after him, and instead try and talk informally to him as much as possible. It was hard to get hold of him,

though. He escaped all the time, so I started to observe his settings as a replacement for actual communication.

It has to be underlined that Ismaël had another handicap other than not attending school, a physical handicap; he was polio-struck as a child, and he still limps rather heavily, hauling himself from one side to the other. His parents were farmers and had moved to the great city of Abidjan, and did not know of the vaccination campaigns, and so he got polio. With this kind of body, it was clear that he was never a threat to anyone, he could not join the ghetto race of who had the most muscles, and he could never work out. Who was afraid of him, being a polio victim? Therefore, he soon understood that he had to get himself respected by doing something totally different, something that the others did not manage with their physical strength and frightening body language. He managed to turn the focus away from something that in Africa often was seen as a failure, his handicapped body. Instead he focused on his biggest talent, namely his mind, and his ability to produce song texts and melodies that would bring people to a pause, to listen to what he had to say. He turned this into success. Ismaël coped with his bodily malediction, but not by hiding it from others. He did not stay in. On the contrary, he started to practice his voice with his friends from an early age. As he was already a “good-for-nothing”, his parents let him continue. However, the fact that he wanted to become a singer was a matter of great dispute in the house. The parents, especially his father, care a lot about Ismaël’s not choosing an ordinary way of living.

“Ismaël Isaac had problems to make his father, an imam and fervent believer, accept that he, the eldest of the brothers and sisters, hence the locomotive of the family, would choose the route for perdition, arame. Facing the stubbornness of the child wanting to do music, his father makes the decision of repudiating Ismaël, with his mother and his other brothers and sisters. Ismaël Isaac then finds himself in the streets, but will never do a renunciation of the music” (Ivoir’Soir, 1.2.2001).

Ismaël calls himself a ghetto man, “l’enfant de Treich”, “the child from Treich”, and “l’enfant terrible”, “the terrible child”, to quote the intro sang by his choirgirls during his concerts. The intro further goes, “Il met drap partout”, which means “he imposes himself wherever he goes”.

The fact that Ismaël calls himself terrible is repeated in journalists' articles, which we will see in chapter 5.

Ismaël is living proof of the Ivorian dream: to get out of the ghetto, to get a life, not being dependent on anybody. This reflects the sentence “bring your ghetto guts out”, which I will deal with in chapter 6. What he says is perceived as the truth among the audience, because he sings about lived experience. He is not a naive, romantic singer who would talk about the sun in the morning breeze and so on. He gains his credibility by his personal history, and where his physical handicap once was disturbing, he now receives admiration for it. People say to themselves that even a guy like him can escape from the ghetto. Even a cripple can not only survive, but also become famous, receiving ovations from people from all social layers in the region. So despite his fate as a child, he managed, he “s'est débrouillé”. However, the ghetto dictates that you should be loyal to it throughout your life, not hide it away. It is not enough to be born somewhere in order to reclaim belonging to it. So on the one side, the dream is about getting out and become independent, and on the other side it is about staying the same, taking the same problems seriously, and above all, one is not supposed to become a high-flyer, but stay humble and easygoing. It is also about being proud of one's background no matter how poor it is; to stand up for it, to speak a neighbourhood's cause.

In the song “Treich Feeling” from the album with the same name, Ismaël sings “Treich feeling, Treich feeling, Ismo feeling-style”, and tells the world that there is an absolute overlap between himself and Treichville. He claims by this that he has founded a certain style; the style of Treichville, and the word “style” is in English in the text, which he pronounces “style”. He also sings “Treich town – Trenchtown” as a wink to Bob Marley. Trenchtown is a deprived neighbourhood in downtown Kingston, Jamaica, from where many reggae artists have sprung. Bob Marley and The Wailers lived and worked here, and they produced the famous song, “Trenchtown” in 1980.

So both Bob Marley and Ismaël stand up for their poor neighbourhood; they defend it, but also give the inhabitants their advice about everyday behaviour. But where for example the reggae and ragga singer Kajeem has founded a successful organization for his ghetto brothers, Ismaël



Ismaël full of energy during a concert

shows his support and loyalty for Treichville in a more verbal way during concerts, in his lyrics and through his spending much of his time there. He knows that he is dead as a singer and performer when he stops being in Treichville, as all his credibility and “ghetto guts” will vanish. As it is now, whenever he performs in Treichville, it can be compared to a home team playing a football match. The crowd admires him immensely, and people come to the concerts to have a good time, to listen to good music, and to be with friends. (In a later chapter I will discuss how important music is in everyday life in the ghetto, to what extent it is part of people’s lives).

As a person, Ismaël is very calm indeed, never making a spectacle of himself when out, even at nightclubs. As he limps, he never dances or makes a lot of moves. Sometimes he will walk over to someone with the object of talking, but nothing else. This is the case for others, too: reggae singers Tiken Jah Fakoly and Kajeem. They do not arrive somewhere in order to get noticed. They do what the social code inculcates in such circumstances, they buy drinks, they consume enough that the owner of the bar and everyone around understands that here is a star. It is the social codex that dictates this behaviour, not the stars themselves, and the consequence might often be that they are pressed to pay more than they can actually afford. For that reason, some of

them prefer to stay in. This pattern marks a stark difference to the zouglou setting, where the stars often go out every night, and rarely come in groups with fewer than 4 or 5 loud speaking persons. They buy whole “casiers de bières”, that is 24 bottles in a box, or they buy several bottles of whisky in a row. This, they do in a very loud and conspicuous manner, for everyone to notice.

Ismaël has another conception of things, he never brags. That is why he has withdrawn from the centre of Treichville to the Yopougon neighborhood, in order to get more calm in his everyday life, to work on his music without everyone disturbing him, and also to live a family life. But as mentioned, he is still constantly in Treichville, where he meets up with his musicians, his manager and where his extended family still lives. This is where he arranges gigs with his musicians, assuring himself of their availability. There is a race to obtain them, to get the best ones, and to become convinced about them really being able to play the music. As he is not a virtuoso musician himself, he often asks Pépito if this or that musician is capable of handling everything, all the intros, all the breaks and solos. Personally, I only once saw Ismaël really excited in a context that was not a concert, and that was because of a TV program. It was about the young men living on the streets of Abidjan, who called themselves nouchi. Ismaël was following the program very attentively, and excelled in telling us that this or that guy was definitely not a nouchi. “He is a false nouchi! He is not worth anything!” he would proclaim, leaning towards the TV set. “Ah, he has only run away from home, nothing else, he is not a nouchi. He has money, he just wants people to feel sorry for himself, he thinks it is cool to be homeless, to be free of pressure from the parents”, he would judge. He meant, as mentioned earlier, that the sense of nouchi is a whole mental concept, not something that you decide because it is exciting, to obtain girls etc. You are not a nouchi just to brag about it, because there is a responsibility attached to the name. A nouchi is a responsible person with dignity, not a simple thief or a squatter.

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF MUSIC MAKING



On the road with Ismaël, heading for the Bouaké gig

When musicians make music together, not only music is created. There is a whole social world that comes to life. The sound itself is only one of the consequences of the coming together. During the music making social relations are negotiated or renegotiated. When musicians make music, a fine balance is created between them, they meet in the music, they make the sounds; but above all this is about social relationships that are started, continued or broken. Making music is a social encounter.

My aim in this chapter is not to unveil the character of the social relationships in the Ivorian showbiz and see how they are reproduced in music. Music does not express social relations,

but rather creates them. Social relations and social patterns appear as consequences of the music-making, rather than the music itself articulating them. Further, music is not a text with a finished set of meanings. On the contrary, music is a language through which one not only negotiates social positions and obtains a profit, but also through which one sees hierarchies and social patterns. As for the Ivorian field, musicians and vocalists might discuss music, but what is at stake in the end is social positioning. This social positioning comprises the option for a job, and the possibility to hold on to it, as we will see in my example below. It is about surviving economically. Music seen in this way enables us to further claim that the quarrelling in Ivorian showbiz is not so much about the sound of the musical product, as about making oneself an insider of the band. That is why most disagreements take place before entering the rehearsal room and not inside the rehearsal room, which is a very important distinction.

I am interested in the social mechanisms in the immediate environment of music and performers, and in this chapter I will particularly deal with the networks created between the musicians, Ismaël and the manager Doudou. David Coplan has written about the precarious relationship between band members and their immediate social and professional frame, and writes about “a rapid turnover of personnel within the bands despite the high level of demand for their services” (1985:177). Below I will describe to what extent power is an asset, in addition to an outcome of interaction, which one can lose if one is taken off guard. One needs to defend one’s challenged position; one must negotiate with people by offering them advantages, and in that one obtains power. I will discuss how the members of the group navigate in this sort of highly tense network, by focusing on the way they excel in the management of important local parameters. Power, economy, skills and social abilities are parameters they use in order to reproduce their social position. The Abidjanese social setting influences what this kind of reggae sounds like, as we will see more clearly in chapter 6 where I compare Ivorian and Jamaican reggae.

Operating in a competitive environment makes the members of Ismaël’s group behave in a certain way towards each other. Life is unstable and competition is hard, and as little is based on written contracts, much of the deals are constantly negotiated and questioned if they do not seem fortunate or believable. Where the resources are scarce, but the demand high, the

result is fierce contest. This is the situation even for a band like Ismaël's, which constitutes a relatively stable "firm". The persons involved in these liaisons will seek the best pragmatic options in order to obtain what they consider advantageous. Here, I will draw on Fredrik Barth's extensive work on the concepts of constraint, choice, achievement and personal goals and strategies in a relational world (Barth 1967, 1969). These are important aspects to consider when musicians make music together, because this is what lies in the immediate social world. Musicians do not come together by accident; in this relational setting they are after the fluid goods and gains necessary to survive in life. Professional activity must have a profitable return. That is why the quarrelling over money, rank and gigs between the band members will be my focus in this chapter. I think that the quarrel may be analysed in various ways; it might function as a technique to obtain power in some settings, but it might also take on a function as a "free space" in the sense that the musician quarrels over a matter just to be left in peace for a while. This is an interesting feature of high frequency face-to-face relationships, with few participants. This analytic approach might help us understand the evaporating conflicts that are ever present in these networks, as we have seen above. It is my opinion that Barth's theoretical approach might help us understand my empirical outlines in a more profound way.

The pragmatics of ecstasy

The pragmatics of ecstasy is a concept, which refers to the relation between an artist and his/hers audience. In the Ivorian taste the performance should touch an extravagant aura. However, before going on stage, there are various pragmatic and down-to-earth stages the band has to "pass", such as to choose the band members, rehearse, organise transport, food and hotel rooms, and to make sure everybody is in the right place at the right time. I will elaborate this matter below.

Further, one can relate the pragmatics of ecstasy concept to Ismaël's situation, one that we can call a dilemma. His dilemma comes from the fact that in all rhythmic music there is a paradox; the music has intensification as a goal, which means on one side, the audience is supposed to be physically trapped and exalted; they are to be bombed by good music.

Simultaneously, the music is supposed to represent an identity from which the artists draw their credibility and authenticity, at an ideational level.

As the leader, Ismaël faces similar problems in the music making as he does in the managing of social relations. One of the most important aspects is his credibility as a star. Credibility, via belonging to a place and to certain traditions, must be believable. In order to be successful, every band must have some sort of credibility, by being local. The belonging to a specific place is upheld when the band employs hometown boys as band members. Without credibility, there is no possibility for survival. On the other hand, a band like Ismaël's seeks an advanced musical performance in order to make the audience exalted. For this, a highly developed professionalism is needed. Therefore, without professionalism there is no possibility for survival, either. Hometown boys give credibility a boost, but that might not be sufficient in this arena. On the other hand, with professionalism only, there is equally no chance. A mixture of professionalism and credibility seems to be the most successful when it comes to the reproduction of the band's success.

There is therefore a negotiation between the realm of ecstasy and identity, and both aspects of the music must be present for the audience to accept a performance. The audience is the judge in this regard. Ismaël must create ecstasy among the audience without failing to the ghetto identity: Ismaël finds himself hiring musicians who are professionally skilled to make the public become enjaillé. This word, enjaillé, is extremely important in this setting. It might be a derivation from the English word "enjoy", or "enjoyed", since it is in the past tense, and pronounced in an Ivorian manner. In any way, the word is filled with meaning when enunciated during or after a concert, where one might translate it with "thrilled", "extremely happy" or "euphoric". So Ismaël must hire certain musicians for his gigs, but these musicians do not necessarily come from the Treichville neighbourhood. He therefore explodes the schema of geography and belonging and in this way conflicts his own credibility. In fact, this is also part of the problem the group as a professional, coherent group has; on one side the economic organization or "firm" has to turn out successfully for everyone to stay, and on the other side the identity dimension of the music must be apparent to the world. Ismaël has to deal with this in his everyday managing of the "firm". Berkaak & Ruud argue that: "Playing

in a rock band is therefore about getting insight into the society's manners of operation, how deals are concluded and money earned, how contacts and networks are built, and to be able to separate friendship and professional partnerships" (1994:5). It is this kind of social and professional knowledge I am interested in shedding light on with my empiric examples below; they show the strategies musicians, singers and staff employ in order to survive in a precarious world.

A not negligible dimension of the identity and ecstasy is the fact that in what seems like a spontaneous concert with a lot of happenings and breaks and musicians running back and forth, things must be settled as very clear and non-questionable at an earlier phase. In the midst of improvisation, everybody in the band must already have a coherent idea of what the plan is, when a break will start, when it will stop; all these little details must be planned, or else the spontaneity falls apart, paradoxically enough.

In order for the spontaneity to take place, then, a lot of band rehearsals and pragmatic organization must have taken place beforehand. First and foremost the band structure must be settled; what musicians and instruments are needed, and how many members can come along in accordance with the budget. Then there is the settlement of each member's pay for the gig. Often, the right persons must be bribed or at least "smoothed" in the right and efficient way; these are often the organizers of the concert. Someone must book hotels, meals and transport, someone must do the PR, and others must put up the gear on stage and join the cables in the right way and make sure that the instruments are tuned. In order for the improvisation to take place on stage, then, the pragmatic organization must not fail. There are three steps of development, which constitute a line to follow before every concert; the pragmatism allows spontaneity on stage, which in its turn creates ecstasy among the audience. The aim is that the audience will not detect the detailed pragmatism; people are to forget about this dimension of the concert. However, without this pragmatism there will be no ecstasy.

I witnessed the reggae singer Kajeem perform in this kind of three steps development during a concert on 11th of May 2001, in remembrance of the death of Bob Marley. It happened at the Centre Culturel Français in Abidjan. Before going on stage, he had rehearsed by himself at

home, with the help of his CD with an instrumental version of his songs. He sang and repeated his lines in this way. In addition, he put on various dub versions of other singers' works, adding his own, new lines to these ones; hence organizing his own little private sound system. He explained to me that his Swiss DJ excelled in and enjoyed very much putting on totally unknown songs for Kajeem to sing to during concerts. Kajeem therefore becomes very clever in handling new tunes and adding his own lines to them. What happened during the concert on 11th of May was that he ordered the band to play a Bob Marley song, and then he added his new lines, also unknown to the audience. It was called "Deux Togos" (which means 200 cfa in nouchi language), and he toasted (which is a melodic mixture of singing and rapping in Jamaica) so fluently and quickly that the audience was awestruck. They understood what he was saying despite the cadence, but they were awestruck by his capabilities of twisting his tongue that rapidly, and in such a seemingly effortless manner! Later, Kajeem told me that this was exactly the trick: to rehearse intensely before a concert in order to make believe he performed without the slightest sweat, and by this fact make the audience catch fire and become ecstatic. Actually, he used this particular event to measure the reach of the song lines. He said that before concluding an album in studio, he tests the songs on various audiences, to be able to predict a success or a flop. The audience becomes the measure for this; if it turns out to be euphoric, it is a good song, if not he has to revise some parts of it or cancel it altogether. In this way he can imagine what songs will become favourites and after these tests he is able to range the songs in the proper order on the album. Kajeem is very pragmatic indeed when it comes to organizing himself before a concert or an album release.

This sort of testing and adjustment is called calibration. Calibration contains the idea of adjusting oneself in accordance with one's failures so as not to reproduce them. Kajeem here tested the audience and hence the market by creating feed back loops between himself and the audience. Kajeem is able to do this adjustment because he is inside the local social setting; he shares all the codes with his audience because he experiences what they experience in life. This is the social positioning from which he draws his authenticity. He might immediately detect the nuances in the signals coming from the audience. A singer coming from abroad, or an Ivorian having spent too much time out of Côte d'Ivoire will not be able to do this. Kajeem as an artist and musician then becomes both a businessman and a buddy. Further, he is a



Kajeem communicating with his fans

hometown boy when it comes to both identity and business. In a very clever and expedient way he tries out and communicates with his audience. The latter in its turn is happy about taking part in such a test, and experiences a cherished moment of togetherness. Without his rank as a hometown boy, Kajeem would fail in front of his fans. He gains even more credibility among them when he manages to make songs that hit them as “la vérité” (the truth), as I often heard my neighbours and informants say. For this to take place, Kajeem needs to be in constant communication with different people, he needs to pull out the essence of Ivorian lives. He told

me he listens to what stories people are telling, and what vocabulary they employ. He has to be at the forefront of what goes on in certain precarious areas, especially his home area, Abobo, in Abidjan. Only an artist with local sensitivities can perform in this way. However, as is Ismaël’s case, Kajeem employs musicians from different parts of the country and even from abroad in order to do a professional show with him. These musicians might have nothing to do with the Abobo-feeling, but they know how to play their instruments well.

This sort of overt calibration might have its historic reasons. When Kajeem released his first album with a lot of economic strain and a tremendous amount of personal effort, it went straight into oblivion among the audience. The PR had flopped altogether, and the song lyrics themselves were far too poetic and refined for the inhabitants of the deprived areas, for whom this album was intended. They did not understand what he said, it was written in an academic

language, as Kajeem was a masters degree student at the time. There was a considerable discrepancy between his message and the audience's perception. For example, he made a song called "Marie Jeanne". But where Kajeem was referring to the Rasta drug marihuana, the audience looked around for the girl Marie Jeanne, and constantly asked him if this or that girl was her. This astonished him, but he subsequently made various "ecstasy" tests before releasing new albums, taking even more into account the living conditions of his fans. This is Kajeem's way of dealing with the pragmatics of ecstasy. He makes ecstasy possible by making sure the band "passes" the various pragmatic stages before an album release.

Expediency

"Vocalists are kept as a unit for all performances. Instrumentalists, on the other hand, are used independently according to the demands of a particular recording or live show" (Coplan, 1985:185).

"With so few outlets for independent achievement and public recognition, band members often quarrelled over money, leadership, and personal prestige. Promoters found this lack of unity easy to exploit. Performers frequently left established groups and set up new ensembles of their own, since a disproportionate amount of revenues, recognition and authority normally went to the group leader-management" (Ibid:177).

These two quotations are representative of the situation I found in the Côte d'Ivoire, particularly the quarrelling about rank, money and gigs. Why do they bother to quarrel all the time? Clearly, it is not for the fun of it; on the contrary, it is linked to the already mentioned hard competition in a merciless working environment. There is an extremely high degree of unpredictability on all levels. The expediency in human relationships that we saw was part of the ghetto discourse pervades the inhabitants' professional lives, too. The musicians run for the best jobs and the singers run for the best skilled musicians, and the manager tries to hold it all together at an organizational and economic level. Even though the members of the band have some sort of common goal in the efficient functioning of the "firm", they all have personal convictions they follow as well. Here I want to introduce the concept of the hit-and-run effect. In this kind of relational setting without written contracts and monthly payments,

people are forced to go for what seems to be the best option in the various situations. It is linked to the idea of the fluid good or gain, which must constantly be found in different places every time. People use their network actively in order to get jobs; everyone tries to seek out the best fluid good or gain, and goes for it. The wish for the best permeates the relationships between different persons with different rank and status. There is constant communication; telephone calls, visits and “hanging out” at maquis in order to get hold of the goods and gains and survive in life.

This communication is extremely important, because the individual who holds the most up to date information might predict where the jobs are located. Information is power in itself. As these networks are characterized by a high level of tension things happen quickly, and the person who is not updated lags behind and therefore loses opportunities. The powerful person must be even more on the alert than everyone else, as his power is constantly being challenged in various cunning ways. He must be a confidence trickster. Not only must he himself be confident, but he must manage to gain the confidence of others, too. There is a race in which the winner has a controlled façade and behaviour characterized by confidence, fearlessness, rhetoric, intimidation, coercion, and flattery. He must know how to behave and how to perform the presentation of the self, in line with what Goffman writes on information control (Goffman 1959). Within this façade, there is a notion of violence, both mental and physical. The powerful person must frighten the others so they will not succeed in challenging him; in fact they will not even try to do so. He must try to attract followers and not create opponents. Followers are useful when it comes to putting his will into action. This is the very aim of the façade. He must remain on the inside of the circulation of information, goods and gains by employing his skills as a confidence trickster.

