

The Tradition of Invention: The *Kamalengoni* Harp in Mali and Burkina Faso

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Abstract

This thesis presents the first large-scale study of the performance technicalities, organology, and cross-cultural appropriation of a West African bridge harp called the *kamalengoni*. Since a group of young musicians in the 1950s circumvented the musical and esoteric restrictions of the *donsongoni* (hunters' harp) by inventing the *kamalengoni* (youth harp), the latter continuously takes new forms within its homeland in Mali and recently in neighbouring Burkina Faso. This thesis explains how *kamalengoni* players appropriate, dismantle, and reassemble old and adjacent harp traditions to re-design, re-signify and insert themselves into an inventive tradition. My primary research question is: What musical thinking, performance techniques, composition processes, and inventiveness win the approval of other *kamalengoni* players and are celebrated by the wider culture? Other questions include: What motivates *kamalengoni* players to constantly invent? How is knowledge communicated between musicians, and how do *kamalengoni* players assess the performance standard of their peers? Has the *kamalengoni* been institutionalised, and if so, with what consequences? Can and do women play the *kamalengoni*? I found that contemporary *kamalengoni* players are invested in provoking change, engendering surprise, and asserting individuality rather than establishing and protecting a strict set of conventions. By inverting Hobsbawm and Ranger's well-established theory presented in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), I

demonstrate that unlike the preservationist motivation found in adjacent hunter and *griot* harp traditions, the *kamalengoni* is a tradition of invention in which its players' main mission is to distinguish themselves through displays of individualistic creativity and imagination. Using performance as research as my principal research method, I draw from my musical experience and data collected during thirteen months of fieldwork in Mali, Burkina Faso, and France. My findings are illustrated with transcription and analysis, ethnographic writing, edited fieldwork footage, a lecture demonstration video, and an ensemble recital video.

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Orthography and Pronunciation

Bamanankan (also known as Bambara) is a Mandé language of the Niger-Congo classification. It is one of a cluster of northern Mandé languages that linguist Charles Bird (et al. 1977) designated as Mandékan. Other languages in the group include Maninka (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Mali) and Mandinka (The Gambia and southern Senegal). Bamanankan is the first language for approximately fifteen million people in Mali (80% of the population) and has numerous mutually intelligible dialects, including Somono, Segou, San, Beledugu, Ganadugu, Sikasso, and Wasulunke, which is spoken in the Wasulu region of Mali. Standard Bamanankan is the most widely spoken African language in Bamako and it was the language used during my fieldwork in Mali.¹

Bamanankan has twenty-one consonants, seven oral vowels (which can be short or long), and one syllabic nasal (Figure i.i), *n* only when connected with a vowel as in *kamalen* (young man) or consonants *ngoni* (harp). The grave accent (`) is often used to contract pronouns and verbs, similar to “I am going” and “I’m going.” For example, “*ne be taa*” turns into “*n’ taa*” (I’m going/I go).

¹ I was also able to communicate with Wasulunke speakers, and while undertaking research in Burkina Faso I communicated with Julakan speakers, a closely related language spoken primarily Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso.

Vowels		Consonants	
Written	Pronunciation in British English	Written	Pronunciation in British English
a	cut	b	bat
e	take	c	chat
ε	bet	d	dance
i	bee	f	father
o	show	g	get
ɔ	got	h	hat
u	glue	j	just
		k	key
		l	lost
		m	mind
		n	net
		ɲ / ny	canyon
		ŋ ²	song
		p	past
		r	no English equivalent ³
		s	sit
		t	tap
		w	water
		y	youth
		z	zebra

Figure i.i: The Bamanankan alphabet and its loosely equivalent British English pronunciations.

² There are only a few words in Bamanankan that uses the letter “ŋ.”

³ There is no true equivalent for the Bamanankan *r* in French or English. The Bamanankan *r* requires a tap of the tip of the tongue against the ridged area of the mouth roof exactly behind the front teeth, whereas the English *r* is often a liquid sound while the French velar is pronounced in the back of the mouth.

Bamanankan is a true tone language with two relative speech tones. High tones are marked by acute accents and low tones are left unmarked: for example, *só* (house) and *so* (horse). Although the orthography changed in 1967 and low tones do not necessarily have to be represented with diacritical marks, using acute accents as a system convention is still generally accepted and adopted.⁴ Speech tones are not marked in this thesis as this is not necessary to convey the musical analyses.

Bamanankan special characters are often substituted by è (ɛ) / ò (o) /ng (ŋ) /gn (ɲ, ny) for ease of use. Plurals in Bamanankan are indicated by *w* (pronounced as [u]) at the end of nouns. For example, *kamalengoni* (sing. youth harp), *kamalengoniw* (pl. youth harps).

This thesis also uses Brazilian Portuguese and the Nagô lexicon used for prayers and lyrics in Afro-Brazilian religions. The diacritics used for Portuguese and Nagô are the tilde (˜), which nasalises vowels, the acute accent (´) for stress and open vowels, the circumflex (^) to designate stress and for close vowels, the cedilla (ç) for ç (as in English s) and the grave accent (`) to indicate the contraction of two consecutive vowels (e.g., a + as = às).

⁴ Pers. comm., Wilfred Wiley, London, UK, 18.6.21.

Conventions

The Bamanankan language in this thesis uses special characters but does not use diacritics to indicate speech tones (see Orthography and Pronunciation). The exception is Mandé names, where diacritics are included. All foreign language words are italicized throughout the thesis. Translations are in parentheses on first appearance and frequently used foreign words and terms can be found in the Glossary of Foreign Words and Musical Terms. Where English translations appear in the main text, the source language text appears in a footnote. Foreign language song and instrumental piece titles are followed by a translation in parentheses. Selected musical transcriptions and figures are illustrated with audio-visual examples in the Lecture Demonstration video, the Recital video, and the DVD. These are signposted with the symbol (*) in the List of Video and DVD Examples, the main text, captions, and footnotes.

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Acknowledgements

I came across a proverb in Mali that speaks to my journey: *Ni i ye, i pan dakɔɔba bokuna, o tɛ fɛn kɛ i la. Mɛ ni i ye i pan a kumakan kuna i bɛ a sɔɔ i ye fɛ* (You can jump over a wise person's defecation and no harm will come to you, but if you jump over his words, you will find them ahead on your path). I was very fortunate to cross paths with many wise *dankɔɔbaw* (men) and *dankɔɔbamusow* (women) in Brazil, West Africa, and Europe. They are musicians, scholars and friends who helped me on my academic journey.

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Two wise women did the impossible to make sure I survived the *favelas* (shanty towns) of Rio de Janeiro so I could pursue the dreams that took me through Europe and to the extraordinary musical soundscapes of Mali and Burkina Faso. Neither knew how to read or write even their own names, but they deserve PhDs for negotiating the *favela*'s daily hardships with their *malandrags* (survival strategies), allowing me to be where I am today. Thank you, my late grandmother, Aldeide Pereira da Silva, and my late mother, Mariete Pereira Ramos.

0. Introduction

A life in flight

As I arrive at the Bobo-Dioulasso bus terminal around 9am, I see traders selling rams for the upcoming Tabaski, a one-day festival that marks the end of Ramadan. Dressed in African attire to show respect for the holiday, I wander around in search of coffee, hauling my luggage full of recording equipment, with a *kamalengoni* over my shoulder. Most of the bars and coffee shops are closed for Tabaski but I find a small bar on a main road a few minutes from the bus station.

As I enter the bar, I see a man who appears to be the owner, a woman cleaning the floor, and some people across the room chatting and drinking. I greet the proprietors in Bamanankan (as I speak no French) and settle for a soft drink when discovering they don't serve coffee. The woman chats in Julakan, a Burkinabe language close to Malian Bamanankan and she becomes curious, asking,

“Are you from Mali? From the sound of it, you're not Burkinabe.”

The owner is quiet and seems uncomfortable. I find a quiet spot in the room and gaze at the cars, buses, motorcycles, people on foot, and animals passing by outside. While waiting for my drink, I rest my *kamalengoni* and luggage on a chair and slip my hand into my backpack to find my telephone charger. I put my headphones on and immerse myself in fieldnotes and videos. The sound of Burkinabe and Malian musicians playing their acoustic harps is interrupted by someone shouting in French. I raise my eyes to the sight of five heavily armed soldiers pointing guns at me; I can't understand a word they're shouting. I look outside and see a vehicle with three more soldiers, then I swing around to look behind me. Everybody has disappeared. I have a flashback to looking down the gun barrels of police and gangsters during my childhood in Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* (slums), so I know to stay

calm. As I slowly take off my headphones, a soldier moves in and puts his gun to my head.

He's speaking French and I reply in Bamanankan:

"I can't speak French, sorry." Another soldier asks in Julakan,

"Why are you here?"

"To meet a friend."

"Give me your passport." As I move towards my backpack, three more guns are pressed to my head.

"Slowly!" The commanding soldier doesn't look convinced by my passport, dated only 2016 but battered from months of fieldwork. He gazes at the dreadlocked man in the picture, then at the shaved head in front of him. He's confused by the West African name, Kouyaté. Telling him that I am a Brazilian musician with British citizenship, also known by the stage name Gaio, doesn't help. But explaining that I had changed my name to Zé Aruanã Kouyaté appears to make things worse. Still with guns at my head, I empty my backpack on the table in front of me. A soldier examines the other bag and finds my harp. He orders me to pack my things and leave with the soldiers.

"Why do I have to go with you? Am I being arrested?" My captor looks at me seriously and repeats,

"Pack everything. We're going."

