

**“I AM A STORY OF TAMALE”:  
SHERIFF GHALE’S COSMOPOLITANISM**

A thesis

submitted by

Phil Babcock

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

*Music*

**TUFTS UNIVERSITY**

August 2013

ADVISER: David Locke

## **Abstract**

*Sheriff Ghale is a north Ghanaian popular musician who can be described as a cosmopolitan in both the moral sense, as Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) has theorized, and the social sense, following Thomas Turino (2003, 2003). Through his music, which draws on local and international influences, Sheriff performs his cosmopolitanism to a north Ghanaian audience, encouraging an awareness of the wider world while addressing issues of regional importance. How is this awareness encoded, though? What about his music and his message makes it cosmopolitan? How is the participation in social cosmopolitan related to a cosmopolitan ethos, and can one engender another? In this thesis I explore the various threads of scholarly discourse surrounding the term cosmopolitanism, and by engaging in an ethnographic investigation of a particular popular musician, show how engagement with cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan formations can contextualize local issues by relating them to transnational ones.*

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank, first and foremost, Sheriff Ghale for his patience, assistance, and generosity in working with me on this thesis. I look forward to our future projects. This work would not have been possible without the guidance of the members of my reading committee: Nicholas Tochka, Amahl Bishara, and especially my adviser, David Locke. Additional thanks to Jane Carter for many excellent ideas and invaluable emotional support, my dad John and brother Doug Babcock, my colleagues Max Jack, Kathleen Kuo, William Kenlon, and Rachel Kelly, and professors, friends, teachers, and benefactors at Tufts and in Ghana: Nani Agbeli, Wulana Fati, Fuseina Wombei, Chief Susan Herlin, Prof. Wyatt MacGaffey, Mensah Ali, Mohammed Assau, Alhassan Abdul Nasir, and many many others who I do not have time to mention here.

# Table of Contents

<b>What is Cosmopolitanism, and a Story of Tamale .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Approaching Cosmopolitanism.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Ancient and Greek Usage .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Kant's and Marx' Cosmopolitanisms .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Cosmopolitanism, Patriotism, and Nationalism .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Moral Cosmopolitanism .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The New Cosmopolitanism .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Figure 1 .....	27
<b>Cosmopolitan Formations .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Making Connections through Musical Cosmopolitanism .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Playing the Story of Tamale .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Sheriff Ghale.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Reggae and Rastafari in Ghana .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Sochira.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Tiɛm Kɔm (The Guinea Worm Song) .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>72</b>

## **Table of Figures**

Figure .....	27
--------------	----

## What is Cosmopolitanism, and a Story of Tamale

Over the past two decades, cosmopolitanism has become an increasingly popular rubric for the academic analysis of "global" systems and processes. "Global," as Thomas Turino (2003) points out, is frequently used in reference to systems and processes that aren't strictly so. To be considered global, Turino argues, the processes in question must be placed in time at the present moment and in a space that encompasses the whole globe. Events like the sunrise, childbirth, and possibly radio are global in that anywhere there are people, you can most likely find these. Conversely, processes like the internet, capitalism, and flamenco music are not global. They are all, though, transnational formations that have spread throughout the world and resonate in some places stronger than others. Turino refers to these processes as *cosmopolitan formations*. In his 2000 book *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*, he offers these definitions, which I will use as a point of departure for my own theorizations on cosmopolitanism.

I use the term cosmopolitan to refer to objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are widely diffused throughout the world and yet are specific only to certain portions of the populations within given countries. My usage is based on a common meaning of the word, 'of the world': to be cosmopolitan, given ideas and features must be widely diffused among particular social groups in dispersed locales. Cosmopolitanism is a specific type of cultural formation and constitution of habitus that is translocal in purview. Because cosmopolitanism involves practices, material technologies, and conceptual frameworks, however, it has to be realized in specific locations and in the lives of actual people. It is thus always localized (Robbins 1992), and will be shaped by and somewhat distinct in each locale. Cosmopolitan cultural formations are therefore always simultaneously local and translocal.

Cosmopolitan formations are largely like other cultural complexes in that they comprise aggregates of tendencies and resources for living and

conceptualizing the world which are used variably by the people engaged with that formation ('the culture group') to inform thought and practice. (Turino 2000: 7)

As Martin Stokes notes, the importance of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan formations as analytical frameworks rest in their ability to restore agency and creativity to the scene of analysis in modern, globalizing contexts (2008: 8).<sup>1</sup> Such analysis allows that people are not just subjects to the processes of globalization forced upon them by hegemonic capitalist powers, but that they have a degree of agency in how to receive these processes. Cosmopolitanism acknowledges that individuals receive technologies, ideologies, medias, and economic practices that spread through increasingly rapid and far-reaching systems of transference developed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in ways that best suit the cultural context in which they live their lives.

However, cosmopolitanism should not be embraced uncritically. These patterns of reception, as one might expect, are usually unique to particular locations. They are also always the result of different influences and combinations of influences. Therefore, a number of cosmopolitan theories have developed that are specifically tailored to particular patterns of reception and engagement with cosmopolitan formations. In a recent article in *Ethnomusicology Forum*, Tony Perman (2012) presents arguably the most thorough literature review on the discourses surrounding these various theories. He groups them "neatly" into two broad categories, which he calls descriptive and prescriptive cosmopolitanism.

---

<sup>1</sup> Though Stokes is referring specifically to musical cosmopolitanism in this case, the sentiment applies to the analysis of the reception any cosmopolitan formation.

Descriptive cosmopolitanism tends to be that espoused by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, as in the examples by James Ferguson (1999) and Thomas Turino (2000). They look to understand and explain existing social formations and relationships without relying on received categories of the modern or global, however influential these discourses may be. Descriptive cosmopolitanism is wary of claims of universalism. ... The so-called "new cosmopolitanism" (P. Werbner 2009) that follows Kwame Anthony Appiah is a prescriptive cosmopolitanism, providing a model for a considerate, respectful, and universal mode of social interaction, advancing a classic enlightenment project (Appiah 2006). (Perman 2012: 376)

Descriptive cosmopolitanism I have described briefly above. Prescriptive cosmopolitanism, as Perman suggests, builds on the philosophical theories of Kwame Anthony Appiah. As I will describe in detail in Chapter 1, Appiah suggests cosmopolitanism as a model for respectfully interacting with people across difference. What is unclear about Perman's synthesis of his argument, however, is that Appiah does not propose that people should act in a particular way so as to universally coexist with everybody. Appiah's cosmopolitanism rests on the tenets of pluralism and fallibility, and these beliefs only inform how to think during cross-cultural conversations, they do not prescribe a particular mode of interaction. The "new cosmopolitanism" is an emergent school of anthropologists who find Appiah's theory of cosmopolitan ethics, which I will refer to as *moral cosmopolitanism* in this thesis, a useful tool for analysis in an ethnographic context. As these investigations usually focus on particular individuals, particular attributes of moral cosmopolitanism are emphasized or understated where appropriate: as no two individuals are exactly alike, no two moral cosmopolitanisms are exactly alike. As Perman rightly says, "It has come to mean different things to different people. The numerous theories of the cosmopolitan all come with their own strengths, weaknesses, and agendas"



(Perman 2012: 390). This does not only apply to prescriptive cosmopolitanism, though. Since ethnographic investigations that engage with descriptive cosmopolitanism usually addresses a single formation, the way a particular group or individual interacts with that formation will always be unlike any other due to the unique socio-cultural context in which the formation resonates. Therefore, when thinking about how to conceptualize cosmopolitan theory, the two circles of cosmopolitan thought that Perman identifies are not the only ones, but the most broadly inclusive.

He asserts, though, that these two categories—as well as different theories that fall within them—are "mutually untenable" (Perman 2012: 390). While many cosmopolitan theories are tailored to specific scholarly subjects, I would like to disagree with Perman's subsequent conclusion. These multiple different senses of what cosmopolitanism means should not lead to narrowly defined usages that don't apply in many transnational cultural interactions. I believe that cosmopolitanism or lack thereof is present in every cross-cultural interaction, and that it is thus a useful rubric for analysis in these situations. I propose that we think of these circles of thought on cosmopolitanism as parts of a large, malleable Venn diagram: that we allow them to overlap, intersect, synthesize, and conflict as they reflect the identity constructions of the people they describe. To show how this conception of cosmopolitanism might be applied to ethnographic analysis, in this thesis I will take a look at the life and work of the north Ghanaian reggae artist Sheriff Ghale.

I met Sheriff in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana, while doing fieldwork in the area on changing systems of music distribution during the late summer of 2012. Meeting him was almost an unavoidable part investigating popular music in Tamale: whenever I told anybody about my project, I was inevitably asked, "Have you met Sheriff Ghale?" It seemed like almost everyone I spoke to suggested that I meet him, and I was anxious to do so. When I did, he picked me up from the town center in his car and drove us to his recording studio, where we did a long interview. Though it was our only meeting during my short stay in Tamale, it was a productive one, and it (obviously) changed the direction of my fieldwork project.

Fortunately, I saw Sheriff again just a few weeks later in Boston, Massachusetts. He had been invited to attend and perform at the World Damba Festival 2012 @ Tufts University, a diasporic iteration of the Dagomba's celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>2</sup> Though the members of his band were not able to acquire visas, he was invited on stage to play a song with Mohammed Alidu and the Bizung Family, and his song "Sochira" was well received by the diverse crowd. Sheriff had planned to stay in the U.S. for a couple of weeks after the Festival, and, having made a good impression on David Locke, a professor at Tufts and one of the organizers of the festival, was invited to be a guest lecturer in his classes. Many of the quotes in this thesis come from these

---

<sup>2</sup> "Dagomba" or "Dagbamba" is the name of the ethnic group, "Dagbani" names the language spoken by the Dagomba people; "Dagbon" names the traditional polity or "kingdom" of the Dagomba people. For more information on the Dagomba people and the history of Dagbon, see Staniland 1975, MacGaffey 2013, and [www.dagbon.net](http://www.dagbon.net). For more information on WDF 2012 @ Tufts, see [www.worlddamba2012.org](http://www.worlddamba2012.org).

lectures. Sheriff and I also got a chance to do another interview, and we began to discuss collaborative projects, such as creating an online record label for north Ghanaian popular music, which is currently in progress.

While in Boston, Sheriff saw himself as a representative of his hometown. "Whatever I am," he said, "whatever my experience is, is a product of Tamale. So I am like a story of Tamale, and anywhere I go I want to and hope to be a good ambassador for Tamale," he said during one of the lectures. As I will show in Chapter 2, Sheriff's engagement with "foreign" musics and international humanitarian programs like the Carter Center and UNICEF, combined with an embodiment of a moral cosmopolitanism similar to that proposed by Appiah, makes him an ideal ambassador for Tamale. In embracing ideologies, technologies, and medias that came to him both from his north Ghanaian heritage and the wider world, Sheriff developed a cosmopolitanism that is rooted in his national Ghanaian citizenship, ethnic identity as a Dagomba, and hometown pride in Tamale. In expressing cosmopolitan values through international popular music styles sung in a local language, Sheriff performs his worldly ethos of acceptance and tolerance to a Dagomba audience, encouraging the reframing of regionally important issues in relation to transnational discourses on health and peacebuilding. In doing so, it becomes apparent that finding a singular definition or conceptualization of cosmopolitanism to use as an analytical framework is not only impossible, but also contrary to the pluralizing goal of the discourse itself.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will review the various conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism from scholars of anthropology, ethnomusicology, sociology,

and philosophy in order to provide a more thorough background for my own theory. The basic idea of a "a citizen of the world" has been around since Diogenes the Cynic, who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, so over the millennia the term "cosmopolitan" has come to have a variety of associations. It is also defined in different ways in relation to particular ideologies: in this thesis, I will especially focus on its relation to nationalism. The most important idea that I want to convey, though, is that in order to observe how cosmopolitans engage with transnational networks and what kind of impacts they have on the societies they live in, it is necessary to realize that there are as many different cosmopolitanisms as there are cosmopolitans, and that applying this description to an individual or group as such must be qualified not only by what parts of the wider world they engage with, but the affect of their engagement as well.

The second chapter will begin with a biography of Sheriff Ghale as a musician, an educator, and a philanthropist, and analyze how his ethos and world-view (in Clifford Geertz' sense of the terms) might be likened to Appiah's moral cosmopolitanism. It will continue with an overview of reggae as an international music of social awareness and its reception in Ghana. This will provide context to the particular cosmopolitanisms that Sheriff is participating in. Following this, I will analyze of a couple of his most popular songs, paying particular attention to how his cosmopolitanism is performed musically—primarily through his lyrics but also through the music itself. In this section, I argue that a musically performed moral cosmopolitanism can promote cosmopolitan projects such as peace-building and humanitarian efforts, and that in this performance the

analytical rubrics of descriptive and prescriptive cosmopolitanism become intertwined and inseparable.

This organization mirrors the evolution of my own understanding of cosmopolitanism, and I hope that, in reading it, your conceptualization will change as mine did from a vague characteristic of elite world travelers to a more multivalent understanding. My objective is to impart a more pluralistic way of thinking about what it means for someone or something to be cosmopolitan. It can be an important part of a person's identity. How someone engages (or doesn't engage) with and ideologies, medias, technologies, economic practices, and people from other parts of the world can, to an extent, define who they are. As such, cosmopolitanism can be used to describe both a person's ethos and their world-view. Geertz writes that "ethos is the tone, character, and quality of [a people's] life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflect," while "world-view is their picture of the way things, in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society" (1957: 421-422).