As for Ismaël, he wants to stay within the circulation, too. There are two reasons for this. The first one is because of his identity project. It is a fact that he comes from Treichville and puts forward a collective voice from the heart of the deprived areas. This local credibility enables him to make his musical product acceptable. The second reason for his staying in the circulation is the business aspect of the music. He must be able to catch the feed back loops in order to stay in line with what is going on among the audience. For this to take place, he needs

to maintain his social relations to get information. Ismaël's case of course also applies to Kajeem, who so overtly tests his audience from the stage.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the person who holds a certain power, or who seeks power, will try to convince others that he has some advantage for them to obtain. He will make himself indispensable. This was the case with Pierrot: he efficiently made himself useful to me, and explicitly underlined it. This is individualism in an extreme sense, and it is part of the everyday life in Ivorian showbiz.

The hit-and-run effect influences every relation in the network of the members of the band, because they are open minded and inventive about analysing an option for a job. Perhaps the most important aspect of the above mentioned information control is one's ability to sniff out opportunities for a job. Berkaak & Ruud have written about a community characterized by a professional setting on the one hand, and a pact of feelings on the other, something that might be difficult to manoeuvre on a daily basis. It is challenging to be a friend and a professional partner at the same time, because feelings among friends who make music together must be handled in a "business-like" and economic way. Berkaak & Ruud claim that when it comes to networks and bands, jobs and tours: "What is characteristic to such networks compared to more formal organizations is that they are at the same time open and shut" (1994:72). This is in line with the idea of hit-and-run relationships; they argue that both human relations and geography are open and shut. Human relations become relevant when there is a fluid good or gain to obtain, and they are therefore constantly negotiated and renegotiated. If there is a need for a skilled guitar player, he will be allowed in the band; if not he will effectively be stopped at the "border" between the band and the rest of the world. When it comes to geography, this professional domain is characterized by being multi-sited. Jobs are found in different neighbourhoods, regions and countries, and in theory the world is the site of interest for the band members. According to Berkaak & Ruud, open and shut networks cover both human relations and geography, as the network itself is geographically dispersed. I claim that in the Côte d'Ivoire, the borders of the various bands are open and shut, as well. When there is a need for a certain musician, the gap must be filled in order to do performances, and the borders of the band are open. And during rehearsals and concerts, the set of musicians is very

much present and concentrated on the common identity and sound; there is no negotiation on stage. The situation they have before them is the important one, not actually who is playing and who could have played. On the other hand, when there is no need for a specific musician, he will not enter the group and this is not a matter for discussion, either. Even though the musicians might play with various singers, they manage to live in the moment and contribute to both the identity and economic realm of the band.

Ismaël has an extended knowledge about how his networks function, he foresees various situations and consequences and is able to make the network of musicians and staff members successful. He must make believable plans and try not to let people down in a verbal social world. I think that his actively using his knowledge within social networks makes his dilemma bearable. This is comparable to many other music settings in the world, for example most rock'n'roll bands in the Western countries, as we have seen above. Ismaël, for instance, must be both idealistic and pragmatic in front of his very pragmatic musicians. This is the real dilemma he cannot escape nor resolve: how to make people freak out and become enjaillés during the shows and simultaneously create an ideational mirror. He has to employ musicians who are skilled, no matter where they come from geographically speaking, no matter if they are really friends or even loyal to the Treichville aura. Ismaël needs competence in order to go on stage and to give a show where people will, on the contrary, feel the ghetto vibes and Ismaël's identity as theirs. Ismaël, the terrible child from Treichville, and his skilled musicians (who come from as distantly apart as Sierra Leone, Ghana, Bénin, and the Côte d'Ivoire) make the audience confident in the ghetto feeling and a joint history and future. Ismaël has not hired musicians primarily from Treichville, because there are not enough good ones from that neighbourhood. He cannot go on stage and produce a lousy sound, because people will simply not come and listen to them. It might be fun for half an hour, but that is it. Few people will actually enjoy poor sound, that is; where the local aesthetics are not being observed.

Ismaël and his musicians must make sure they cope with both levels. They must cope with the issue of a "terrible" Treichville identity, with an authentic music pointing at a specific symbolic togetherness. On the other hand they must ensure that this pointing becomes

possible, with the actual, real, professional sound pouring out from their instruments into the spectators' bodies as a physical experience. The audience is to be struck by the sound: the bass and the drum kick, for example, are to blast them to the ground. This dilemma of Ismaël's permeates every relation he undertakes, because he needs to create two opposite categories of experience among the audience: the credible one and the exalted one.

Whenever musicians make music together, there are therefore many things that enter into consideration in addition to the sounds produced. When the members of Ismaël's band make music, there has been intense negotiation going on beforehand. It is a very fine balance of trust and distrust that reigns in this sector of Abidjan's working life. The human relations are characterized by highly frequent face-to-face actions at a low scale; that is, a restricted number of participants have a multitude of kinds of interaction. The interaction must cover the technical management of the band as well as the sentimental and mental realm. But as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the negotiation is about how to become or remain an insider of the band. It is not about musical codes or aesthetic styles – these are unquestionable areas in which everyone can meet in agreement. They share a high percentage of common codes, they know how the music of Ismaël is supposed to sound and do not fight it. Music is hence a means to create social relations and positions. Inside the band, some forces are atomising and individualistic, as for example how the money is split between the members. But at the same time, other forces are community oriented, with the adage "one for all and all for one". They must all work hard towards a common goal, namely to manage getting concert jobs for the band. This is their common interest. They all are interested in making money, and therefore getting jobs is more important than how the money is split afterwards.

Sometimes they will negotiate over a common identity, at other times they will discuss individual profit. Because of the unstable life they lead, they find themselves in all kinds of strange situations and crises, crises that might evaporate rather quickly again, without anyone saying a word too loudly, as we have seen above. This is a consequence when plans are difficult to rely on, and where the members of the band make themselves a "free space" by starting an argument. Maybe most of the crises are therefore not as problematic as they seem,

and this might be the explanation for all the evaporating conflicts that I witnessed. As in all social landscapes, there are many codes one has to be familiar with, in order to prevent communicational mistakes. Mistakes can become impossible to mend afterwards, and one had better avoid them. This is a tough sort of landscape, where one has to react instantly and in the right way to be accepted as an insider. Often one has to bite before the adversary does in order to get respected as a man or a musician. They live in what David Coplan would have called a “predatory environment”. This creates evaporating conflicts. As we saw earlier, the musicians execute the desired sound. Ismaël and his staff hire them to do the show with him. So in that sense Ismaël is their employer. But the picture is denser than that, of course, and I will exemplify it with empirical illustrations.

As music is a means to create social relations and positions, it is also a means to sanction them. My experience from the Abidjanese setting was that people were efficiently sanctioned and excluded if they were of no use in a particular situation. This could cause great frustration among those so discarded. If a musician were not let into a specific band, he would continue to look for another option for a job. If he could not find one, he would have to take up some other activity in order to survive and maybe pay for his family. From this perspective, one can say that networks and bands can efficiently sustain themselves by shutting their borders. Through music, in a vast city like Abidjan, relationships and social positioning can be sanctioned. Standing alone is as difficult as in small-scale villages in which persons without a social position or role are helpless. Even in a modern city like Abidjan there is a helpless aspect related to the experience of being sanctioned. By not opening up the borders of a band or a network to others, these people remain “others” and “outsiders”. It is not as if they are free to choose or lead modern liberal city lives that allow them to easily run for a job somewhere else. Their choice was sanctioned in the first place, and there are not numerous other possibilities lined up. The freedom of choice that is often seen as a positive and liberating feature in modern individualizing cities does not necessarily lead to access to the fluid goods or gains in the Abidjanese field. Some people see their social positions sanctioned because they are prevented from access to these fluid goods and gains by powerful others. Standing alone in this sense in Abidjan is dramatic.

Talja Blokland has written on neighbourhood and community identity in a Rotterdam working class area (Blokland 2003). She describes a setting in which social control, struggle over scarce resources, competition and exclusion is part of the neighbourhood's characteristics. Even in modern large-scale cities in which the inhabitants might live anonymously, crude sanctions are carried out on some people who become outsiders. Blokland underlines that through a collective remembering from the long distant past, the "old" inhabitants of the neighbourhood rather bluntly categorize themselves as the insiders and the others as outsiders. Through memories certain people are sanctioned and do not have access to a togetherness in a neighbourhood in a large-scale society. Further, Blokland sees the aspect of contest through a fight over the use of a square, between "old" Dutch inhabitants and people of other ethnicities. The Dutch network is hence shut for foreigners, but they still live in the same neighbourhood. This phenomenon creates clusters of people who are not integrated in the over-all society.

As we have seen, in the Ivorian showbiz the negotiation between musicians, singers and managers is about how to become or remain an insider of the band. There is a constant possibility and therefore a persistent fear of being classified as a member of the out-group. As an insider, one can make a living, as an outsider one cannot; one is sanctioned.

Pragmatism

I want to relate the settings of negotiation to Fredrik Barth's claim that under certain given circumstances and conditions, people will react and act in order to seek the best options among many, to achieve something they assume as valuable or positive, be it physical or psychological, money or rank, or as often is the case: both. Barth sees the personal initiatives as a means to obtain something. The over all interest is the individuals' way of finding solutions, by using their local knowledge within a social framework, in order to obtain fluid, mobile goods or gains. In Barth's words, people are therefore "entrepreneurs" who think in new ways. Entrepreneurial activity might lead to changes in the social setting over time: others may look at an ingenious action and want to copy it. Barth focuses on changing social patterns, initiated by individuals. His emphasis is on patterns in the making, but his emphasis is also strictly economical, as in his analysis of the various economic spheres in Sudanese

Darfur (1967) and in writings about capital and investment among nomads in South Persia (1969).

His findings are to some extent comparable to the field in Abidjan. I am interested in how individuals cope with their “predatory environment”; what personal strategies they initiate in their everyday life. As in Darfur, the unity of administration and economy in Abidjanese showbiz is the person, not really the family or the clan, even though the artists pay for this or that for their family members. In this sort of relational field there is an extreme individualization where everyone runs for their strategic goals in the form of fluid and precious advantages. In Abidjan, there is not only a constant wish to survive economically, but to enrich oneself as well, if possible. This creates the previously mentioned hit-and-run relationships among the musicians and the singers, especially during concert clashes, but also in their everyday quarrelling pattern in which they play a mental hide-and-seek with one another. The hit-and-run relationships are evident among the musicians themselves, as well. They compete for the jobs in the cases where there are several musicians who play the same instrument. As we will see below, this is the case for trombone players, Olivier and Philippe.

Negotiating power

During Ismaël’s rehearsals there are little indications of neither musical nor language preferences, only a sense of right or wrong in relation to the cassette listened to; the master piece. This is a fundamental feature in Ivorian music at large, where the singer goes in the studio by himself, and calls on session musicians and studio technicians in order to create an album. For concerts on the other hand, the singer uses another set of musicians who rehearse and perform with him on stage, and who are paid for each gig. Before this, of course, the musicians have to listen really attentively to the album, to detect his or her line in the middle of all the lines. It is a job that requires a clever and rapid musical ear, as well as a capacity to remember several new songs in a row. Ismaël’s concerts might include up to 20 or even 25 songs. So during rehearsals there is little sense of jamming, on the contrary it is a joint adaptation from the cassette into real life. The musicians agree on what is possible to play and what is not. As the album is made in studio by technicians as well as musicians, the

consequence might be that some lines are unplayable in real life, sometimes the guitar line is too quick, for example – the fingers cannot be as quick as the computer and the keyboard in the studio. The music is not a joint result of working out the sound together; the sound is already produced in the master album. Therefore, between the musicians and Ismaël, there is rather a sort of musical commitment to the album, and one can be grudging for not having studied the album enough.

I will give an empiric outline of a rehearsal before a concert in Abengourou. The friendly and easygoing relationships between the band members, Ismaël and manager Doudou had been challenged for a while, and I could only note that the cooperation and the loyalties had changed. This was openly discussed during a rehearsal where everything culminated:

Without telling anyone, Choko and Grant, the keyboardists, had not shown up for the rehearsal. Consequently, the rehearsal was cancelled. The others were upset by their behaviour. They voiced a qualified guess that they were playing with two other singers who were also preparing a concert soon. The remaining musicians waited for Doudou to arrive because they wanted to arrange the Abengourou journey, which already had been postponed once. By the time Doudou arrived, the musicians had slandered the keyboardists to each other, because everyone had other things to do, and other singers to accompany, and they felt that Grant and Choko abused their precious time. Doudou himself was very disappointed that the prepaid rehearsal did not take place, and ordered everybody inside for a pep talk.

He claimed that this was the time for him to take on the responsibilities as a manager. Later in the evening, he would have to tell Ismaël that the rehearsal had been cancelled for no evident reason, and that the band structure did not work all too well, he said. The fact that some musicians were not loyal constituted a serious problem for him and the rest of the staff, in addition to the band members. Now, the musicians had to choose which singers to play with, and stick to their choices. Things could not go on like this, he continued. He asked where Choko was, but received only vague answers. He decided that from then on, Choko no longer played in the band. Thérèse, the choirgirl, and Pépito started to laugh, and the others protested. Diarra, the bandleader, said that Doudou could not just make such a decision in the

absence of Choko. What they ought to do, according to Diarra, was to meet after the concert to talk. Doudou accepted that, but he still wanted everyone to talk, and come up with some ideas of how to solve the loyalty conflicts and the problems with all the rehearsals that were put off. While he was talking, the others started to laugh too; I think the idea of saying things explicitly like this was strange to them. However, Doudou told Diarra to start. But Diarra said that it would be best for them all to wait. Again, Doudou accepted.

Olivier, the trombone player, said that if Doudou wanted them to choose Ismaël, they in their turn would have to be really sure that Ismaël would choose them. It is known that a singer can rather arbitrarily change his band as it pleases him, so Olivier was speaking up for a secure employment. He was also subtly attacking a second trombone player, who had shown up recently, a "brother" of trumpet player Ras. What were two trombone players supposed to mean? That Ismaël would see who played best? Rumours said that Ras, a Béninois, had asked Ismaël behind everybody's back to accept his "brother" Philippe from Bénin as his trombone player, and the other musicians had been appalled by this mean behaviour. In that situation it would be quite difficult for Olivier to make a serious choice, although in the past, he had already declined several offers from other singers.

Then, guitar player Marcel spoke up, with immediate enthusiasm. He said that during the MASA, the musicians had faithfully accompanied Ismaël, and they had done a good job. They had helped him to success, but what they get in return now, is the bad news that Ismaël plays with other European musicians when he goes to Switzerland and France. He, Marcel, said that he wanted to be part of that success and those tours. A loud discussion evolved, where especially Marcel showed his dissatisfaction. It did not last for more than 5 or 10 minutes, though, because the others started to look at their watches – they had other appointments waiting. Pépito was off to a sound check with another singer at the Palais de la Culture. So they left, with the question of how to cooperate unsolved.

Two days later, they had agreed on a meeting before the departure for Abengourou, and I was told that the musicians would meet up a little before, in order to discuss things amongst themselves. There had been a lot of talk about which musicians would go and when the

departure would be, so when they had eventually agreed on 7.30 in the morning on Sunday, I was one of the first travellers to be there. The discussion would have to be held at some other time. We waited and waited for everyone to show up. Choko was not there, neither Marcel. Ras arrived with his "brother" Philippe from Bénin, and threatened not to go if Philippe was not accepted in the band. The others took this as an attempt to blackmail Ismaël and Doudou. However, Philippe left a bit later, he understood that he was not welcome. Ras then disappeared for a while, so that we had to wait for him when we eventually were about to leave. This took us a lot of time, and we were also waiting for Marcel, who had still not shown up. There was no way that Ismaël could do a concert without a guitar player. But they could manage without Choko, who claimed that he had gone to church. Marcel had turned off his mobile phone and was out of reach, and the other musicians criticized his behaviour. We waited and sweated by the gbaka, the minibus, and everybody complained.

Diarra and Doudou made phone calls here and there, to try to get in touch with Marcel's neighbour. At 10.00 they decided that we should all go in the gbaka to pick him up, he was probably sitting at home making himself important, they claimed. But to their surprise he was not in, but had left early that morning to go to another job, and he was now waiting for us at the place we had just left. He arrived in a taxi. But even though the other musicians had spoken ill of him earlier, they were now happy to see him, and when they heard that he had had a job, they understood. It was not long before they talked and joked as normal. The conflict had been solved without open discussion. We left at 11.00, and the concert was scheduled at 15.00. As before, they talked out loud in the beginning, but they soon fell asleep.

After a successful concert and once back at the hotel, the suffocating atmosphere between manager, singer and musicians continued. As they had intended earlier, they now wanted to talk. They barricaded themselves in Diarra's room, also to get their pay. Everyone got 50 000,- except for the bandleader and Pépito, who received 85 000,- Although I was not allowed in, I was informed that Grant had claimed 60 000,- and nothing less, because at one point he burst into my room and said: "music is not an amusement, some people only think of money!", meaning that to him, this was his living, and he did not perform just for the fun of it, and in this way he underlined his professional presence. Although before going to

Abengourou he had accepted the wages, he now refused to accept his envelope in Diarra's room. Doudou came after him and paid him, and they went back to Diarra's room. What the amount was, I do not know. They talked loudly in there, and I mainly heard the men's voices. Apparently, everyone wanted to have his say in the discussion. It took them some time to get out of the room, to grab their things, and to settle in the gbaka to go home. But the bass player Frédéric was missing; he had gone into Ismaël's room again.

He eventually arrived, having an argument with Diarra. The others had to listen to them, and they complained about the late hour. Frédéric was dissatisfied with his wages, too. Being the eldest, and having accompanied Ismaël for the longest time, he had claimed that he ought to receive more money. He did not play with as many singers as the other musicians did, and according to Pépito, he was jealous of the young ones who had possibilities beyond his reach. In the gbaka, Diarra shouted at him: "We're all big boys now, everyone with their responsibilities", meaning that this was an unacceptable attitude. The others started to complain loudly about the argument; they were tired and wanted to go home as quickly as possible. We went on our way, while Frédéric and Diarra continued to annoy the others with their argument. Finally Frédéric calmed down, and sank down at the back, sulking. Soon, they were all asleep.

As I see it, these are typical features of behaviour in Ivorian showbiz. "Personne n'est indispensable" says Doudou, meaning that nobody is indispensable, even himself he claimed. He is the typical manager who wants to control the musicians; forcing them to make their choices when it comes to what singers they will play with. He wants to be able to foretell certain events, to be able to plan something with them, plans that will actually take place. Doudou wants to be efficient, and wants to punish and expel musicians who are not loyal to Ismaël and the band. I think that Doudou has a "Western" way of behaving, short and efficient, whereas the others have an "African" one, verbal and thorough. In their point of view, everything can be settled if one talks it over properly. And the over-all target is that everybody departs on good terms. Doudou is a banker, and a businessman, that requires many years of schooling; he is not a streetwise music friend, but someone who simply enjoys Ismaël's reggae, who wants to promote it and earn money on it at the same time. From this

outline it is clear that the individualistic behavioural ghetto logic with an expedient focus is ever-present in the music making as well as in everyday life. The social setting demands streetwise pragmatic and strategic thinking.

Unpredictability

Musicians try to make themselves indispensable as best they can by using their coercing and cunning strategies, which demonstrate Barth's logic. Everybody wants to obtain something from given situations. For example, there is a constant question of whether or not all the musicians will actually show up for a rehearsal, a concert or a tour; things are unpredictable. The latecomers are in power, because they know the rest of the band is dependent on them. All this is due to the lack of band structure and band feeling, in addition to economic problems. These musicians and singers do not form a group of friends hanging out together, discussing music together, as Berkaak & Ruud write about, and as Sara Cohen describes from a Liverpool setting (Cohen 1991). This is not the boy's-room-syndrome band with a coherent, desperate hope for a contract. The setting that Cohen describes is some four or five friends playing together, continually searching for their music to have a special touch, their music is them personified, and they put a lot of energy in their outfits on stage. In addition, they do everything by themselves, they try to get hold of gigs, to get journalists write about them and travel long distances to try to get an appointment with someone who might know someone who might help them get signed. Therefore, they make their own PR as well as their music, and they pay for everything themselves. However, they do not live off their music, and have to struggle by working in bars and restaurants.

Ismaël's musicians, on the other hand, are professionals in the sense that most of them live off their art with no other income. They listen attentively to their lines, reproduce all sorts of rhythms, deliver a musical commodity, are paid and then move on to other destinies. They do not have a feeling of "this is us, this music reflects us". To make ends meet they are forced to play with several singers, they make their pragmatic down-to-earth choice, again, following Barth's writings. That is what all the negotiating is about. The musicians are not disloyal just for the fun of it. It is true that there are constant clashes between different singers' tours, and

even if the singers try not to have concerts at the same time, it happens now and then, and the musicians are the ones who have to make their choices in the immediate context. This requires a well-founded ability to analyse the given situation, and to draw conclusions concerning the hypothetical outcomes from this or that act. To obtain what they esteem valuable, they need expressed goals and cunning plans that can go well in with the overall relational landscape. As Berkaak & Ruud noted, “playing in a rock band is thus about getting insight into the society’s manners of operation” (1995:5). The participants must be socially competent if they want to be a part of the beneficial social network. That means that if there is a concert clash, the concerned parties must come to some sort of understanding, whether approved by everyone or contested.