My heart starts to beat faster as I wonder why I'm being taken, fearing that maybe these men are not from the army but are *ihadists* in soldiers' uniforms, kidnapping tourists in the city. I am panicking now but I try not to show it. I learned in the *favela* that you can negotiate with the police but never with the army, but I know nothing about talking to *ihadists*. They take my luggage, and we walk towards the jeep, where three more uniformed men wait. I remember that I haven't paid for my drink and ask my captors if I can go back into the bar.

"Get in the jeep!" My heart is racing, I'm in a bit of panic knowing I can't escape this situation. I take out my phone and call my main contact in Burkina Faso, Siaka Sanou, but the soldier next to me tells me to put down my phone. I plead that I just want to make sure someone knows where I'm going. He tells me a second time,

“Put it down.” As I move the phone from my ear, I let it keep ringing in the hope that Siaka will pick up and hear my conversation with the soldiers.

“Where exactly are we are going? There’s no reason to take me anywhere.” I feel helpless and distressed and as I start thinking about my family and friends in Brazil and the UK, I pay attention to my surroundings and try to memorize the route. As we arrive at the army barracks after around fifteen minutes, I’m relieved that I’m not in the hands of *jihadists* after all and my heart starts to slow down. They usher me to the corner of an outside patio, where I sit in silence under the watch of a soldier. After half an hour, they take me to a room; it’s hot as hell. A soldier speaks to me in French, and I reply in Bamanankan,

“I can’t speak French.” Surprised, he replies in Julakan.

“They told me you’re from Brazil, right?” I nod and smile,

“Yes. Have you ever been there?” In a more friendly tone, he says,

“No, but I saw the Brazilian movie *City of God*, and I love Ronaldinho [the Brazilian football player], the beach and the women there; they are gorgeous. My mother and my sisters love Brazilian *telenovelas* [soap operas]. I’d love to go to Brazil one day. I want to marry a Brazilian woman.” We’re both laughing until a senior officer suddenly arrives and tells the guard to leave. Someone starts to translate from French into Julakan, and Bamanankan back into French.

“What’s your business here?”

“I’m doing research about the *kamalengoni* in Mali and Burkina Faso.”

“It’s strange that a researcher can’t speak French, our official language.”

“It’s better for my research to speak Bamanankan, but I’d love to learn French.”

He interrogates me for an hour about my background, where I am staying, my plans, and when I will leave the city. Then I wait, again.

Some hours after leaving the bar, I’m finally allowed to turn on my phone so my interrogator can call my friend Siaka and verify my story. I give the translator his number and he exits, leaving my captor and me in more intense silence due to the language barrier. My anxiety builds when I’m told that the number is not working. I hand over another

number for a well-known Burkinabe singer and *kamalengoni* player, Rama N’Goni. The translator lights up.

“Is this the singer who’s always on radio and TV?”

“Yes, I was waiting for her when your soldiers found me.” After more uncomfortable anticipation, the translator tells us that Rama is on her way to the barracks. I’m taken back to the patio and wait for another hour before she appears. Rama moves close to me and asks,

“Are you OK?”

“I am now.” As my captor asks her to follow him, she jokes,

“What have you done to these people Kouyaté?” She returns after half an hour with some soldiers and tells me I am free to go. Relieved, I turn to the soldier who brought me to the barracks.

“Why was I detained?”

“The manager called us to say that there was a suicide bomber in his bar.” Rama looks at me surprised and says,

“Gaio, you’re a Brazilian *jihadist* now!” Everyone laughs as my passport is returned to me and we walk towards the barracks gate.

Although it ended peacefully and with humour, this terrifying experience on 16 August 2017 in Bobo-Dioulasso revealed the distress many people in Mali and Burkina Faso are suffering daily. For just one day, I was immersed in the realities of terror in Burkina Faso, just long enough to deepen my understanding of the experiences of the many people suffering or escaping Islamic fundamentalism, which prohibits all music. While internationally mobile musicians from the region have led the drive for global awareness of this unprecedented conflict situation,¹

¹ For example, at Glastonbury in 2013, Malian artists Fatoumata Diawara, Bassekou Kouyaté, Rokia Traoré and the Tuareg rock band Terakaft were outspoken about the violence and ban on music in Mali and its impact on musicians. Diawara, who composed a song called “Peace,” has been a

there have been waves of Malian musicians from the occupied north crossing the border into Burkina Faso. Some of these musicians brought the *kamalengoni* tradition to the country. (See Figure 0.1, which shows the regions of Burkina Faso deemed by the UK government as too dangerous for travellers).

Only in retrospect did I appreciate that my experience in Bobo-Dioulasso was also petrifying for others. When the Burkinabe woman in the bar remarked that my accent seemed to be from northern Mali, I naïvely perceived it as a compliment. At the time, I was unaware that my speech, attire, and complexion had probably identified me as a Malian Tuareg, one of the ethnicities that joined the *jihād* concentrated in northern Mali and spilling over into Burkina Faso. As my location and social circumstances have often been in flux during my mobile adult life outside of Brazil, I am constantly reshaping my identity in response to new environments. I continue to encounter new forms of racism, but I had never expected to receive the light-skin discrimination I experienced during my time in Burkina Faso, nor had I imagined that my perceived identity could put my life at risk while generating confusion and distress for others. While immersion is a powerful tool for ethnographic research, I was brutally alerted to the risks of doing fieldwork in unstable political regions. Negotiating daily violence during my childhood in the *favelas* had cultivated a capacity to stay calm that may well have saved my life in a West African bar.

particularly high-profile activist, with a growing global media presence and a lead role in the acclaimed feature film *Timbuktu*.

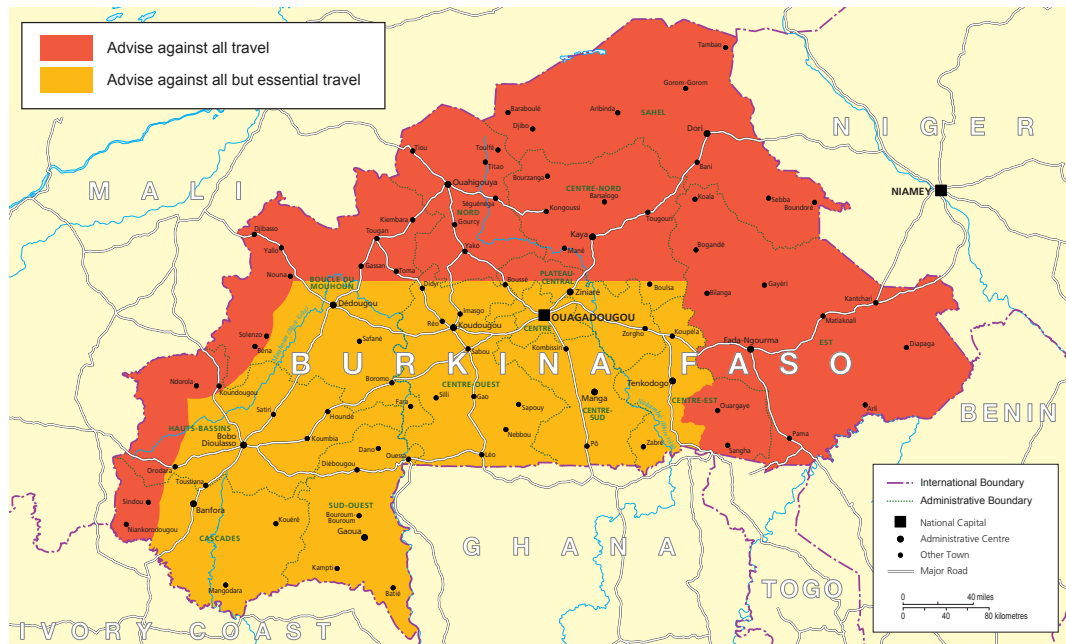


Figure 0.1: Map of Burkina Faso.²

Although my lack of French occasionally placed me in situations of confusion and considerable danger during my fieldwork, my ability to speak Bamanankan helped me to overcome most difficulties. The decision to learn Bamanankan rather than French in preparation for my West African research allowed me to interact with *kamalengoni* players unable to speak French and to offer emic insight into the music I was studying. I realised early in my artistic career, and later during my academic journey, that being polylingual allowed me pivotal access to new spaces, people, and knowledge.³ Although my research respondents greatly appreciated my Bamanankan skills, West Africans are not particularly impressed by polyglots as the ability to speak several languages in large, ethnically dense West African cities such as both Bobo-Dioulasso and Bamako, is usual and crucial for locals.

² See <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/burkina-faso> [Accessed: 14.1.20].

³ I am a native speaker of Brazilian Portuguese and learned Italian, Spanish, and English as an adult.

Before arriving in Burkina Faso, I had experienced political tensions in Mali in July 2015 in the capital, Bamako, then later, in July 2017, during a visit further north into Mopti, a town close to a region contested by *jihadist* rebels. Soon after my unfortunate experience with the soldiers in Burkina Faso, I performed with Rama in a village between the towns of Ténado and Nouna, where the tension felt remarkably similar to Mopti. Rama's friends spoke of how frequent kidnappings were affecting business, particularly at the big music festivals which rely on foreign tourists. The *jihadist* threat, however, is even stronger in the capital, Ouagadougou, where terrorist attacks have been escalating since I completed my fieldwork. Yet despite this uncertain future, musicians are struggling to execute their art and continue to do so with passion and perseverance despite the pervasive danger.