## Chapter 1: Approaching Cosmopolitanism

My introduction to the literature of cosmopolitanism was Steven Feld's *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana* (2012). As such, I approached the discipline both from the most recent major work and from a uniquely Ghanaian context. Feld's engagement with the broad and deep body of literature on cosmopolitanism was an inclusive one. I am very much following in his footsteps with my theorizations here: central to my approach to the discourse is the belief that, contrary to Perman, the various conceptualizations of transnational social interaction grouped together under the label of cosmopolitanism are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Though he builds on cosmopolitan theorizations from many fields, he does not conveniently walk his reader through his position in relation to them, instead letting the cosmopolitan stories of his collaborators speak for themselves. Therefore, I was left to approach the discourse on cosmopolitanism from any angle. In this chapter, I will present a thorough review of the literature on cosmopolitanism relevant to my ethnographic and specifically ethnomusicological interests.

As a way into this discussion, it is useful to start with a concrete definition. *Cosmopolite*, from the Greek *kosmopolitês*, meaning "citizen of the world," is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as: "a 'citizen of the world'; one who regards or treats the whole world as his country; one who has no national attachments or prejudices" (OED Online, accessed 2/14/13). A note on the entry mentions that it first came to common use in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and was revived early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "often contrasted with *patriot*, and so either reproachful

or complimentary." It is the 19<sup>th</sup> century revival use of cosmopolite that *cosmopolitan* derives from. For this suffixed derivative, the OED has both noun and adjectival definitions. The noun form has the same definition as the root, but for the adjectival form there are three relevant definitions that offer more nuance to the term: 1) "Belonging to all parts of the world; not restricted to any one country or its inhabitants"; 2) "Having the characteristics which arise from, or are suited to, a range over many different countries; free from national limitations or attachments"; and 3) "Composed of people from many different countries" (OED Online, accessed 2/14/13). In all of these definitions, there is one word that appears in each, and that is "country." I will return to the significance of this below.

One more definition is relevant here, not necessarily for understanding cosmopolitanism as I approach it, but essential in understanding many of its critiques. It comes from the "Soviet usage," and refers to a "disparagement of Russian traditions and culture" that is "equated with disloyalty" (OED Online, accessed 2/21/13). This usage, so tied into a particularly extreme nationalist identity, is useful for addressing what I and many other scholars think cosmopolitanism does not have to be: a characteristic diametrically opposed to a sense of loyalty to one's country, people, or "home." Though the OED makes explicit connections with this usage of cosmopolitan as the antithesis of a jingoistic, Soviet-style nationalism, this debate of whether or not a cosmopolitan is necessarily a rootless individual dates back to the Early Modern era, engaging such intellectuals as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Julius von Schlosser. This kind

of cosmopolitanism describes someone who has consciously uprooted himself or herself from his or her home in favor of travel.

These people certainly exist: Appiah describes a stereotypical European or western version of this kind of cosmopolitan: "You imagine a *Comme des Garçons*-clad sophisticate with a platinum frequent-flyer card regarding, with kindly condescension, a ruddy-faced farmer in workman's overalls" (2006: xiii-xiv). While this may seem like a bit of a caricature, the "elite" cosmopolitan is referenced in much of the scholarship available on the term (Appiah 1997, 2006, Harvey 2009, Perman 2012, Shipley 2013). Some are more humble than *Comme des Garçons*-person seems to be, but I think the common thread here is a sense of rootlessness. These are "citizens of the world" in that they are citizens of nowhere in particular. Appiah describes Sir Richard Francis Burton as a historical example of such a cosmopolitan. An international superstar like Bono might be a modern analogue: though he began his career by singing about the political situation in his native Ireland, there is a generation of his fans who I'm sure would be surprised to find that he's from there.

There are representatives of this kind of cosmopolitanism from the non-western world, as well. In talking to popular and traditional musicians from Ghana, there are many who strive for cosmopolitanism as a means of upward social mobility. For better or for worse, many musicians that I met believed that the only or the best way to progress their career was to leave Ghana in order to do it. Usually they would return to their home country, and did so with a degree of prestige associated with their travels (this is especially true for traditional



musicians who live in rural villages). When I talk about Sheriff, however, this is not what I am talking about. As I will show, his cosmopolitanism that is less directly related to an elite class status and does not necessitate wanting to live somewhere other than Tamale.

### **Ancient and Greek Usage**

The philosophical notion of being a "citizen of the world" has been around since Ancient Greece. Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, the Cynics and the Stoics all wrestled with the concept of how a person should relate to and associate with the human community. How exactly "the human community" has been envisioned has varied throughout the history of the debate, but "[the] nebulous core shared by all cosmopolitan views is the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, do (or at least can) belong to a single community, and that this community should be cultivated" (Kleingeld and Brown 2011). This desire to connect with all of humanity is certainly what drives most pro-cosmopolitan thought, and there are not many critics who argue against the universal moral aspirations of those thinkers. Where the criticism lies, and rightly so, is in the accessibility (or inaccessibility, rather) of a single human community. The reality of accepting *all* of humanity as one group—in your own personal moral code, not to mention through some kind of governmental or juridical system—is a daunting task. Every philosopher or theorist of cosmopolitanism has defined a border for this human community that excludes some of humanity. If we want to define ourselves as one community, then it is difficult to encompass those who disqualify some humans from membership.

Though this is a fascinating discussion point in the philosophical discourse on cosmopolitanism, its relevance to Sheriff's cosmopolitanism is peripheral. More applicable to the discussion at hand is cosmopolitanism's relation to nationalism, the roots of which are in the writings of Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx.

### **Kant's and Marx' Cosmopolitanisms<sup>3</sup>**

In the 1700s, cosmopolitanism began to acquire a regular usage describing someone as a "citizen of the world." Through this usage, the term acquired a stigma through its attachment to particular upper-class individuals who had the luxury to travel or the opportunity to cultivate international networks of relationships. This stigmatized usage has become the colloquial one—in American English, at least. Though it is not my goal here to debunk this usage, there must be a distinction between upper-class jet-setting cosmopolitans who approach travel as a means to connect with people across difference (think Michael Palin and Anthony Bourdain) and those who use their ability to travel to progress their own agendas, no matter how irreverent of or uninterested in local populations on a cultural level (missionaries, international businessmen, and, though fictional, James Bond).

The modern philosophical concept of cosmopolitanism stems from Kant's notion of "universal hospitality," which is one of his definitive articles of world citizenship. It says that: "Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated

---

<sup>3</sup> Though it is necessary to provide this foundational background, I will try to keep my discussion brief and basic; more senior and more eloquent scholars have already written everything I will write here (see especially Nussbaum 1997, Cheah 2006, and Kleingeld and Brown 2011).

as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction; but, so long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility" (Kant 1970: 7). The key idea here is to treat everyone with kindness and tolerance. Though Kant sought to outline a mission statement for a cosmopolitan republic that would prevent all war, the universal values of kindness and tolerance of others appeal beyond this governmental and juridical formulation. It is the postulation of these values as universal that sowed the seeds of current cosmopolitanism theory.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the philosophy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels addressed a theory of cosmopolitanism that, contrasting with Kant, was more economic than moral. They saw cosmopolitanism "as an ideological reflection of capitalism" (Kleingeld and Brown 2011). Market capitalism, which they saw as the cause of misery for millions and the very existence of the proletariat, is not restricted by nation-state boundaries, and therefore is by definition cosmopolitan (ibid). Thus, in their usage, the term is intended as a negative. Ironically, though, the proletariat itself is unbounded by nation-states and representative of common goals and values, and therefore possesses a transnational character defined by equality and the connection across difference. In the Kantian sense of the term, the proletariat would be considered cosmopolitan.

However, as more recent scholars have shown, cosmopolitanism is about more than just cross-cultural or transnational connection through the promotion of a "universal hospitality." Hospitality involves interaction, and the demeanor of

that interaction, regardless of the hospitable services or goods provided, defines the nature of the connection (or disjuncture) between the parties involved. Recently, Appiah published a book outlining the appropriate etiquette for these interactions, or "conversations," as he refers to them. But before analyzing that work, it is important to clarify just what it means to engage in a cross-cultural or transnational interaction. As I will discuss in the next section, some scholars argue that bringing local or regional allegiances to bear in cross-cultural situations may negate one's ability to make significant connections.

### **Cosmopolitanism, Patriotism, and Nationalism**

As we can see from the philosophies of Kant and Marx and Engels, the nation and nation-state are essential to cosmopolitanism. Without borders to cross (physically or otherwise), there would be no cosmopolitans. But how do we define nations, states, and nation-states? Following Anderson (1983), I use the definition of a nation as an "imagined community" of people who share an ethnicity and/or culture and seek self-determination. Nations do not always have strictly defined borders, and may be coterminous with other nations or states.<sup>4</sup> Native American tribes are considered nations, as are the Dagomba people in Ghana. States (or countries) are geopolitical organizations with usually strict and defined boundaries, but the people who live there do not necessarily share a singular ethnicity or identity other than their relation to the state itself. Nation-

---

<sup>4</sup> Whether or not a nation can be truly self-determinant while coterminous with another nation is still under debate. However, in the kingdom of Dagbon there is a traditional local chieftaincy that interacts on a political level with the Ghanaian national government. The situation is not uncomplicated, but it shows that two national entities (in this case a kingdom and a nation-state) can coexist relatively peacefully.

states, then, refer to an autonomous legal body that governs a group of people who do not necessarily share a common culture or ethnicity, but identify as citizens of the same state. As the etymology of the words suggest, attachment and loyalty to nations and states are expressed through nationalism or patriotism, respectively (Primoratz 2009). Additionally, nationalism is representative of a political movement or ideology, as opposed to patriotism, which is better described as a feeling of belonging to a state.

So what of cosmopolitanism in relation to patriotism and nationalism? In 1994, philosopher Martha Nussbaum wrote an article called "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," which sparked a lively debate on the subject. She argues that the

emphasis on patriotic pride is both morally dangerous and, ultimately, subversive of some of the worthy goals patriotism sets out to serve—for example, the goal of national unity in devotion to worthy moral ideals of justice and equality. These goals, I shall argue, would be better served by an ideal that is in any case more adequate to our situation in the contemporary world, namely the very old ideal of the cosmopolitan, the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world. (Nussbaum 1994 [2010]: 155)

In her conception, one's allegiance is either to local or regional community or to the single world community, and the two are mutually exclusive. Nussbaum proposes the foundational ideal for a system of "cosmopolitan education" that would teach children not that they were first and foremost citizens of a nation, but that they were citizens of the world who happen to be located in a particular nation. She sets these two options up as an either/or scenario; not implying that they are mutually exclusive, but that one has to come before the other. One can

either favor national bonds or a commitment to greater humanity, but one must be greater than the other.

This is a rather black-and-white way of approaching the issue. The way that we build our identities is too complex to be reduced to a ranking of greater or lesser attachments to people, places, and ideas. In an article responding directly to Nussbaum, the British-Ghanaian Appiah offers his father as a counterexample to Nussbaum's theorizing. Joseph Appiah was an important figure in early post-colonial Ghanaian politics. The first two paragraphs of the essay are as follows:

My father was a Ghanaian patriot. He once published a column in the *Pioneer*, our local newspaper in Kumasi, under the headline "Is Ghana Worth Dying For?" and I know that his heart's answer was yes. But he also loved Asante, the region of Ghana where he and I both grew up, a kingdom absorbed within a British colony and, then, a region of a new multiethnic republic: a once-kingdom that he and his father also both loved and served. And, like so many African nationalists of his class and generation, he always loved an enchanting abstraction they called Africa.

When he died, my sisters and I found a note he had drafted and never quite finished, last words of love and wisdom for his children. After a summary reminder of our double ancestry—in Ghana and in England—he wrote: "Remember that you are citizens of the world." And he went on to tell us that this meant that—wherever we chose to live, and, as citizens of the world, we could surely choose to live anywhere—we should make sure we left that place "better than you found it." "Deep inside of me," he went on, "is a great love for mankind and an abiding desire to see mankind, under God, fulfill its highest destiny." (Appiah 1997: 617-618)

Appiah's father was an Asante nationalist, a Ghanaian patriot, and a cosmopolitan; or, as Appiah calls him—borrowing a term coined by Mitchell Cohen—a "rooted cosmopolitan." Rooted cosmopolitanism "accepts a multiplicity of roots and branches and ... rests on the legitimacy of plural loyalties, of standing in many circles, but with common ground" (Cohen, quoted in P. Werbner 2009: 9). This pluralism is not afforded in Nussbaum's conception of cosmopolitan, patriot, or

nationalist identity, or at least not to the degree that allows them to all be felt strongly in one individual. But as the example of Joseph Appiah shows, this plurality of loyalty is possible.

Possible, but not always guaranteed. Joseph Appiah had the advantage of an upper- or upper-middle class upbringing, British education, and high-profile political connections, a status that his children certainly enjoyed as well. The fact that they "could surely choose to live anywhere" is indicative of a degree of privilege that is inaccessible most people in the world. This is certainly one way into cosmopolitanism. However, as Sheriff proves, there are other, more modest means as well.

Since the relationship between cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and patriotism can all be parts of a single individual's identity, it would make sense that each can influence the nature of the other. In Turino's *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (2000), he argues that in Zimbabwe, nationalism is defined in part by cosmopolitanism, and, like many other African nations, prominent Zimbabwean nationalists arose from a cosmopolitan middle class (2000: 12). Indeed, a national identity necessitates the awareness of other nations and their sovereignty is itself a kind of cosmopolitanism. So cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and patriotism can all be coexistent parts of an individual's identity. Instead of the ranked importance that Nussbaum conceptualizes, I would like to follow Appiah and Turino in imagining a cosmopolitan identification coexist with national identity and patriotic affinity. As I will show in Chapter 2, Sheriff's cosmopolitanism ethics manifest themselves not just in an openness to and

comfort with foreign cultures and people, but through local humanitarian efforts in Dagbon.