This was the case when Ismaël and the singer Loba were scheduled on the same date in different countries in June 2001. Pépito should have played the drums for both shows, but he ultimately had to cancel Loba’s concert, and this caused great damage to their relationship afterwards. Loba wanted to change his musicians altogether, they did not speak for several months. Pépito did not go to see Loba’s newborn baby and wish them good luck. That created an atmosphere of distrust and gossip, where both of them received news from the other via someone else. They kept to themselves for a long time, until all of a sudden they were friends again, telling me that they were after all very good friends and “brothers”, explaining that “one does not change the hand that cooks well”. I do not know if Loba re-accepted his musicians because they are the ones who play his music best, if this was another example of an evaporating conflict, if it was a case of time healing everything, or again if it was an African way of settling matters: thoroughly and in detail exposing a problem from many angles and departing on good terms in the end. For an Ivorian to permanently cut the relational cord to another person, something really grave must take place.

Making oneself indispensable

An example of a long lasting, but difficult relation is Grant, the keyboardist, who makes himself special to Ismaël. He helps him to arrange his songs. Ismaël might come to him with an idea of a song that is half-made. That is, Ismaël has the voice and the melody, and at home

he stumbles and plays around with his keyboard, trying to figure out the structure of the melody. He tapes this, and sees Grant, who in his turn adds more lines to the song. Thus, Grant has power over the professional musical sound. This is not a friend doing a favour to another friend; this is the professional facet of their relationship. However, after this sequence, there is a lot of work to be done in an eventual studio, with a professional arrangement that is paid for. But as Grant's help is not negligible, he obtains a certain status in the group. Every time there is a rehearsal, somebody from the staff gets him in Ismaël's car. The other musicians take local, public transport that Ismaël pays for, but which takes a long time compared to a passenger car. And at the same time, Grant is the kind of musician who forgets his line, even though he might have made it himself. So during concerts, he would at times forget, or play the line wrong, and start to dance in stead. The other musicians complained about it, and accused him of taking too much "kali", marihuana that is.

Everybody wants respect, and that is what the social codes are about in the end. In order to be respected, one does things that are noticed. All attention is good attention, it seems. People are quite inventive about it, and can become unrecognisable all of a sudden. They change attitudes quickly so that the others will perceive that this is a man one does not mess around with, as in line with the ghetto discourse. This is the reason why Pépito sometimes pierces the skin of the bass drum during concerts; it may be a reaction to the organization around the concert, the hosts, or the poor quality of the sound engineers at the mixing table. This is his trick, amongst many others. He damages the final sound by the piercing and is happy with it. Sometimes one of the other musicians will understand he did it on purpose, and also understand why he did it, and will approve of his action. Lack of respect must be punished by any means, even when it comes to destroying the professional sound in front of an audience. This is about having access to the making of the music as a commodity, by using certain techniques and methods.

The main coercing factor the musicians make use of, in addition to techniques such as Pépito's piercing of the drum, is their presence or their absence, in a purely physical sense. The late arrival and the lack of presence is part of the musicians' muting strategy. Their unique resource is their bodies that perform during concerts, and it is the bodies that become

the reason for quarrelling and the starting point for blackmailing. If the body is absent, there is nothing one can do. If the fingers will not play, there will be no concert. The musicians do not have any money to bribe someone with, or in other ways make someone do something for them, but they are the ones who own the skills and the performance knowledge. If they know that there is no other man or woman who can do the job for the singer, they can permit themselves to cause a lot of trouble. It is crucial to them to appear as important and not negligible. They must therefore be able to control the means of expression, and be able to hold on to their social position every time someone challenges them. A deep knowledge of ghetto behaviour is compulsory in order to maintain stability in their relationships; if they are taken off guard, a dimension in their relationships is subtly open to renegotiation. I think that is why people in the Ivorian showbiz react suddenly and violently when they are challenged as musicians, friends, family members and so on. They constantly have something to prove; namely their social position and consequently their access to various resources. As the musician and musicologist Adolphe Yacé said, “There are no equal relationships here” (personal communication). Relationships are constantly contested.

As mentioned, this is related to the fact that they enter a social setting characterized by high frequency face-to-face relationships. When they meet up, they spend many hours together during several days, and have a series of interactions. They do not simply produce the sound. The target for the interaction varies and their relations are multiplex. Within the relations they have to delimit themselves to other bands, make a musical product, manage a technical apparatus, come up with a common identity and agree upon a leadership; all this must function throughout a range of contexts. They must appear as a coherent official band on stage, but within the band each individual has his/her appearance as well. The social setting is dense, and they might want some peace from the others at times. The consequence is all the quarrels, evaporating conflicts and actual sabotages within the band structure; they do it in order to not lose themselves as individuals. They must create a feeling of distance.

Again, these musicians and singers do not form a coherent band and a group of friends simultaneously. They do business together, they are a professional “firm” in the sense that they create and deliver a commodity in the form of musical performances, and they seldom

meet outside this setting during leisure time. They do not have engagements via contracts and bills, and matters are seldom written down to remember, but they are held together by a common interest in the making of the music. They are professionals who join in a strategic organisation, and not only make a part of this organisation, but who also want to have a certain influence over the making of the final musical product. It is in everybody's interest that the organization works well, so that the band performs well, and so that the audience in its turn will pay entrances and albums. This is the hardcore business side of it, and has nothing to do with the credibility of the ghetto men performing on stage. Here, we are in a totally different realm of the musical life, which dictates professionalism and efficiency.

Grant knows that Ismaël counts on his skills in arranging his songs, and therefore he demanded more money after the show in Abengourou. And that is why he will be collected before the rehearsals, too. Marcel knows that without a guitar player, especially during the song "Magno Mako", the grand hit at the end of the concert, they will lack the final punch they usually have, and which the audience waits for. So he can claim to be at church, eating his meal, even digesting it, before showing up. This is also the reason for Pépito doing one of his other tricks; it consists of not showing up at the airport for a tour. If there are too many uncertainties when it comes to the tour in general or the pay, or the singers have too many heavy debts to him, he can choose not to be there. Then, the singers might as well do a play-back, as the drums will be absent.

The choirgirls are not likely to put such a pressure on Ismaël. They are there to back the lead voice, and therefore have a much less powerful position than the drummer or the bass player. Without the bass player in reggae music there will be no concert, but things can be arranged if one of the choirgirls, or even both, are absent. The girls are important, of course, but they seldom enter into the hard negotiation over money or working conditions. I never saw them overtly quarrel with Ismaël; on the contrary, they would try to calm down their colleagues and persuade them to accept what they had previously agreed on. In this way, the girls keep mostly to themselves, especially while on tour. They rehearse, do the concert, are paid and move on to other destinies. After having accepted the deal, they will not try and change it by coercion. The girls are more peripheral in the band than for example the bass player or the

drummer. The peripheral role is linked to both musical professionalism and sociality. They know they do not enjoy one of the most powerful roles in the band when it comes to music; if there were an emergency, the drummer might do the choiring. This does not give the choirgirls a very heavy social position off stage either; but as we saw in the methodological chapter, this is a social role that I think they to a large extent choose themselves. They particularly want to avoid the negotiation on all levels, thereby demonstrating a serene attitude, although there are individual variations among them, too. One of them could actually be a bit of a nag, but then again she knew the bandleader Diarra really well, which means that she might enjoy some of his power within the band.

Mutiny

As a contrast to the mostly peaceful choirgirls, there was nearly a mutiny amongst the musicians against Ismaël and Doudou in Séguéla during a concert tour. The musicians felt left alone, there was no proper food, and neither Ismaël nor Doudou had called on them at the hotel the day of the concert asking if they had had a nice journey, if they had slept well and if they had had breakfast. On top of this, they had found out that Ismaël really had engaged some other band in Europe for his European concerts. They threatened not to go on stage that night, and Pépito told me that if Abidjan had been nearer, he would have taken a bus back home right away. There was a constant running back and forth and in and out of the rooms, there was calling out for this or that musician all the time, and there were small conversations in low voices all over, accompanied by gesticulating hands and arms. To an outsider, it was really difficult to keep up with these emotional turns. All one could understand, was that there was rebellion in the air. The manner in which it happened surprised me. That is, all of a sudden there was a big crisis coming up, from seemingly nothing, and during the whole concert day there were matters to settle.

This episode is yet another example of how one obtains respect from someone who has more money or more authority than oneself, and who seems to be in charge. The musicians wanted to force the managerial staff to pay attention to them, to convince them that they had power, too, and that nobody could take them for granted. They wanted to work under better

conditions. This explains the precarious situation a concert has to survive. That is, even before a concert can take place, there are a lot of uncertainties that have to be settled, many of them at the last minute. Those who engage economically in it must have high-quality nerves, and a good stomach. I think the one who sweats the most here is Doudou the manager, because he is responsible for the band giving a performance. And he is economically responsible for the group, which means that if the hosts do not pay for some reason, he has to pay the musicians himself. He cannot afford to “gâter son nom”, which means to make a fool out of himself, “spoiling his name”. If he fails to do his duty, the musicians will shun him and see to it that all other professional musicians will do the same. As a manager, then, he is dead. Rumours spread extremely quickly in this sector, so even before the band has come home from a tour or a concert, other musicians are informed.

This behaviour might seem extremely tiring, as it very much is to the persons cited above. As mentioned, the reason for these attitudes and behaviours is the search for power over how the music comes into being and how the professional final product sounds in front of an audience. Again, we are in the realm where the musicians want to be a part of the economic firm they represent on stage, where we no longer talk about a group of friends making music together. Here, it is in everybody’s interest that it works well, that they are paid and have enough gigs to survive.

As I said, the musicians do not blackmail without reason. Several times there has been talk of huge concert programs, monthly wages, better rehearsal settings and travel conditions. The singers usually want the musicians for themselves, and make promises. They try to attract the musicians with all these promises, but actually the musicians have an attitude of “wait and see”. As long as the bandleader does not see for himself the concert or tour contracts, it is difficult to believe in talk only. Actually, one cannot believe in a concert before it has taken place. A singer like Ismaël is dependent on his musicians to create his sound, and he would like everything to be as stable as possible. He told me he preferred to stay on with the same musicians as long as possible to prevent the situation where he constantly had to look for new ones and teach them his feeling of the music. It is in Ismaël’s interest to treat them well, so that they will not get tempted to play with someone else. However, he cannot afford to blow

up his budgets all the time, either; he is not that rich. Organizing a concert means a lot of money if he decides that his staff is to be in charge of everything. There are great risks of losing money. He has to trust that all the levels work well, that means the PR staff, the ones who collect the ticket money, the persons who rent out the scene and the gear and cables, the sound engineer, the hotel and the food, and last but not least; the musicians. Ismaël has to delegate the jobs, the apparatus consists of many people, and everybody has to get paid. In this case, all Ismaël earns, is the ticket money. On the other hand, if he accepts to play for a performance organizer, he will just receive his pay after the concert and share it with the band. In this case there is less personal responsibility, but then again he has to trust strangers in order to get paid.

To make the key musicians stick with him, Ismaël repeatedly tells them how skilled they are, how well he thinks of them, and he will openly express his feelings after a rehearsal or a concert. He will say, often by the help of an intermediary: “Tu es dans mon feeling, man! La manière tu joues, là, ça m’enjaille!” (You are in my feeling, man! The way you play makes me happy!) Ismaël’s employing the verb “enjailer” is significant. As they have no contracts, the musicians need this verbal feedback to stay on in the band, and eventually choose him during concert clashes. I witnessed a scene where the relationship between Ismaël and Pépito was overtly expressed; I see it as a dramatisation of their respective roles and social position. This is how they appear to the world.

A day in the business

Showbiz is the company for duplication and distribution of cassettes in Côte d’Ivoire, and it controls a large percentage of the market, for national as well as international music. Consequently, there are a lot of powerful decisions that are made here, and what usually interests the musicians and the singers, is the number of sold cassettes. They receive a certain percentage of the sale, and often they go there in order to ask for an early payment, to check the numbers, or get their favourite cassettes for free. Many people come during a day; there is a mixture of managers, performance organizers, artists, journalists, young hopeful singers and bands etc. Everybody tries to get something financially or relationally successful out of it. It

often means that you have to be patient, and wait for a long time, even hours, until the person you want to see squeezes you in his/hers order of the day. It depends on what rank you have in society, of course. If you are a powerful person by relationship, or you are rich and want to invest your money in some project, there is time for you. However, if you are a young boy wanting to become a singer one day, you will obviously find yourself waiting. Again this shows what Adolphe Yacé said, “There are no equal relationships here”.

One day, Ismaël and Pépito had been there together, often they made appointments in order to discuss details about a tour program or rehearsals, or to discuss money-related matters. It was a practical place to make appointments in this kind of setting, much more peaceful than the numerous maquis. What happened, was that Ismaël hesitated over a matter, and called out for Pépito’s help – Pépito was then at a distance, so Ismaël’s voice could easily be heard by people around. Pépito then walked over to him. Even though they used to cooperate and were often seen together, this event interests me a lot, because it says something about the relationships in these networks.

The relationship is a precarious balance, where Ismaël would not like to overdo things; he would not like people to get the impression that Pépito has all the power. But on the other hand, he wants to show the world that he and Pépito have a project together. This is a strategy that in everyday life can get very complicated. By this little call out loud for Pépito at Showbiz, loyalties and alliances are established. Ismaël marks his territories in a relational world. He wants his sound to blast the audience, with the help from an experienced and competent drummer. Again, we are in the realm of proficiency and the firm-like relationship, and not in the friend-like one.

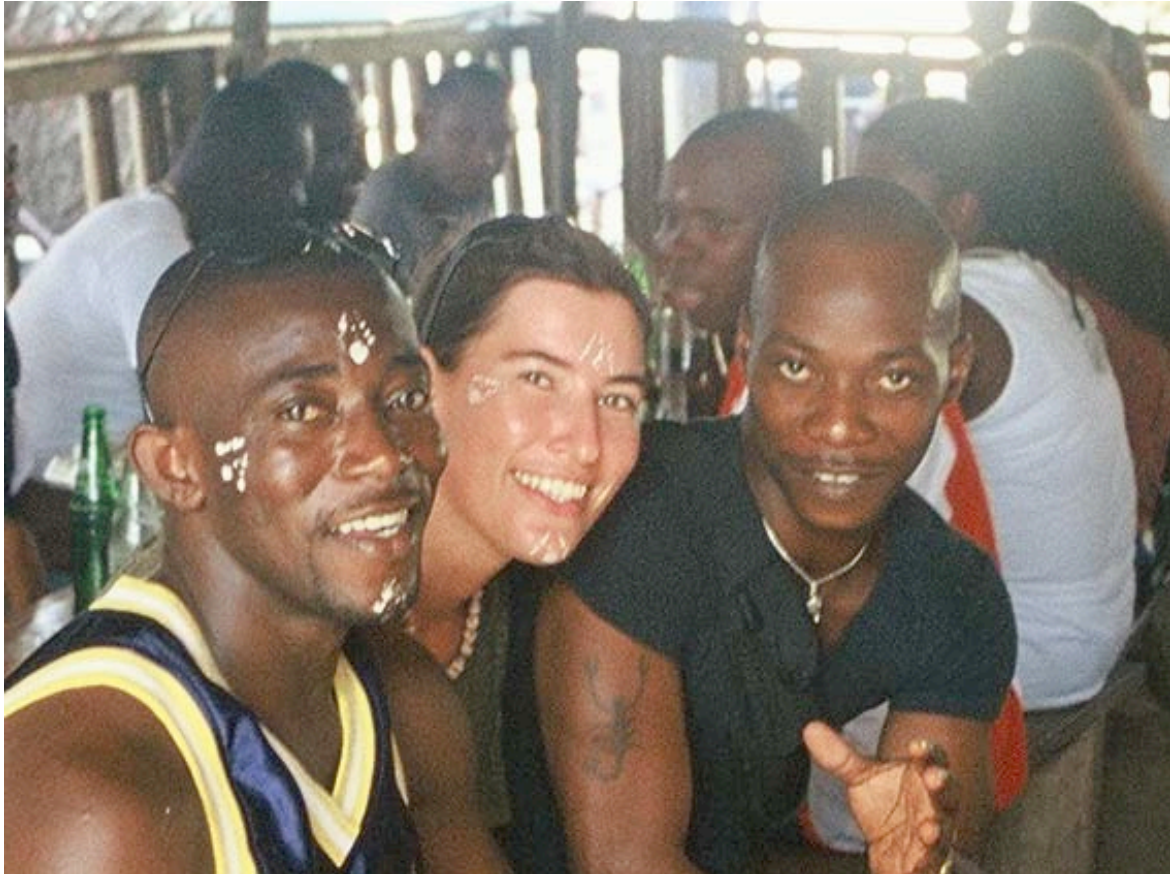
By this, Ismaël makes it obvious that the two are cooperating, and are at the same level. This is extremely important – Pépito is hauled up a level, and it is stated publicly that the two are of the same kind. There is interrelatedness and interdependency between the drummer and the singer. Pépito gets up to a star rank, and in that, he may be looked upon as a star himself, a potential drummer star. And this is a lucrative commodity in the business, as there are not that many of them. The event states the fact that he has good skills; “If you play with Ismaël, you

can play for me, too” is the logic. And as it happens in an arena which is known for the exchange of services, favours, commodities, musicians and contracts, it becomes dense with meaning. Ismaël officially states that as a musician he is very competent, and as an organizer he is reliable. Pépito is both a musician and nearly a member of his managerial staff. This makes him powerful.

To Ismaël, on the other hand, this means that he confirms that Pépito is his drummer, Pépito of whom people often say that he has nothing more to prove in Côte d’Ivoire, that he has to seek other opportunities elsewhere. Ismaël makes it obvious that he has hold of this competent drummer. Actually, Ismaël is dependent upon him, as Pépito keeps the band together during rehearsals and concerts. That is, he leads the others musically, but also when it comes to organization. During my stay in Abidjan, he was asked to become bandleader, as Diarra was absent for a while, and from then on Pépito called everyone before the rehearsals, he made sure the rent for them was paid. Ismaël dares to express this relation in public at Showbiz, wanting to confirm and strengthen it. His nightmare would be to see Pépito go far away to Europe or the US, and be lost forever.

Ismaël will repeat this cooperative relation with Pépito in more confident settings, too. Before the concert at Hôtel Ivoire, they were both back stage, but back stage is never shared by musicians and Ismaël together, neither the journeys, nor the stays at hotels. They do not mingle. So when Ismaël calls Pépito aside, it often means to join him at a total different place. And often, Ismaël does not come to Pépito himself, but sends a little messenger. So Pépito went to Ismaël’s hotel room, a calm setting, where only a few people are allowed to gather. There, he told him that, “the fate of the concert is in your hands”. As this was not a public setting and no contest for the best drum player, it was more about making Pépito understand that he was of great value musically speaking.

I find the idea of contest interesting. The relationship between singers and musicians is constantly negotiated and questioned. Often, some of them will go via others who will gossip to the destined person. There is a mixture of overt confrontation and covert statements. Everything has as starting point who pays what, who owes what musicians, who has the most



Hanging out at a *maquis* during the traditional Abissa festival in Grand Bassam: P pito, the anthropologist and bass player L o. In the background: members of Magic System with manager Kabila to the left

believable projects, and what gain might one have with this or that person. Individuality is extreme in this city, and especially in showbiz where few people are engaged with work contracts, so everybody is seeking the best opportunities.

I just want to recount another little incident, which covers once more these precarious relationships of the musical networks. A'Salfo, the lead singer in the zouglou group, Magic System, met a boy in Isma l's staff in the street. A'Salfo told him that now Isma l would just have to get himself another drummer, because Magic System would go on tour with P pito. When Isma l heard about this he freaked out, and immediately called P pito to make sure he would still play in his band and would perform on his tours. P pito had to calm him down, and assured him that he would not just take off like that. A'Salfo did this to make a name for himself, and even his own manager, Kabila, got scared when P pito told him he would be

absent for a concert: "where are you going?" he screamed out loud. But P  pito was only testing him.

Clearly, the sound is only a part of the concert, as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. Music is a social happening, where the sound is an important element, but where there is more to it. The musicians do not meet up to do music by coincidence. The argument for this is the very existence of the sound object. Someone created it for some intention, with the help of competence, disciplined through the body. Alfred Gell comments on the agency behind the sound (Gell 1998). And this is where we have to put our theoretical focus if we want to understand music in particular and art in general. Specific social interaction takes place, and this is the case for every performance, be it Samantha Fox, Bj  ro Haaland, Jimmy Hendrix, or as in our case, Isma  l Isaac.