Beyond the extremes of social deprivation, poverty, and political oppression in Mali and Burkina Faso, musicians have, nevertheless, great social power outside of the constraints of fundamentalist Islam. When Rama arrived in the barracks to secure my release, I witnessed how happy and excited the soldiers were, beckoning their colleagues to come and meet her. Having this local celebrity vouching for me elevated my status as a musician and, ultimately, as a person. Observing how Rama exploited her charisma, artistic status, and social mobility to extract me from dangerous circumstances among powerful men is captured by the Brazilian lyrics, “*não existe malandragem pra mulher*” (no *malandragem* can outsmart a woman).⁴ These words communicate women's powerful capacity to deploy *malandragem*, a Brazilian concept underpinning my thesis. *Malandragem* comprises a set of shrewd

⁴ From the song “Malandro Também Chora” (A Malandro Also Cries) by Neguinho da Beija Flor, (CBS 1989). See <https://www.discogs.com/Neguinho-da-Beija-Flor-Carente-De-Afeto/release/9105666> [Accessed: 30.12.19].

behaviours that can lift an individual out of difficult circumstances. One who has successfully exploited *malandragem* can be labelled as a *malandro* (or, in the case of women, *malandra*), which is a common expression referring to performance excellence in Brazilian music, arts, and sport. Like the female vocalists involved in *wassoulou* music, the Malian genre from Wasulu with the *kamalengoni* at its heart, Rama exudes social savvy and power and is indeed exceptional, being one of the rare *malandras* playing the harp.⁵

My identity as a suspected *jihadist* was thankfully short-lived, yet for the Burkinabe soldiers, it initially seemed more plausible that I was a *jihadist* than a Brazilian with British citizenship who looks and sounds like a Malian Tuareg but speaks no French, and whose last name Kouyaté marks me as an inherited West African musician (*griot*). The fact that the soldiers found a musical instrument and not a suicide vest possibly saved me. My last name, Kouyaté, is one of the four main *jeli* (*griot*) names in West Africa and, understandably, it perplexed my Burkinabe captors. In 2014, while living in London, I was publicly honoured with the name Kouyaté by a well-known Malian *bala* (xylophone) player, Lassana Diabaté. My intuitive identification with the *kamalengoni* and Malian music was explained by an ancestry DNA test I took in September 2015 on returning from my first PhD field trip to Mali. When it was revealed that 11% of my genes originate in the region of the former Mali Empire (Figure 0.2), I felt that the *kamalengoni* embodied possibilities for my self-realization, just as it does for its Malian and Burkinabe musicians. At this moment, I decided to legally change the colonial name imposed upon me, Anderson Ramos Lima, to Zé Aruanã Kouyaté, keeping my stage name

⁵ Wasulu refers to the geo-cultural region (Figures 0.4 and 0.5), while *wassoulou* is the musical style from Wasulu.

Gaio.⁶ As each of these names was given to me in musical circumstances, they better reflect my mixed musical and Black ethnic identity.

While I undertook eleven months of fieldwork in Mali in 2015 and 2017, my time in Burkina Faso had to be reduced to three months. Before my release from the barracks, the soldiers alerted me that I should lay low during the Tabaski celebrations as there was an elevated risk of *jihadist* attacks in Bobo-Dioulasso. While in the country, I very cautiously travelled with Rama to her performances outside Bobo-Dioulasso but had to return to Ouagadougou to renew my Malian visa. On my five-hour bus trip to Ouagadougou, we were accompanied by heavily armed soldiers as a safety measure to protect passengers on our overnight journey.

On my return to Bobo-Dioulasso on 8th November 2017, I immersed myself in eight weeks of fieldwork until the day several people told me that there were *jihadists* in town. Although I had not completed my planned research in the city, I paid for my accommodation and called each of my respondents and new friends to tell them I needed to return to Mali for security reasons. Although the “Brazilian *jihadist*” had survived an army ambush, I was not willing to test my *malandragem* skills in front of a real *jihadist* (particularly with a musical instrument in my hand). My relative wealth and mobility allowed me to escape the risk most cannot; I flew back to southern Mali and eventually back to my adopted home in Wales. It is a sad

⁶ Zé is a Lusophone diminutive form of José, which in Brazil also relates to a spiritual entity known as Zé Pelintra. As it is believed I have Zé Pelintra as one of my spiritual guardians, I was named Zé while playing at an Umbanda gathering. Aruanã is an Indigenous name of the Amazon region of Brazil with several distinct meanings depending on the language group. The Amerindian man who gave this name to me explained that Aruanã refers to a flock of birds flying in circles and crossing one another as if dancing and partying. The nickname Gaio - a contraction of *papagaio* (parrot) - was given to me in my teens by my *capoeira* teacher Mestre Mandéla in recognition of my ability to sing and my athletic flips.

irony that in the comfort and safety of Cardiff, I was once again mistaken as a *jihadist* when my Facebook account was hacked, and an ISIS flag appeared as my profile picture. Facebook responded by irreversibly removing my account, deleting a rich archive of my fieldwork experiences in West Africa. Thankfully, this thesis captures much of what was lost.

Positionality

I was born into an illiterate family of mixed African, Indigenous, and European heritage in the impoverished *favelas* (slums) of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. As a Black person in Brazil, details of my ancestry are inaccessible due to the social fracturing caused by slavery and the persecution of Black, Indigenous, and poor Brazilians. Through my creative practices and personal reflections, I have searched for the meaning of life by exploring my musical identity beyond the geographic borders that constrict me as “a Brazilian.” Despite my deprived beginnings at the margins of a wealthy country, the music of my childhood surroundings gave me a cultural legacy that provided a link to my transatlantic ancestors in Africa and Europe, and which eventually delivered me to West Africa.

Up to the age of thirteen, I played only the percussion instruments of the Umbanda ceremonies my family attended,⁷ but my musical horizons changed when one of my schoolteachers gave me a plastic recorder, an instrument that was not pejoratively associated with magic and the devil (as was the case with Umbanda and other percussion played by Afro Brazilians). On my way to school, I would try to mimic my grandfather’s LPs as I blended in with the traffic noise, birds, and other

⁷ Umbanda is an Afro-Brazilian religion.

animals in the *favela*. One day, as I walked home practising the *samba* “Aquarela Brasileira” I had learned in class that morning, I heard a *cavaquinho* accompanying me.⁸ When my new neighbour saw that I was hypnotized by his *cavaquinho*, he gave me a battered one he had in the house. Little did he know that that old lute opened the doors to my semi-nomadic existence and development as a professional musician.

My formal musical education commenced at the Villa Lobos School of Music (2003-2005) in Rio, where I was introduced to the mandolin. My teacher at the time, Paulo Sá, urged me to continue my studies in Italy with his mandolin teacher Ugo Orlandi. After spending two years learning Italian at the consulate in Rio, I won a scholarship to study at Conservatorio Ceasare Pollini di Padova.

I arrived in London in 2007 as a Black immigrant musician (initially with no English), where I struggled (once again) alongside thousands of others striving to assimilate in a new city. Relying on music for my survival, just as I had done in Brazil and Europe, I established myself as a professional multi-instrumentalist within a London-based community of international musicians.⁹

When I first encountered the *kamalengoni* in a South London pub in 2011, I did not know what it was or what it was called, but I intuitively recognized that it represented a missing link in my identity. For reasons I could not explain at the time, the *kamalengoni* resonated with my formative musical experiences in the *favela*. In

⁸ *Samba* is a percussion-based carnival music. The *cavaquinho* is a four-stringed lute introduced by the Portuguese in colonial Brazil, where it was adapted and transformed into a new instrument with distinct performance techniques.

⁹ As well as the *cavaquinho* and the ten-stringed mandolin, I play guitar, *guitarra baiana* (a small electric lute with four or five strings invented in the 1940s), the Brazilian banjo (a small four-stringed banjo tuned like a *cavaquinho*), the *berimbau* (a Brazilian musical bow with African origins), and a range of hand percussion instruments from Brazil, Cuba, and West Africa.

my early search for this instrument's lineage, I encountered another unwritten oral history, recalling my search for my personal history and a sense of continuity in my unwritten family tradition. It was this ancestral longing for Africa through the *kamalengoni* that attracted me back into academia at SOAS, where I obtained an MMus (2013-2014) under the guidance of Mandé specialist, Lucy Durán.

Many years after escaping violence and poverty in the *favelas*, and surviving the challenges of emigrating to Europe, I related to the strategic inventiveness of London's most successful West African musicians (and later *kamalengoni* musicians in Mali and Burkina Faso). Their "way of being" and use of creativity to survive in a difficult city resembled a particular kind of Brazilian social manoeuvring of the marginalised that felt very familiar. I knew this behaviour as *malandragem* but for the first time, I recognised that the concept could be applied interculturally. In contemporary Bamako, where poverty is the norm and armed conflict and terrorism threaten the safety of musicians, my own internal, cultural framework, as a musician brought up under an oppressive military dictatorship in the *favelas*, inevitably influenced my Malian and Burkinabe encounters.

Although I have started my story in Burkina Faso, most of my research was undertaken in the south of Mali, which included my ventures into the Wasulu region, where the *kamalengoni* originates (see Figures 0.4, 0.5, and 0.6).