Appiah's 2006 book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, has been frequently cited as a vital and relevant update to Kant's Enlightenment ideal. That said, he has also been criticized for this very idealism (Liss 2009, Jazeel 2007, Hall and Werbner 2009, Harvey 2009, Perman 2012). However, Appiah's cosmopolitan ethos is a useful analytical framework with which to analyze the life and music of Sheriff Ghale. In this sense, I am following the example of the scholars of the "new cosmopolitanism." This new "school" of anthropology, championed by several authors in Pnina Werbner's *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism*, uses Appiah's and also Homi Bhabha's theories of cosmopolitanism ethics and "vernacular cosmopolitanism" to investigate how individuals and groups of individuals engaged with transnational processes or cultural formations. In the following sections, I will summarize Appiah's and Bhabha's theorizations of cosmopolitanism, and the "new cosmopolitans'" approach to using these theories in an analytical context.

### **Moral Cosmopolitanism**

Appiah's vision of cosmopolitanism, as I mentioned above, continues Kant's utopian Enlightenment vision. In the Introduction to *Cosmopolitanism*, Appiah succinctly summarizes the primary goals of his conception of the term:

So there are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives,



which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. (Appiah 2006: xv)

Very simply, the "obligation to others" is no more than kindness to strangers. However, this means *all* strangers. Appiah devotes the last chapter of *Cosmopolitanism* to describing the ways in which one might aid others who are in need, but the strategies he suggests—mainly donating to humanitarian organizations like OXFAM and UNICEF—seem to reduce and essentialize the myriad problems in the world to those that can be addressed just by donating money. As the example of Sheriff demonstrates, cosmopolitanism can be a tool of humanitarianism and peacebuilding on the local level in northern Ghana, but perhaps elsewhere in the world as well.

In the second "strand"—taking seriously the value of human life and particular human lives and their practices and beliefs—Appiah is talking about finding common ground in cross-cultural interaction. His suggestion for how to take a serious interest in other people's practices and beliefs is neither Positivist in the sense that there is a logical "truth" that should be a guide in cross-cultural interaction, nor relativistic in the sense that neither party is right or wrong in such an interaction. A cosmopolitan approach to cross-cultural interactions is not about finding the truth of a belief—proving whether it is right or wrong—nor is it about accepting that there can be multiple right ways to approach a situation due to multiple value systems. It's about conversation. "Conversation," Appiah writes, "doesn't have to lead to a consensus about anything, especially not values; it's enough that it helps people get used to one another" (2006: 85). Conversations, especially conversations across identity boundaries, are less frequently about

finding out who is right and who is wrong than they are about finding a common ground or imagining the world from a different perspective than your own in order to communicate on a basic level.

Entering into these conversations requires a "cosmopolitan curiosity" that doesn't necessitate a universal connection that all human beings share, but one shared by two individuals. The benefits of this curiosity, Appiah writes, are "obvious enough." He continues,

The points of entry to cross-cultural conversations are things that are shared by those who are in the conversation. They do not need to be universal, all they need to be is what these particular people have in common. Once we have found enough we share, there is the further possibility that we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not yet share. ... We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. (2006: 97)

So conversation with someone from another culture can expand our own capacity for connecting with other people. Appiah does not use "conversation" to mean only literal talking, but "also as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others" (2006: 85). So watching movies, reading books, listening to music, or consuming any other kind of foreign media can be a way of entering into these cross-cultural conversations. Following this, the "individuals" and "people" involved in these conversations do not necessarily have to be human beings, but can also be forms of human expression such as art, literature, or music. But is engaging in these conversations enough? Appiah argues that it is not: cosmopolitanism is not just about engaging in cross-cultural conversations, but how to behave during them.

To clarify this point, he uses the example of neofundamentalist Islam as a group of counter-cosmopolitans, but any evangelical fundamentalist religious

disposition would qualify. Counter-cosmopolitans seek out and engage in cross-cultural conversations, just as cosmopolitans do, but their prerogatives are different. These interactions are not about seeing the world from other perspectives than your own, they are about promoting a universal ideal that the counter-cosmopolitan believes is the right or true way to see things. There is a universalism without tolerance for difference, which, even if well intentioned, can become dangerous. Tolerance is an essential part of being cosmopolitan: without embracing and respecting difference, cross-cultural conversations will be cut short.

But the execution of tolerance is a complicated one. As Appiah writes, it is one of those "times when these two ideals—universal concern and respect for legitimate difference—clash" (2006: xv). What happens in situations where negotiating between "universal hospitality" and respecting difference is difficult or impossible? "Toleration requires a concept of the *intolerable*," Appiah writes, and the obligation to others "sharply limits the scope of our tolerance" (2006: 144 [emphasis in original]). There is no universal rule for measuring this scope, at least not that Appiah mentions. The boundaries of one's tolerance can only be drawn by that individual, and each individual's boundaries will be different. It is useful, then, to have some tenets through which to approach this obligation.

Appiah suggests two:

One distinctively cosmopolitan commitment is to *pluralism*. Cosmopolitans think that there are many values worth living by and that you cannot live by all of them. So we hope and expect that different people and different societies will embody different values. (But they have

to be values *worth* living by.)<sup>5</sup> Another aspect of cosmopolitanism is what philosophers call *fallibilism*—the sense that our knowledge is imperfect, provisional, subject to revision in the face of new evidence. (2006: 144 [emphasis in original]).

The commitment to pluralism is implicit in the acceptance and respect of difference. The realization that there is more than one "right" way to live your life is necessary in order to enter in order to approach cross-cultural conversations with a cosmopolitan affect. Fallibilism, though, the notion that *your* way of being-in-the-world or system of values might be wrong for someone else, is indicative of an open-mindedness that separates cosmopolitanism from other transnational modalities. A cosmopolitan, then, does not seek to alter difference when he or she meets it. But nor does he or she have to understand that difference. What you learn from a conversation is not guaranteed to have a conclusion.

It must be said, though, that Appiah's moral cosmopolitanism does derive in part from a western liberal impulse to impose "universal" values (Jazeel 2007). The universal imposition of these values—nuanced as it is in Appiah's formulation—always risks violence on marginalized populations. Additionally, he glosses over some of the problems that arise in cross-cultural conversations. For instance, how does one address a skewed power dynamic between two cultures that cannot be overlooked, or "traumatic histories and the very contentious political and cultural legacies that develop from them" (Liss 2009: 423)?

---

<sup>5</sup> The notion that some values are worth living by and others are not and the ability to distinguish between the two is a topic that Appiah devotes significant time to. However, as I will not address in this thesis any situations wherein this distinction must be made, I will not commit to analyzing it here.

## The New Cosmopolitanism

Despite its criticisms, Appiah's conceptualization of cosmopolitanism has been useful for some scholars in describing how certain individuals interact with cross-cultural and transnational processes on a daily basis. Another notion of cosmopolitanism is important to these scholars: vernacular cosmopolitanism. Bhabha, usually credited with coining the term, proposed "a 'cosmopolitan community envisaged in *marginality*', a border zone which he terms vernacular cosmopolitanism" (P. Werbner 2006). This community shares, at its core, the same kind of plurality as Appiah's "cosmopolitan patriotism," in reacting against Nussbaum's hierarchical layering of identity markers—i.e. a person must be first and foremost either a cosmopolitan or a patriot.

The vernacular cosmopolitan is a worldly person who is firmly rooted in a local identity. Whereas Appiah's cosmopolitan patriot may be mobile, and can sometimes consciously choose their patriotic allegiances, vernacular cosmopolitans are products of their environment, and are not, unlike Joseph Appiah, necessarily a member of a local elite. This is, Werbner acknowledges, an ambiguous definition. She offers early theorization of cosmopolitanism as a "'twin valorization' of 'worldwide macro-interdependency encompassing any local particularity'" as a means to situate the vernacular cosmopolitan between local and universal identities (Rabinow in Werbner 2009: 14). I prefer think of a vernacular cosmopolitan as any individual whose cosmopolitan curiosity has borne fruit and led to meaningful cross-cultural or transnational conversations, in Appiah's broad

sense of the term, but who retains a strong connection to indigenous cultural practices.

The "new cosmopolitanism" is a recent movement in the field of anthropology that builds on Appiah's and Bhabha's definitions of the term. As Werbner writes in the introduction to her 2009 edited volume *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist, and Vernacular Perspectives*,

Against "globalization," a term implying the free movement of capital and the global (mainly western) spread of ideas and practices, cosmopolitanism is a word used by the new cosmopolitans to emphasize empathy, toleration, and respect for other cultures and values. Thus, at its most basic, cosmopolitanism is about reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect; of living together with difference. It is also about the cosmopolitan right to abode and hospitality in strange lands and, alongside that, the urgent need to devise ways of living together in peace in the international community. Against the slur that cosmopolitans are rootless, with no commitments to place or nation, the new post-1990s cosmopolitanism attempts to theorize the complex ways in which cosmopolitans juggle particular and transcendent loyalties—morally, and inevitably also, politically. (P. Werbner 2009: 2)

Here, Werbner points out how cosmopolitan theory gives nuance to processes of globalization. She reaffirms that the purpose of cosmopolitanism is to take into account the myriad perspectives from which globalization is experienced. By splitting up the hegemonic process of globalization into cosmopolitan formations mediated by individuals, cosmopolitan theory pluralizes globalization. However, an analysis of her theory allows us to see some negative potential of cosmopolitanism. Though its intent is to essentially break up the conceptual category of globalization into constituent parts so as to more easily and accurately analyze the impacts of transnational processes, cosmopolitanism has the tendency to be over-applied. When everything becomes a cosmopolitanism, and everyone

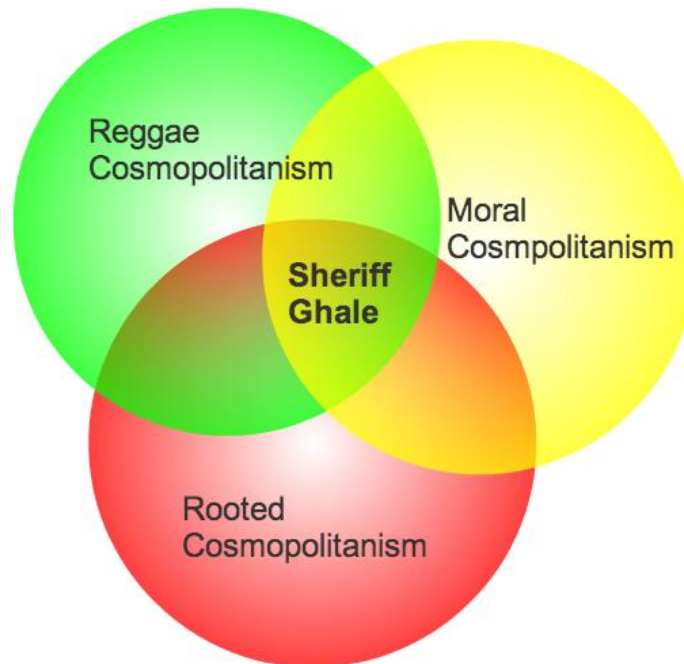
becomes a cosmopolitan, then the term loses its pluralizing function. This potentially puts marginal populations in an even greater danger of invisibility to international discourse than globalization does. That cosmopolitanism would purport to account for *all* perspectives on globalization when it really just accounted for *most* would further disenfranchise those overlooked by the discourse. As Perman writes: "Cosmopolitanism, if constrained appropriately, is a very useful analytical tool. However, it should not be applied in all cases where indigenous ways of life no longer shape social identities. As tempting as its application can be, it can inadvertently direct the scholar's gaze in such a way to render the subaltern even more invisible and silent" (2012: 397).

So, for the purposes of this thesis, when I apply the label of "cosmopolitan" to Sheriff, my meaning is close to a "vernacular cosmopolitan" in the way that he is firmly rooted in his identity as a Ghanaian, but I am also talking about his ethical code. Sheriff might be called a vernacular cosmopolitan, but I want to resist the temptation to pigeonhole him into this formulation. Vernacular cosmopolitanism is something that Sheriff can be *described as*, not something that *describes him*. He is also a moral cosmopolitan, a reggae cosmopolitan, a hip hop cosmopolitan, a Muslim, a Dagomba, and a Ghanaian. Recalling the metaphor of the Venn diagram, Sheriff stands in the center of these circles, as can be seen in **Figure 1**. I am using cosmopolitanism as a way to describe to describe a kind of ethos and world-view that necessarily involves meaningful interactions on every level from the local to the transnational. And I am only talking about the cosmopolitanism of a single individual.

*Figure 1*

Circles of Cosmopolitanism

---



However, moral and vernacular cosmopolitanisms are still inadequate to describe all of the transnational interactions that Sheriff is a part of. To elucidate another side of cosmopolitanism, I will turn to the scholarship on the descriptive side of the discourse, which addresses how individuals interact with, participate in, and are shaped by these transnational cultural systems, or cosmopolitan formations.

### **Cosmopolitan Formations**

Cosmopolitan formations are distinct transnational cultural or social formations. This differs from a philosophical conception of cosmopolitanism in that instead of defining how all humanity is connected, it is a method of connecting to other humans through a particular commonality across the social,



political, cultural, or physical divides that separate us. The genesis of this idea comes from James Clifford's concept of "discrepant cosmopolitanisms," which he describes as generating from "cultures of displacement and transplantation [that] are inseparable from specific, often violent, histories of economic, political, and cultural interaction" (Clifford 1992: 108). What Clifford attempted to do with this term was break up what he saw as the homogenizing discourse of globalism that created a dichotomy between "travelers" and "natives" or "cosmopolitans" and "locals." These kinds of dichotomies omit populations such as those that do not necessarily physically travel often or at all but are active participants in transnational communities nonetheless. This is sometimes the case in places that are more cosmopolitan than other, such as world cities and border areas, but with the (albeit uneven) spread of internet accessibility, the number of these kind of vernacular cosmopolitan communities grow.<sup>6</sup>

Following in this effort to give voice to these communities, Turino proposes a category of cultural group called a cosmopolitan formation that is

defined by constellations of conceptions, ethics, aesthetics, practices, technologies, objects and social style—habits and resources for living. Like all cultural formations, specific cosmopolitan formations come into being through basic processes of socialization: in a given family and in particular social networks. Membership is a subjective condition formed through on-going relations to particular environments and external conditions. The conceptualization of cosmopolitanism as a type of cultural formation, i.e., involving processes of socialization and comprising shared internalized dispositions, is fundamental to its usefulness as an analytical term. (Turino 2003: 61)

---

<sup>6</sup> I want to clarify that this dichotomy of globalization—cosmopolitans versus locals—does not just marginalize vernacular cosmopolitan individuals and communities. For instance, where do tourists fall on this dichotomy? However, since an individual of one of these communities is the particular focus of this thesis, I will not dwell on any of these other examples.