AN EXTRAVAGANT ART

In this chapter I will formulate the criteria for musical evaluation that are the most important in Ivorian showbiz. We will see that ghetto culture leads to certain ghetto preferences when it comes to music. Further, I will show how these criteria constitute a continuity of the social structure that we have seen making up the elements of Abidjanese showbiz. Concerts as social events in Côte d'Ivoire are part of a cultural pattern of expediency, pragmatism and the seeking out of the fluid, movable good or gain. The concert is a micro-picture of the overall cultural pattern. I see the concert as a compensation for the exceptionally individualistic environment Ivorians live in. Therefore, the concert gives the individual a bodily experience of and involvement in the large, incomprehensible community. Victor Turner has written interestingly on the issues of community and sharing, and I think his writings might help us understand what happens during concerts in Côte d'Ivoire. The concert is the rare moment where people can share something with others, in a social environment in which one is constantly on the alert for personal gains.

In order to formulate these issues, I must first take a look at the so-called art speak among my informants. All art worlds have their own discourse and rhetoric. Musicians, critics and fans in Côte d'Ivoire have a good command of the local technical terminology. This language constitutes a framework that the various actors make use of when they for example listen to, interpret and adopt music coming from abroad. I will try and formulate this art speak in order to be able to formulate certain principles and patterns within the Ivorian setting. This, in turn, enables me to conclude with specific musical aesthetics.

All of my informants were socialized listeners, which means they were competent in analysing certain music genres played in Côte d'Ivoire. This means that they gave judgements and technical and aesthetical assessments. They were familiar with the social setting around the music, that is they were already beyond the stage in which one tries to find the contrasting elements between genres, or "a difference which makes a difference", (Bateson 1972:459). My informants therefore were able to reach a level in which one employs local evaluation criteria. These evaluation criteria cover sound, timber, grain of the voice, pitch, tempo, pulse and orchestration, concerning a specific musical style. These are parameters, which take into account the quality of the music, compared to other performances within the same genre. Different genre conventions emphasise different parameters and evaluation criteria.

The sound must be powerful and rhythmic in order for people to consider it good music. Frequently they would say out loud, "This is my singer/song!" ("Ça, c'est mon chanteur/morceau!") as a certain song was played on the radio. Often, if they were at home, they would make dance steps in order to enjoy the music. A domestic help I knew well would run to the radio and turn up the volume, enjoying the music. She would say, "Il dit la vérité!" which means, "He tells the truth!" Members of the showbiz world would say, "Il a un bon son", ("He has a good sound") if they heard their favourite. It would most often be a national hit (zouglou, reggae, dancehall, traditional), although sometimes an international one (rap, hip hop, r&b, zouk, n'dombolo/zaiko). A DJ told me his preference was the American singer Lauryn Hill. Another young man, who wanted to become sound engineer, told me he specifically liked the Nigerian Afro-Beat singer Fela Anikulapo-Kuti for his heavy orchestration and long songs. What also fascinated him was that Fela had a double set of musicians during concerts, and if for example the trombone player was not at his best, Fela would tell him to step down and call for the second to go on stage. The radio and TV play national and international hits, but also old songs people have heard ever since they were children. These tunes filled them with happy memories, as for example all the singers who had boosted Treichville with acoustic guitar music in the 60s and 70s (cf. the earlier chapter on the Treichville neighbourhood).

The musical genres I cited are all characterised by being very rhythmic at the base, with drums or percussion constituting one of the most important and distinctive features of the sound. People repeatedly told me that they disliked the French style of pop songs, or “chanson”, which they considered completely boring, without action and not danceable. The same kind of argument was applied to cinema and French films; many informants loved to hate what they called French, action-less films. In these films it takes a long time before anything happens, according to some of the people with whom I spoke. They definitely preferred American movies, where the level of action was much higher, with car racing and spectacular explosions. Going to the movies was to them to go and see an American action hero conquer the world, facing down the bad guys. Compared to this, they often laughed at French intellectual films, which often had a complicated plot, and they did not bother to sit down and follow it. They preferred a movie with two clearly defined sides; good against evil.

I interpret these attitudes in accordance with the social setting in which these people live. They prefer music, films and perhaps art in general where they can enjoy a certain sense of rhythm and speed. Art as an intellectual endeavour is chosen away and even ridiculed. They want to listen to an entertaining and straightforward story, told on a certain rhythmic beat and in a comprehensible language, or else it becomes boring. They are not interested in elaborate and long stories à la Edith Piaf or Serge Gainsbourg, for example, where words, rhymes and melody are at the forefront. They prefer amusement to sophisticated poems, which force them to analyse. The stories they are told in Ivorian songs might make them reflect over a certain matter, but the story itself is told in an easy way. Kajeem, as I mention below, made an early “mistake” by writing poems to an audience that was not ready for it. Further, music is ambience, and another DJ I spoke to, said that whenever he had a radio session Saturday nights, he would put on dance music, so that people staying in would have a sort of sensation of going out anyway. Music in this context means having fun. The local expressions for this are “S’amuser” or “Passer un bon moment” (“To have a good time”).

Through music, people “s’amusent” and “passent un bon moment”. If we now consider what the press says about this kind of social event, we become convinced that in fact, music is social relations. In album reviews it is often stated as a fact that “this is good reggae music” or

“this is the real zouglou music from Abidjan” and similar affirmations. Sometimes the journalists will call the albums “bouquets of flowers” and the like, ready for the audience to enjoy. When it comes to concert critics, the journalists write solidly in order to give an accurate account of what happened, so that people who missed it will have a feeling of having taken part in a collective happening. The critics report what interests them, namely what they see: an extravagant show on stage and an audience in front of it. The personal interest and commitment to the music is ubiquitous in their writings. Often, they enjoy the music with the public and have a good time themselves by joining in the atmosphere.

The newspaper *L’Inter*, writes about “a euphoric ambiance”, where Ismaël “once again showed his talent as a confirmed artist. (...) When it comes to the show, it was simply breathtaking (...). The last song by the terrible child from Treichville, “Magno Mako”, the most awaited one and which has from now on become the national anthem among those who form the ghetto friends of the artist, was joined by a delirious audience, conquered by Ismaël’s enormous talent” (nr. 1058, 2001). Another journalist notes, “A sort of collective trance gained the whole stadium. (...) One could hear more the voices from the fans than the one from the artist” (Douze, 3.1.01). Other words that are common in these articles are: “a concert rich in colours, a crazy crowd, a collective hysteria, a live that was all fire all flames, and the area was destroyed”. The allusions to fire, burning, devastation and exaltation is important. A show must turn the audience upside down and inside out. They must have a bodily sensation of it; it is a sort of a bodily outburst. Similarly, Berkaak and Ruud write about a bass player who claims that during a Van Halen concert, the musicians went bananas on stage; it was like a gigantic roar, a total burnout of energy. Van Halen did not even try to make it sound good and nice (Berkaak & Ruud 1994:116).

What is important, it seems, is whether or not the audience is put “in flames” by the show. The show must be larger-than-life. If people are content and are having a good time, it is an enjoyable concert, and the band has delivered what the audience initially paid for when buying the tickets. If the audience is “wild”, it was well worth going to the concert. Further, in these circumstances, the audience and the journalists in the Ivorian setting do not listen to the formal aspects of the music, that is, for example whether the bass follows the guitar or the

keyboard. They are not in the mood to listen to details. What they want during a concert is to “burn out”, to dance, to sing and to yell. Of course, the journalists are on duty, so they keep a certain distance between the show and themselves. But what is clear from the articles is that they look at the audience and how it reacts to the show, when reporting from concerts. The scope of interest is what happens between the audience and the band members, that is, what sort of human relationships are created through music.

The 1st of May concert

In order to exemplify these evaluation criteria in more detail, and show how they work in real life, I will describe a concert that Ismaël gave in Yopougon 1st of May 2001. This case also shows how the social structures that are part of the cultural pattern within the ghetto culture pervade all social events, concerts included. In the first paragraphs of the case I think the expediency rationale becomes relevant. Through the stress, the running and the excitement of the audience, people show in practice how they consume the fluid, movable good. They do not stand still, but run for the prize, even if they know that there will be room for everyone in a stadium. The reason for this behaviour, I believe, is that people know that nobody follows the rules. Generally, you never obtain any good or gain by standing still. By running to secure a spot in front of the stage, they actually consume the good, in this case the concert. This is how they are used to reacting within their ghetto environment. In this case it is also clear that they consume this social event together. During the concert, they can allow themselves not to keep up the usual guard they erect against nearly everybody else. They can escape the individualistic system and devote themselves to the community experience. Further, I see the concert not only as a social event, but also as a ritual context. Through ritual, the community can be worshipped, because the event is out of time and therefore other people no longer constitute a threat of any kind. This creates ecstatic events. The concert seen as a ritual and hence collectivism is apparent already from the promotion beforehand. The audience is asked to join in a party and to be supportive of their idol.

The promotion can be compared to an election campaign. There were posters all over Abidjan, jingles on the radio as well as TV-interviews of the manager as well as commercial

spots. The campaign was aimed at the inhabitants of lower-class areas, but particularly at Yopougon. Ismaël had his promotion team that had a car at its disposal. Four or five persons worked full-time with this. They did various interviews on the local Yopougon radio stations, and the announcements were all about how the listeners now had the possibility of sharing (“partager”) an important moment. “Ismo vous invite à une grande fête, où vous pouvez soutenir votre artiste”, which means, “Ismo invites you to a big party, in which you can support your artist”. The notion of party was important for the promoters to underline, because at a party people have fun, and actually Ismaël would throw a party for the inhabitants of deprived areas. Further, they would repeat that all the “baramogos” (“blood brothers”) were especially invited for this occasion, and they would urge all the drivers of taxis and gbakas (mini-buses) to attend – this would be their party. The promotion car was driven through the Yopougon neighbourhood, while the jingles from the radio were played loudly through speakers. Sometimes the promotion manager would do a little speech and call for attention. Whenever the car drove slowly, people would run along, insisting, “On vient, on va faire la fête avec vous!!” (“We’re coming, we’ll party together!!”) or “C’est mon gars!” (“It’s my guy!”).

On the day of the concert, the security situation was dramatic. By 12.00, people were everywhere in the streets, and had started to gather impatiently in queues in front of the stadium, being supervised by policemen. They were let in, and the first ones ran to the stage, shouting and yelling. As this is a popular area, and as the tickets only cost 1000 cfa, many workers and even unemployed people attended. The sound check took place at 14.30, with the audience in front, and they were already enjaillé about the show. As mentioned above, this word, enjaillé, is extremely important in this setting. It means that one is freaking out completely, getting blasted by the music and the concert experience, squeezed by the crazy people around, ferociously devouring the music together with other fans. I particularly noticed that some young men were enjaillé from the start. They arrived in groups of four to ten, maybe even more, and partied together. In my perception they had a threatening behaviour, yelling out loud and dancing with spacious movements. These young men probably came from Yopougon, and had been drinking for a while, in order to get in the mood (“Se sciencer”, “Se conditionner un peu”).

It did not matter that the temperature was extremely high, that they were sweating; they danced to the music that the DJ and sound technician put on. Other people walked calmly over to the stadium's walls, to get some shadow during the waiting hours. These groups were composed of both men and women. During the sound check, people got so excited, dancing and running, that the police threw bottles of tear gas into the audience, to make them scatter. The audience's answer to this was to dig up some grass and soil, and throw it at the police officers, but it nearly all landed on the stage, where the musicians were trying to play. Eventually, the musicians had to run off and take refuge behind the stage. Later, when the tear gas had evaporated and the audience had calmed down, they could go on with their work. They criticized the police for their unnecessarily violent behaviour. The musicians took a break and went back to the hotel to rest, and as their gbaka made its way through the audience, people followed it, shouting and yelling, asking for Ismaël. There were both men and women, and they were all young. In general, fans who attend stadium concerts are young and come from deprived areas. If it had been in a hotel concert hall, the audience would have been older and wealthier, as for example when Ismaël played the Hôtel Ivoire. The conditions were safer there, the tickets were more expensive, and people remained seated during the concert.

When the concert in Yopougon was about to start, everybody waited for the star to appear. His chauffeur drove Ismaël in his private car. There were some warm up bands scheduled, but in order to calm the audience down, Ismaël had to go on stage himself. The organisers did not take any chances with the audience being in a quarrelling mood and throwing grass. So when he climbed up the stairs, the audience was cheering, shouting and applauding. At this point, there was nobody by the walls of the stadium; everyone was packed in front of the stage. In the chaos, I did not think to go up to the stage with the musicians and the journalists, and it was evident that the access to it during the concert was efficiently blocked by happy spectators. I was locked out by the masses, and it was quite scary. The audience had been waiting for the concert for about 5 or 6 hours, they were dancing, jumping and running around. The fences around the stage soon were torn down, and the audience invaded the space, and clung to the borders of it. Luckily, I knew two men who watched the concert from

the masses, and they took care of me. Once in a while, they would insist that we change place, because there were too many young men singing and dancing near us, who were about to form a circle around us. This is a known trick for mugging, raping and fighting.

The consequence of this lack of security was that we constantly moved around. This is a telling example of the audience being competent about the concert setting. They knew how to interpret signs in the crowd, when to move around and what to look for. So the competence does not stop at how to interpret sounds and identity representation on stage, but also how to behave oneself in the crowd. I did not think it wise to take photos. It was then I understood why everybody I knew was on stage. There, they were safe. However, there were not enough security guards on stage either, and people constantly tried to climb it. Some succeeded, and were taken care of by Ismaël's personal bodyguards. In the middle of the concert, things were about to get out of hand, and some "gendarmes" arrived, armed and wearing helmets, constituting a wall against the public. Even though the stage was loaded with people, and even though Ismaël is handicapped, nobody I talked to ever expressed a fear that Ismaël could get hurt. They said that such a thing could never happen. Even during the concert, the police threw tear gas into the audience once, and they started to run around, screaming, getting out of the gas zone. But nobody looked shocked.

As a contrast to this concert, I must mention the one the political party Front Populaire Ivoirien, FPI, gave to its adherents to mark its anniversary. Two well-known artists, Meïway and John Yalley, were invited to perform the show. Even though thousands of people were cramped in front of the stage, and even though it took place in a stadium, there was never a feeling of lack of security. The police never intervened, and people could freely move back and forth as they wished, even I as a single woman. People danced, partied – all within a frame of respect. Later, I was told that it was due to a political gathering and party that there had been security. "Ils ne viennent pas casser quand c'est la fête de leur candidat!" explained one of my FPI-informants ("They do not come here to destroy things when it's their candidate's party!"). So it seems that the FPI-party was more serious than Ismaël's concert, despite the fact that both happenings were described as happy parties.

Ismaël's audience seemed to know all the lyrics by heart, everyone joined in the huge party it all was. Most of them seemed to have a really good time, smiling and dancing, but others were so heavily drunk that it seemed they just waved around nearly unconsciously. As they usually do, the musicians performed three and three songs in a row, and in between, Ismaël talked with the audience, who cheered and applauded. Actually, the concert is in Ismaël's hands when it comes to "lightening" up the audience and communicating with them. This is part of his job as an artist on stage. Once, for example during a concert in Bouaké, he would repeatedly say, "Est-ce que les ghettomen sont là? Je viens du ghetto, moi, et j'en suis fier. Ce n'est pas tout le monde qui vient du ghetto qui est voleur, il ne faut pas voler. Tout le monde a sa chance dans la vie." ("Are the ghetto men present? I come from the ghetto, and I'm proud of it. Not everyone from the ghetto is a thief; don't steal. Everybody will get a chance in life"). Later, as he was to sing a song concerning AIDS, sexual behaviours and fidelity, he said, "Il faut mettre la capote! Montrez-moi vos capotes!" ("Put on a condom! Show me your condoms!"). The audience cheered, and showed their condoms in the air, many blew them up like long, white balloons, playing happily with them. "Soyons fidèles" ("Let's be faithful"), he sang.

On the 1st of May, Ismaël and the musicians wore ordinary, casual clothes, as they usually did when performing on a stadium in Côte d'Ivoire. Jeans, shirts, caps and sunglasses were the outfits. The audience was familiar with these clothes, and also wore them. The feeling of togetherness in the casual ghetto style ("free-free", as Ismaël said) was therefore enforced during the concert. Dressing casually was a deliberate action from Ismaël. At the concert hall of Hôtel Ivoire or abroad, both musicians and Ismaël dressed in traditional clothes. There, the band had another audience in front of them, either the richer layers of the Ivorian people, or international audiences. As the ghetto identification would be minor in these cases, Ismaël would meet them at another representational level. He would here seek to communicate his respectability as a singer. During concerts abroad, it is clear that he and the band sold a commodity, and that they represented Côte d'Ivoire with all possible traditional aura they could emphasise. In these cases, they wore boubous, (long tunics) and represented more their country in general than they did just the Treichville or ghetto environment. This is "a difference which make a difference". Kajeem would do the same thing; in his movies, he said

that he particularly made sure to put on a colourful tunic to show he is African. He would repeat this for national concerts (see photo above). However, when he was to promote his latest album that had been released on CD, he put on a casual orange sweater with a dragon pattern on, just like the ghetto style was at that time in Abidjan. The promotion took place at a big shopping mall, and many young men from deprived areas attended. Kajeem commented upon this fact, and claimed that as this was an event during daytime, the spectators must have been mostly unemployed. Via his clothes, then, Kajeem showed them he was one of them.

In addition to the press writings about “fire” and burn out, there is another journalistic approach. One of them makes religious allusions when he reports from the concert that Ismaël gave in Bouaké in November 2001: “The mass took place. (...) The stadium of the municipality served as a chapel, (...) the disciples manifested themselves”. He states the bands that warmed up as “angels” with “heavenly voices. (...) Between “Les Garagistes” and the public there was a total communion”. Then enters “the prophet”, namely Ismaël himself. “The mass starts. Ismaël preaches and preaches. (...) The mass ends with Magno Mako, this canticle that has become so famous. Anointed by the benediction of the Almighty, the inhabitants of Bouaké walk home” (Déclic, nr. 42, 2001). Here, the sensation is more spirituality where Ismaël has transformed into God. The journalist draws the comparison quite far, as if God has personalised himself. The audience has become disciples with a fervent faith in Ismaël as a talented star, in his messages and in his music. The audience has been refreshed in their spirits, and have received a benediction that will sustain them in everyday tasks afterwards.

We have noted how the journalists concentrate heavily on the audience and the atmosphere. But often, they also say something about the messages in the song texts, and repeat them in the articles, as if to join the campaign of enlightenment among the people that Ismaël has started. These are powerful messages that call for union and for the combat for a peaceful future in the country: “The enemy is not the other, we are all brothers”. These messages in these times of reconciliation were well received (...)” (Déclic, nr. 42, 2001). Ivoir’ Soir writes about Ismaël’s album when it was released: “The 14 songs of “Black System” (...) show the indignation of the singer in front of the residence permits in Africa. To him, in fact, these

permits do not contribute to the re-enforcement of the people's union in the old continent" (19.07.00). When the album "Treich Feeling" was released, the newspaper Le Jour wrote: "In [this album Ismaël] has boiled a reggae which reveals his misery, his detriment and his difficult life conditions, in the memory of the ghetto" (29.01.97).

Sometimes the critics will write that Ismaël's orchestra was in good shape, that the musicians delivered a powerful sound, because they too of course make the tickets worth buying. Occasionally, they will write that this or that musician had the audience in his hands by his musical and performance skills. But mostly, the critics concentrate on Ismaël and his performance. This fact underlines the singer as the actual star, and the band as an accompaniment, that can be changed over time. The singer holds the label, without Ismaël there is no concert, no fire and no hero. But on the other hand, it is the musicians who make most of the sound, and who can make a crowd crazy with only a couple of notes. The drummer can walk on stage, sit down behind his drum set, start a bombastic fill, and the show is on. Or, as was the case in Abengourou; the gendarmes threatened to beat the audience, who had barricaded themselves behind the stage. With the help from Pépito, who jammed at the drums, people moved, cheered and danced. Now the audience was entertained, enjaillés, and accepted to go out in the rain in front of the stage.

In June 2001, Ismaël and his band went to Burkina Faso, and we could only note that this audience was extremely calm. It was an interesting behavioural difference. Early in the evening, there were many spectators gathered inside the stadium, some local people told me the stadium was full, but it seemed to me that there was much space in front of the stage, on the grass. As we have seen in Côte d'Ivoire, the audience invades this space in order to come close to the star, but in Burkina Faso, the gendarmes and the police officers were respected. They are known to handle the audience violently, and therefore have a bad reputation. As people are scared of them, they do as they are told. When the audience finally was let in to this open space, they even sat down and remained seated and disciplined during the concert, something that I have never seen an Ivorian audience do. The Burkinabé enjoyed it, they were happy, smiled, joined in the singing, and applauded, but they were calm.