The Wasulu region and the emergence of the *kamalengoni*

Many African populations with shared languages and common or similar cultures cluster around colonial yet porous borders that separate nations; the geo-linguistic region known as Wasulu is one such example. The word Wasulu appears to have emerged with the settlement of the Fula army during the time of Sunjata Keïta, who founded and reined over the Mali Empire (c.1230-55) (Figure 0.2). One theory is that “Wasulu” is an elision of two syllables in an utterance of the Fula warrior Yoro (highlighted in bold below):

*Ne te **wa** so toun: ne be n' **solon** ay la yan.*

I will not return home: I entrust myself to you here.¹⁰

Modern-day Mali (Figure 0.3) occupies an overlapping but different landmass from the former Mali Empire (Figure 0.2). Due to French colonization and subsequent expansion during the late 1870s, Wasulu coalesced into a geo-linguistic region that now straddles the contemporary nations of Mali, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire (Figures 0.4 and 0.5). The imam, Almamy Samori Touré (c.1830-1900), also known as *kéletigui* (war commander), brought much attention to the Wasulu region through his resistance to European expansion. In around 1887, Touré lead a disciplined army of thirty thousand, which was established to fight against the French.¹¹

¹⁰ Cissé and Kamissoko 1991:172.

¹¹ Both the Mandé *jeliw* and *sogoninkun* repertoires celebrate Samori Touré’s military deeds in the form of praise and song lyrics but praise singing is not a prevalent practice in *wassoulou* music (Durán 1995: 104).



Figure 0.2: The Mali Empire (c.1230-55).¹²



Figure 0.3: Map of contemporary Mali.¹³

¹² See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mali_Empire [Accessed: 11.2.22].

¹³ See <https://images.app.goo.gl/GG8GD6jyPRVz6yZu7> [Accessed: 14.1.20].



Figure 0.4: Map of the Wasulu region.¹⁴

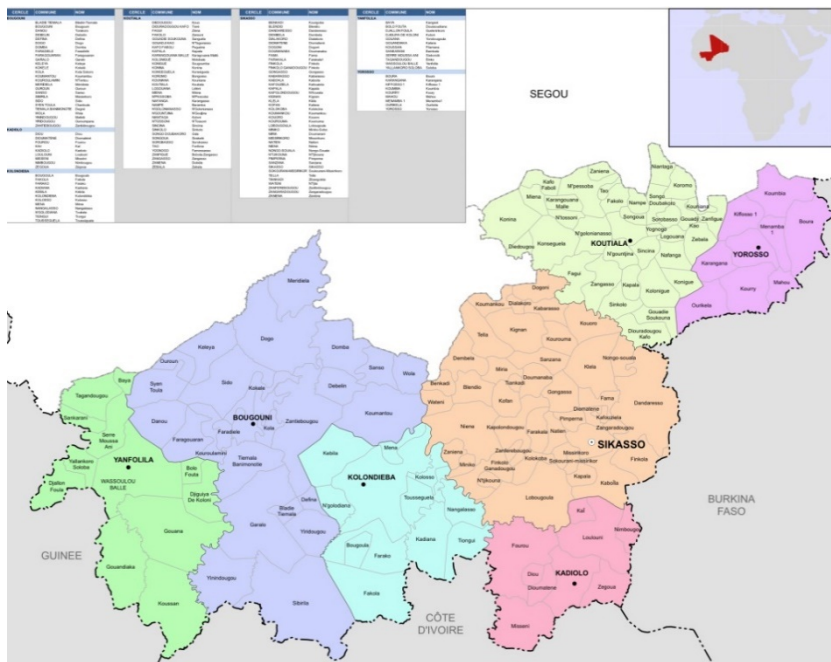


Figure 0.5: The Wasulu region in southwest Mali.¹⁵

¹⁴ See <https://images.app.goo.gl/Wqmr1kxaZMVuV9ULA> [Accessed: 13.1.20].

¹⁵ See https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_SIKASSO_A3_09092013.pdf [Accessed: 14.1.20].

Wasulu is characterized by rich savannah, forests, and abundant agriculture, and its population is well-known for its day-to-day hunting practices. The Wasulu people are ethnically complex as explained by Durán:

The people who call themselves Wasulunke define their ethnicity as tripartite: they are of Fula (Fulbe, Peul) lineage;¹⁶ their cultural framework falls within the Maninka-Bamana matrix and these two identities intersect in configurations that are specific to the region. In addition, there is much interaction with neighbouring peoples such as the Senufo. Thus, part of the character of Wasulu is its diversity. Imperato estimates the Wasulunke population at c. 100,000 (Imperato 1981), though this is not based on a firm census; many maps of ethnic groups and languages in Mali fail to cite the Wasulunke, classifying them as either Fula or Bamana. In addition, the Wasulunke have migrated widely both as seasonal workers to Bamako (Durán 1995: 105).

The Wasulunke people have their own language, Wasulunka, and although they claim Fula heritage, Wasulunka has not been spoken for several generations (Amselle 1990: 73 quoted by Durán 1995: 105).¹⁷ Beyond these common languages, the music of the region, which became known as *wassoulou*, has been very important in the formation and expression of Wasulu identity.

In the decade leading up to Mali's independence from France in 1960, young musicians from the Wasulu region developed the *kamalengoni*, a smaller and higher-

¹⁶ The Peul/Fulbe linguistic group (with many internal dialects) stretches across several countries in West Africa and depending on the region and colonial or local language, the Peul/Fulbe are also known as the Pulaar, Fula, and Fulani. The common Fulbe lineages are the Sangaré, Diallo (also spelled Jallo), Sidibé, and Diakité (also spelled Jakité).

¹⁷ Internationally known Wasulu popular singers such as Sali Sidibé, Oumou Sangaré, and Ramata Diakité, for example, have names from the Fulbe lineage.

tuned version of the six-stringed hunters' harp, the *donsongoni*.¹⁸ The etymology of the word *kamalengoni*, often translated into English as “youth harp,” reflects its social status; *kamalen* means “young man” and *ngoni* (in this context) means “harp.”¹⁹ The older instrument, the *donsongoni*, is associated with magical practices and sorcery rituals and is played to control esoteric powers. Accordingly, the *donsongoni* has social restrictions and taboos imposed upon its players, who are often members of hunting cults.

Like the *donsongoni*, the *kamalengoni* is a spike harp and was originally made with six strings, though up to eighteen strings are now used as musicians experiment and innovate (see Plates 0.1 and 0.2). The *kamalengoni* is a secularized version of the older, sacred harp, and due to its liberation from taboos, it has a much wider social access and appeals particularly to young people who, during the time the harp emerged, would not otherwise have been able to play music professionally.²⁰ With the iconic *kamalengoni* at its heart, *wassoulou* music became very fashionable from the 1970s and it created a social framework for a new category of musicians, ones who fulfilled an entirely different role from the hierarchical traditional musical cultures in Mali. Young men considered the *kamalengoni* to be the perfect instrument for musical experimentation due to its lack of either sacred obligations or social restrictions, as was the case with *donsow* (hunters') and *jeliw* instruments.²¹

¹⁸ Alata Brulaye Sidibé is credited for creating the very first *kamalengoni* in the 1950s (see Chapter Four).

¹⁹ The term *ngoni* is the general name used for stringed musical instruments such as harps and lutes in several West African countries, such as Mali and Burkina Faso.

²⁰ Durán (1995: 103) wrote that *wassoulou* music provided a space for unmarried youth, including female singers.

²¹ *Jeliw* cannot comment freely on social issues, while hunters are bound by the secrets of their hunting societies. There are also strong gender conventions among both classes of musicians;



Plate 0.1: An early six-stringed *kamalengoni*,
Bamako, Mali, 20.9.19. Photographer Idrissa Diarra.



Plate 0.2: A recent eighteen-stringed *kamalengoni*,
Av. du Colonel Jamot, Bobo- Dioulasso Burkina Faso, 6.9.17.

traditionally females do not play musical instruments such as *kora* or *donsongoni* but rather, they commonly play hand-held idiophones such as rattles and scrapers.



Plate 0.3: Mpa Diarra (left) playing *donsongoni* with *karinyan* player Nitie Diarra (right), Segou, Mali. 4.4.17.

The *donsongoni* (Plate 0.3) is just one of a variety of traditional harps across West Africa's savannah but is one of the most influential contemporary hunters' harps, and it has become even more so due to the international popularity of the *kamalengoni*. Like *jeliw*, the *donso* musician has obligations beyond music. He is typically also a healer who prepares medicine using his knowledge of flora and fauna (Ferrarini 2014: 130-131), and he is not only expected to be a great hunter and warrior, but will frequently act as a politician, craftsman, and historian.²² The *donsongoni*, along with the *karinyan* (metal scraper) (Plate 0.3), accompanies singers. Unlike most *jeli* music's heptatonic tonal system, the *donsongoni*'s tuning is pentatonic.

Although the *kamalengoni* is not considered to embody the esoteric powers of the hunters' harps that preceded it, its sounds can, nevertheless be associated with

²² The main deity among hunters is female, and although the vast majority of hunters are men, women can also be hunters, despite the strong resistance of elders. In Bamako, for instance, the gender ascription is stronger than in the villages, which are now more open to female hunters. For more see Manzon (2013).

occult powers (Durán 1995: 115) because of its direct association with the *donsongoni*. The creative approaches and strategies to integrate the music of the *kamalengoni* into society have emerged as part of an expression of freedom among the younger generation in Wasulu, who have resisted political and traditional constraints. But secularizing the *kamalengoni* has been a process, as illustrated by Coumba Sidibé:

Alata Brulaye and I, we were the first to turn this music into a *nyenaje* [entertainment] thing, music for young peoples' pleasure. My older brother [Brulaye] and I got together and said, let's try to change the hunters' harp a little so that the youth can dance to it. We called it *kamalengoni* ... but the elders were against it. They couldn't understand why we should bring this culture to many people, for them it was something reserved for hunters' societies ... When we started doing this, the hunters rose up and protested everywhere. They felt it was unacceptable to have hunters' music played for public amusement. So Brulaye and I, we brought them kola nuts, chickens, even goats and local alcohol [as sacrifices] to ask their pardon. We told the elder hunters we promised not to touch the secrets of their ancestors. But any village that didn't have a *kamalengoni nyenaje*, that village was not a nice place to be (Interview with Coumba Sidibé in Durán 1999: 162-163).