So a cosmopolitan formation is a transnational community that engages with a particular or particular set of transnational processes, and that this engagement at least in part defines the habitus of individuals in that community (Turino 2000). The cosmopolitan formation that Turino addresses in his 2000 monograph is the modernist-capitalist middle class. In particular, Turino engaged with black middle class Zimbabweans, whom he said "belonged to the local variant of the same modernist-capitalist formation that I did" (Turino 2003: 63).

Cosmopolitan formations as large as the modernist-capitalist middle class are so expansive, though, that they must necessarily encompass a broad variety of individuals with a wide range of identities in each particular location where they are present. The massive size of the cosmopolitan formation Turino focused on is not indicative of all similarly-formed cultural groups, though. Cosmopolitan formations can be linked through almost any kind of media, contact, or interchange that contributes to similar constructions of habitus amongst the individual members of the community. Turino was able to look at the musical connections within modernist-capitalist cosmopolitanism in Zimbabwe in part because that is what the scope of his research allowed.

While this definition of cosmopolitan formation—on par in size and function to diasporic or immigrant communities (Turino 2003)—suited Turino's purpose, its scope is too large for my purposes here: I want to look at cosmopolitan formations as more specific entities, and specifically relating to music. Martin Stokes' concept of *musical cosmopolitanism* encompasses "various ways of imagining musical belonging, [and] various musical spheres of exchange and

circulation" (Stokes 2008: 10). It is this imagining of a shared belonging through engagement with a particular type of music that defines these cosmopolitan formations. Thus, reggae fans in London can imagine themselves as part of a transnational network that connects them to people in Kingston, Tamale, New York, Warsaw, or anywhere else where there are reggae fans who imagine themselves as connected into this same network. We could call this reggae cosmopolitanism.

However, fandom does not necessarily denote a particular ethos or world-view. Not every music listener can consider himself or herself a member of the cosmopolitan formation of each type of music he or she likes to listen to, but this is not an all-or-nothing relationship. For instance, let us consider the example of Country music in Ghana. Country music is *very* popular in Ghana. In almost every record shop you walk into, copies of Kenny Rogers and Don Williams records will be for sale. And they sell frequently. In informal conversations with Ghanaian friends in Tamale about music tastes, a considerable number of the people I spoke to listed Country as one of their favorite genres. This might prompt the questions: are they Country cosmopolitans? What does that mean? What degree of engagement with Country aesthetics and ideologies constitutes a cosmopolitanism? Do you have to wear cowboy boots and a cowboy hat to be considered part of the cosmopolitan formation? Do you have to play in a Country band? Do you have to identify with a particular blue-collar working-class aesthetic?

But these are not the right questions. The problem with them is that they introduce judgment and either/or exclusiveness to the formulation of cosmopolitanism. These questions make the circles in the Venn diagram absolute and hierarchical: to answer them a cosmopolitan formation would have to have a particular orientation and prescribed rules of engagement (first you hear Country, then you buy cowboy boots, then tractors, etc.). But engagement with cosmopolitan formations are part of how people construct their identity, so the influence of a cosmopolitan formation like Country or reggae music can affect the ethos and world-view of an individual in a unique way.

So to what extent can musical cosmopolitanism affect an individual's ethos and world-view? Can a musical cosmopolitanism have the kind of impact on a person's way of being-in-the-world that a moral cosmopolitanism can? As a way to begin answering these questions, let us return to Feld's most recent monograph: *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra*. In this book, Feld explores what involvement in a musical cosmopolitanism—specifically jazz in Ghana—means to three individuals and one community of musical people. The four answers are all different, as they always will be, but over the course of the book certain commonalities appear in these individuals' construction of ethos and world-view through a connection with jazz cosmopolitanism.

### **Making Connections through Musical Cosmopolitanism**

Feld presents us with four examples of musical intimacy through the transnational connection of jazz cosmopolitanism in Accra. Though all examples are fascinating case studies of musical cosmopolitanism, for the sake of brevity I

will focus on the one most relevant to the study at hand: the La Drivers Union Por Por Group.

This is a group of *trotro* (public minibuses) and lorry drivers from the La area of Accra—about eight miles east of the city center along the coast. At some point in the history of this drivers union, the members took their por por horns (picture car horns from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—the ones honked by enema bulbs) off of their vehicles and "developed a honking, squeeze-bulb horn music with the addition of struck tire rims, bells, and percussion" (Feld 2012: 43). This music drew from both Ghanaian and diasporic African sonic influences, but the strongest cosmopolitan connection—and an apparently coincidental one—is the context of its performance. The music was born from necessity: in the mid-1900s, when the squeeze-bulb car horn was still in regular use, they were used along with tire rims and small percussion by ensembles of drivers' mates as a way to alert other drivers and ward away animals as disabled vehicles were repaired at night. As the music developed, it "became ritually specialized, played by the La drivers exclusively at funerals for transport workers" (Feld 2012: 43). The por por funeral procession named the deceased as a member of the La Drivers Union, as a part of a particular community. Feld, not surprisingly for an American jazz buff, connected this performance aesthetic to the style of the New Orleans jazz funeral. But the performers themselves were unaware of the cosmopolitan connection they were engaging in—that is, until Feld brought it to their attention.

The precise nature of the connection—the naming and voicing of an individual's reputation through a sonic memorial in a public space—though

resultant from two distinct histories, creates a strong connection between the two nodes of jazz cosmopolitanism, which Feld describes as a kind of "intimacy." As can be seen in the film project that the monograph grew out of, Feld gives a coffee-table book on New Orleans jazz funerals to Nii Yemo Nunu, a photographer and Feld's research collaborator, to show Vice, the Por Por Group leader. While the two were looking at and discussing the book, it is clear that Vice is moved by the similarities between the funereal practices of the La Drivers Union and the New Orleans jazz community. There is a moment where the depth of the connection seems to really land. Feld writes:

the sense of felt and imagined intimacy becomes more heightened the moment Nii Yemo indicates to Vice that participants in Touchet's [author of the book being viewed] New Orleans images 'look like people we know around here!' Without missing a beat, he enthusiastically continues: 'They are our kinfolk!' and Vice instantly overlaps, strongly repeating the same exact words. (Feld 2012: 189-190)

This cosmopolitan connection was opened up through the realization of a shared belief that lost friends should be sent off in a particular style. Coincidence though it may be, this connection has real significance for the members of the La Drivers Union Por Por Group. Though their lives and lifestyles are different in many ways, this common practice based on a mutual value between two groups creates an imagined intimacy between two communities of a musical cosmopolitanism, which in turn can foster deeper intimacy within each community. For the Por Por Group, each time they play now, they play not only their own history, but New Orleans' history as well. By playing New Orleans' history, the Por Por Group adds to the significance of their own stories.

Feld refers to this as *beyond diasporic intimacy*:

...the idea that a lost beyond is closer than you imagine, that shortcuts or leaps from X to Y via Z perform the storied place of connected memory, creating intimacy rather than effacing it. An image, word, sound becomes a preface to the production of stories about connection and the authority of stating, imploring, beseeching. Any key phrase, any punch line, can do the work of bringing out the effects of a much bigger story. (Feld 2012: 206).

It is this last point especially that makes this connection so powerful. That knowing the connection, feeling tied into a musical cosmopolitan community, allows performers to tell long stories with simple references. As I'll show in Chapter 2, a sonic reference to a music of social awareness can bring not only a history of struggles to bear on local problems, allowing those effected to reimagine their plight in a cosmopolitan context, but also the moral lessons of that history and an ethos and world-view influenced by those morals.

## **Conclusion**

But I don't think this connection is as dramatic as Feld presents it. Meaning no disrespect, I think his sense of rhetorical flair might have got the best of him when he coined the term "beyond diasporic intimacy." This intimacy, this deepening of affection for one's own traditions, values, or lifestyle through a connection with another individual or community can also be explained by reaffirmation. The fact that someone else feels the same way you do or does the same thing you do or likes the same thing you like can be liberating. By adding someone else's story to yours, a history becomes a shared history, and this shared history can reaffirm your own feelings. This kind of intimate connection through musical cosmopolitanism, as can be seen in the example of the Por Por Group, can carry

with it maybe not a way of being-in-the-world as all-encompassing as an ethos or world-view, but definitely shared values, lifestyles, and practices.

The jazz cosmopolitanism of the La Drivers Union Por Por Group is an ideal example of how to start a cross-cultural conversation through the medium of a cosmopolitan formation. It is the enactment of the "cosmopolitan curiosity" that Appiah describes, and the way to a connection across difference. "They are our kinfolk!" is not an imposition of sameness, but an acknowledgement of common ground. Where can we go from here, though? As I mentioned earlier, the engagement with a cosmopolitan formation only through media seems like a one-sided conversation. But is it? As Feld shows, music carries stories, and stories often have morals. In the case of the Por Por Group, these morals have to do with how to respect the dead. But let's consider a music like reggae. Reggae music has a long history of social and political activism attached to it, not to mention a religious disposition in Rastafarianism, and the pan-African ideology of Marcus Garvey. These, as I will show in the next chapter, can be part of a cosmopolitan ethos, and they can come about through the reaffirmation of a cosmopolitan connection.



## Chapter 2: Playing the Story of Tamale

The first time I heard Sheriff Ghale play "Sochira" was at the World Damba Festival 2012 @ Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts. The festival, a diasporic celebration of one of the largest yearly festivals of the Dagomba people of northern Ghana, had on the program that night three of northern Ghana's most popular artists: Mohammed Alidu, Sherifa Gunu, and Sheriff. Sheriff, though, was the hometown hero—the only performer that night who still lived in Tamale. It was his American debut, but since the rest of his band hadn't been able to secure visas, Alidu invited him up on stage to play one of his songs with his own U.S.-based band, the Bizung Family. The performance was one of the highlights of the evening, standing out even in the middle of Alidu's excellent performance and regardless of the lack of rehearsal. The crowd of diasporic and visiting Dagombas and musicians and scholars who had come from Ghana for the weekend-long festival sang along, as they all knew every word from hearing the song play on the radio since 2004.

"Sochira," Dagbani for "Crossroads," was released in Ghana around September of 2004. The song is an explicit attempt to heal the internecine rift created by the conflict is known as the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis, an ongoing political and social issue that had recently come to a violent head, by appealing to a cosmopolitan morality and putting the issue in an international context. "Sochira" addresses this issue by recounting the origins of Dagbon and the ancient unity of the tribe, and by posing the rhetorical question "Is this the end of it all / ... / Or have we yet to meet again?" in the chorus. Singing a reggae song in

Dagbani and using Dagomba proverbs, Sheriff implores his people to try to see their situation from broader viewpoints, both national and international.

He projects his cosmopolitan ethos through musical engagement with various cosmopolitanisms in a Dagomba context in the attempt to promote peace and advocate for better living conditions. In doing so, Sheriff's public image becomes cosmopolitan in both the prescriptive and descriptive senses: he is actively working to better the lives of northern Ghanaians, and his engagement with a "foreign" musical style is the medium through which this work is done. As "Sochira" indicates, the messages that Sheriff communicates in this style frequently find strong resonances with the Dagomba people. When Sheriff performed the song that night in Boston, people stood up and danced in front of the stage. One man went up on stage and placed a number of bills on Sheriff's forehead, a common gesture of musical appreciation in northern Ghana and much of West Africa. As Sheriff himself said, through "Sochira" he found that his voice became the voice of many:

"[Sochira] resonated with the thoughts of many people. So this song became so famous and so popular in the [Northern Region]. It just encourages me to go on with my music because it becomes like a voice for many people. You just have to make sure that you're honest about your thoughts and your thoughts are pretty much well informed, and then you could be speaking for many many many more people than just yourself. You see that is more than just an expression of your conflict. You come to discover that so many people in your society are suffering from the same situation you're suffering from, and it unites you with many people."  
(Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12)

In this chapter, I will take a close look at two of Sheriff's songs, "Sochira," and "Tiem Kɔm (The Guinea Worm Song)," as examples of how Sheriff's rooted cosmopolitanism translates transnational messages to a local dialect, allowing

transnational ideologies and messages to resonate as a Dagomba voice in northern Ghana. "Sochira" and " Tiem Kɔm" are both musical voicings of particular humanitarian or peacebuilding projects: the effort to heal the divide caused by the Dagomba chieftaincy crisis and the effort to eradicate the Guinea worm parasite in Ghana. Before analyzing these songs, though, I will provide a biography of Sheriff and a short background on reggae music and Rastafari, focusing on its reception in Ghana in order to establish a thorough context for the discussions of cosmopolitanism in the songs mentioned above.