These are interesting features if we go back to the journalists again. Western journalists watch a show Argus-eyed, listening intensely for the instruments, the voice and the sound at large. The aim of going to concerts and reporting from them is totally different. A Western journalist, who is often him/herself a musician, will analyse a musician's ability and expertise with his instrument, an Ivorian one will look at the audience in order to measure whether or not it is "on fire" and crazy. Once during a festival, a known and loved singer in Côte d'Ivoire cut a lousy figure when it came to his vocal performance. His monitor did not work on stage, so he could not hear the other musicians. Consequently, he sang really out of tune throughout the 30 minutes he had at his disposal. He himself noticed it and complained about not hearing the others, and his staff noticed it too, but nothing was said about it by the newspaper critics the next day. On the contrary, the articles referred to the festival in an applauding way, commenting on a frenzied public in huge numbers, covering the neighbouring streets and alleys in central Abidjan like a black sea.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, I consider the concert to be a compensation for the exceptionally individualistic environment Ivorians live in. The concert gives the individual a bodily experience of and involvement in the large community. To me, the concert is the rare moment where people can share something with others, in a social environment in which one is constantly on the alert for fluid goods or gains. The concerts and the audience's experience of them, might be linked to what Victor Turner has called "communitas" (Turner 1970). Communitas is a concept that covers the notion of identity and how one regards the society in which one lives; that is, how depending on the angle, one sees the society in different ways. Turner did much of his fieldwork in what is now Zambia, where he concentrated heavily on the so-called "Rites de passage" and their symbolism, a concept he draws from Arnold van Gennep (van Gennep 1960). A rite de passage is ceremonial and dense in meaning to the participants. Turner deals with cases of initiation rites (Turner 1970, 1974). A novice entering into the world of the adults must, according to tradition, go through a period of reflection during which he/she endures certain trials created by the elders. The novice must think and rethink of the roles among the members of the society.

I am interested in the *communitas* concept when it comes to the feeling of identity through strong sensations, and I want to underline how important the sense of community and hence “*communitas*” is to the spectators in Ivorian showbiz. I would like to shed light on what comes out of the strong experiences of going to concerts in Abidjan, as a feeling of belonging and everlasting ghetto relationships. It is clear that among the Ivorian audience, there is a sense of *communitas*. The music, the performance and the credibility based on ghetto identity result in a dense common experience, where one gets the feeling of “us” and “them”. The audience has been told certain truths about life in the ghetto, the songs reveal a trustworthy backdrop to everything that happens on stage, but above all, the audience has experienced these truths together. They belong to the same kind, versus all other kinds. The indefinite other is not bound to be unveiled, because the “we”-kind is a definite entity. As long as a person is not “we”, he/she is the other, and only relevant when it comes to constituting a contrasting element.

However, I do not see the concerts as something disharmonic, as opposed to normal life in order to show in a spectacular way how this very ordinary life functions, as Turner does (Turner 1970, 1974). I would rather see it as an additional way of identity-making in an urban setting where life is precarious, as Coplan does when he says that urban performing arts are not “the disintegration but the creation of a culture” (Coplan 1985:3). I am interested in togetherness and common-ness rather than cyclical oppositions and crises. I have concentrated on the “*communitas*” concept, which Turner links “with spontaneity and freedom” (Turner 1974:49). One can see a concert being much the same as a ritual, where the participants have religious feelings towards what happens during the performance. This guides us to the next analytical step, which links the ritual with reflexivity. All rituals are inculcated with rules and a sort of ritual frame within which they take place, all with clear instructions (Kapferer 1984:189).

The concert as a ritual

We saw the additional journalistic approach comparing Ismaël’s concert with a mass, and thus comparing it to a religious ritual. Now, concentrating on the ritual side of concerts, and the

possibility of reflection within them, we can say with Kapferer that a person's ability to reflection during a ritual changes. One cannot regard and think in the same way throughout a ritual, neither can one regard the same sequence in the same way from different angles, or rather: one cannot have an overview of a situation, where the eye catches everything synchronically. During a ritual or a concert, there are different levels of appreciation and reflection. Bruce Kapferer has dealt with the various layers of thought during a ritual of Sinhalese demon exorcism, and he states that a spectator at the outskirts of the happening sees, reflects and analyses the information differently compared to a participant in the midst of the event. The latter will utilise a totally different register of sentiments, and his/her reflexive abilities will be heavily coloured by the personal commitment to the event. This participant will have the ability of losing him/herself to a great extent, especially if the person being possessed is a close relative. The person on the outskirts of the ritual, on the other hand, is "cooler" in sentiment, and might analyse the situation at a higher degree, because his/her personal feelings are much less present. The personal involvement is weak (Kapferer 1984).

We can draw the parallel to the Ivorian scene, obviously. There, the audience might be split into different layers of appreciation and reflection. Thus, there is a sense of strong or weak attendance in the realm of everyday life versus the extraordinary realm of the ritual, and therefore two kinds of realities existing side by side, but which will not intermingle (Kapferer 1984:191). One could say in other words that the sensation of "communitas" and identity is stronger or weaker, it depends on the position of the onlooker. For the Ivorian audience, I will claim that most of them will seek the level of hysteria where they forget themselves and time, and where the bodily sensations are the strongest. What happens on stage becomes the spectators personified, they are all representations of the ghetto subculture in Côte d'Ivoire.

I will argue that the spectators who initially sought out some shade by the walls in the beginning of the event will, during the sound check and especially during the concert, become personally involved. These are the ones who alternate between the realm of calm and ecstasy, reflection and involvement, or in Geertz' words, deep and shallow play (Geertz 1973:431). They become overwhelmed by the "aesthetic moment" during the peak of the concert. On the other hand, the young men arriving together to make the show, who run to the stage straight

away, are heavily involved from the start, and will mirror this feeling of self-oblivion and personal commitment to the event. In my opinion, they do not attain the level of reflection during the concert. Reflection might have taken place before, though, or maybe it will afterwards. A contrast to this category are the more distant spectators, such as the journalists or the field worker, who will remain in their role as themselves at the border of the happening, and who actually have a job to do. They will not attain the level of deep involvement. They will take on a level of reflection that is different. They identify themselves less intensely with what happens during the performance, compared to the ones practically glued to the stage. These categories of people have one thing in common, though, and that is their quick acceptance of the fact that the concert is over. During the last song, they all start to direct themselves to the exits from the stadium.

Kapferer says that the exorcists have an overlapping set of roles between ordinary and extraordinary life, in the sense that they both create and stage what will happen and have a reflexive idea about it, but on the other hand they become “lost” during the event, too, since they cannot reflect during the peak of the exorcism, but mostly concentrate on the patient and the demons. And, further, when it comes to the spectators at the border of the event, they are drawn into the middle of the exorcism during the peak of it, whereas they afterwards stay back again. Compared to the Côte d’Ivoire, Ismaël has a similar twofold role during the concert. He is the one who has created the music, he is the reason why everyone has come, and he wants to touch and guide the audience in their everyday life, on an ideational level, but on the other hand he becomes “lost” and inspired while singing, so he drifts away into some other-worldly dimension as well. One could always claim that the spectators at the outskirts of the concert area are more reflexive than the ones right in front, but I would suggest that there is less ambulation between the two modes of appreciation compared to the Sinhalese setting. Kapferer emphasises the transformational aspect of rituals to a larger extent than Turner did, and I think his findings are interesting for the Ivorian field. It is clear that Ismaël wants his music and his messages to pervade the minds of the spectators; that it is not only for fun he is on stage. He has a job to do, too. He wants, little by little, to transform the Ivorian mentality about the ghetto and the social codes about how one should lead a respectable life. The staging of a spectacular concert enables Ismaël to be a part of the ever-changing society.

Therefore I would now like to turn to some societal aspects of this hysteric character of performance that we find in Côte d'Ivoire.

Why hysteria?

I made a comparison between Ivorian concerts and rock music concerts earlier, because the latter are often typified by an extravagant kind of music making, where artists and spectators share the same set of values in a complicated relational world. These artists “articulate and mediate the silent experience that does not find its forms in well-established conventional art forms” (Berkaak & Ruud 1994:211). “Rock music is a way of appropriating the culture” (Berkaak & Ruud 1994:210). One facet of rock'n'roll music is a total freak out during concerts, where a show must lead the public to a physical peak (Berkaak & Ruud 1994:116-117). The adage is to play loud, “out of tune”, that is, not too clean and nice, and not too rhythmically correct either, otherwise it starts to resemble classical music and all the conventional art forms. The more correct, the more one drifts away from street credibility and lived, real experience. One cannot be a “semi-rocker” because this is about life and authenticity.

Correspondingly, the Ivorian concerts are extravagant, too, as we have seen. I think there are several reasons for this, in addition to the ones I have already mentioned. Music in Côte d'Ivoire is immensely important. Music is omnipresent in people's homes, in the narrow pathways between the houses, in restaurants, bars, maquis, kiosks, public transport, taxis, at the hairdresser's, in shops and it is poured out from the radio and TV. People discuss music and know many songs by heart. They are not afraid of singing, and they might conclude afterwards, “Oh, that artist tells the truth!!” This means that the artists expose a certain cultural competence that the audience detects as meaningful to them in their everyday life. This cultural competence is transported through the messages in the song texts (Coplan 1985:237-238).

This omnipresence of music has to be analysed together with the fact that there are not many places to go, or many activities to join. David Coplan is concerned with leisure time, and says

that: “Whoever captures the leisure time of the people gets the people ... a people’s character is moulded by the kind of investment made of their free time” (Ray Phillips in Coplan 1985:115). This means that people become very influenced by what they do during leisure time. If this is right, music and artists in the Côte d’Ivoire have a tremendous role to play in the society at large, and consequently they have a lot of influence on behaviours and attitudes among people. Some of the artists I talked to were eager to show me this very role of theirs, as mediating guides and “diseurs de vérité” (tellers of truth) in a difficult world. In David Coplan’s words:

”A cultural broker is a kind of entrepreneur in situations of acculturation, and a leader in the adoption and creation of innovations. In its broadest sense the concept refers to individuals who link sectors of a society and mediate between cultures in contact. (...) Performers function as cultural brokers because they provide social commentary not only in music, dance, and drama, but also in their expressive styles of dress, speech, and the social interaction” (Coplan 1985:237).

When culture traits are at stake, they become apparent and consequently might be questioned by individuals. Often, people are thankful for having a known, public example to lean on to in life situations that demand that choices be made. Musicians and singers put their persons at the front of the stage in order to tell something to the world. Christopher Waterman writes about this in a social history and ethnography of Nigeria’s many musical styles. He claims that one of the most important factors to the development of a musical genre is “the role of musicians as culture brokers in a heterogeneous urban environment” (Waterman 1990:53). This is true not only in musical genres, but also in life in general. There is a continuing meeting of different styles and cultures in the big cities of Nigeria, and this has an effect on people. A cultural broker has power in the sense that he/she shows one possible behavioural way out of many, through music, and by constituting a heavy ingredient in people’s everyday leisure time. Again, this is not an opposition to the overall culture, but a comment and an addition. As Berkaak and Ruud claimed, this is about conquering the open space in a creative and alternative way (Berkaak & Ruud 1994).

In Côte d'Ivoire, people relax in the evenings, and they have a constant wish to spend time with each other. They live in a society where socialising is important. To interact with family and friends is part of an everyday social pattern to a much larger extent than in the Western countries, especially in Norway, where people tend to visit each other much less frequently, and mostly if they are invited. To Ivorians, there is one question to be answered daily: where do I meet up with my friends? They can choose between the private sphere, the home or the narrow pathways nearby, or on the other hand the public sphere, where one cannot exaggerate the role that the maquis play. As there are no parks that are safe to walk in, and no other outdoor activities to join, which could have constituted an arena for discussion, the maquis are an important arena. They are put up "everywhere", and as many people live in tiny apartments, they are often "at the mercy of" the maquis. In these maquis, the music is poured out at high decibels, as we saw was the case in Pépito's neighbourhood. So even if one cannot afford to buy a beer, but only passes by, one just cannot escape all the hits. The maquis are located in all the neighbourhoods, but especially in Yopougon, where there is a long street, la rue Princesse (or just "la rue"), consecrated to maquis of different standards. Yopougon has several nicknames, "the quarter of thousands of maquis" (Le quartier des milles maquis) or "Yop the happiness" ("Yop la joie"). When it comes to the public sphere in Côte d'Ivoire, the maquis are an absolute winner for socialising, drinking beer, hanging out, showing off, and making deals. As these are popular places, one will find people of even the lower social classes here, such as manual labourers and unemployed people, in short people without much schooling and without much money. These will either walk around, searching for someone who can buy them a beer, or they may already have had the lucky break of the day as a friend might have given them some local cfa-francs.

Nothing can be compared to the concerts, though. They are often organized at stadiums localised in popular neighbourhoods, with low entrance fees. The artists claim that the concerts here are chances for all people to come and party together with them, as for example Ismaël did. This, of course, marks a stark difference from ordinary life, which often contains long periods of waiting, without any occupation at all. People might be job seekers, or they might have lost hope of ever obtaining a job a long time ago. It might be the fact that they are rare occasions that makes the concerts take on such an "amplifying" role. People jump on

these exceptional moments of joy. It can be compared to a football game, where people go wild in the stadium, cheering, singing and dancing. I have already compared one of Ismaël's concerts with a home team playing a match, and where the Treichville supporters are loyal to their star. My informants often said that people in general are in search of strong sensations, something that explodes the ordinary schema. This search must be underlined, as it is not a feature only during concerts. This was the case with the burglars in Treichville, too, as we saw. The inhabitants, who wait for an opportunity to vent some upheld frustration, track them down. So if anything happens in the neighbourhood, if someone has an argument or is fighting, if there is an accident or the peculiar appearance of a strange person, people gather quickly to watch. They want sensations, actions and something that can make their day a bit spicy.

However, the fact that people are great music lovers must also be underlined. Not everybody goes to concerts even though they can afford it; fans go to concerts in order to see the artist live and sing with him/her. That is why people bother walking long distances to buy tickets, to queue for hours under the burning sun, to wait another long time for the artist to show up, to handle the abusive police officers and to confront the possible dangers to their own security during the concert. People will not easily give up once they have started entertaining the thought of going. Once, during the concert that Ismaël gave in the Hôtel Ivoire concert hall, a journalist had interviewed two girls queuing for tickets. They were determined to queue until they had obtained what they had come for. It could start to "rain or snow. Tonight we will do the show!" (Top Visages, nr. 396, 2001).

The audience has certain criteria that have to be fulfilled for the concert to be a success. There must be a possibility to freak out completely and for the body to get "extinguished" afterwards. In short, they must attain the state of enjaillés. The artists are familiar with these demands from the audience, and they prepare themselves in accordance. The artist wants to give them a show they can talk about and remember as a happy moment in life. Maybe the concert will make them buy the cassette, too. The common experience and the future common memory of this experience are identity-constructing events within a neighbourhood or within a musical genre (idea from Berkaak & Ruud 1994). The audience enjoys a personal

experience of togetherness; it is as if the concert affirms the community, which gives them a bodily sensation of it. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the concert setting is a compensation for the overall context of individuality in which they live. Music as identity, as a “we”, is extremely important when it comes to putting a name on a generation in a ghetto setting in Abidjan, as my field shows.

The geographical area becomes more than a place with houses, it expands in the minds of its dwellers as a named somewhere, as a common area where actual, real things happen all the time, and this helps people organise their everyday life. Living, physical people happen to belong to this neighbourhood; they have grown up there, and lead their lives there. Ismaël makes his music in Côte d’Ivoire, which is a country experiencing a great political and identity upheaval, which is young in its multiparty democracy, where few people recognise and know to the full all the duties and the rights of the citizens. Côte d’Ivoire in itself has problems, and so the people experience them, too. This concerns especially their orientation towards the world; should they look to ancient France, the fresh USA or to themselves in the making, as Ivorians? It must be clear that Ismaël and his band become then something the people can recognise as theirs, as coming from them. This identity construction draws heavily on geographical space. First and foremost this has to do with Treichville, but on an ideational level, it is of course expanded to all ghetto dwellers, or to all people who feel that the messages concern them. Ismaël wants them to be proud of themselves, and he helps them by saying, as he did in Bouaké, “I come from the ghetto, and I am proud!” A common event to remember together might facilitate the feeling of belonging and make people confident in their ghetto dweller setting, as a pride, not an excuse. With the sound itself, the music calls for attention, it becomes apparent. Again, it is about “conquering a space and establishing itself as a centre” (Berkaak & Ruud 1994). Ismaël, as well as Kajeem, want to vehicle certain messages in the country, and they want to push it forward, make it “avancer”. They want people to have better life conditions, and they use themselves as examples in everyday matters. That is why they seek to construct togetherness through remembrance rather than individualism.

But, for this remembrance to take place, the concert in our field case must touch the extravaganza of the performing art. The performance cannot be poor in sound and look. Once, the singers in the zouglou band “Magic System” arrived at the stadium in a helicopter, doing a grand turn over the public before landing back stage. The audience responded to this act by running after the helicopter, cheering and singing, bumping into each other, generating masses of people in one spot. Ismaël never had such circus-like paraphernalia, but still gave the audience what they wanted, by his music and by his speeches in between the songs. Hence, during concerts, there has to be action, there has to be “fire and flames” to quote the various newspapers.

This concept is the opposite to the nicely architecturally built concert hall where people sit down and listen to a symphony of classical music for an hour and a half, after which they applaud and dine at some fancy restaurant. Here, the clue words are refinement, gala dresses, expensive suits, self-control, nice manners and small talk. Christopher Small writes about the concert halls and classical concerts in “Musicking”. He contrasts this form of musical setting and the more bodily moving popular ones, the former which involves “listening to the work of the great, dead, composer”, and the latter in which “a crash of drums and amplified guitars greet the appearance onstage of the famous star of popular music, who is often heard on record and seen on video but whose presence here in the flesh is an experience of another kind” (Small 1998:1). Clearly, both sets of musicians have rehearsed intensely, but where the classical musicians have graduated from well established conservatoires and maybe won prizes at high level competitions, the pop musicians have had a total different perimeter from which they have drawn their knowledge; sometimes from a solitary study in the boy’s room, or from jamming with others, but rarely from a classy music school. This is about the learning process within different musical genres, which is interesting. We saw that Pépito and Thomas had a learning process similar to many rock and pop musicians in the world. They made their own instruments, and started to learn by hearing, looking, and imitating. Similarly, the guitar player in Berkaak’s and Ruud’s work made his guitar out of planks at school. “A career in rock music must force itself through on its own premises, not necessarily because it is an ideal or a value in itself, but because the music pedagogical apparatus actively works against such efforts” (Berkaak & Ruud 1994:39). Usually, the rock musician must pave his/her own way

because there are not enough possibilities of schooling in this genre. This is the case for nearly all music genres and nearly all musicians in Côte d'Ivoire.

One can always compare these sets of learning processes; however, Small continues and generalises by asserting that music at large is not a thing, but an activity. As all learning processes are endowed with activities, then which learning process one engages in is quite unimportant, because every activity is filled with meaning and social relations, and so is music, according to Small. Music provokes reactions among the public. The famous Nigerian Afro-Beat singer and musician, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, draws this thought a bit further, and states: "Music must awaken people to do their duty as citizens and act" (quoted in Waterman 1990:225). So it is everybody's duty to help the nation develop in the right way, you cannot wait at the outskirts to see what the politicians decide next. The music must be filled with messages that the audience grasps and uses for the good of the society in which they live, and hence there is a two-way relationship that must take place if the music is to be really powerful. It is not enough with engagement from the artists.

If we once again consider the concert settings, I opposed the classical concert hall setting to the Ivorian one, where the clue words for Ivorian concerts are sweat, dust, sun, heatstroke, pickpockets, burn out, beer, and explosive dancing and singing. Here, the artist and the audience "destroy the area" as was so often mentioned as a sign for success. When everything was "devastated" ("déchiré"), it had been a good concert.

Grant, Ismaël's keyboardist, often joins in this feeling of losing oneself. At times, he will stop playing and start to run around on stage, shivering his head, waving his dreadlocks around, as if not controlling himself. The other musicians, though, are more calm and laid back on stage, especially the bass player, Frédéric. Frédéric will wear his ordinary clothes and sunglasses whenever he can, just swaying on the same spot throughout the concert (See next chapter on reggae music and Ismaël's music). Ismaël himself does not move much, as he limps. The zouglo bands, at the opposite end of the scale, are livelier on stage. They have a sort of common ballet, with rehearsed steps, especially "Magic System". They are in constant movement on stage, and at times the lead singer, A'Salfo, will step down amongst the

audience, dance with them, make them sing in the microphone and in short, party with them. They also invent lyrics during concerts; it is a sort of a sport between the zouglou bands. They jokingly attack each other verbally, and responses come from the other bands during their own concerts, or if they are present, later during the same concert. This adds a very funny and entertaining character to the zouglou concerts. As the artists excel in this competition, the audience laughs, enjoys the attacks and never gets tired of it. Then again, zouglou concerts might last for up to 3 hours, as the singers add many new lines and sequences. The set list might cover only 10 or 12 songs, so these kinds of concerts are extreme, and both the musicians; the artists and the audience are totally exhausted afterwards.

One might draw a parallel from this individual verbal competition to rap and its communicational forms and rules in the streets of inner city areas in USA. Simon Frith writes about rap that it is,

“the contemporary Afro-American use of the rhythms of street-corner gossip, threat and argument. Rap is rooted in a long history of jousting talk, formalised in a variety of names – “signification”, the Dozens, the Toast, the Jones. These are rituals of name calling, boasting and insult, in which rhyme, beat and vocal inflection carry as much meaning as the words themselves” (Frith 2004:199).