Wassoulou music is generally secular and the *kamalengoni* is said to have no esoteric power. However, during my fieldwork in both Mali and Burkina Faso, the *donsongoni*'s magical aspects, such as *jinn* (pre-Islamic spirits) and *nyama* (a powerful force believed to be present in all living things, inanimate objects, and unseen elements of the material and spiritual world), remained covertly associated with the younger instrument. The *kamalengoni* is not usually thought of as sacred but to some extent, this can change according to the context in which it is played and who plays it. For example, many hunters I met, who play both the *kamalengoni* and

donsongoni say that the two harps are “*a bε kelen*” (the same) in that they can embed sacred aspects into the *kamalengoni*.²³ More recently, the *kamalengoni* has entered the spiritual domain. An example of its use in a Muslim context is in the post-1990s music genre, *zikiri* (a Bamanankan loan word that derives from Arabic *dhikr*).²⁴

Diffusion of the *kamalengoni*

Since its innovation in Mali, the *kamalengoni* has dispersed beyond the Wasulu region. Within a long history of population exchange and displacement during wars and conflicts between Mali and Burkina Faso, a short war in the Agacher Strip (1975-1986) caused the mass dispersion of peoples.²⁵ As the musicians within these forced migrations became mobile, the new *wassoulou* music became popular in Burkina Faso. Since 2012, an ongoing civil war in the north of Mali was triggered by an Islamist insurgency and has created an influx of Malian refugees into a region of Burkina Faso that had also been occupied by Islamic religious extremists from Niger (Figure 0.1).

Since the *kamalengoni* was brought to Burkina Faso in the 1990s (Castellanos 2019), two distinct styles of playing have emerged due to the exchanges between mobile musicians in the city of Bobo-Dioulasso (Figure 0.6), which was the first capital of Burkina Faso and is now the second-largest city in the country

²³ Pers. comm., Abou Diarra, Paris, France, 5.4.19.

²⁴ See more about the controversy of *zikiri* in Mali in Chappate (2018: 229-256) and the integration of *kamalengoni* into this musical style in Castellanos (2019: 98-178).

²⁵ The Agacher Strip is a disputed area around a 100-mile stretch of the border shared by Mali and Burkina Faso, which is rich in natural resources. Mali claims the area based on the ethnicity of people who occupy the area, but Burkina Faso claims inheritance from colonial borders. The frontier, however, was never exactly delineated by the French coloniser. The ongoing dispute led to war in 1974 and 1983.

(population approximately 1.5 million) next to the current capital, Ouagadougou.

Bobo-Dioulasso is a space overflowing with diverse cultural manifestations resulting from the confluence of Burkinabe musicians from different regions and ethnicities, newcomers from other areas of West Africa (including Mali), and Europeans.



Figure 0.6: Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso.²⁶

In comparison to Mali, the *kamalengoni* in Burkina Faso has not yet been integrated into family ceremonies, but it has been accepted as an essential educational tool for children in Bobo-Dioulasso.

As well as the movement of people involved in music, recording artists have played a key role in disseminating and popularizing *wassoulou* music internationally. Harnessing the tradition's ability to adapt and change, in the 1970s, *kamalengoni* musicians incorporated electric guitars, bass, and drums such as the *dundun* and the *jembe* into their compositions and performances. The increasingly hip *wassoulou* music extended to neighbouring countries beyond Burkina Faso such as Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, where they adopted and adapted this exciting new musical

²⁶ See <https://www.worldatlas.com/af/bf/03/where-is-bobo-dioulasso.html> [Accessed: 21.2.22].

tradition in their own ways. Meanwhile, Malian singers, such as Sali Sidibé and Oumou Sangaré further popularized *wassoulou* internationally. The genre's combination of mystical overtones from hunters' music and its new cultural and musical flexibility has allowed musicians to experiment and adapt when collaborating with musicians from around the world. "Rhythm and Blues" is a particularly good fit, facilitating collaboration with the *kamalengoni* due to its minor pentatonic tuning.²⁷

Malandragem, the malandro, and the dankɔɔba

Just as shared tunings such as the bluesy pentatonic can communicate across musically distinct cultures, I identified parallel ways of knowing and being through my experience as a musician in Brazil and West Africa. The Brazilian *malandro* and Malian *dankɔɔba* exemplify this shared way of knowing, behaving, and achieving.

The Brazilian concept of *malandragem* can be framed by Victor Turner's (1975) theory of social drama, which he later described as:

units of harmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations...
[consisting of] either the *reintegration* of the disturbed social group, or of the social recognition and legitimation of [an] irreparable schism between the contesting parties
(1988: 74-75).

Economy, aesthetics, dress code, movements, and gestures give context to the controversial performance of the *malandro* and what he represents in Brazilian

²⁷ As detailed in later chapters, numerous *kamalengoni* tunings and tuning methods have developed over time. Even when tuned with guitar machine heads on modern harps, the minor pentatonic often has microtonal differences from the European minor pentatonic.

society (most particularly the people of Rio de Janeiro). *Malandragem* is usually pejorative and refers to an illicit way of life involving petty crime, womanising, and personal manipulation to gain a social advantage. The Portuguese word *malandragem* is constructed from the Latin *malus* (bad) and German *landrin* (vagabond or wanderer) (Dealtry 2009: 151) and is most commonly translated to English as one who is lazy, a hustler (E. P. Dictionary 1989), a trickster, or with the English slang, “geezer.” *Malandragem* has linguistic and conceptual equivalents in other European languages and cultures; Italians regard the *malandrino/a* or *picaro/a* as a person of mischief who does not conform to expected social norms (Capoeria 2014: 439), while Spaniards have adopted *malandrino* to mean dishonest and the French *malandrin* means thief or tramp. In these European countries, their related words are also used to describe unemployed people or immigrants from diverse, cultural backgrounds, such as nomadic groups (Dealtry 2009: 151).

The concept of *malandragem* should also be contextualized by slavery in Brazil, where abolition was the latest in the world in 1888. This accelerated social and lexical change as the new Brazilian society formed. Turner (1988: 33) explains that “in periods of major sociocultural change, the grammar and lexicon themselves may be irreversibly altered by a potent process of social action.” As a “social drama,” *malandragem* became more explicit during the 1920s and has since continued to generate confusion. To give a recent example, according to the current Vice President of Brazil, General Antonio Hamilton Mourão, the Brazilian people’s DNA inherited “*indolência*” (indolence) from Amerindians and *malandragem* from Africans (Suberb 2018). Mourão’s comments reflect an internal combination of the Eurocentric, demeaning, and confused national perspective that deems the *malandro*

neither a good citizen nor a criminal. Claudia Neiva de Matos explains that during the years of Brazil's military government (1964-1985) the social relevance of the *malandro* and the liminal space he operated within, was a place of permanent mobility that allowed him to escape from the pressure imposed by the system:

He cannot be classified either as a well-behaved worker or as a common criminal: he is not honest but he is not a thief either, he is a *malandro*. His mobility is permanent as he depends on it to escape from pressures of the system, even if for a short while (1982: 54).²⁸

Although the negative interpretation of the liminal space (Turner 1988: 33-71) is where the *malandro* operates, *malandragem* has developed an idealised facet (Salgado 2012), where the *malandro* can also be seen as a charismatic individual or “lovable rogue.” He can even become an anti-hero through duping or resisting established social structures, conservative traditions, and those in power who impose them. For example, the popular fictitious anti-hero Macunaíma embodies and portrays qualities of the *malandro* and in some ways characterises the psyche of the Brazilian people.²⁹ As with Macunaíma, the *malandro* can be any ethnicity and can shift between anti-hero and hero by harnessing his creative assets to transcend his predicament of marginalisation and general disadvantage to achieve social justice at a personal level.

²⁸ *Não se pode classificar nem como operário bem comportado nem como criminoso comum: não é honesto, mas também não é ladrão, é malandro. Sua mobilidade é permanente, dela depende para escapar, ainda que passageiramente, ás pressões do sistema.* Translated by the author.

²⁹ Macunaíma is a character in a novel of the same name by Mario de Andrade (1922-1945), a musician, writer, and key figure in the Brazilian modernist movement (1922-1945).

Another famous Brazilian *malandro* is the (real-life) iconic Brazilian footballer, Pelé (born Edson Arantes do Nascimento in 1940), who transcended racism and poverty to become one of the greatest international footballers of all time. Outspoken in his leftist views, he was persecuted by the military dictatorship but, in later life, became an international activist for the poor and Minister of Sports in Brazil (1995-1998). Musician Gilberto Gil (b. 1942) also exemplifies the most celebrated aspects of the *malandro*. Gil also grew up in humble circumstances and transcended his circumstances as one of Brazil's most famous musicians. He was incarcerated in December 1968 then exiled (1969-1972) by the military government for his political views then three decades later, Gil rose from being an exiled musician of resistance to becoming Minister of Culture (2003-2008).