### **Sheriff Ghale**

Sheriff Ghale was born Mohammed Sheriff Yamusah on March 26, 1978 in Tamale, Ghana, to Alhaji Yamusah Mumuni and Abiba Fuseini. Sheriff, like his parents, is a Dagomba. He received all of his education prior to the college level in the Tamale area, attending the Sakasaka Primary School, Bishop's Junior Secondary School, and was then accepted to Tamale Secondary School.<sup>7</sup> Immediately after graduating from Tamale Secondary School in 1996, Sheriff learned to be a teacher at Tamale Training College, where he graduated in 2000. After teaching social studies, English, and Ghanaian languages for a number of years, Sheriff enrolled at the University of Education in Winneba, a coastal city in Ghana's Central Region. Graduating with a Bachelor's of Education in Music, Sheriff became a District Culture Coordinator for Tamale area schools. At the time of writing, he is pursuing a Master's of Philosophy in Music at the University

---

<sup>7</sup> In Ghana, Junior Secondary School, also known as J.S.S., is the equivalent of Junior High School in the United States. Tamale Secondary School is a Senior Secondary School, or S.S.S., which is likewise compared to High School.

of Ghana in Legon. His thesis is on the challenges faced by popular musicians in northern Ghana in getting their music heard. Throughout his studies and other travels, he has not been away from Tamale for longer than 6 weeks at a time.

Tamale is currently one of the fastest-growing cities in West Africa. The 1984 census reported the city's population at 136,828, but that figure is now estimated at over 500,000, with local reports reaching as high as one million people (*The Columbia Encyclopedia*). The Dagomba, unlike most of the ethnic groups in southern part of the country, are descended from invaders that came into present-day Ghana from the north, from an area east of Lake Chad in northern Nigeria. Thus, Sheriff, like many other Dagombas, feels a closer affinity to the cultures of Sahelian region of Africa than to sub-Saharan ethnicities. Though it does not have the international visibility of the larger cities of Accra and Kumasi, Tamale is nonetheless a global city. As Sheriff put it:

"Tamale is a product of the world. We have so much influences from outside of Ghana—from all of the world—impacting on Tamale. ... Today the global village or the global world has opened doors from when I was growing up and let the whole world in on us. Cultures and knowledge and information, technology, everything from all parts of the world. From the U.S. and China, from all across. I would say we are not left out of the world." (Guest lecture #2, 9/18/12)

On another occasion he said:

"Our culture is a collection of several interactions and currently—they say it's a global village and that's the age I grew up in. Where you have the globe opening up on you, and you're coming from your history, your tradition, and you have the whole world pouring down. Technology, cultural diversity, information, and everything that you can imagine. Anything that I believe that you can imagine from any part of the world can also be accessed in Tamale. Like I said I grew up in Tamale. I watch CNN a lot, Aljazeera, I watch BBC, I have access to all these things. The first time I was in Europe in 2009, my shock was that I was not in any way shocked that I was in Europe. ... It was like I had seen it all before." (Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12)

This, of course, is not the case for all Ghanaians, Dagombas, or even other natives of Tamale. Sheriff is a unique individual, but his cosmopolitanism was nonetheless born out of a Ghanaian experience. Sheriff's travels away from Tamale and outside of Ghana have been relatively brief, and he didn't make an off-continent trip until 2009. Early on in his music career—in the late '90s, early 2000s—Sheriff, like many aspiring musicians, moved to Accra to try to make it big; and, like many aspiring Ghanaian musicians who seek fame and fortune in the capital, he did not find it there. He did, however, meet a well-known highlife musician named Rex Omar, who inspired him to pick up the guitar. More than that, though, Omar taught Sheriff that pursuing the "rock-star" dream that captivates so many of Ghana's young musicians is not the way to approach being a musician in Ghana. It was due at least partially to Omar's influence that Sheriff has maintained a job as an educator and, now, an education coordinator.

This freed him from the mindset that he has to make money or achieve fame and celebrity from his music: "It's my art, and I decide what I want to play. I am not playing for fashion, I am not playing for what [the] trend is on the radio ... I want to express myself, and I want to do my music as I do it" (Interview, 8/22/12). This approach to music as means of expression instead of income was part and parcel with the continuation of his education, as his employment as a teacher in turn let him pursue his musical interests on his own terms. This was a crucial factor in the development of Sheriff's world-view:

"If you're lucky to be properly educated, you can be a global citizen just by being in Tamale because you have the advantage of being everybody's dumping ground. You don't really have too much power to dictate what

comes to you or not, so everything comes and you have the opportunity to now select what is good." (Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12)

Sheriff's identification of and engagement with these transnational systems is indicative of his rooted cosmopolitanism. There is the implication in his words, though, that this cosmopolitanism is not just his, but available to all citizens of Tamale with a proper education. By "proper education," Sheriff is referring not to book smarts or necessarily factual knowledge, but a kind of self-awareness that allows him to have agency in how he constructs his identity. As he said: "You have to know your place before you can fit in, and know how to fit in and where to fit in. For me, this is my understanding of education" (Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12). What he meant is that, in Tamale, this acceptance of Cohen's rooted cosmopolitanism as a "multiplicity of roots and branches," and the realization of "standing in many circles, but with a common ground" just requires an awareness of where things come from, how they got there, and whether or not you want to stand in that particular circle. Sheriff identifies Islamic heritage, Ghana's Western-style school system, and the influx of cheap Chinese technology as the primary "dumpers" on Tamale. These transnational processes and the attendant patterns of social behavior that make them cosmopolitan formations are notable aspects of day-to-day life in Tamale. The population of the city is currently around 80% Muslim, and the mosques, as in most predominantly Muslim parts of the world, have a significant impact on the visible and audible composition of the city. As does the school system: Tamale is known for having a large number of educational institutions ranging from kindergartens and basic schools to polytechnics and universities. Education Ridge, a neighborhood in the northwest

part of the city, houses dozens of schools in its verdant, bucolic setting. The influx of Chinese technology, similarly, has a dramatic impact on life in Tamale, and throughout Ghana and West Africa, for that matter. Cell towers' dominance of Ghanaian horizons reinforce the fact that almost everyone has at least one cell phone, and home entertainment systems are also a relatively common element of the home environment now. As Sheriff said, though citizens of Tamale do not have a choice of the kinds of media, technology, and ideologies come to them, they can have a choice of which ones they engage with.

Interestingly, Sheriff cannot exactly explain how he came to this realization about the meaning of education. In an attempt to, though, he reveals his cosmopolitanism. Continued from the above quote about education:

"I don't know how I got this—I can't exactly tell—but perhaps from *all* that have come to me. Because it is a constant conflict. From when I started maturing and started to see myself as an individual—as myself—this conflict continued to rage. Am I supposed to be this, or am I supposed to be that, or can I be both at the same time or can I be this and that. There's so much conflict going on constantly, and if you are lucky, you would want to find a solution and you will never give up and eventually you will or you may [find it]. But if you are not lucky, you will easily just pick one, and suit yourself, maybe, and close your doors to the rest. Well that could be, by your definition, fine. But by my definition it is good to be open to everything because the human mind, I believe, has the ability to take *all these* and still be able to make headway." (Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12) [Emphases added]

The emphases are not added to this quote in order to recreate a particular inflection of Sheriff's delivery, but as referents. "*All*" and "*all these*" are used here as pronouns going back to the above conversation. "All that have come to me" refers to the above cosmopolitan formations; what has been "dumped" on Tamale that Sheriff has decided to keep. How and why he decides to keep them is reminiscent of Appiah's cosmopolitan ethos: being open-minded allows a person

to have more perspective, to embrace a hybrid identity in order to make sense of the multiple, sometimes contradictory influences at work in your society. The ability to create and embrace a hybrid identity has allowed Sheriff to resolve internal conflicts that arise due to these influences.

These types of conflicts are not always peaceful. To my knowledge, Sheriff's struggles to define and embody his ethos and world-view have been mostly psychological ones within himself as opposed to physical ones with other people. For instance, even with long dreadlocks he worked as a teacher for many years without confrontation from his superiors, though Ghanaian stigmas against wearing dreadlocks keep many of those who wear them from the profession. This reservation of judgment is most likely thanks to Sheriff's friendly demeanor and personal charm.

In many situations in the world these kinds of struggles to construct hybrid identities influenced by cosmopolitanism can be very serious and occasionally violent (Luvaas 2009, Solomon 2006). In Ghana, the influx of foreign musics, especially reggae and hip hop, have created such identity conflicts amongst musicians and music listeners. In the next section I will discuss the reception of these musics in Ghana, some interpersonal and personal conflicts that arose from them. Because reggae is most relevant to this thesis, that is where I will focus most of my attention, but since there is vastly more information on hip hop in Ghana and the reception of both styles are analogous, it will be useful to address both.



## Reggae and Rastafari in Ghana

Reggae became popular in Ghana around the mid 1970s<sup>8</sup>. Throughout the 1980s, though few Caribbean artists were able to make personal appearances due to economic instability, their recordings—especially those of Bob Marley—became hugely popular. Ghanaian reggae bands began to spring up in the late '70s, imitating the Jamaican style (Collins 2012: 214-215). In the 1990s, reggae, along with African-American hip hop, country music, and disco dominated Ghana's airwaves.<sup>9</sup> This preponderance of non-indigenous music is indicative of a general inclination amongst many Ghanaians in the latter part of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries toward "foreign" musical styles, especially those originating in the African diaspora. As Jesse Weaver Shipley writes: "In the decades after independence, black diasporic music provided young Ghanaians with a symbolic language to see themselves as modern and removed from the colonial legacies of older expressive forms" (2012: 50). This was especially true in the late 1980s and 1990s. Since then, local hiplife—inspired by African-American hip hop—has become the most popular genre in Ghanaian youth culture. However, there are still many reggae and highlife artists active on the Ghanaian music scene, and when Sheriff was coming into his own as a musician, reggae was a dominant force on the airwaves.

---

<sup>8</sup> This review of reggae's history in Ghana is, necessarily, quite brief. For more complete histories of reggae and popular music in Ghana, see Savishinsky (1993), Collins (2012), and Shipley (2013).

<sup>9</sup> Since radio was privatized in the mid-1990s, much more local music is played, but in the late '80s, the *Ghanaian Times* reported that 90% of all music played on Ghanaian radio was of foreign origin (Savishinsky 1993: 125).

Reggae music, though did not just impress itself upon the Ghanaian consciousness simply as a musical style. It carried with it an attendant ideology:

Rastafari. As Savishinsky writes:

Reggae music ... serves as the principal conduit through which the majority of the [Ghanaian] population gain access to information about Rastafari—information which ultimately leads to the formulation of opinions, attitudes, and preconceptions about the movement and its attendant forms of cultural expression. (1993: 135)

This is how Sheriff came to his explorations of Rastafari. His mother introduced him to reggae:

"My mother was a fan of reggae music. She played quite a lot of reggae music: from a guy called Eric Donaldson, to a group called Culture, Bob Marley, and many reggae artists. She would play this music early in the morning and late at night before we sleep, so I fell in love with it." (Guest lecture #2, 9/18/12)

His father owned an electronics shop in town, which was right next to a music shop. "[He] sold electronic equipment like cassette players, television sets, and stuff like that," Sheriff said on another occasion. "But right next to our shop was a music shop, where they sold music. So I had access to music and I had access to players, so... [laughter implying the obvious outcome of the situation]"

(Interview, 8/22/12). This was in his early life, before he began his investigations of Rastafari ideology in his teens. What he discovered in his research would have a profound impact on the development of Sheriff's cosmopolitanism.

As Jamaican author, filmmaker, and cultural spokesperson Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah writes:

Rastafari grew out of the darkest depression that the descendants of African slaves in Jamaica have ever lived in, the stink and crumbling shacks of zinc and cardboard that the poorest and most tattered remnants of humanity built on the rotting garbage of the dreadful Dungle on Kingston's waterfront. Out of this filth and slime arose a sentiment so

pure, so without anger, so full of love—the philosophy of the Rastafari faith. (Blake Hannah 2006: 120)

This sentiment manifests itself in Rastafari's adherents, also known as Rastafarians or Rastas, through a core set of beliefs, rituals and practices, and a particular mode of appearance and speech, collectively referred to as "livity." Paraphrasing from Neil Savishinsky (1993: 9-10), these are:

1) Beliefs—that God ("Jah") is Black; that Haile Selassie I (former emperor of Ethiopia also referred to as "Ras Tafari") is the Messiah; that the evils in the world can be attributed to the spreading influence of Western civilization ("Babylon"); Rastas are the true descendants of the ancient Israelites from the Old Testament; that Western Christianity is a corruption of a purer Judeo-Christian tradition that has been maintained by the Ethiopian Coptic Church; and that the "The Apocalypse" as prophesied in the Book of Revelations is close at hand, and the world will thereafter be repopulated by those judged righteous.

2) Rituals and practices—the ritual/secular use of music (i.e. reggae and *Nyabingi* [a Jamaican style that combines African drum styles with Christian-based Rastafarian hymns and chants]) and drugs (ganja); strict dietary restrictions derived mostly from the Old Testament; constant study, discussion, and interpretation of the Bible and speeches of Marcus Garvey and Haile Selassie I in "reasoning sessions" [long group discussions considered paramount form of human communication]; and the cultivation of habits and attitudes deemed conducive to living a good and healthy lifestyle (maintaining diet, abstaining from hard drugs and alcohol, "placing maximum emphasis on individual freedom

and self-initiative, and acting honestly in all one's dealings with one's fellow human beings").<sup>10</sup>

3) Modes of appearance, dress, and speech—wearing dreadlocks; dressing in bright, "African" colors (red, green yellow, and black); and the use of "iryaic," or "Dread talk," a kind of modified Jamaican patois created by Rastas to express their heightened consciousness and profound awareness of the power of the spoken word.