It is a must to be eloquent and be armed with a sharp wit, and the purpose is to dupe and impress the antagonistic other. A further parallel can be drawn to Jamaica and its sound systems. The setting is very similar to the American and Ivorian ones, in which young people organise verbal competitions between themselves. In Jamaica, the singers, or toasters as they are called, put their own lyrics on to instrumental versions of already released songs. The purpose is again to be able to do it well, and to dupe the other competitors with one’s wit. In this street art, the participants must be flexible, cunning and inventive when it comes to changing ordinary speech into lyrics on stage, in front of an audience. There is no time to withdraw oneself in order to think and write an answer, as the competitor is already present, waiting for that answer.

This is not the case for Ismaël in his reggae performances, though. Mostly, he gives his concerts in a traditional straightforward way, without inventions from the stage, or from the audience. He very much runs through the set list. On the other hand, even if Ismaël and most of his band are calm during concerts, it is as if the music triggers the sensational feeling amongst the audience. The artist and his band produce a powerful sound which will be enough for the audience to be set “on fire”, even during sound checks, as we have seen.

If we continue to compare this “burnout” with rock and pop music from around the world, we see that in the history of these two latter genres, one can take Elvis or The Beatles as illustrating examples of an audience going wild, girls crying, fainting, shaking, totally overpowered, and where the sense of disorder during a concert is all pervading. How many times have we not seen tapes from the tours of The Beatles; in and out of planes, at press conferences, on TV-shows, and eventually in concerts – and during all these events there is a compulsory pattern, namely all the fans clinging to them, shouting, yelling and running, and the journalists trying to get some words out of them. There is definitely a parallel to the behaviour among the Ivorian audience, even though the stars might be less grandiose in world scope. The lack of distance between the fans and the star is a striking feature. Where The Beatles provided the Liverpoolians with some common identity and the pride of a whole subculture, we can find the same relationship between artists and spectators in Côte d’Ivoire. Kajeem told me that if he went out to eat grilled fish at a popular maquis, he would be mobbed by fans who would say: hey, what are you having there? Let me have some, too! I love you!

When Ivorian newspaper critics write about “a collective hysteria”, it is about passion for music and for extraordinary sensations. There has been an institutionalisation of this extravagant performance and behaviour during concerts, both on stage and among the audience. This means that a “normative context for ritualised social interaction” has been established (Waterman 1990:213). It is about strong, shared experiences, a category of events with certain well-defined criteria that create a stark contrast to everyday life. It becomes a ritual, and hence, there is an expected behaviour; not only is there a possibility of becoming crazy during these happenings; but one is actually supposed to, and one knows it before

attending them. The notion of time becomes blurred and unimportant: “We may say that ordinary daily experience takes place in a world of actual time. The essential quality of music is its power to create another world of virtual time” (John Blacking 1973:27).

This is how the inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods have fun once in a while; something that becomes memorable moments for them. To someone from the upper levels of society, however, these concerts might seem scary and dangerous, so they attend concerts in other, more comfortable and secure places. However, some of them make an occasion out of coming to the stadiums. They do not come as ordinary spectators, but invent situations where they can enjoy the music and the party in nearly the same way as the audience. That was the case with Séguéla’s Chairman. The Town Hall of Séguéla invited Ismaël and his band, and the Chairman made himself a representative during the concert. He was introduced in the beginning, and I saw a man in Western clothes with a grey suit, approach the microphone. However, that was not the Chairman, only someone accompanying him. The Chairman wore a cap and a polo shirt, like an ordinary man in the streets. Thus, he made his entrée in a rather unfashionable way, and people cheered and applauded. This was his moment; he would talk to the youth. He made his speech about the municipality working for the youth, and said he was enjaillé. When a person of his rank employs such a street word, it is a heavy signal of his sympathy with the youth, and that he is someone who does not lag behind, but to the contrary is young in his mind. He then walked over to the tribunes, where he had had his seat put up for him.

At the end, he wanted to sing one of the hits; “Khôrodjô”. He happily smiled at the audience, who joined in. Pépito later told me that a concert like this one is one of the really rare occasions where a man of the Chairman’s rank can enjoy himself freely, not thinking of manners or social codes. In the music, he can loosen up a bit, and show feelings, joy and happiness. He can behave in this “un Chairman-like” way at concerts, without the journalists writing bad things about him. A Chairman cannot sit down in a maquis to eat grilled food, for example. People will not approve, because his rank is not theirs, and he is expected to spend a lot of money going out elsewhere, in hotels and so on. In this way people like the Chairman are put on a pedestal, perhaps even against their will, and are forced to live as if they were

extremely rich. Ordinary people can even get angry with "rich" people who go out to the same places as they do. The myth that is created of a powerful, distant person is thus upheld. In this way, it is perhaps as much for his own personal sake that he showed up at the concert, as to make a political promo for himself, since he dressed in simple clothes, and seemed to really enjoy himself. Now he was out of the routine of ordinary life, as the audience was, at their level. With the help of the music, he too could enjoy the popular hysteria in his own manner.

REGGAE AND THE MUSIC OF ISMAEL ISAAC

Genre conventions in reggae music

Up to this point in my thesis we have been discussing the social history of the Treichville neighbourhood, expediency and give-and-take relationships, the constant search for the unpredictable fluid good or gain in everyday life and in music making, and how Ivorian people consume music during concerts. I relate concerts to rituals, where people compensate for the ever-present individuality in their daily lives, and enjoy a feeling of togetherness and community. Having outlined social patterns in the Abidjanese setting, I will now analyse the formal features in reggae music. In this chapter I investigate Jamaican and Ivorian reggae, and compare them. It will become clear why the differences between them are evident.

What is striking in all reggae is the constant electric bass line. It must be omnipresent during the songs; without it the whole music falls apart. This is a distinctive feature of the genre. The bass is the steady, driving force that never stops in the music.

The bass player usually plays figures, which means to repeat a couple of measures in loops, with small pauses in between. He can emphasize his play in two ways. He might play small, short figures within a small number of measures, and concentrate his play on certain basic notes in the harmony. This creates a heavy, driving force in the music; the bass rolls massively ahead. The interesting moment is when the bass makes the small pauses in between the figures, because it creates suspense among the listeners before it powerfully starts all over again. Alternatively, the bass player might emphasize his play in another way. He can choose to play a more melodious figure line. Compared to the first method, the bass player enlarges the number of measures within which he plays a certain figure. This is a more elaborated kind

of figure, with a softer rhythmic. This elaborated manner of playing the bass is less concentrated around the basic notes or the basic pulse. The bass player will in this case listen really carefully to the voice, and follow it gently with his harmonies. This bass play creates a softer and sweeter over-all sound in the music. Bob Marley's bass player through all times, Aston "Family Man" Barrett, underlines this softness when saying, "Reggae music is the heart beat of the people. One can say one good thing about it; when it hits you, you feel no pain" (DVD, *Catch A Fire*).

Further, reggae music dictates a certain emphasis within the measures. As with the bass, without it, it is no longer reggae music because this is a distinctive feature. One can make this emphasis with different instruments; the guitar, the keyboard, the brass section or the drums, but as long as the feature is upheld, it is reggae music. More accurately, the emphasis is put on the 2nd and the 4th note in a 4/4 measure. In rock music, the emphasis is on the 1st and the 3rd in a 4/4 measure. It must be underlined that not all the instruments in reggae music put the emphasis on the 2nd and the 4th at the same time, because there still is a constant accent on the ordinary 1st and 3rd. What is important to understand is that the final sound has a compulsory ingredient, namely the emphasis on the 2nd and the 4th; a small keyboard sound, called "lick" in the Jamaican patois, is enough for this matter. The listener, who is familiar with reggae music, will listen to the bass line as well as this emphasis. The drummer alone could make the different emphasis on his drum set.

Choko, one of Ismaël's keyboardists, underlined to me that the reggae element in the keyboard play, is the accompanying factor. It is this complementing way of playing the keys, gently, and in "le temps faible", which means the 2nd and 4th in their musical language. The keyboardist and the guitar player are cooperating, and follow each other, often they have the same line, but they may also fill different sound spaces. It can be hard to tell the difference between the instruments for the audience. A reggae singer may have two keyboards accompanying in his band, one keyboard has then a more melodic and leading line, the other has the complementing line that emphasises the 2nd and the 4th note. All these instrumental and technical relations together constitute a common sound, which forms the reggae music, according to Choko. Put in other terms; the emphases of the individual instruments create an



Christian tuning his keyboard

over-all pulse to the music at a higher, collective level. Tony Platt, the engineer of Basing Street Studios in London, who remixed Bob Marley's first album aimed specifically at the Western market, sustains this by saying: "We put an electric piano on [Kinky Reggae]. It's another example of when you play the things by themselves they are fairly meaningless. But when you put it in, what seems like an ordinary piano sound suddenly makes complete sense, because it fits into that texture" (DVD, *Catch A Fire*).

In the musical landscape of reggae music, one can say that the bass line and the drums give a constant rhythmic presence, and on these two lines others are added. One can have many or few instruments, but as long as the bass line and the emphasis on the 2nd and the 4th are present, it is reggae music. Within the reggae band, the musicians listen to each other. They are each other's audience. There is a selective listening going on, and they make small changes in their emphasis during the play, as musical initiatives and answers to the others. Playing in a band is about knowing the rules, and knowing how to break them. This is the dynamic of ensemble play; it is unpredictable. On the other hand, these changes are so small and within strict frames that only the connoisseurs are capable of hearing them. The genre convention's parameters in reggae music are not complex, and that is why small modifications create such a refinement within the genre play.

Jamaican reggae orchestration

In Jamaican reggae in general, there is an aesthetic preference of relatively few instruments. This gives the reggae music a very neat, clear and organized sound. The most basic instruments are present, that is the drums, the bass, the guitar, the keyboard, and of course the male voice. An eventual brass section is most of the time left out. Nothing extravagant is added, because the aim is to cut the sound down to the core. For this a strict instrumentation is needed. Even though a promising budget will permit a heavier instrumentation, the Jamaican band will not accept more instruments, because it will create a dense sound. Minimalism reigns at all levels. Reggae music appeared as an opposite to the former ska rhythm appreciated in Jamaica in the late 50s and 60s. Ska incorporated a dense instrumentation in which the brass section was important. In reggae, on the other hand, the opposite aesthetic was the rule, coolness and few instruments. The reggae musicians wanted to be different from the former local aesthetics, and often emphasized the contrary of what was known. Ska was fast, reggae cool. Ska was dense, reggae cut down to the core. In order to distinguish themselves from the rest, the reggae musicians sorted out “a difference which makes a difference”, in Bateson’s words (Bateson 1972:459). Further, there is no possibility for the musicians to freak out and become exhibitionists about their skills by doing a grand solo; neither their lines, nor the local Jamaican aesthetic preferences permit it. The musicians are to remain composed on stage and expose an aura of coolness. The intros in Jamaican reggae are short, without spectacular fills on the drums, for example. These are the “codes chosen” in reggae music that present it as a particular music genre.

The audience is of course composed of competent and socialized connoisseurs, and it detects small deviant notes, breaks and fills that are meant as pleasant and surprising musical details. The musicians communicate with their audience through musical nuances. If the listener is not attentive, he/she will not become aware of all the interesting refinements. That is why the aesthetic preference dictates a certain calm during concerts; one is supposed to actually listen to what is going on onstage. A Jamaican concert is therefore never hot in the sense that people will freak out; people do not become ecstatic or frenetic. If they allow themselves to become feverish, they will miss out what happens, and others will despise this behaviour. The concert

hall is not an area for going crazy in any way, but to listen and to move in certain ways. The bodily movements reflect the musical nuances; one is supposed to do easy skanking. That means to remain cool in the dance, to uphold the bodily equilibrium, and not lose oneself in wild dance steps. There is no room for technical virtuosity in reggae music, as is the case for rock'n'roll, for example. European, white, middle class sophistication and virtuosity will be ridiculed within the reggae genre conventions in Jamaica. Virtuosity is linked to machismo, virility and manhood. Reggae music and performers seek the opposite, namely spirituality. This is crucial. Music and dance is not about a competition of who can do the most dance steps or play the most notes on the guitar within a measure. No, the tempo in reggae is extremely important; it is supposed to be cool. Not only is reggae opposed to the white middle class music, both rock'n'roll and classical music, but as we have seen it is also opposed to the local ska music. With the quicker rhythm of ska the audience danced with spacious and fast movements. The performers of reggae differentiated themselves from the rest; they chose their codes that made them particular. They therefore set forth these inversions in order to create the discrepancy.

The spirituality of reggae

The aura of coolness, composure and attentive listening must be seen together with the fact that the singer and the band on stage have an important message for the people. They do not go on stage in order to be clowns; they do not hold a role as entertainers – the message for the people is far too important than to allow it to sink into oblivion. This aesthetic is apollonian, the opposite of ecstasy and a heated atmosphere. Within the ska genre convention, singing, dancing and love themes were at peak. This audience went out in the evenings in order to have a good time. Not so with the reggae audience, it will become enthusiastic about the true reggae messages and the music, and some of the spectators might attain a measure of ecstasy on a mental level with the help of the repetitive drum rhythms and all the ganja smoke, of course. However, the body itself will mostly remain calm and the mind focused during a reggae concert in Jamaica. That is why the people in the audience will not seek to lose themselves in the event, but instead try and record what is said and listen to the music.

The singer's lyrics contain something important; it is "guidance" for the people. Actually, one can widen its importance and call it a sort of preaching on everyday relational problems as well as in racial and political matters. Traditionally, reggae music in Jamaica is overtly political and involved in the overall society. The reggae texts therefore become effective weapons in the process of empowerment of a whole people. The Jamaican singers are not afraid of indexing rather bluntly themes like oppression, segregation and injustice. Linton Kwesi Johnson considers Jamaican lyrics, and writes, "Jamaican music is the *spiritual expression of the historical experience* of the Afro-Jamaican. In making the music, the musicians themselves enter a common stream of consciousness, and what they create is an invitation to the listeners to be entered into that consciousness – which is also the consciousness of their people" (Johnson in Frith 2004:196). Bob Marley's lyrics, as for example "Get Up, Stand Up" are clear messages for Jamaicans to fight for their existence. Powerful lyrics might have a deeper impact on people than ordinary politics have. Reggae singers openly name whites and Europeans as the wicked ill doers of the world, who lead sinful lives in Babylon. In Rastafarian cosmology, Babylon is the term for the Western, racist, colonizing world, which will eventually succumb in flames on the last day of existence.

Inherent in the preaching of empowerment is therefore the omnipresent spiritual feature in reggae music. Jamaican reggae is fundamentally spiritual in the sense that faith pervades all facets of a human being living among other human beings and in relation to God, or Jah. The lyrics and the musicians direct the primordial message from Jah; that all are equal. Reggae musicians are mediums of Jah, they vehicle the divine message. As they are spiritual, they are cool on stage. They are not tough cowboys, they have no façade and they are as such unarmed and natural. The reggae men are cool all the way in; they have a clarified interior and hide nothing. They want people to become conscious about their rights as human beings. "The [Jamaican] lyricist contributes to the continuing struggle of the oppressed" (Johnson in Frith 2004:196). Therefore, Jamaicans were helped to believe in themselves in a more profound manner than during colonization, thanks to reggae lyrics. These claimed that paradise, Zion, is within reach for everyone, not only for whites. They appropriated the Bible by interpreting it in new ways. In the Rastafarian cosmology, the white man has obscured some crucial biblical truths from the black man, and that is why there is such misery among black people. The truth

has to be found and revealed, and that is why Rastafarians are constantly interpreting the Bible in new ways. There are many versions of the true message, and all are equal until one has come up with the ultimate right one. Through these new interpretations Jamaicans became conscious of their status as free subjects who could determine their own lives, and who were no longer some white master's objects and belongings.

This "subjectivication" was immensely important to the self-esteem of the Jamaicans. Bob Marley and The Wailers were very spiritual, and claimed that the over all aim of reggae music was to put forward the message and the truth to the people. "People are searching for the truth", Bob Marley insisted (DVD, *Catch A Fire*). He was dedicated to the responsibility he and The Wailers had to spread the divine message to oppressed people. In Rastafarianism there is a conviction that the Holy Spirit has effect through music and that human beings can experience a spiritual revelation in reggae. This is a purely spiritual project, not an intellectual one in the Cartesian cognitive understanding sense. Where the Western art music is based on intellectuality, through critics and cognition, reggae music is meant to run into your body, not via the brain. It suffices to let the Holy Spirit in, and it works within you. Reggae is about the body and the flesh to a much more extent than in the Western art music, where the bodily vulgar is not allowed.

A brief move into the London studios in the past

In the early 70's, Bob Marley and The Wailers went "to London to see if we could establish ourselves as well as the music", says Bunny Wailer (DVD, *Catch A Fire*). What happened after they had recorded the album in Jamaica was that they remastered and remixed it in London under the label Island Records in order to try and break through in Europe and America, as mentioned above. One can say that in that period of early globalisation in the London studios, a musical translation took place; the studio engineers changed the roots reggae into what could be more acceptable to a Western ear that at the time was used to rock music. "In those times reggae music was a novelty music, crude, cheap, not to be taken seriously at any level. (...) Reggae was despised by rock fans in Britain and the US. (...) The job of conversion had to be done," says music critic Richard Williamsville (DVD, *Catch A*

Fire). The most interesting part of the story, however, is the American musicians taking part in the remixing and translation project. They were supposed to play the keyboard and the slide guitar, and were completely lost. They did not have the slightest feel of the music; they did not find the right rhythm and struggled a lot to get a grip of things. The slide guitar player understood a bit more only once the engineer turned down the bass, interestingly enough. It was like a laboratory, and the final product had a clear aim regarding the marketplace. There was no hazard, but a strictly planned album release – Bob Marley and the Wailers’ *Catch A Fire* was to pierce the West. It sounded very different from the Jamaican reggae taste at that time. I think this event clearly shows that long before Ismaël Isaac came to sing and play Ivorian adapted reggae music, even Bob Marley and The Wailers had played around with the musical genre conventions and created a somewhat different style from the “original” reggae in Jamaica. Much of the audience throughout the world, however, recognizes Bob Marley as the founding father and exponent of the original reggae. This produces several layers of originality and authenticity, depending on the geographical angle and local aesthetics of the gaze.

Ismaël and Island Records

Ismaël had released “Rahman”, his first solo album in 1990. Then he signed a contract with Island Records, and “Taxi Jump” was the result in 1993. Compared to the first album, “Taxi Jump” was different. This has been confirmed with his latest releases, too, which are more in line with the first one. “Taxi Jump”, created under the auspices of Island, deviated from Ismaël’s personal musical convictions and how he wanted to present himself to his Ivorian audience. His career was starting to deteriorate. Many people told me that fortunately, Ismaël stopped this cooperation in order to pursue his own path. What happened during the experience of “Taxi Jump” was that the big international label wanted to translate his African reggae into something else, something that the Western market could grasp. In the effort to make Ismaël’s reggae more mainstream, they left out all the distinctive features that made Ismaël appear as Ismaël. The result was an extremely polished, candid and kind variant of Ivorian reggae that the local fans did not recognise as Ismaël, and turned away from. One of the changes was that he even sang in English on some of the songs on that album. In the years

after this event, Ismaël has confirmed himself as an Ivorian artist, drawing heavily on the Treichville ghetto authenticity. Musically speaking, he is according to himself more fulfilled now, and has been able to make his choices within another set of musical aesthetics. He is capable of choosing his “feeling” in the music, and instructs the musicians how it all is supposed to sound. He takes great pride in this.

Globalisation and the local

The final reggae music of Ismaël Isaac sounds different from the Jamaican reggae. In this chapter I will underline several musical features that are different when an Ivorian reggae band performs in Africa. Despite the fact that both music genres are called reggae, in Côte d’Ivoire the Jamaican reggae is perceived according to Ivorian aesthetic preferences, which the musicians have already embodied. Furthermore, the Jamaican reggae is adapted to the audience in line with the local approach to music and expectations for concerts. Ivorian reggae is as we will see not a blue print of Jamaican reggae. Ismaël’s heavy instrumentation is one proof of this. Ismaël has listened to Jamaican reggae and decided to make it denser in sound. A Jamaican would most probably react negatively to this change and make a claim for a drastic cut in the instrument lines.