In their separate ways, Macunaniama, Pelé, and Gil exemplify *malandragem* as a shapeshifting intellectual resource that incorporates historical, aesthetic, and cultural factors into artistic and athletic social performances as a strategy for survival and social elevation. This particular kind of creative capability and social versatility juxtaposes the *malandro* with “genius” to describe brilliant footballers and musicians in the popular media, even outside of Brazil. As the *malandro* and *malandragem* are both strongly associated with musicians, artists, sportspeople, and oppressed peoples, they are frequently praised in Brazilian popular lyrics. For example, the 1972 hit song “Fio Maravilha” (Marvellous Son) by guitarist and songwriter Jorge Ben Jor (b.1942) pays tribute to the Brazilian footballer João Batista de Sales (b.1945). The song celebrates his goal for Rio football team Flamengo against Benfica de Portugal:

Foi um gol de anjo, um verdadeiro gol de placa

Que a galera agradecida assim cantava

Fio Maravilha nós gostamos de você

Fio Maravilha faz mais um pra gente ver

It was the goal of an angel, a truly brilliant goal

Where the grateful crowd sang

“Fio Maravilha, we like you

Fio Maravilha, make one more [goal] so we can see it.”

The song has immortalized both the goal and Sales as a *malandro* and has been reinterpreted by artists across generations.³⁰

In the context of the symbolic hero of the arts and sport, the *malandro* constantly invents, adapts, and re-invents reality for personal gain and social ascendancy. Turner’s (1988: 41) logic, that “heroes must go through hell to attain paradise - their own natures oppose the ethical schema,” expresses how Brazilians perceive *malandros* as heroes. Growing up in Rio’s *favelas*, I managed to play *samba* alongside big names in the genre such as Xande de Pilares, Carlos Caetano, and Eduardo Galloti. I also had my compositions interpreted by artists such as Latin Grammy winner Grupo Fundo de Quintal and singers including Principe do Pagode Reinaldo and Ferrugem. I am sometimes labelled as a *malandro* by others because of my achievements, but to make such a claim for oneself is deemed inappropriate.

Underpinning the *malandro*’s association with popular culture icons are magical properties and the trickster archetype. In the early twentieth century, the *malandro* emerged as a spiritual entity of the Afro-Brazilian religion Umbanda (Pimentel 2011). Several Umbanda spirits are regarded as *malandros/as*, such as Zé Pelintra (male) and Maria Navalha (female), which are very well-known examples of

³⁰ Listen to a recent interpretation of this classic with the samba group Bom Gosto: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9zOuKQw7QE&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 15.1.20].

popular *exús*.³¹ These Umbanda spirits are ancestors who were well known for their fame and bravery during their lifetime. Plate 0.4 depicts a romanticised *malandro* on a throne surrounded by protective sorcery accoutrements and weapons that are often associated with *malandragem*. While the hat and the white suit demonstrate the insertion of the *malandro* into society and his assimilation into the system, his bare feet are an act of resistance. It is believed that before they became ancestral spirits, *malandros* fought barefoot against the police or any other individuals who opposed their way of life, which is often associated with polygamy, prostitution, dancing, playing music, illegal games, drugs, unemployment, drinking, and a generally bohemian lifestyle.

There are Umbanda lyrics that provide insight into the *malandro*'s moral code and way of life. In situations of conflict, a real *malandro* is brave and does not run away from a fight.

Se radio-patrolha chegasse aqui agora

Seria uma grande vitoria

Ninguém podeira correr.

Agora que eu quero ver

Quem é malandro nao pode correr

If the police arrived here right now

That would be a great victory

No one would be able to run

Now I want to see

A *malandro* who can't run.

³¹ *Exú* is a Yoruba-derived spiritual entity in the Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions of Umbanda and Candomblé.



Plate 0.4: Depiction of the archetypal *malandro*.
Drawing by Alex Mesquita Alves in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 7.9.18.

The bare feet in the image represent a symbol of “disharmonic social process” to non-conformity with the Brazilian social system. For example, a *malandro* fights using the Afro-Brazilian dance and martial art known as *capoeira*, which was once illegal and had to be done without shoes. Clothing is a symbol of reintegration while also a camouflaging strategy of imposed assimilation. The drawing depicts a razor, knife, gun, and ritual accoutrements, which are some of the

tools used by *malandros* to defend themselves or attack enemies, such as the police and others who oppose their way of life:³²

From the image of a stylized *malandro*, who is always dressed impeccably with decorum and most prefers gambling and glibness, the smooth-tongued swindler [*malandro*] emerges, the *capoeira* of political street fights, the courageous from *petrópolis* and the fighters with razors, who not only profit from violence but also makes it a lifestyle (Rocha 2005: 132).³³

The relationship between crime, the *malandro*, conflict, and esoteric powers is hinted at in the 2002 movie *Cidade de Deus (City of God)*, which one of my Burkinabe captors enthusiastically referred to in the army barracks. It is based on the real story of a *malandro* and gangster known as Lil' Zé (Zé Pequeno), who uses magic as

³² The *malandro* and *capoeira* characters have a significant relationship to one another within the Brazilian urban space, though it is important to note that they represent distinct roles. While a *capoeirista* (*capoeira* practitioner) is linked with the clash against the politics of the Brazilian Empire, a *malandro* is associated with the resistance and consequence of the post-abolition social system that has been implemented, as well as with *samba* musicians. Both are protagonists of Blackness, forced marginalisation, as well as true street culture. That street culture has generated several adjectives to classify the *malandro*, which are intertwined and can have distinct functions, such as the pejorative *vadio* (vagabond) and the positive *bamba* (a master or extraordinary on doing something). The ethos, objects and body techniques are common elements circulating and borrowed amongst the *vadio* or *bamba* for example, the razor, white suite and the use of *capoeira* including *samba* musicians as a nod to *malandragem* as a way of life. The symbolic linen suit turned into the brand referring to the professionalisation of the *malandro* as a *samba* musician during the 1930s. Matos (1982) explains this symbolizes the moment policy forced the *malandro* to regenerate in the 1940s. The same suite in the 1950s turned into a trademark, showing that the *malandro* has assimilated and now, instead of being a threat, he had become a good boy.

³³ *Sob a imagem do malandro estilizado, sempre elegante e alinhado, que mais prefere o jogo, a labia, o conto, o golpe, surge o [malandro] capoeira das lutas políticas nas ruas, os valentes de petrópolis e navalhas à mão, que fazem da violência mais do que um ganha pão, senão um estilo de vida.* Translated by the author.

protection to fight against his enemies while ruling his shantytown in Rio de Janeiro. In one scene he obtains supernatural powers from the *guia* (amulet) he receives from a man possessed by *exú* in the cemetery.

Malandro spirits are often praised or evoked in *samba* lyrics:

Vou apertar, mais nao vou ascender agora
Se segura malandro, pra fazer a cabeça tem hora

I will roll it [cigarette or weed], but I will not light it up right now
Not so fast *malandro*, there is a time to “go to the pot.”³⁴

Being a *malandro* or describing a *malandragem* in music can often be determined by how a musician uses or understands the use of syncopation. In Afro-Brazilian music, such as *samba* and its subgenres, syncopation signifies a liminal space that welcomes transformation. The explanation about the use of syncopation in *samba* by the writer Muniz Sodré (1998: 68) highlights that:

In the *nagô* system, sound is the third term of a process always triggered by pairs of parent elements – whether the hand is hitting the *atabaque*³⁵ or the air is reverberating in the vocal cords. The sound of the human voice, the word [...] is guided by *Exú*, a dynamic principle of the system “born from the interaction of male and female parents.” In turn, the *axé* [exoteric power], which gives meaning to the elements of the system, is guided by the words and ritualized sound. Along with the word and sound, there must be the presence of a human body capable of speaking and listening, giving and receiving as part of this constant reversible movement. It is within this system that

³⁴ From the song “Malandragem da um Tempo” (Malandragem Take it Easy) by Bezerra da Silva. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CM_XZtOBsLY [Accessed: 19.1.20].

³⁵ A hand drum used to evoke spiritual entities in Afro-Brazilian religions.

the syncopation of *samba* speaks to us. The insistence of syncopation and its interactive nature constitute the index of difference: in-between two ways of musically signifying time, between the constancy of African rhythmic division and the necessary mobility to aggregate various forms of white influences. Between the strong and weak beat, the mobilization of the body erupts, and appeals for the impossible return of what was essentially lost in the Black diaspora. Weak and strong: the two contrasting beats are the parent elements of this sound, which is carried by a third term, that “third person” who sings blues or *samba* – *Exú bara*, the owner of the body.³⁶

As my interest in the *kamalengoni* grew during the years I lived in London (2007-2015), I viewed African musicians through a Brazilian ethnocentric lens informed by *malandragem*. Unlike asymmetric colonial ethnocentrism, however, my reference points emerged from growing up in poverty and political oppression under the post-military dictatorship in Rio de Janeiro in the 1980s. I began to consider what the Afro-Brazilian concept of *malandragem* could reveal about the strategies for survival I observed among West African musicians I befriended in London. On my subsequent field trips, working with musicians in Mali and Burkina Faso, who relied

³⁶ *No sistema nagô o som equivale ao terceiro termo de um processo sempre desencadeado sempre por pares de elementos genitores – seja a mão batendo no atabaque, seja o ar repercutindo nas cordas vocais. E o som da voz humana, a palavra ... é conduzida por Exú, um princípio dinâmico do sistema “nascido da interação dos genitores masculinos e femininos.” Por sua vez, o axé, que confere significação aos elementos do sistema se deixa conduzir pelas palavras e pelo som ritualizado. Junto com a palavra, junto com o som, deve dar-se a presença de um corpo humano, capaz de falar e ouvir, dar e receber, num movimento sempre reversível. É desse sistema que nos fala a síncopa do samba. A insistência da síncopa sua natureza interativa constituem o índice de uma diferença – entre dois modos de significar musicalmente o tempo, entre a constância da divisão rítmica Africana e a necessária mobilidade para acolher as variadas influências brancas. Entre o tempo fraco e forte irrompe a mobilização do corpo, mais também o apelo a uma volta impossível, ao que de essencial se perdeu com a diáspora negra. Fraco e forte: os dois tempos em contraste são os elementos genitores desse som, também transportado por um terceiro termo, aquela “terceira pessoa” que canta no blues ou samba. Exú bara, o dono do corpo. Translated by the author*

on their *kamalengoni* for day-to-day existence, I discovered that they had similar concepts to *malandro*. The Bamanankan word *kamalenba* (womanizer) aligns with the pejorative renderings of *malandro* and, like its transatlantic equivalent, appears in music such as Oumou Sangaré’s song “Kamelemba.”³⁷

U b'i negen, k'i negen, k'i negen, k'i negen, k'i negen n'dɔgɔ
Kamelemba, a b'i lamumunun, k'i la espérer, k'i tromper
A b'i rouler, k'i rouler, k'i rouler, n'dɔgɔ
A b'i jɛnaminin, k'i mumunun, k'i tromper, hé
Hahahaha, i t'a jɔgɔn ye!