The Ghanaian Rasta communities that Savishinsky studied almost wholly accepted these tenets of Rastafari. Crucially important to this study, though, is that these communities were located in Takoradi and the Labadi neighborhoods in Accra, both predominantly Christian areas along the southern coast. Tamale, being predominantly Muslim, has a certain discord with Rastafari, as the latter grows very much out of a Judeo-Christian religion whose primary text is the Bible. Though Islamic theology is inclusive of Judeo-Christian characters and ideologies, elements of Rastafari such as the messianic status of Selassi and Garvey as well as smoking ganja come into direct conflict with the teachings and practices of Islam. This is surely one of the "conflicts" that Sheriff mentioned: how to balance an Islamic identity and practice with a Rastafari ideology, the two based in spiritual traditions that don't always allow for mutual resonance. Little scholarly work has been done on the reception of Rastafari in Muslim West Africa, but Sheriff's views closely resemble those of Burkinabe Rastas whom Frank Wittmann wrote about in his 2011 article "The Global-Local Nexus:

---

<sup>10</sup> This is a direct quote from Savishinsky (1993: 10).

Popular Music Studies and the Case of Rastafari Culture in West Africa." These

Burkinabe Rastas practiced a kind of religious syncretism, identifying as both

Rastafarian and devout Muslim. As one of Wittmann's interlocutors puts it:

"[Rastafari is] a lifestyle and everyone is free to live his spiritual life. It's a state of mind" (Wittmann 2011: 164). Similarly, Sheriff said:

"I studied quite a lot of Rastafari ideas and concepts, and to this day I see that for me, Rastafari is the system, it's the lifestyle, it's a belief system, it's an idea. I don't see it as a religion for me. There are some people that see it as a religion. From my studies, I have concluded that there are two groups of people in Rastafari: some who are strictly religious Rastafari who depend on the Old Testament of the Bible. There is a second group of people who belong to various religious groups. Some are Christians, some are Muslims, some are all kinds of beliefs, but who ascribe to Rastafari as the idea of self-consciousness, see Rastafari as the idea of self-consciousness, the constant battle of good over evil, over darkness. This becomes a second, broad group of Rastafari. Sometimes you would find even religious Rastafari people claiming the non-religious Rastafari people as Rastas. For example, you would find Culture—Culture is a reggae group lead by Joseph Hill, a very popular reggae group, a strong one—they label people like Martin Luther King as a Rasta, and they see people like Malcolm X as a Rasta. They see people like [Nelson] Mandela as a Rasta, although these people have different religious beliefs systems. So it is quite a broad idea. And that is where I find myself to belong, because I don't ascribe to the idea of Rastafari being my religion." (Guest lecture #2, 9/18/22)

In both cases, it is through this syncretism and open-mindedness that the potential conflicts between Rastafari and Islamic spiritualities are negotiated. This open-mindedness stems from an explicitly stated tolerance to other religions and viewpoints that comes both through Rastafari ideology and from modern West African culture. For the Burkinabe Rastas, the Rastafari ethos included

attitudes such as charity, creativity, hard work, honesty, political abstinence, a positive way of life, a sense of responsibility, solidarity and tolerance. It was based on the maxim that 'all men are equal' in the sight of Jah (God). ... Tolerance was particularly important in religious questions. The Rastas in Ouagadougou claimed there were no central differences between the different religions. (Wittmann 2011: 165)

In Sheriff's case, he believes tolerance is part of what it means to live in Tamale.

Regarding finding musicians to play with—occasionally difficult due to Islamic attitudes towards popular music—he said:

"We are so lucky growing up with a very high level of tolerance. Our society is very integrated. You have Christians, you have traditionalists, and Muslims all living together and interacting constantly. So for my band in Tamale, some of them are my classmates from my basic school who are Christians, so it was kind of like a reunion calling them to play for me. Basically this is the kind of crop of people I play with. Everybody has his own vision for his music, and they have different backgrounds and different views, so they are not necessarily representative of my view, but they have their own interests for doing the music, so we come together and see where we unite. It works for us." (Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12)

This kind of tolerance, resonant both in modern Tamale citizenship and Rastafarian ideology, very strongly evokes the cosmopolitan commitment to pluralism in the acceptance and respect of difference advocated by Appiah. Does this mean that Sheriff and the Burkinabe Rastas are all rooted cosmopolitans? Potentially, but as I said above, cosmopolitanism must be approached on a case-by-case basis. In the case of the Burkinabe Rastafari community, Wittmann draws a similar conclusion about their ethos that I am moving towards in Sheriff's case: that they "developed [their] collective ethos and ideology primarily through the inspiration found in the lyrics of reggae songs by Bob Marley, Alpha Blondy, and Lucky Dube" (Wittmann 2011: 168). Though in Sheriff's case, he mentions Culture and Eric Donaldson instead of Alpha Blondy and Lucky Dube,<sup>11</sup> the sentiment comes through the same cosmopolitan formation of Rastafari via reggae to resonate with the plurality of modern West African identity.

---

<sup>11</sup> This is probably because the Jamaican artists Sheriff mentions were more firmly established during the early and mid-1980s, when his mother would have been playing reggae music around the house.

And Sheriff does not just listen: he plays. He plays a reggae sound that has spread all over the world, infused with the "ideas and ideals of 'equal rights and justice,'" but with it he plays the story of Tamale (Zips 2006: 131). Using this music that sounds an attractive, modern Ghanaian identity as well as a cosmopolitan struggle for peace and equality, Sheriff sings messages of progress and unity specifically tailored to his homeland. In the next couple of sections, I will take a close look at two of these messages. "Tiem Kɔm (The Guinea Worm Song)" is a song that helped the effort eradicate a painful and sometimes fatal parasite that had plagued the region for decades. "Sochira," as mentioned above, is a song that encouraged peace and unity amongst the Dagombas in the wake of the violent events in May 2002 related to the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis.

### **Sochira**

In the opening chapter of *Music and Conflict Transformation*, Felicity Laurence suggests that "music, along with all its other functions and effects, indeed offers a specific potential to enable, catalyze, and strengthen empathetic response, ability, and relationship, and that it is this *potential* capacity with lies at the core of music's function within peacebuilding" (2007: 14 [emphasis in original]). A key term in her article, and the basis on which she argues music is able to deliver a message that is not about reinforcing hierarchical power dynamics is empathy. She writes:

In empathizing, we, while retaining fully the sense of our own distinct consciousness, enter actively and imaginatively into others' inner states to understand how they experience their world and how they are feeling, reaching out to what we perceive as similar while accepting difference, and experiencing upon reflection our own resulting feelings, appropriate to

our own situation as empathic observer, which may be virtually the same feeling or different by sympathetic to theirs, within a context in which we care to respect and acknowledge their human dignity and our shared humanity. (Laurence 2008: 24)

I would like to draw attention to the similarities between Laurence's definition of empathy and Appiah's definition of a cosmopolitan ethos. The very act of engaging in peacebuilding demonstrates an obligation to the other, as without this sense of obligation one would likely be content with some degree of conflict. But "taking seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance" resonates in Laurence's "actively and imaginatively into others' inner states to understand how they experience their world and how they are feeling." This empathy also requires an acceptance of the moral cosmopolitan beliefs of plurality and fallibility, these being necessary to accept that there are other ways of experiencing the world that are equally as valid as your own.

Laurence does stress, however, that music's capacity to foster this kind of empathetic response—which I am arguing is analogous to moral cosmopolitanism—is *potential*. Sheriff's song "Sochira," in its creation and reception, executed this empathetic potential in helping to calm animosities between conflicting groups in Dagbon.

The Dagbon Chieftaincy crisis is a long and complicated conflict, and I will not delve into detail on it here.<sup>12</sup> It will suffice to say that during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, parties competing for the seat of the chieftaincy have become

---

<sup>12</sup> There are a number of publications that outline the history of the Dagbon Chieftaincy since the origin of the tribe and through the troubles that have developed in more recent years (Ahorsu & Gebe 2011, MacGaffey 2006, Issahaku 2005, Staniland 1975).



associated with Ghanaian national political parties, and in the course of the conflict Dagbon has become very polarized along party lines. In the wake of the 2002 killing of the Ya-Naa Yakubu Andani II, the traditional chief of Dagbon, though, the Dagbon became divided. The government in the south imposed a curfew, and the region teetered on the brink of civil war. Dagombas' perception of themselves as a unified whole and as a coherent part of Ghana's political and ethnic makeup had weakened or broken.

In regards to the "otherness" implicit in the theorizations of Appiah and Laurence, the othering created by the Chieftaincy crisis was not a physical or international estrangement, but an internal one. The divisions and strife amongst the Dagomba is related in the language of departure in the chorus and first verse of the song:

Chorus:

Daxila di naami maa bee, ka daxila di naami ŋɔ bee  
Ti soya kuli wali la taba shem ŋɔ bee ti na n go n chirigi taba dahinsheli

First verse:

N yi ye n chebsi a n teeiri la tɔhazie yɛla  
N chebsiri a ka yuuni Naa Gbewaa  
Duna n dɔxi ziri mini yɛmtɔri n nam ti mini mɔhi dachehili  
Nyaba Zirili, Zirili ni kofɔxu, ti naa zali zulya din ka ŋmali  
Duna n daa dɔxi o bihi ata n boli Tɔhagu, Shitɔbu ni Dmantambu  
Suhuyurilim mini ti fawaxili ŋɔ ka ti daa pun niŋ ka alobo di ti  
Dina n daa waligi Dmanpurugu, n waligi Dagboŋ mini Nanuŋ

Translated to English:<sup>13</sup>

Is this the end of it all, is this the end of it all?  
Have we parted ways from now on, or have we yet to meet again?

---

<sup>13</sup> All translations by Sheriff Ghale.

In my attempt to say goodbye, so fresh on my mind is Tohadzie  
In my departure, all I remember is Naa Gbewaa.  
From whom came Zirili and Yemtori,  
Making us cousins to the moshi.  
Oh Zirili the Great, Zirili Ni Kofogu,  
By our king, we're one of a kind.  
Him it was who brought forth the three,  
And named them Tohagu, Shitobu, and Dmantambu.  
Verily, by this same attitude it was, that we got torn apart,  
And we came to be Dmanpurugu, Dagbon, and Nanung.

The lyrics of the chorus speak of an internal strangeness and a disembodied realization of the division in the region. But, while articulating this Sheriff asks rhetorical questions to the Dagomba people, asking if this conflict will be the end of them. The implied answer is no: the Chieftaincy crisis is not a separatist one, but an internal struggle for power. So the real question is: why are we perpetuating this conflict instead of making peace? By asking this question, Sheriff brings immediately to the attention of the listener that Dagbon is a single entity—something that can be forgotten or put from one's mind in the midst of such internecine conflicts. But "we" implies a single group. The first verse reinforces this sentiment by recounting the ancient origins of Dagbon, from the hunter Tohadzie to the three brothers, Tohagu, Shitobu, and Dmantambu, who respectively founded the kingdoms of Dmanpurugu, Dagbon, and Nanung. This history is common knowledge to Dagombas, and the invocation of this lineage is meant to symbolically unify them.

At the time, though, this was a very unusual stance to take on the conflict. Most of the discourse regarding the Chieftaincy crisis was quite partisan: opinions expressed on the radio, published in newspaper articles, and discussed in taxis usually overtly favored one side or the other. When the song was first released, its

message of peace was frequently misinterpreted as a cleverly subtle partisan statement on one side or the other. Sheriff believes that this is due to the poetic, ambiguous nature of the lyrics. The second verse continues in this style. In

Dagbani:

Bulchininima ti tiehimi vienyela, ηun tam piligu kun baη bahagu  
Ka wula ka ti du n zi tiwula zuxu, ka yi n zani n lahi ηmari tiwula ηo  
Laxingu yi kuli lahi zani luvisheli ka man chaη di mali ma la nandahima  
Ti punpu la taba n wali taba ziya gbibi ηumaηuma ka kaηiri n yuuni taba  
Ma vi zuxu ka wabgu ti vii tutuxu zuηo, wabgu di yaηi tutuxu ni ηunibu  
Kom n diri ti ma di daa alobo, ka mochayima bariti ti ninbansi

Translated, this means:

Oh patriots of Dagbon, let's reason again,  
For he who knows not the past, knows not the future.  
But why would we choose to cut down  
The very branch on which we build our nest?  
It breaks my heart to see us gathered only in sects,  
Spying, scheming, and plotting against our very selves.  
But if not for the loss of shame and pride  
How would an elephant seek refuge in the grass?  
It's only by the misfortunes of a drowning man  
That the weak grasses brush his eyebrows.

In the first line of the second verse, Sheriff explicitly addresses his intended audience, and references the discourse that that audience has engaged in. Then, having just referenced the origins of Dagbon in the first verse, he suggests that looking to the past may lead the way forward to peace, and away from self-destructive and divisive behavior, to not "cut down / The very branch on which we build our nest," and to stop exacerbating the internecine behavior that created the crisis in the first place. In the last couplet of the verse, Sheriff references a Dagbani proverb: "when you're drowning in the river, every weak grass along the water/riverbanks brush your eyebrows." As he explained it, this proverb implies

"that when you suffer a humiliating predicament, every Tom, Dick & Harry gets to mock you. So I use this proverb at the end of the second verse but pluralize it for Dagbon as a whole: '...the Dagbon kingdom is drowning, hence the reason for all the mockery and humiliation we suffer from around the world'" (Facebook interview, 9/28/12). This last image, significant only to Dagombas, again serves to promote a feeling of unity, of a single people that are struggling to keep themselves together and with the aware of their perception by other and larger groups: specifically the Ghanaian state and the international community. It reframes the conflict into a solvable scope by putting it in a cosmopolitan context.