When it comes to the deep political engagement among Jamaican artists; if an Ivorian singer copied this approach, he would certainly become ostracized among Côte d’Ivoire’s audience, at least during the time of my fieldwork. There are several examples of singers who have not demarcated themselves clearly from the political arena, and the consequence is that they have severe difficulties in selling albums and giving concerts in Côte d’Ivoire. The artist is supposed to be an example for all the inhabitants, not only particularly chosen ones. Politics is seen as an un-trustworthy sector, and being associated with it is dangerous to an artist’s national career. People in general do not believe in their politicians, therefore they are not examples to follow in everyday life. As the local adage says that politicians lie and that they “eat” while it is possible, being on the corrupt top of society (“ils mangent seulement”), people have a tendency to look to an artist who has made it up and out of the ghetto as someone who has performed something of an extraordinary deed. That is something

respectable. People will further claim that during election years, the politicians will talk to them in a sweet tone, and after they have elected him, he will forget their very existence. Not so with the dedicated artist, it is believed. My neighbours and informants often claimed that Ismaël and Kajeem told the truth, and that they gave good advice in their Ivorian daily life. We are definitely not in the realm of a Jamaican world here, but in a local Ivorian one. However, in both these worlds people listen to what they believe is “real” reggae music, which displays the right authenticity for the audience.

If Jamaican reggae is seen as minimalist and a contrast to ska and Western art music, Ismaël’s music forms a third angle in this shape. It is neither purely Jamaican nor representative of the white man’s music; it constitutes something in itself. It does not fit into the inversions and oppositions that the Jamaican reggae artists created in a particular geographical area at a specific time, all related to their society. Ismaël’s reggae does not share in the same way the colonial history and the cruel black-and-white opposition between Jamaica and Great Britain, because it does not have the same experiences of hardship and racism related to slavery. The continents have different memories and different traditions. In this two-polar, contrasting system, Ismaël constitutes something different to both poles. He is free of them, and does not have to make sure he is in line with the local Jamaican reggae genre conventions. He is Ivorian and from Africa – the Mother continent to the Jamaicans.

Ismaël makes reggae music, but it cannot be said to be either minimalist or repetitive when it comes to the sound landscape; in fact there is a lot of action in his music, with several fills, breaks and changes. In short this variety of reggae is heavier, more bombastic and has more instrumental ingredients than Jamaican reggae. Georges Kouakou, Ismaël’s arranger and a famous reggae piano player in the US, says rather bluntly in an interview with “Notre Voie” (January, 2002): “One has to admit that reggae music belongs to the Jamaicans. Therefore, it is hard for the Jamaicans to listen to African reggae. To them, this reggae is composed of too many instruments. When one listens to Jamaican reggae, the arrangers hardly ever use all the tracks in the studio. They use at the most 12 out of the 16 tracks. The Africans, on the contrary, fill up their music with the tracks, and it exhausts the ear (“Cela fatigue l’oreille”). Consequently, the sonority is heavy”. This reflects the fact that Ismaël employs a lot of



Ismaël's brass section doing their sound check

instrumentation both in studio and on stage. In Jamaica, those of Burning Spear's albums in which there is a brass section will not be classified as real roots reggae. Rather, these albums are classified as his debut and a time when he took part in the making of the reggae genre.

As previously discussed, in Jamaican reggae the brass section is mostly left out, whereas almost all the reggae bands I saw in Côte d'Ivoire had these. Consequently, the ones that were without a brass section and were cut down to the core, were said to be near the Jamaican reggae style. As an example, the band that I followed in the beginning of my fieldwork, Rastafari, was classified both by the band itself and by others as a purely Jamaican inspired band. People often said that they were not really an Ivorian band at all, and not very representative for me to follow if I wanted to do research on Ivorian music. Rastafari themselves claimed that they were inspired by the UK band Steel Pulse. Peter Tosh was also one of their heroes in reggae music. Rastafari enjoyed a basic reggae, which was not filled up with instruments; they did not engage a brass section, and had only one keyboardist and did the choring themselves without the backing from female voices. They were generally 6 musicians on stage. The lead had, as in most Jamaican reggae bands, a very "sweet" voice: he sang in a light tenor register, with a distinctive vibrato at the end of the note.

When one considers this Jamaican overall feature of down to the core instrumentation in reggae music, I have to mention one of my neighbours in Abidjan, who explicitly told me several times that he particularly loved Burning Spear for his heavy brass section, which produced a really weighty sound. Burning Spear, according to my friend, was his favourite reggae singer, laid back and smooth, but with this spectacular punch that the brass instruments allowed. What is interesting in this event, is that he pointed out to me what he as an Ivorian preferred in Jamaican reggae music; but he underlined what was the least particular to the Jamaican taste, and the most particular to the Ivorian taste. Actually, he listened to and appreciated what is most valued within his own cultural aesthetics, and this he called real reggae music.

Contrary to the Jamaicans, whenever the budget permits it, Ismaël in his turn calls on many musicians to make the show. I have seen him with up till 12 musicians on stage at the most. But when he had to cut down the instruments, I saw him with as few as 7 or 8 musicians. This is interesting, because it means that what happens on stage is not necessarily in line with Ismaël's personal taste. He might prefer to engage more musicians, but due to economic issues he cannot. He must deal with certain constraints, and this affects the over-all sound on stage quite heavily. Therefore, there is a possible incongruence between the sound produced and the sound wanted, between practice and sensibility. So, before coming to any conclusions about the show on stage, one has to interpret the setting within which it operates. Actually, Ismaël has a pragmatic attitude to his shows; if there is enough money, he will call on a large number of musicians. If not, he will not cancel the show, but he will reduce the number of participants. For example, once we were in Dakar, Senegal, and for various reasons Ismaël had to leave out his sax player. During the sound check, Doudou the manager came up to me and asked me anxiously whether or not I heard the empty sound space the sax ought to fill. There was already a trumpet and a trombone in the band. Still, the third member of the brass group should have been present, according to the Ivorian preferences. Sometimes, the sound will be "the next best thing", on other occasions it will be fully in line with the aesthetic principles that reign in Abidjan. But on no occasion did I hear of a concert being cancelled because of the fact that the sound would not be dense enough, although that is normally their

very specific aim when they perform. In the end, though, they always made deals that upheld the image of Ismaël as a local reggae star with a strong competent band. For example, they declined and ridiculed an offer that came from Burkina Faso, where the impresario would pay a one-way ticket for 7 persons.

Ismaël opens up for his musicians to show their personality or at least their musicality to a certain extent, through solos. This gives an overall impression of dense reggae music where the sound landscape is filled with a lot of different lines. It seems that this is one of the most important features in Ismaël's reggae, which is part of the aesthetic preferences in Côte d'Ivoire; music is supposed to fill you up, music is supposed to be grand and tumultuous. The Jamaican liking for musical details is simply not sufficient to an Ivorian listener; he/she will need more of a spectacular punch to become satisfied with the sound. In order to create a heavy punch, then, Ismaël needs many musicians.

When it comes to the intros of the songs they are often dramatic, sometimes in a totally different musical genre than the reggae genre. One song has a really quick rock'n'roll like intro during several measures, where the electric guitar plays the head line, before the bass enters and marks the break and settles everything into a smoother, composed reggae rhythm. This does not shock anybody, neither the musicians nor the audience. This is the way it is supposed to sound. It is in fact a chance to go crazy on stage, and for the audience to dance wildly. I have described the audience in detail above. Another song, usually the last one during a concert, has a keyboard intro with a falling sound over 6 notes which is repeated several times in a staccato manner in order to create a suspense in the audience. Then, all the instruments join in, and the audience knows that this is the last song, and the most famous one. The audience often cheered as they heard this intro, as it was new to them. Ismaël had come up with it for the concerts.

These inventive intros are important in Ismaël's reggae. They make the audience appreciate the concert even more. The Ivorian audience is used to musical and verbal innovations during concerts. When the local zouglou heroes Magic System perform, they usually make a tremendous effort at telling anecdotes and funny stories with the help of local abidjanese



The four singers in Magic System: Goudé, Manadja, A'Salfo and Tino

neologisms in the street language nouchi. These are stories that do not figure on the albums, so the audience experiences them together. This creates a dense atmosphere. Actually, the zouglou audience demands this kind of funny entertainment during their concerts. As mentioned above, the tradition of this musical genre dictates a verbal cleverness and wit, and smarts during small oral “combats” between bands on stage, which take on an entertaining character. In concert, this phenomenon pervades the songs. The manager of Magic System, Angelo Kabila, has said that, “After the message is heard, one can dance” (Iain Harris, www.afribeat.com). This means that there is a time for attentive listening before attending the concert, via mass media and purchase one is already familiar with the themes of the songs and many people know the lyrics well before dancing to them. Whereas the Jamaican singers are very eager to communicate the spiritual message to the people before, during and after concerts, the over-all impression I have from the audiences and singers in Côte d’Ivoire, especially within the zouglou genre, is different. The sense for entertainment, rapid eloquence and innovation is more present than the all-pervading political and religious message. I would say that the sense for musical and verbal innovation runs into Ismaël’s musical genre as well, even though to a much lesser degree. The audience wants to be entertained and have a good time. The show must be grand, and so whenever Ismaël adds musical innovations, they must

be grand, too. Where Jamaicans add musical nuances, the Ivorians add grandiose ones, in accordance with local aesthetics. Jamaicans are cool and composed, the Ivorians are extravagant.

All the larger-than-life sounds, solos and intros, some of them even with distorted electric guitars, are important features of Ismaël's reggae, and it is in accordance with the Ivorian extravagant aesthetics. The distorted electric guitar sound is something never heard of and completely inconceivable within the reggae genre in Jamaica. There, the sound must be clean and sweet. As we have seen, the Ivorian audience goes crazy during concerts, which is the absolute opposite of the Jamaican one. The Ivorian listener does not have the possibility to listen attentively to the small details in the music, nor will he/she pay that much attention to what is said in Ismaël's song texts during concerts, contrary to the Jamaican listener. The reason is that the listener is in a sort of physical ecstasy. So the music must be even bigger and bombastic for the audience to notice the interesting features. The arenas for the audience to listen attentively to the lyrics, are rather in the family compounds, in the narrow pathways or in the maquis. The listening will have taken place before a concert experience, as Magic System's manager, Angelo Kabila pointed out. The audience already knows the song texts and join in during concerts.

As journalist Stéphanie Joyce writes "(...) overseas artists provide [the French] for an African reggae, (different compared to the Jamaican or the English one), with uncomplicated themes, which have nothing to do with oppression of the people, war, injustice... (...) The tone is hence given; love, passion, deception in love, family affection and defence of the nature", (Top Visages, nr 395, 2001).

When it comes to Ismaël's lyrics and their content, they mirror this. There is nothing revolutionary in them. The audience often informed me they told them the truth, "la vérité", they understood the lyrics as good advice. They contain different themes, but while the local zouglo music is mostly entertainment with funny anecdotes, Ismaël's reggae is more a lesson in how to behave in society and how to interact with other people. However, it is difficult to foretell the future, and what is actually going to come out of this reggae genre. Maybe, despite

what people might think or write today, the texts and the songs will have an impact over time on the development of society in unexpected ways.

The musician and musicologist Adolphe Yacé underlines the importance of Ismaël's bass as in all reggae, but claims there is a difference compared to Jamaican reggae. Not only is the base in Ismaël's reggae constant, but it also follows the voice rather closely. Thus, the bass line is even more melodious than in Jamaican reggae. It will not rest on the deepest notes as a sort of steady force, but instead it goes up and down in scales and tones. This is the already mentioned way of playing the bass called harmonious play, which creates some softness in the over-all sound. In some of Tiken Jah Fakoly's songs, the bass will actually take the melodic lead, and cease the role of merely providing a constant presence. It becomes the very element that one listens to and enjoys. Several informants told me they particularly loved Tiken's bass player. Adolphe Yacé underlines this feature as purely African.

Ismaël's bass player, Frédéric, is the epitome of the typical Jamaican reggae bass musician. He is usually extremely cool and composed in his behaviour, and he often wears ordinary jeans and a shirt, with sunglasses. He expresses the cool guy who never loses his temper, but who controls himself both on stage and privately. I never saw him speak out loudly. Only once did I see him quarrelsome, when he demanded more money after a concert.

The voice

Ismaël's use of the voice is also typically African, according to Adolphe Yacé. His voice is remarkably high-pitched and he sings in a light register, without going into falsetto. He has a vibrato-less voice. I have never heard him attain very deep tones and scales. When he reaches the lightest tones, it is malinké, mandingue or African, says Yacé. In addition, he has a sort of nasal sound, with a lot of breathing through the nose. To a person unfamiliar with this kind of voice, it sounds as if Ismaël forces himself to obtain it. But to Ivorians, this is simply the voice of Ismaël, his label. The other reggae singers do not necessarily have this high-pitched voice, both Tiken Jah Fakoly and Kajeem sing in a deeper register. However, and this is why Yacé says Ismaël has a malinké way of singing, in the northern part of the country where the

ethnic group Malinké live, as well as in the Sahel region even further north in Western Africa (Burkina Faso and Mali), this way of singing is common. Both women and men employ a light register, and it is a distinctive feature in their music. This particular way to sing has been transported from the traditional songs to the reggae music. And the region, especially Mali, is known for its marvellous diva singers; beautiful, big women who perform with their bands and who make traditional or semi-traditional music.

One of these famous Malian divas, Amy Koïta, blends traditional music with electric instruments, and it is said of her that she has a “shrilling voice (...) with vocal fluctuations very important for the griots” (www.mali-music.com), and a “vibratoless voice” (www.africafest.com). Amy Koïta is a descendent of the grand Malian oral singing tradition, and as a “djelimusso” or griot, she embodies the pride of her ancestors. In former times, people in conflict used to call for the griots to mediate between them. “Because they are not afraid of anybody and they tell the truth”, explains Amy Koïta (*Le Patriote*, 10.02.04). What I find interesting here is how the voice is described as well as the position of the singer in the overall Malian and African society. Alpha Blondy, the national reggae singer and hero from northern Côte d’Ivoire, also sings in this way, with a vibratoless and shrilling voice. Through his music he takes on a mediating role when he runs against civil war, and when he calls for religious tolerance. He is not necessarily a griot, however. But the singer’s position as a truth teller in society is important.

One can also note these features in Ismaël’s voice; no vibrato in a high register. Compared to Jamaican reggae singers like Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Jimmy Cliff, this is very different. Not only does Ismaël sing in a high register – a feature these Jamaican singers may very well follow as well – but Ismaël also has a very high intensity in his voice. That is perhaps the reason why this way of singing might be perceived as if he were forcing himself to reach the highest notes. And this is different from Jamaican reggae, where the voices are generally smoother and “sweeter”. Like the divas’ voices, Ismaël’s voice has a piercing character that cuts through the other sounds. This high intensity is a distinctive feature in Ismaël’s reggae. Maybe he actually needs this sort of piercing voice in order to be heard among all the other instruments. Furthermore, it might be the case that this is a part of the local aesthetics

dictating that one has to get wild and crazy during concerts; one cannot stand still. One must punch the audience with the sound, and in this context the voice must follow the genre conventions too.

The voice has a primordial role in Ismaël's reggae. It must cut through the rest of the heavy instrumentation. Pépito told me that they had once been to Djibouti with the whole reggae band. The band members had arrived earlier and Ismaël was due to arrive later. Then Ismaël told them that he could unfortunately not make it to the concert. This created a lot of tension and problems for the impresario who had an audience to satisfy. The band ended up going on stage. Pépito took the role as the singer, in addition to his ordinary task of sitting behind the drums. From behind the drum kit, Pépito imitated Ismaël's voice; his high register and technical way of singing. During ordinary rehearsals he sometimes does this too, if Ismaël is late or if he wants to listen to the instrumentation. I see several reasons for this to actually happen on stage in Djibouti. First, the impresario could not let his audience down; he desperately had to fulfil his promises. People had bought the tickets and everything was ready for them to have a good time. They would not let go of such an opportunity to listen to the music they loved. Second, this could happen because what probably mattered most to the audience was the show; as long as all the instruments' lines were present, and as long as Pépito imitated the ordinary vocal lead, he maintained the over-all sound. The audience wanted Ismaël's reggae, and they had it; only Ismaël as a person was absent. Whether or not this could ever happen in Treichville, being Ismaël's stronghold, I do not know. People in Djibouti were not necessarily accustomed to Ismaël's face, and as long as they heard good music, it might have been enough for them.

What is interesting, though, is the phenomenon of the presence of the sound of the vocal line, dissociated from the singer as a person and with what is said in words. This fits well into what Simon Frith has written about the position of the voice within a song; the voice has words, but what has even more importance is the very presence of the voice, not what is actually said in words (Frith 2004). He claims that "First, *in analysing song words we must refer to performing conventions which are used to construct our sense of both their singers and*

ourselves, as listeners” (Frith 2004:203). He claims that music and the way of singing can make us experience certain feelings and moods.

“In songs, words are the sign of a voice. A song is always a performance and song words are always spoken out, heard in someone’s accent. Songs are more like plays than poems; song words work as speech and speech acts, bearing meaning not just semantically, but also as structures of sound that are direct signs of emotion and marks of character. Singers use non-verbal as well as verbal devices to make their points – emphases, sighs, hesitations, changes of tone; lyrics involve pleas, sneers and commands as well as statements, messages and stories” (Frith 2004:203).

In this respect, the voice is seen more like an instrument line rather than something that puts forward a verbal message. And following this thought, one can say that to the audience in Djibouti and perhaps elsewhere, the sound of Ismaël’s voice is so specific, that when this articulating feature is upheld, the music is “right” in their ears. This contrasts to the position several singers personally enjoy and endure as idols and stars. There is thus a difference between the singer *in person as an icon* and the singer *as upholding a musical aesthetic preference within a genre*. Roland Barthes has written about music and “the grain of the voice”, which means the texture of the voice, the way of singing and how it sounds. He claims that within every musical genre there are specific rules that dictate how the singer is supposed to sing (Barthes 1985). In Barthes’ view the specific way of singing in pop and rock music might be seen as a contrast to classical music. A pop singer cannot go onstage and sing an opera aria. This applies to the local Ivorian reggae genre conventions too. Reggae artists like Ismaël and his band must go onstage and perform the sounds in accordance with what the audience has come to hear. As mentioned above, it is in this sense that the Djibouti audience might have accepted the show without Ismaël even being present. His vocal line was present, and that would do. “...popular music works as a social event. Its cultural (and commercial) purpose is to put together an audience, to construct a sense of “us” and “them”. Such pop consciousness depends primarily on the use of voices to express the identity at issue” (Frith 2004:204).

Ismaël's "sweet" songs

Where the Jamaican reggae music aesthetic may often be characterized by a somewhat repetitive pattern, this is less the case with Ismaël's music, as we saw above in his dense instrumentation and incorporation of solos and breaks in his songs. Adolphe Yacé claims that there are certain traits in Ismaël's reggae, which make it purely African, and that the melody is one of these traits. He claims that melodious songs characterize Ismaël's reggae; they are easy to listen to and to remember. The journalist Awana Sylla repeats this, when he characterises Ismaël's reggae as a melodious one (Le Jour, 04.10.01). There is not some sort of scientific struggle of what is technically possible with this or that instrument, rather Ismaël wants people to catch his songs. He wants them to be easily understood by people who are not necessarily musically trained. The positive consequence of this is that everyone can easily hum his melodies and text lines.

The same goes for Alpha Blondy, who also has catchy melodies that remain "on the tongue". Tiken Jah Fakoly, on the contrary, makes less melodic songs, and hence his songs are more difficult to separate from one another.

Often, they sing and play in pentatonic scales. A pentatonic scale has 5 steps, which differs from the western art music scale with 7 steps. So in pentatonic scales one leaves out a note twice. In between the 5 steps there is a possibility of a myriad of small steps, and therefore one is able to produce musical nuances. This creates dissonances, and to a musician familiar with jazz, it is quite easy to understand the pentatonic scale. To someone else, though, it might seem too dissonant and difficult to appreciate, with its emphasis on minor tones. Quite often, Ismaël will sing in pentatonic scales, whereas the musicians will play in western art music harmonies, according to Yacé. To an outsider, it seems a bit "sad" as a reggae music genre.

As we saw above, the political and spiritual messages in Jamaican reggae texts are omnipresent. The singers articulate an overt political combat, and try to empower the people

through music. In Côte d'Ivoire, on the other hand, most of the singers deny that their role is a political one, and say they want nothing to do with national politics. Ismaël is one of the singers who most vehemently claims an a-political approach in society and will not be associated with any political party. He wants a dialogue with everyone in the country, and he wants to be a person who gathers people together. Nevertheless, he makes an example of the fact that Bob Marley managed to make two politicians who were hostile to one another shake hands during a concert in front of a huge audience in Jamaica. Ismaël sees this action as unifying, and what is even more important is that this achievement took place during a music event. Ismaël sees his role in the Côte d'Ivoire as a sort of a guide for people in their everyday life; they have a lot of problems and often they are desperate and do silly things in order to solve them. For example, they might steal or conduct illegal businesses in order to get up and out of the ghetto way of life. Ismaël tells them in his song texts that escaping from the ghetto is not an excuse for stealing; easy and quick solutions are bad. He wants people to be patient, to work and to have a goal in life. One of his primary issues is his trying to convince handicapped people that they are full worthy human beings like everyone else, and he tells them "to never lose hope no matter what happens. Even if you are handicapped, you can enter a podium to sing" (Le Jour, 04.10.01). They are not doomed to failure even though their start might have seemed a bit disadvantageous.