My little sister, they will lie to you, lie, lie, lie
The *kamelemba* will make you go around in circles; give you hope and deceive you
Little sister, he will roll you, roll, roll you in the flour
He'll stun you, make you go around in circles and deceive you, hey!
You will not see it coming!³⁸

In Mali, young, unmarried men and women would spend nights out dancing to the sound of *kamalengoni*, which the elders deem *woroso/woloso* (bordello or vulgar). A *kamalenba*'s ability to negatively betray, deceive and seduce women corresponds to

³⁷ Dumestre (2011: 477) translates *kamalenba* as “tall young man of marrying age; gallant, flirtatious; high- living; woman chaser” (translated from French). *Kamelemba* may be a dialect difference. When interviewed by Pan African Music (10.5.17), Oumou Sangaré revealed that the song was “about men who show off, who bring women down, about women who fall badly in love ... I wrote that song to give advice to our sisters to be careful because there are loads of *kamelemba* out there ... we do a lot of teasing in African music. We tease each other, but it isn't malicious. These are messages we need to get across, but they're not really mean. I accuse men, but some say, ‘women are like that too!’” See <https://pan-african-music.com/en/oumou-Sangaré-kamelemba/> [Accessed: 26.4.20].

For the entire song see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4eXmjhub8> [Accessed: 20.1.20].

³⁸ Transcribed by Aminata Moneketa (3.8.19) and translated and edited by Willfred Willy 21.4.20.

the malicious and exploitative side of the Brazilian *malandro*. Historian and philosopher Wallace Silva explains, “since the beginning of the 20th century, prostitution, *malandragem* and bohemia were responsible for composing the collective memory that is currently (re)signified through interventions and its form and content” (Silva 2019: 15).³⁹

The *kamalenba* concept is also used for something positive: *dankɔɔba*. The *Dictionnaire Bambara-français* (Dumestre 2011: 216) refers to *dankɔɔba* as (including music), the *dankɔɔba* can portray a hero or winner (*dankɔɔtaama*). The “[L’homme] *extraordinaire*” (an extraordinary man).⁴⁰ In some social contexts *dankɔɔba* is recognised by his actions, experience, and extraordinary deeds, and (as with *malandro*) one should not claim to be a *dankɔɔba*.⁴¹ One who makes such an immodest claim can be disparaged by the Bamanankan proverb “*ka bo ti bugurije la*” (to fart ashes from one’s own mouth).⁴²

As with calling an iconic *samba* musician a *malandro*, identifying a *kamalengoni* player as a “*kamalengoni* hero” (which derives from the rock term “guitar hero,” as mentioned by Graeme (2006: 209) roughly translates as *dankɔɔba*,

³⁹ *Desde o início do século XX, a prostituição, a malandragem e a boemia foram responsáveis por compor a memória coletiva que atualmente é (re) significada através de intervenções em suas formas e conteúdos.* Translated by the author.

⁴⁰ *Dankɔɔba* can also apply to animals: “To be (man or animal) [a] very old, very strong, very experienced; extraordinary person or animal (nickname of the solitary hyena and other animals).” Also, a complex nominal verb meaning “*extraordinaire-sortir*,” which does not exist in French ... *Extraordinaire-sortir* “operates as one of the many neologisms created by the author of the dictionary to translate a Bambara concept facing the lack of a literal match in French.” Pers. comm., Clea Thomasset, email, April 2020.

⁴¹ Pers. comm., Harouna Samaké, Bamako, Mali, 19.8.15.

⁴² Pers. comm., Abou Kone, Segou, Mali 4.2.17.

a concept I expand upon in the following chapters.⁴³ The exceptional, creative approaches and strategies of transnational *kamalengoni* players are what I call “acts of *malandragem*,” a set of creative strategies shaping a *dankɔɔba* which is further explained in the following chapters.

⁴³ Between 2015 and 2020, several of my respondents mentioned that despite its other social functions, the term *dankɔɔba* can be used to refer to a music star, which is also referred to locally as *ngaraya* (musical master).

Chapter One

The *Kamalengoni* as Invented Tradition

The study of a musical instrument can provide a pathway into obscure, largely unspoken cultural beliefs and social behaviours. By focusing on the *kamalengoni*, I have accessed the musical and esoteric world of its players (*kamalengoni juru fɔla* or *kamalengonifɔla*, pl. *kamalengonifɔlaw*) in the southern regions of Mali and northern Burkina Faso.¹ Through my study of a single kind of instrument, this thesis contributes to the understanding of non-linguistic musical transmission, musical invention, and transformation.

Prior to the *kamalengoni*'s appearance and the emergence of young *kamalengonifɔlaw*, two types of musicians dominated the West African Mandé² region's cultural soundscapes: *jeliw* (sing. *jeli*),³ who are born into an endogamous caste, and the *donsow* (hunters) (sing. *donso*) musicians who play in sacred rituals. Both types of musicians can trace their heritage back several centuries; thus, their musical practices are deeply rooted in the past. These musical traditions are also

¹ There are regional variations in nomenclature of the *kamalengoni*, including *ngoni*, *goni*, *kamalenkoni*, and *koni*.

² The word "Mandé" encompasses a large group of West African peoples, who speak closely related languages across the region.

³ *Jeliw* are popularly known as *griots*, the French term for inherited musicians throughout West Africa. The *griot*'s role, however, extends far beyond performing music. See Hale (1998) and Keita (2011).

connected to mystical, social, and cultural roles beyond the domain of entertainment. Unlike these musicians, who are bound by traditions of the past, the pioneering generation of young *kamalengonifɔlaw* from the late 1950s has given rise to the first musicians in the Wasulu region to become music professionals through choice rather than ascription, within what are still very conservative cultural settings and musical traditions.⁴ The reputations of individual *kamalengonifɔlaw* require continuous invention to attract the attention and approval of peers, which can lead to social elevation. Not all of my respondents were fully aware of the various local claims and publications describing the 1950s origin of the *kamalengoni*, but it is common knowledge among *kamalengonifɔlaw* that it is a direct descendant of the *donsongoni* (hunters' harp). I was also told that when communicating with non-Africans, some Burkinabe players refer to the *kamalengoni* as a *kora* due to the latter's global popularity, but of course, they understand that their instrument is not actually a *kora*. However, I never encountered this mixing of harp nomenclature in Mali.

Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) reminds us that no tradition is static and traditions appearing to be old may well be recent. Rather than considering the way some traditions thrive through the act of preservation, this thesis looks more closely at the way a particular tradition constantly innovates. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 9) determined three categories of how traditions are invented:

- a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or membership of groups, real or artificial communities;

⁴ See Merriam's cross-cultural distinction between ascribed musicians and those who achieve the status of professional musicians (1964: 123-144).

- b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status, or relations of authority; and
- c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value and conventions of behaviour.

More specifically, their work led me to investigate the collective processes of inventing tradition by two main groups. The first invents to preserve a tradition, as in, for example, the *jeliw* and the *donso* traditions, while the second group invents to transform tradition, as in the case of *kamalengonifɔlaw*.

The *modus operandi* of *kamalengonifɔlaw* is best captured by my inverted wording, “the tradition of invention.” In the twenty-first century, the main impetus of *jeliw* and *donsow* has been to preserve their traditions.⁵ While the *kamalengoni* may be misunderstood to be ancient, this is a recently invented tradition, albeit with strong links to the past. In contrast to the preservationist priority of *jeliw* and *donsow* musicians, in order to make a name for themselves, *kamalengonifɔlaw* are compelled to constantly create fresh musical ideas and repertoire, innovative performance techniques, and to adapt the construction of their instrument. Hobsbawm and Ranger emphasise that it is easier to create than to modify a tradition (1983: 236); throughout this thesis, I explain how change and invention are the main underpinning principles of the new *kamalengoni* tradition. Rather than acting as destabilizing forces that threatens to disrupt continuity and/or notions of authenticity, change and invention are among the defining elements of the tradition.

⁵ More about how the *jeliw* and the *donso* preserve their conservative tradition is explained in Chapter Two.