Sonically, "Sochira" has a roots reggae vibe, reminiscent of the style of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and the group Culture. When Sheriff got up on stage to play his song with Alidu's band, his only instruction was: "One-drop in F#," and possibly something about laying out on the bridge that I couldn't quite hear. But with these simple instructions, the band—primarily white Americans familiar with international reggae styles—joined in without missing a beat. A "one-drop" is a common drum pattern in reggae that accents the two and four with rimshot hits on the snare and three with the kick, "dropping" the one as the name implies. Carlton Barrett, Marley's drummer in the Wailers, employed the pattern frequently, and it thus became a staple of the roots reggae sound. Also present in "Sochira" is the characteristic offbeat rhythm guitar pattern ubiquitous to reggae music. This rhythmic element, combined with the backbeat accents on the drum and a heavy downbeat emphasis from the bass contribute to the song's danceable, upbeat feel.

Though Sheriff's vocal tone in the chorus has a slightly pleading affect, the song, for the most part, has a light, easygoing feel that seems contrary to the gravity of its message. The hook, especially—a catchy, pleasant melody played on a synthesized flute and doubled by Sheriff humming—gives no hint of the song's serious message. In this way, "Sochira" reminds me of Peter Tosh's "Stepping Razor," particularly in the verses. In this song Tosh, who, along with Bunny Wailer and Marley, was one of the original Wailers, delivers a very serious message in a very pleasant tone. "If you wanna live / Treat me good," Tosh sings while guitarist Al Anderson plays a snaking, major key guitar line and Jamaican *nyhabinghi* drums beat in the background. Though lyrically Tosh is threatening to kill the person he is addressing, the arrangement and tonality suggest a relaxed, dancey vibe.

All of these musical elements have analogs in "Sochira." In both songs, the lead guitar solos throughout the song beneath the singer and percussion fills out the musical space (in "Sochira," Dagomba *lunga* drums replace the Jamaican *nyhabinghi*), and the weight of the songs message contrasts to the levity of its sound. These musical qualities, all indicative of the roots reggae style, sound a musical style that has strong associations with the socio-political goals of the Rastafari movement: most notably repatriation to Africa and reparations for former slaves and the global inequality of black people. In relation to these issues, the music seems to ask, what is the significance of the Dagbon Chieftaincy crisis?

Though "Sochira's" engaged listenership was very specific, the general listenership of the song was quite broad for a song released by a Dagomba artist.

In 2005, the song became well known throughout the whole country and very popular in Dagbon, and won Reggae Song of the Year at the Ghana Music Awards that year. This was quite unusual for a north Ghanaian artist based in the north, so the Dagomba listeners were acutely aware that this song was being heard outside of Dagbon. Even though the song's Dagbani lyrics were probably not widely understood outside of northern Ghana, "Sochira's" wide distribution most likely amplified the sentiment expressed in the second verse's concluding proverb: that the wider world's awareness of the Chieftaincy crisis was all the more reason to find a resolution.

This cosmopolitan awareness, along with a cosmopolitan ethics—the tolerance of pluralism, the realization of fallibility—both contribute to the power of a message designed to evoke an empathetic response in the listener base. "Sochira" allowed Dagombas, divided by an old grudge and a new wound, to imagine a unified Dagbon that politicians and peacemakers were unable to conjure. The realization of "Sochira's" power was made real in performances around Tamale. Sheriff describes playing the song at a large venue in Tamale: "the band played very softly as the crowd sung along from beginning to end, and when we got to that humming in the middle of the song, it was just so beautiful to [see] people from all political and chieftaincy divides in Tamale, male and female young and old humming together... and singing the song through..." (Facebook interview, 12/15/12). As mentioned above, "Sochira" was one of those instances when Sheriff realized that his voice had found resonance with the beliefs of "many many many more people than just yourself" (Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12). In

this case, as Sheriff articulated, that belief was that "[if] you believe in something, that's just what you believe, and if someone else believes in something [else], then you have a right to differ—we have to agree to disagree—but we don't have to kill each other over that" (Interview, 9/18/12).

### **Tiɛm Kɔm (The Guinea Worm Song)<sup>14</sup>**

Throughout his career, Sheriff has made a particular effort to contribute to the betterment of Ghanaian and Dagomba society through his music. This has taken many forms over the years: his second album in 1995 was funded by UNICEF, and was dedicated to a peaceful resolution of the Konkomba Nanumba Conflict that broke out in 1994; he wrote jingles promoting the use of iodized salt and hand washing; a cross-cultural collaborative project with musicians and artists in Denmark to raise funds to build a recording studio in Tamale; the list goes on. "The whole idea of these things," Sheriff said, "perhaps started coming in from my personal experiences and challenges. Because when you're facing these challenges you're kind of thinking: 'What can I do? Maybe I can build a bridge to help the next person after me walk past instead of facing the same challenges'" (Interview, 9/18/12). This sentiment is reminiscent of the obligation to others theorized as one of the tenets of Appiah's moral cosmopolitanism. Through Sheriff's cosmopolitanism, this international message is translated in to a north Ghanaian one from a local actor and for local people.

---

<sup>14</sup> Streaming audio of this song, as well as a short video of Sheriff teaching the response pattern to a young girl, is available at [http://www.cartercenter.org/news/features/h/guinea\\_worm/musician.html](http://www.cartercenter.org/news/features/h/guinea_worm/musician.html). Accessed 4/7/2013.

"Tiem Kɔm" was written as part of the effort to eradicate the Guinea worm parasite from Ghana. Guinea worm is a water-borne parasite that is found in stagnant water in Africa and Asia. The disease begins when the host ingests water infested with copepods (water fleas) that harbor the worm's larvae. After incubating for a year to 18 months within the host, then presents with the meter long, threadlike body of the female worm emerging from the skin through a painful blister, usually on the lower limbs. If this exposed worm comes into contact with water, larvae are released and that body of water will become infested. An infected person will frequently be in too much pain to do any work or go to school.<sup>15</sup>

In 1986, the Carter Center began an international campaign to eradicate the Guinea worm disease. In 1987, Ghana and Pakistan became the first country partners in this campaign. In 1989, nearly 180,000 cases of Guinea worm disease were reported in Ghana. To combat the spread of this disease, the Ghana Guinea Worm Eradication Program distributed nylon household filters and pipe filters to strain the fleas from the water, treated stagnant water sources with larvicide, advocacy with water organization, and promoting the construction and use of safer, hand-dug wells. The primary effort of this campaign, especially in Ghana, was educating the people on how to properly use the water filters provided by the Carter Center and various other aid organizations.

---

<sup>15</sup> Information in this section on the Carter Center's campaign for Guinea worm eradication comes from their website on the Ghanaian campaign (<http://www.cartercenter.org/countries/ghana-health-guinea-worm.html>, accessed 4/8/13), and the documentary film *Foul Water, Fiery Serpent*.



This education was done through publicity campaigns, and this is where Sheriff's contribution to the effort was focused. Working with the Carter Center, Sheriff played a number of concerts throughout northern Ghana. These concerts were primarily in rural areas, where the disease was most common, and were accompanied by educators and technicians from the Carter Center who lead tutorials during breaks in the music. To help the message land, Sheriff wrote a song to reinforce the technicians' instructions for water filtration. "Tiem kɔm ɛɔ" means "filter your water," and the song's lyrics serve to drive this point home. In Dagbani:

Chorus:

Tiem kɔm ɛɔ, tiem kɔm ɛɔ, tiem kɔm ɛɔ ngu nyerifu  
Tiem kɔm ɛɔ, tiem kɔm ɛɔ ngu nyerifu

First verse:

Nyerifu nyela kɔm doro, Nyerifu be la kɔm puni  
Mɔɔyɛli kɔm la doro mbɔɔɔ, kulga kɔm la doro mbɔɔɔ  
Nyerifu yi puhɛ nira `un di mali `a nkperi kulga puni  
Nyerifu yi kpe kɔm puni o gbuxiri la nyerigala mbahi  
Niri ɛun kam nyu kɔm ɛɔ nyerigala waxiri la o puni  
O ti yen giligi yuuni na nyerigala ni tooi puhɛ o ni

Second verse:

Mogoriba lahabali mbɔɔɔ yee, pukpariba lahabali mbɔɔɔ yee  
Mogoriba lahabali mbɔɔɔ yee, pukpariba lahabali mbɔɔɔ yee  
A yi mali shili nchani mɔɔu polo, a kavisheekotierigu la  
A yi mali shili nchani puu polo, a kalambookotierigu la  
Kuli chali ka di yelli a nyingoli ni  
Kɔm kam ka a yi yen nyu, nyin zaɔ li kpa li nnyu  
Kɔm kam ka a yi yen nyu, nyin zaɔ li kpa li nnyu  
Dini gu a ka che nyerifu, dini gu a ka che nyerifu yee

And in English:

Filter your water to prevent Guinea worm (x2)

Guinea worm disease is water borne  
It is from our dams, it's from our water sources  
If you have guinea worm disease, do not expose it to the water source  
In the water it lays its eggs  
And whoever drinks from thereof incubates the eggs in them  
And by the next year, they may be attacked by guinea worm disease

This message is to the bush-men and farmers (x2)  
Remember your pipe filter whenever you leave home for the bush (x2)  
Just hang it around your neck  
And any water you drink must be through your pipe filter (x4)  
It will protect you from the guinea worm disease (x2)

This song, as can be seen from the lyrics, is not a poetic expression of self like "Sochira." The song is meant to be a way of getting the Charter Center technicians' instructions stuck in people's heads. The irresistibly catchy chorus delivers the pithy and direct message at the root of the Carter Center's eradication program. It is sung in a call-and-response style, with the first line sung by Sheriff's solo voice and the second line sung by a chorus. This choral response continues through the first verse, so as Sheriff describes what the disease is and how it's transmitted, the response group, which is intended to include the audience in this circumstance, sings back "Filter your water to prevent Guinea worm." The repetition of this line and the catchiness of the chorus were crafted to make the most Carter Center technicians' most crucial message easily memorable.

The second verse identifies and appeals to the demographic that aid workers had the hardest time getting to use the filtering techniques. Pipe filters are small, hard plastic straws with nylon filtering on one end designed specifically for prevention within this demographic. When bushmen and herders went out into rural areas for long periods of time, larger filtration systems—usually consisting

of 5 or 10 gallon buckets with filter screens that fit over the top—were impractical, so water was drunk unfiltered, leaving them open to becoming infected. 144,000 were distributed in northern Ghana in 2005. "Tiem Kɔm," performed in rural concerts around 2006, reinforced the instructions of using pipe filters that Carter Center technicians had had a difficult time driving home. As Sheriff said: "One reason I do this is to get the song sung so many times. As I sing the song with the kids, the people listen to us singing the song over and over. If all the people get to know what they can do to prevent Guinea worm, how they can handle their Guinea worm cases, it is the foremost power to solving the problem" (Carter Center 2009).

In a video available on the Carter Center's website,<sup>16</sup> Sheriff teaches a little girl to sing the response line at a 2006 concert in Savelugu. The video is adorable: the girl is clearly quite shy and nervous to be up on stage, and her voice wavers as she responds to Sheriff's lines. They sing the chorus and part of the first verse before Sheriff, tickled by the young girl's bashfulness, laughs, congratulates her, and turns to the crowd. The camera changes and pans across the crowd, and we see the mass of hundreds of people gathered to see the concert. Sheriff's star was high in 2006: he had just won the 2005 award for Reggae Song of the Year at the Ghana Music Awards for "Sochira," and concerts in rural areas drew thousands of people from villages in the bush to see him play. It was a powerful confluence of circumstances that resulted in a successful prong of the Carter Center's campaign to eradicate the disease. As Carter Center technician Laura Barrett expressed to

---

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.cartercenter.org/news/features/h/guinea\\_worm/musician.html](http://www.cartercenter.org/news/features/h/guinea_worm/musician.html). Accessed 4/9/13.

me, it took the right person at the right time to make the message land successfully, and Sheriff was able to do that in this case.

Sheriff took this transnational health message and made it feel like a north Ghanaian message. The things that the Carter Center technicians were teaching were the same techniques being taught in Pakistan, Mali, Sudan, and Chad, but because a local celebrity earnestly and passionately helped to deliver this message, it was made more effective. Today, Ghana is free of the Guinea worm disease. The Carter Center ended their operations in Ghana in August 2011 after reporting no endemic cases for 14 months. Sheriff's contribution to the campaign was just one part of a far-reaching multimedia effort to spread awareness about the disease, but it was an effective one, especially in the communities he played for.

Sheriff feels that this and other humanitarian projects that he has been a part of are an essential part of encouraging Ghanaians to think critically. In his words:

"The motivation has been that I have come to feel that activism—the idea of an artist being an activist and impacting society in some way—[is] much more useful to society rather than just being an entertainer. So if I want to get people thinking intellectually, I also want to play a role and be seen as an integral part of the community, and that will mean being practically applicable and useful in the society or community. That has been one of my core beliefs, and that is how I got connected with people at the Guinea worm office who found that it was a beautiful idea to use art to contribute to health education, generally." (Interview, 9/18/12)

Here Sheriff connects an obligation to others with his effort to get people to think critically by listening to his music. Thinking intellectually is part of what Sheriff believes it means to be properly educated, and the ability to think critically about society and community requires an awareness of other communities, regional, national, and transnational. So here, a moral cosmopolitanism plays through the

music of a rooted cosmopolitan in an effort to better the quality of living as well as engender a cosmopolitan awareness in his own community. As a role model in northern Ghana, engaging in this effort through collaboration with a transnational aid organization encourages likeminded thinking.

## **Conclusion**

I have shown that with the spread of Rastafari ideology through reggae and the resonance of "Sochira's" message of peace, it is possible for value systems and ideologies to be carried across and within national borders through musical transmission. Through Sheriff's rooted cosmopolitanism, these transnational messages are recoded so that they are not first and foremost from a foreign place; instead their most important quality is that they seek to connect people as part of an effort to better the quality of life for north Ghanaians.