Kajeem often claimed a similar attitude when it came to the singer's role in society; he should not dictate and tell people what party or candidate to vote for, but on the contrary he should try and unite the already divided Ivorians. Kajeem said that in a society where there is not one single hero or image that the youth can look to and admire because he sets a good example for others, Kajeem sees his own role as a conscientious artist as someone who might create such an example for the ghetto dwellers. He is very much aware of the strength and discipline it takes to hold such a rank; he has to behave well and help others at all times. However, he wants to teach others; he could have chosen to become an ordinary teacher at school, but as he says: "Now I can teach a whole nation!" In order to succeed in this, he uses his song texts and his music as effective means. He has also taken on a local engagement in his neighbourhood, Abobo. He has founded an association in which youth come to learn about the art of rapping; how they create verses with rhymes, how they cope with an audience and how they manage

their rights as composers and singers. Quite often, one of the members will give a lecture on a general topic of which he/she has considerable knowledge. In this way, they educate each other.

The association is purely social and seeks to teach the youth that they are worth something, but that they have to work hard in order to obtain their goals. They learn to take responsibility in life, and the association gives them the opportunity to grapple with all the dimensions of how to become a reliable person. The leaders of the association are examples for the youth to follow, and they are very much aware of this, having themselves been in a deprived position as children and teenagers. Actually, this is what makes the project successful; Kajeem the singer and his staff obtain their credibility from having lived through difficult stages too. Far from all the parents have the energy or economy to raise their children themselves. Some have lost hope in their children or, as we saw was often the case with the Treichville children, the parents simply do not have access to their children's choices for the future. But with his local authenticity and credibility Kajeem does have this sort of access. His messages are channelled through the reggae and dancehall music that the youth listen to.

Message the belly

There is an aspect of bringing one's ghetto guts out; that is to channel lived, local problems through music. Music, and a life as a singer or musician is a preferred path for those who do not possess a scholarly or professional education, who cannot open "the doors to the system, and the only path which remains, is the artistic path. (...) And the second level is precisely their rank as ghetto men. Being in it, they have lots of situations in their hearts that they would like to express. Situations that ultimately are the ones of every one of us. (...) The guy who can't express it, will recognize himself in what is expressed by the ghetto guy" (Soro Solo, interview, 28.09.01). Within this aspect, there is the feeling of authenticity, the artists bring things out in the open, things they have experienced, and it becomes credible because of their personal commitment and because they use themselves as examples. Their projects become real to people who experience the same things. Often, audience members, friends and taxi drivers told me that they listened to a certain kind of music, be it reggae, dancehall or

zouglou, because they felt that what was said by the singers was the truth. The texts and the music were something they could listen to, because they knew it came from the real world. They also belonged to this world, and could relate to it. Sometimes they would refer to the texts in their daily life, thus making the texts into sayings, in order to understand or explain their difficult way of life.

As we saw above, the Jamaican singers take on a social, educative and revolutionary role among the people of their country. Their powerful lyrics are inspirations, and particularly in earlier times this created a change in the experience of selfhood and of confidence among "their" people. They started to rely on themselves instead of on their white masters. They managed to escape the colonial burden in their attitudes vis-à-vis themselves as subjects, and no longer saw themselves as objects or belongings. Peter Tosh sings about this cruel slavery past in his song "400 Years".

Language and lyrics

If we conclude with the language, we note that even Ismaël's French is of a particular type. French is the official language of Côte d'Ivoire, but Ivorian French is a version of the language, which involves ever-changing local expressions where the articles are left out. The situation is the same in Jamaica, where the official language is English, but where people speak a patois, a variant of the English language. Even to Anglophone foreigners, it is hard to understand. In Côte d'Ivoire, French people have difficulties in understanding the local Ivorian French straight away. Ivorians excel in this language, and take a pride in that it is so different from the hexagon French. This inventive version of French reaches as far away as Senegal, where it is quite admired, or at least recognised as something distinctive and creative. Ismaël's employing French makes him reach an audience within the West-African region, but perhaps most importantly in Europe. The French-speaking part of Europe is an interesting market for selling albums and giving concerts, because it is known that Europe provides an important site for consumption of reggae music. However, it must once again be underlined that by not employing the hexagon French Ismaël distinguishes himself from the written, grammatically correct and scholarly firm French language. In France they have what

is called L'Académie Française, a powerful political institution that dictates the spelling rules and grammar of the French language. Ismaël positions himself in contrast to this written, heavily historically indebted French, yet he still remains within the same language in a fundamental sense. He wants to reach the European *and* the general Ivorian market, and in order to do this he has to employ the French language. This is in line with what Gregory Bateson says about “a difference which makes a difference” and “the code chosen”, when it comes to diverging oneself or something from other persons or things (Bateson 1972). For example, Ismaël chooses not to sing in English, which is a language with an even wider scope. I understand this phenomenon as his willingness to be able to reach people in their own language, and that he concentrates his scope on the francophone world. I will draw a comparative line to Kajeem here who often claimed that if he were ever to perform with a Jamaican artist, he would most probably sing in his mother tongue, Baoulé, in order to create a meaningful difference within a reggae/dancehall genre that they would both perform. Kajeem would thus choose his codes differently when confronted with the other singer and with an audience in order to sustain a personal style and artistic interesting significance.

Ismaël not only sings in Ivorian French, but in dioula as well. Adolphe Yacé claims that the fact that he sings in the vernacular dioula makes this variety of reggae a Malinké one, a local one. A Jamaican would never sing in this uncommon language, because it is purely African. The dioula language is geographically speaking a widespread language in the northern part of the Côte d'Ivoire, as well as in Burkina Faso, Mali and the northern part of Guinea and Ghana. In addition, many people who traditionally lived in these areas have moved south, so its range is expanding. Yet another factor is that dioula has been known for a long time as the commercial language. So any merchant who wants his commerce to be successful, has to learn this language. When Ismaël employs dioula in his song texts, he knows that he reaches a lot of people, and in this way he reaches them in their own language, not just in French, the colonial language. The song texts become nearer his audience, who can more easily mirror themselves in them.

However, not everyone speaks dioula fluently; people who live in the south are not necessarily familiar with it, but they might be familiar with the nouchi language. The nouchi

has not reached the status of an ordinary language, it is the street language employed by the loubards (the heavy muscle men, often body guards, described in earlier chapters). However, the nouchi is a widespread linguistic form, especially among ghetto dwellers, and it is a vehicle for Ismaël to make himself understood by those he really wants to communicate with; the inhabitants of deprived quarters. This is important, as Ismaël has a message to these people, and in order to make them part of his audience he has to speak their language. They are part of the same world. This does not mean that he has given up the other inhabitants of the Côte d'Ivoire. Everyone has a lesson to draw from his lyrics, but he never forgets to remain loyal to the ghetto dwellers. Actually, what Ismaël does, is to lift the nouchi language up a level, and treat it as a means of communication on par with every other language. In academia and among critics, there has been much discussion about the so-called "flattening" of the language in pop lyrics. These critics take it for granted that the fact that there are certain phrases that are often repeated in varying forms is far removed from poetry. Clive James notes that, "The best lyricists are bound to celebrate common speech. The Beatles' genius, for example, was that they could take a well-known phrase and make it new again. They could spot the "pressure points" of language, "the syllables that locked up a phrase and were begging to be prodded"" (James in Frith 2004:205). James further suggests that the songwriter's art is to hear "the spoken language as a poem" (ibid.:206). These songwriters make us listen to "the rhythm of speech". Because of Ismaël's practising of the ever-changing nouchi patois in his daily interaction with various people, I believe he makes us aware of the rhythm of nouchi speech and its poetic beauty.

With all these three languages, in addition to other African languages like bambara, mandinka and malinké, he manages to reach the whole population of the country, even all Western Africa, as a possible audience. Informants from all social strata in the country told me that they liked Ismaël's music and that they wanted to go to concerts to enjoy it more intensely than they could by just listening to it on the radio. Ismaël as an artist speaks to everyone; the whole population constitutes his possible audience. That is why he must have a broad linguistic scope when composing his songs. In this way he shows that he does not favour one side or another. Of course there are singers in Côte d'Ivoire who particularly express and represent one region with their music, but mostly these are within musical genres that are

associated very strongly with a specific, local geographical area. Ismaël has on the contrary widened his scope to practically every human being, even though he is particularly attentive of the inhabitants of deprived Ivorian areas.

A mixture of drum and bass aesthetics

Pépito expresses somewhat of a contrast to the typical Ivorian taste. Personally, he has a liking for an unpretentious drumming style: “Posé, sans trop de roulades” which means, “Calm, without too many fills”. So it seems that his taste is a rather un-African one, more cut down to the core. He would point out drummers who according to him were exhibitionists; they would sit down behind the drum kit and make a dense sound with a lot of fills. Pépito would then say that it is not interesting to know that a drummer is capable of doing all these tricks at once; he is not paid to show off. On the contrary, according to Pépito, the drummer is present in order to perform a constant beat and to guide the others in their lines. His role is not that of the comedian. The audience is supposed to look at the singer, not the drummer. Pépito was therefore often annoyed with exhibitionist drummers that we observed during festivals and the like. Once, he called out “Là, il a fait carrément deux intros, quoi!” (“There, he actually made two intros!”), meaning that this specific drummer made a lot of noise and exposed his presence.

Pépito has his personal tastes and convictions, but he cannot show his personal style within the band. The pragmatic reality in Ismaël’s band dictates a different sound ideal for the drummer’s way of playing. Without all the action from the drum kit, the other musicians are lost. They need his guiding behind the drums, and he also adds nods and winks in order to tell them for example how many measures are left before a break. This is not necessarily only an Ivorian or a Treichville taste, however, but rather comes from the fact that the musicians play with many different singers, and so they have a tremendous number of songs to grapple with, and easily get lost in their lines if they are not guided in some way. Consequently, the drummer sometimes will take on the role of a director. Of course, this is part of the drummer’s job; providing the beat, making sure the beat is steady, so even though Pépito must know thousands of songs by heart as well, he is not exempted from the heavy job of directing

the others. The brass players have a special challenge, as they are meant to fill the sound space at certain times, to accompany, not to lead. They therefore have many breaks during the songs, and they have to count the measures very carefully in order to re-enter their lines correctly. This is the way Ismaël's reggae is supposed to sound; the brass players are an accompaniment, a sharp punch. The fact that some of the musicians need guiding and cues might also be one of the reasons why Ismaël's reggae is so dense in sound. In other words, there may be a practical reason as well as an aesthetic one for this special sound landscape.

As we noticed under the bass line heading above, Ismaël's bass player Frédéric maintains the image of the composed Jamaican musician, the cool reggae man who has a clarified interior. Overtly, he expresses his ability to provide the much-needed asset of making the bass into a steady, heavy force driving the music forwards.

Considering both Frédéric and Pépito, we see that even though they live in Côte d'Ivoire, they express body composure and musical preferences usually associated with Jamaica. There is a mixture of dictates and preferences among the musicians, who all have different personal tastes and styles. Despite them living in a specific place they do not entirely have to adopt a particular preference of playing in correspondence to that place. After all, they are individuals who are professionals, and who seek out many kinds of musical genres from which they become inspired, both national and international ones. There is therefore some discrepancy between personal aesthetics and band practice. When they perform with others in a band on stage, the sound and style must be coherent and comprehensible to the audience. They perform as a band on a collective level, and there is no room for the individual to express his preferences on behalf of himself only. The individual must accept the dictate of the collective level, because even though he might have individual preferences, this should not affect the show. The audience is the judge and has its cultural, local aesthetic rules with accompanying strict expectations.

We saw how Ismaël has a pragmatic approach to his desire for a high number of musicians to perform his show, and this type of approach is apparent among the musicians as well. They all have their personal preferences, but they must produce something else together. What comes

out as common sounds and symbolic forms of expressions might differ from the individuals' preferred styles. In fact, the personal tastes are irrelevant and not interesting in the context of music making, whether during rehearsals or concerts. The musicians very rarely talk about their preferences. Instead they are eager to play their given lines correctly, after listening to the album. Of course, they are free to make some technical corrections wherever needed, or scream out "This sounds like Podium!!" (A programme broadcast on TV where unprofessional artists try to make it in showbiz), but the general approach is to copy a line for a concert, and get paid. I think that since the rehearsals have this sort of character, the musicians feel less of a need to engage in a battle over music preferences. Earlier I have contrasted this kind of music making to the one Sara Cohen describes as taking place in Liverpool (Cohen 1991). The Abidjan setting is not a laboratory in which all individuals come out with their preferences and their eagerness to be particular and singular, ahead of everything and everybody else. In Abidjan that battle, if it occurs at all, has already taken place by the time the musicians are called for. This might be one of the reasons why the musicians accept copying a line and not creating it themselves. To them, this is not about a personal reflective project, but about making a living. The band is not the members' souls exposed for everyone to see. The tensions and the power relations within the band are not affected that much by the aesthetic choices. However, I was told that once a sort of pop music band had had to call on a Zairian guitar player for a concert. That had created massive protests from the other musicians, due to aesthetics. The Zairian could not grasp the feeling of their music, so he merely did what he was used to: Zairian guitar play, which has an intense, light scaled, quick guitar line. He was not popular with the others, because his play did not fit in well with their sound.

Change

What is clear is that the audience as a critical mass attends a concert and has certain criteria, tastes and expectations when it comes to a successful show. The musicians must confirm the genre conventions by delivering an aesthetically unquestionable concert. But there is more to it; the musicians have to put up with Ismaël as a director and boss, too, both economically and aesthetically. Ismaël is thus powerful. As I mentioned above, occasionally Ismaël will let

Pépito or one of the choirgirls take the lead vocal so that he can listen to the overall sound. Sometimes Ismaël will sit down, smoke and have a coke while listening, but at other times he will not only listen and stay inert, but also actually stand up in front of them and wave his arms very much like a conductor of classical music does. This would mostly happen when there was a new musician in the band who had not yet incorporated all his lines. Interestingly enough, this most often happened when there was a new brass player, seldom when there was a new keyboard player, and never when there was a new choirgirl. This illustrates well the importance he accords to the different lines in his music. But there may be a pragmatic reason as well, because whenever there was a new choirgirl, the other choirgirls sort of “adopted” her into the group, and helped her in every way, musically speaking. The same happened with a second keyboard player, who was guided by the first one. However, it is important to underline the brass section; despite there being on average three brass players, Ismaël showed them much attention. He wanted them to play in the right punching way.

Ismaël’s and Kajeem’s cases are significant and interesting, because they give us valuable information about what happens when reggae and dancehall music is listened to and perceived outside Jamaica, and what sort of transformation or translation take place when Ivorian artists express themselves in these musical genres. Globalisation is about differences, similarities and adaptations. Reggae and dancehall music opens up an enormous communicational togetherness and a feeling of community between former colonies. They become a “we”; we play reggae and dancehall. This creates what Iain Chambers has called a border dialogue (Chambers 1992). The need to communicate via the former colonial power as a reference is no longer necessary, which is a colossal change in power relations between countries and continents. At the same time, however, whenever musicians with another background perform a Jamaican genre in a different local context, it sounds different. The music and some of its codes and its aesthetics are altered; others are parallel across the continents. The adaptation is precisely about how to make an intelligible translation from one sort of musical geography into another. In this process there is an important element of appropriating the musical genre and positioning oneself within it. Ivorians need to own and control their artistic expressions in order to present themselves to Jamaicans and be able to experience an equal exchange of tastes and likings.

CONCLUSION

Terrible aesthetics

The King of Kings, the great and terrible Jah Ras Tafari, is part of the Rastafarians' dread aesthetics in Jamaica. The King Mighty in battle is a terrible enemy. In rastatalk the King is an exponent of dreadfulness as well as of peace and love. The terribleness and the dreadfulness scare away the wicked people who are representative of Babylon. When Rastafarians let their hair grow, it shapes in dread locks. In earlier times the locks frightened nice looking inhabitants of Kingston, and that was exactly the result the Rastafarians hoped for. They wanted to be terrible in the eyes of the "bald heads". This is black empowerment, and the Rastafarian movement had a political impact in a local context, as we have seen. The former slave strikes terror into the former master. However, the slave is not terrible by nature, he positions himself by making political choices.

The word terrible has connotations to power and fear. When a reggae singer like Ismaël Isaac chooses to call himself "L'enfant terrible" ("The terrible child"), what seems like a paradox appears. How can a child, who has connotations to purity, fragility and vulnerability, become terrible? This oxymoron makes people reflect about Ismaël as a rebel and a spokesman for ghetto dwellers.

What is worthwhile noting is that the setting in which one uses the "L'enfant terrible" is not the bourgeois Parisian salons, where a disobedient child might be referred to in this way. Ismaël's terribleness takes on a different meaning, especially when one considers the post-colonial aspect of it. He has taken an expression coming from the Hexagone and its bourgeois circles, and has given it a local meaning. Also in an Ivorian setting then, Ismaël is a terrible child. Pépito once said that l'enfant terrible means "the one who has endured difficult trials". This means that in a local hierarchy he is representative of the ghetto dwellers who are poor and despised by richer people; the intelligentsia, the industrials and the politicians. The consequence is that Ismaël is opposed to both France and other social strata in Côte d'Ivoire.

This is Ismaël as the star; that is as an official figure. As with the Rastafarians, Ismaël is not terrible by nature, but takes on a certain role. He obtains power by doing this, which is a highly political act. Even though he claims to be, and is, apolitical in party politics, he makes his very political choices, which transcend the sphere of party politics. Ismaël wants to empower a whole population of Ivorians living in difficult conditions. With the choirgirls' intro lyrics, "Ismaël Isaac, l'enfant de Treich, il met drap partout", which means "...he imposes himself wherever he goes", the empowerment is verbally expressed on stage. By further calling himself "l'enfant terrible" in the intro (as mentioned in chapter 3) he gets positive and respectful attention. With the terrible image he creates himself an audible space in Côte d'Ivoire and in West Africa. The terrible image is his "point de départ".

Resonance

The expedient relationships in Côte d'Ivoire form specific kinds of perception, performance practices, preferences and aesthetics within music. What is significant is that there is a resonance between one's life and one's musical taste; both are aspects of the same everyday life and pragmatic conditions. A person coming from the ghetto will probably play and enjoy a certain kind of music, which is different from that played or enjoyed by the person coming from the residential Cocody or as far away as Northern Europe. In the ghetto people are somewhat forced to listen to very rhythmic music constantly, as it is poured out at high decibels from maquis nearby. One might have difficulties finding a spot without these sounds. In this environment, it is not likely that one would develop a preference to classical music, for example. In the residential Cocody, people live a different life. Children are able to take a peaceful siesta during daytime, and they are not necessarily surrounded by noise and sounds, a point made by Adolphe Yacé (personal communication). These are typical characteristics, and of course there are intermediary positions, but my argument is that people do not choose their aesthetical preferences randomly. The Ivorian ghetto setting is "hot"; one is embroiled in a constant search for the unpredictable, fluid good or gain, and one consumes it in certain patterns. This social environment creates heavily orchestrated music genres in addition to extravagant concert performances.

I would claim that my case shows something specific in this regard; I have tried to show the resonance between everyday ghetto life and musical taste. However, I would argue that in addition to this, one can say something on a general level when it comes to resonance. Given a specific kind of social organisation and differentiation, certain aesthetic preferences will probably appear. These aspects are linked together, and that is why I have been writing about musical lives as wholes; one cannot separate life and taste. If music is to make sense to a listener, he/she must be a socialized listener who takes into account the social world outside the sounds, and can analyse the sounds in the context of this world. The listener must know how to behave in a specific musical setting, how to consume it, and must be able to evaluate it according to a set of local criteria. If not, one remains an outsider, who might well enjoy the music or the performance, but who is unable to dig deeply into the matter.

The local changing the global

My case has two parts; firstly, it concerns the local Treichville neighbourhood, and I describe its social codes, history and musical preferences. Secondly, it concerns how the impulses and inspirations to some of these musical genres come from far away. The most interesting aspect of this is the extent to which the local Treichville preferences, with Ismaël in the forefront, drastically change the musical impulses coming from abroad. In Bateson's words, this is "a difference which makes a difference" (Bateson 1972). What sounded sweet and cool in Jamaica has been changed into terribleness and an extravagant art form. What was deep spirituality in Jamaica has become everyday advice in Treichville. Ismaël is a "diseur de vérité" ("teller of the truth"). Reggae music as it is performed in Jamaica is not congruent with the musical taste in Côte d'Ivoire, where people live different everyday lives and have a different history. Local tastes had to be added to the ones coming from far away in order to make communication between reggae performers and "mélomanes" ("music lovers") possible. Ismaël's reggae springs forth in this global blend.

Ismaël has chosen the way his music sounds, and he has chosen the way the global impulses meet his own "feeling". He did not continue the Island Record project because he wanted to elaborate his reggae blend by himself, and thus maintain his streetwise credibility and Treichville authenticity among his fans. He has consciously picked some Jamaican impulses, left others out, and added

some new, local impulses to make his sound the hallmark it has become. In multiple ways, Ismaël is thus “L’enfant terrible”.

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