This is not to say, though, that reggae and humanitarian activism lose their cosmopolitan character in local interpretation—it is just that they become "localized" to the north Ghanaian context. With the social awareness of reggae contextualizing a regional conflict and the local celebrity delivering an international humanitarian message, it is impossible to discuss the cosmopolitanism of these situations without talking about both the transnational characteristics and moral qualities inherent in these situations. In such circumstances, "foreign" ideologies, morals, technologies, and medias can come to be perceived as "local" in such a way that distinguishing them as one or the other becomes difficult, and alternative identities can begin to be accepted along with more traditional—or at least older—ones.

Sheriff articulated this very clearly during his visit to Boston. During his guest lectures, he was asked the question "If someone were to ask you 'What are your goals in life?' how do you respond?" Sheriff's answer was anecdotal, so if you'll permit me to quote at length:

"My first and most important goal is to discover myself. ... Search within myself, find out who I am, what I have in stock. When I find this, I will accept it, and I have accepted it. And when I accept it, I will manifest it. I will not be shy to show it off, to show it to everybody. I believe that when I do that, people accept it, and it has worked for me a lot, both at home and where I am now. Everywhere I go I find that people have at least some amount of reception for me. I just cut off my dread about a month ago. I grew my hair for about 12 years. When I started out, my mother didn't like it. She wanted me to cut it. But I just—respectfully—got her to understand that it was just my hair. It was nothing; it was just my hair. It doesn't change anything. So as I kept it for a number of years, she finally got to understand that. And when I cut my hair she was unhappy. [Laughter.] But when I cut my hair, I didn't have any reason—anybody pushing me to cut it. When I was a teacher also; some people have had challenges being a teacher and having dreadlocks. Some educational authorities would try to stop them from teaching, but I was luck not to have those challenges. Back at home, also, I have prayed and usually pray with one of most conservative Muslim groups in the Tamale area, and I grew my hair. Many people think they won't ever allow you to step foot in the mosque, but I did, and I went there confidently. Sometimes covered, sometimes uncovered, and nobody ever said anything. I believe that when you find out who you are and you accept yourself as who you are, just be sure that you also remember that as much as you accept who you are, it is just your freedom, and everybody else has his or her own freedom, and you have to respect that. So I would not take the fact that I accept who I am to want to abuse anybody else's freedom. So I try to stay within my personality and show respect to you, and you show respect to me, and that works very much for me. And that appears to be my ultimate goal. Food, drink, shelter, clothes: these are necessities. I find them because they are necessary. They are not my ultimate goal very much. I must have them, so, yeah... so they are incorporated into my life. But my personal goal is to see who I am, and as long as I see that, I feel accomplished. Really, really satisfied and accomplished. And I feel so much at peace." (Guest lecture #1, 9/18/12)

Here Sheriff articulates how his cosmopolitanism—in both the prescriptive and descriptive senses—are interrelated and inextricable from one another as part

of his identity. As such, it is impossible to address either one as part of one or the other distinct discourse, as Perman suggests, would give an incomplete account of his ethos and world-view. Cosmopolitanism, like the way humans find meaning and value in their lives, must be accepted as plural, no parts of which are necessarily "mutually untenable."

## Conclusion

So a cosmopolitan person can engage with cosmopolitanism in more than one way. Perman's assertion that theorizations of cosmopolitanism that "emerge out of [a particular] author's specific scholarly subject" are "mutually untenable" does not hold in an analysis of the life and work of Sheriff Ghale. Sheriff's ethos and world-view occupy a number of circles in the Venn diagram of cosmopolitanism: moral, reggae, rooted, vernacular, patriot, hip hop, Muslim, etc. All of these as well as myriad non-cosmopolitan influences are the story of Tamale, resonating through one of its citizens.

So this is how my understanding of cosmopolitanism evolved. It began very one dimensional, as something that either could or could not describe a person or group. Then it became a two dimensional spectrum: a person could be more or less cosmopolitan. But this was insufficient, as there are many different ways that one can be described as a cosmopolitan, and they should not be mutually exclusive. This is where I stopped, as it was the limit of what the ethnographic evidence I had to present would allow. But I don't think that this formulation of cosmopolitanism is entirely sufficient.

Cosmopolitanism is not necessarily a set of ethical guidelines to live life by, nor a particular ethos or world-view gained from some form of engagement with a transnational cultural formation, though it can certainly be these things. Defining it as such, though, makes the pluralism of cosmopolitanism more difficult to realize. The Venn diagram metaphor I have offered doesn't quite work because people's lives aren't usually comprised of clearly defined circles. We could think



of cosmopolitanism in three dimensions, allowing for the creative and destructive power of hybridity. This Venn diagram might be painted with watercolors: each a different consistency and irregularly applied. Some circles—such as the moral, reggae, and vernacular cosmopolitanisms represented above—blend beautifully with others, creating splendid colors. Sometimes a confluence of circles results in a putrid brown, the excess moisture causing the paper to crinkle and warp. We could even think of this metaphor in four dimensions, as the interaction of cosmopolitanisms happening over time. We could think of cosmopolitanism as the realization, the sentiment, and the acceptance that this plurality of engagements is how people construct their ethos and world-view.

However, these might be ambitious topics to approach solely through the analytical rubric of cosmopolitanism. When examining how a person or group of persons balance engagement with cosmopolitanisms with behaviors and ideologies representative of his, her, or their indigenous culture, issues of hybridity and syncretism come to the fore. I have avoided these discussions here, foregoing analysis of how Sheriff balances "foreign" and "domestic" influences in order to focus on the issues of cosmopolitanism that I wanted to address. In the continuation of this project, which would most likely take the form of a full biography of Sheriff Ghale or an excursus on the community of popular musicians in Tamale, I would make sure to balance discussions of cosmopolitanism with discussions of indigenous influences or the resistance of particular cosmopolitanisms.

I hope that I have presented cosmopolitanism in such a way that the following is clear, but just in case: cosmopolitanism should not be perceived as a discourse that avoids addressing conflict. Though in cases like Sheriff's, his cosmopolitanism, apparent in the dreadlocks he wore for twelve years, never prevented him from living his life as he wanted to—praying at the mosque, being a schoolteacher—this is not the case with all cosmopolitans. In a recent article by Brent Luvaas, he writes about a community of young, middle-class Indonesian cosmopolitans who play a style of Western indie pop music that eschews all local influence. However, their music is perceived as derivative and corny by Western audiences, so they are caught between local and transnational communities, "no longer content with what Indonesia can provide, but unable to become full citizens of the 'world community'" (2009: 263). Their cosmopolitanism can be a burden.

Another issue to address in the continuation of this project is that of scope. As Turino (2003) suggests, cosmopolitanism pluralizes globalization in part by drawing attention to the fact that most of the forces of "globalization" are not strictly "global." They may occupy numerous and far-flung parts of the globe, but not *all* of it. The cosmopolitan formations that Turino addresses are usually approach this upper limit: modernist-capitalism, nationalism, etc. These could be considered to approach an upper limit of cosmopolitan scope, but what about a lower limit? The musical cosmopolitanisms that Stokes and Feld address are far smaller: Turkish music and jazz do not have close to the same scope and breadth of cosmopolitan dispersion as Turino's formations do. Perman argues that

*sungura*, a popular musical genre in southeastern Africa, is not a cosmopolitan genre, resisting the temptation to conceptualize it as a "regionally specific cosmopolitan formation" because "cosmopolitanism might be unnecessary and even misleading as a term to describe the ties that bind these communities and their music" (2012: 395).

Perman's wariness presumably stems from stigmas attached to the common sense usage of the term, which is a valid concern. To open a short, introductory presentation on cosmopolitan to a class of mixed-major undergraduates, I asked them what I might mean if I were to describe a person as "cosmopolitan."<sup>17</sup> Three answers were offered: 1) someone who lives in a city; 2) someone who is elitist; and 3) someone who is comfortable in any culture. It is the second response, I think, that causes Perman's cautiousness. *Comme des Garçons*-person still springs to mind when the word "cosmopolitan" is mentioned, and Perman did not want to apply this association to *sungura* musicians.

But what about *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra*? Feld's conceptualization of cosmopolitanism did not carry with it the term's elitist stigma. In this thesis, Feld was my entrance into the discourse on cosmopolitanism, and I think it's fitting that I come full circle to close with him. Feld's usage of the term avoids elitist implications because it he addresses not just cosmopolitanism or even jazz cosmopolitanism, but jazz cosmopolitanism in Accra. In specifying a particular point of resonance in a particular cosmopolitan formation, Feld was able to address "how cosmopolitanism, mine, others', is embodied, lived, uneven,

---

<sup>17</sup> This was Prof. David Locke's Music as Culture class at Tufts University, in the Spring of 2013. I was the TA of this class.

complicated," without the specter of Comme des Garçons-person haunting his pages (Feld 2012: 7). This is what I have striven to show here as well: that cosmopolitanism is part of how Sheriff lives his life. For Sheriff, though, it is not just reggae cosmopolitanism, but many cosmopolitanisms and non-cosmopolitanisms that tell a story of Tamale.

## Bibliography

- Ahorsu, Ken and Boni Yao Gebe. 2011. "Governance and Security in Ghana: The Dagbon Chieftaincy Crisis." *West African Civil Society Institute*: Accra, Ghana. <http://wacsi.org/en/site/publications/864/Governance-and-Security-in-Ghana-The-Dagbon-Chieftaincy-title.htm>. Accessed October 30, 2012.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1997. "Cosmopolitan Patriots." *Critical Inquiry* 23 (3): 617–639.
- . 2006. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Blake Hannah, Barbara Makeda. 2006. "Reparations: Rastafari Pathway to World Peace." In *Rastafari: A Universal Philosophy in the Third Millennium*, edited by Werner Zips. Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle. 119-128.
- Carter Center. 2009. "Ghanaian Reggae Artist Sings Out Against Guinea Worm Disease, Educates Concert-Goers About Prevention." May 29. [http://www.cartercenter.org/news/features/h/guinea\\_worm/musician.html](http://www.cartercenter.org/news/features/h/guinea_worm/musician.html). Accessed April 9, 2013.
- Cheah, Pheng. 2006. "Cosmopolitanism." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (2-3): 486–496.
- Clifford, James. 1992. "Traveling Cultures." In *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler. New York and London: Routledge. p. 96-116.
- Collins, John. 2012. "Contemporary Ghanaian Popular Music Since the 1980s." In *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, edited by Eric Charry. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 211-233.
- Feld, Stephen. 2012. *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana*. Duke University Press: Durham and London.
- Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1957. "Ethos, World-View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols." *The Antioch Review* 17 (4): 421-437.

- Ghanaian Census Results, 1984-2010. <http://www.geohive.com/cntry/ghana.aspx>. Accessed April 1, 2013.
- Harvey, David. 2009. *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Issahaku, Natogomah. 2005. "Dagbon Chieftaincy Crisis: A Sad Saga of Animosity, Vendetta, and Disunity... What Next?" <http://dagbon.net/yela/dagbonchieftaincy.pdf>. Accessed November 16, 2012.
- Kleingeld, Pauline, and Eric Brown. 2011. "Cosmopolitanism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Spring 2011. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/cosmopolitanism/>. Accessed March 15, 2013.
- Laurence, Felicity. 2008. "Music and Empathy." In *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*, edited by Olivier Urbain. London and New York: I.B. Tauris. 13-25.
- Luvaas, Brent. 2009. "Dislocating Sounds: The Deterritorialization of Indonesian Indie Pop." *Cultural Anthropology* 24 (2): 246–279.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 2006. "Death of a King, Death of a Kingdom? Social Pluralism and Succession to High Office in Dagbon, Northern Ghana." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. Vol. 44, no. 1. 79-99.
- . 2013. *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 1994 (2010). "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism." In *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, edited by Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity. 155–162.
- . 1997. *Cultivating Humanity: a Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Harvard University Press.
- Perman, Tony. 2012. "Sungura in Zimbabwe and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 21 (3): 374.
- Primoratz, Igor. 2009. "Patriotism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2009. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/patriotism/>. Accessed March 15, 2013.

- Savishinsky, Neil J. 1993. *Rastafari in the promised land: the spread of a Jamaican socio-religious movement and its music and culture among the youth of Ghana and Senegambia*. Diss. Columbia University.
- Shiple, Jesse Weaver. 2012. "The Birth of Ghanaian Hiplife: Urban Style, Black Thought, Proverbial Speech." In *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, edited by Eric Charry. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 29-56.
- . 2013. *Living the Hiplife: Celebrity and Entrepreneurship in Ghanaian Popular Music*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Solomon, Thomas. 2006. "Hardcore Muslims: Islamic Themes in Turkish Rap in Diaspora and in the Homeland." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 38: 59-78.
- Staniland, Martin. 1975. *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*. Cambridge University Press: New York.
- Stokes, Martin. 2008. 'On Musical Cosmopolitanism'. *Macalester International* 21(8). <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol21/iss1/8>. Accessed 2/7/2013.
- "Tamale." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. New York: Columbia UP, 2013. <http://www.credoreference.com/entry.do?id=11668065>. Accessed April 1, 2013.
- Turino, Thomas. 2000. *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Turino, Thomas. 2003. "Are We Global yet? Globalist Discourse, Cultural Formations and the Study of Zimbabwean Popular Music." *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 12 (2): 51-79.
- Wittmann, Frank. 2011. "The Global-local Nexus: Popular Music Studies and the Case of Rastafari Culture in West Africa." *Critical Arts*. 25 (2): 150-174.
- Werbner, Pnina. 2006. "Vernacular Cosmopolitanism." *Theory, Culture & Society*. 23: 496-498.
- . 2008. *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*. Oxford: Berg.
- Zips, Werner. 2006. "'Repatriation is a Must!' The Rastafari Struggle to Utterly Destrory Slavery." In *Rastafari: A Universal Philosophy in the Third Millennium*, edited by Werner Zips. Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle. 129-168.