Using performance as my central research method, this thesis reveals as yet undocumented understandings of the *kamalengoni*'s performance practices and techniques, its processes of change, and its rapidly transforming organology. I discuss in detail how each of these arenas are mobilized for ongoing tradition formation. For *kamalengonifɔlaw*, invention is more than a mere choice; it is a required skill that grants individual survival and creative growth and recognition. Players depend on oral transmission and sharp ears and eyes to receive performance cues, and they need the appropriate language to communicate all things related to making *kamalengoni* music. Regarding the choice to invent music, each player operates differently in response to their musical surroundings. While both *jeliw* and *donsow* must learn substantial canons of musical repertoire and orature, *kamalengonifɔlaw* can also choose to learn the *jeliw* and *donsow* repertoires but are not compelled to do so. The *kamalengonifɔla*'s lack of obligation to centuries-old canons allows for less resistance to the influence and/or incorporation of new genres, such as reggae, rock, jazz, blues, pop, funk, hip-hop, and Latin American music.

Many of the world's musicians are trained to see non-verbal performative cues (Chaffin et al.: 2009), including those who are musically literate. (Only recently have Western forms of notation been used by a limited number of *kamalengonifɔlaw* to transfer and acquire musical knowledge.) Through the eyes of *kamalengonifɔlaw*, non-verbal performative cues can take the form of abstract symbols, landscapes, nature, a variety of living beings, gestures, and body movements. Unless visually impaired (like legendary *kamalengonifɔla*, Vieux Kanté), visual cues can be individually interpreted to instigate musical choices that communicate through performance.

Kamalengonifɔlaw communicate with three kinds of audience: other *kamalengonifɔlaw*, musicians in general, and non-musicians. Linguistic communication about the *kamalengoni* is frequently contextualized by spiritual beliefs, objects such as magical charms, and historical and mystical stories. Communal beliefs and stories stimulate invention and serve to further transform *kamalengoni* music. For example, the widespread belief, “if the player practises the *kamalengoni* every day, the *jinn* inside it allows him to become outstanding”⁶ motivates *kamalengonifɔlaw* to practise, perform, and succeed.

Literature review

While much regional history is presented by music-focused researchers, there is a substantial body of specialised literature about Mandé history from which musical studies can draw. Two particular scholars have published on the ancient historical material of the Mandé region presented in this thesis. Historian Conrad (2005) presents a deep and detailed historical overview of medieval West Africa, documenting the rise and fall of the Ghana, Mali and Songhay Empires, and archaeologist Goodwin (2016) covers a narrower territory with an article about the Ghana Empire. Although both researchers provide significant historical information about the Mandé world and its music, some data differ in terms of dates, historical details, and the names of major mythological characters, which may be inevitable when searching for facts concerning the distant past.

Music-focused research on the Mandé region that informs this thesis includes Castellanos (2010, 2019), Charry (2000, 1996), Counsel (2006), Durán (1995, 1999),

⁶ Pers. comm., Daouda Coulibaly, Bamako, Mali, 13.7.15.

Eyre (2002), Skinner (2015), and Strawn (2011), have had a strong influence on my thesis. Collectively, these authors provide historical, social and organological data from pre-modern to postcolonial West Africa, particularly regarding Mali and Burkina Faso. Charry (2000), Counsel (2006) and Hale (1998) underpin some of the historical factors that determine the life, function and social dynamics of musicians in Mandé societies. Hale and Counsel are most directly engaged with creating an overview of the many layers of the work of *jeliw* musicians by comparing current politics with pre-colonial Mandé societies. Charry's musical coverage is wider and covers the performance practices and organology of diverse traditions in the Mandé music spectrum. Despite the significant amount of research undertaken, however, Charry's focus is particularly Malian; he confesses that his book lacks information related to music in Burkina Faso and invites other researchers to take on this challenge. As my research focuses specifically on southern Mali and northern Burkina Faso, this thesis contributes to the regional deficit that Charry concedes.

Skinner (2015) transports us to the day-to-day social life and musical experience of musicians in Bamako, arguing that the city's urban and contemporary musical encounters of the local, the national, and the global is consolidated by an ethical element among musicians he calls "Afropolitan ethics," which he explains as strategies of social being and tactics of self-fashioning.⁷ Although Skinner focuses on Bamako, he also argues that Afropolitan ethics and "Afropolitanism" cast an invisible web among musicians beyond Mali across the Mandé social world. His work is mainly concerned with performance practices, the dynamics of social power, and the transformation of traditional discourses emerging from the global encounters

⁷ Mbembe (2001) first coined the term Afropolitan.

of cultural insiders with outsiders. White (2012: 5-6) calls these kinds of musical encounters “critical encounters,” which may be a more appropriate term for exploring my own cross-cultural encounters with musicians in Mali and Burkina Faso. Although Afropolitanism can be critiqued as a Western creation in its attempt to mediate and explain local phenomena, Skinner’s theory is nevertheless relevant to my practice-based research approaches to two cosmopolitan countries of West Africa.

As the *kamalengoni* has emerged from the *donsongoni*, studies of the musical practices, history and cultural dynamics of hunters’ music by Cashion (1984), Durán (2007, 2018), Ferrarini (2014), Konkouris (2013), Manzon (2013), and Strawn (2011) are of prime relevance in this thesis. As male musical practitioners researching a male-dominated tradition, Strawn and Konkouris had a significant advantage over the female scholars Durán and Manzon, whose research alerted me to the importance of gender in this field. By building his research around learning to play the *donsongoni*, Strawn was able to experience local concepts of “social uncertainty,” which Malian hunters consider a philosophical approach to all things. On the other hand, Manzon describes the challenges she encountered while conducting her research. Nevertheless, she managed to turn her field difficulties into a research advantage, discovering that women also have the right to be hunters, a choice strongly discouraged by elders in the hunting society. As the *kamalengoni* proceeded from hunter traditions, this may be the reason why female *kamalengoniflaw* are rare. Durán underlines significant issues regarding gender, identity, and power, by showing how music can be used as a tool of resistance and a way to negotiate power.

By juxtaposing Malian and Burkinabe *kamalengonifɔlaw* and their performance techniques and mutually influential inventions, I expand upon Durán's findings about the *kamalengoni* in the Wasulu region. Castellanos's (2013, 2019) investigation of innovation on the harp addresses the musical relationship between Mali and Burkina Faso, and like Durán, he offers useful details about the instrument's transformation, its tuning systems and the *kamalengoni*'s organology. Castellanos offers some approaches to notation which communicate an understanding of the *kamalengoni* in practice. In particular, my research adds to Castellanos (2019), Durán (1995), and Maxwell (2003) by revealing the impact of emigration on the *kamalengoni*, resulting in what I call the *kɔnɔya* web, which binds *kamalengonifɔlaw* across borders.

There are several texts outside African music studies which have influenced my research. Like Strawn (2011), Cross (2014) argues that music provides an ideal communication channel for socially uncertain situations. Accordingly, the Brazilian concept of *malandragem* also negotiates uncertainty and can enhance an individual's ability to achieve performance excellence in all walks of life. Scholars who have addressed *malandragem* in various contexts include Capoeria (2014), Collura (2011), Dealtry (2009) Goto (1988), Hertzman (2010), Jones (2016), Lopes and Simas (2015), Matos (1982), Pimentel (2011), Rocha (2005), Rosa (2015), and Silva (2015, 2019). Historian Simas in particular was a big influence on my work, offering alternatives views on how the coloniser in Brazil disqualified epistemologies of the African and Native American enslaved.⁸ His studies address Brazil's social project to whiten the skin and culture of the nation, which resulted in the adoption of creative

⁸ Pers. comm., Luiz Antônio Simas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23.6.16.

and survival strategies of the majority (Simas 2018). Simas's work has helped me to reflect upon and argue how *malandragem* is one such creative strategy to resist racism.

Pointing out the relevance of the knowledge that emerges through performance and recording, scholars such as Charry (1996), Durán (1995, 1999, 2007, 2013), Eyre (2002, 2003), Hale (1998), Maxwell (2008), and Skinner (2015) have examined and emphasised the impact of national and international media on traditional Mandé oral traditions. With sensitivity to this impact, some of my research has been undertaken through collaborative audio and video recordings with several *kamalengonifɔlaw* in Mali and Burkina Faso. It is not the product of these recording sessions, however, that is of central interest in this thesis; my research is squarely focused on the processes and performance techniques that were revealed during the sessions.

In terms of cross-cultural performance, McGuinness (2011) has strongly inspired my method of collaborative research in a musical setting. Although not focused on Mandé music, McGuinness applied her performance background to research groove within cross-cultural musical encounters. Her practice-based research in London, Cuba and the Democratic Republic of Congo focused on the historical links between Congolese and Cuban music. To conduct her studies, she constructed her own "field" by forming a band called Grupo Lokito comprising Latino, British and Congolese musicians, which generated a rich platform to explore the shared groove aesthetics across the Atlantic in contemporary music. Required to act as researcher, mediator and an active integrated band member, McGuinness's research reveals the under-studied processes of intra- and cross-cultural musical transmission. Through this musical experiment between Cuban, Columbian,

Congolese, and British artists, the musicians learned how to exchange diverse cultural knowledge despite cultural and language differences. Like my own research, McGuinness's study draws on a substantial body of literature such as Burns (2010), White (2012) and Amoros (2012), which addresses the importance of performance in cross-cultural music making, its challenges, and its benefits to gather and mediate knowledge using notation, recordings and performance practices.

Another major influence on my research trajectory is the writings of psychologist John Heron, who devised a research method called co-operative inquiry (CI),⁹ now frequently used in a range of disciplines such as music therapy and arts-based case studies. For Heron, the co-researcher/object of research can participate in the design, management, and even the conclusions of the research. Heron (1996: 104-105) identified four different types of knowledge: 1. experiential knowledge (emerging from participation in direct encounters); 2. presentational knowledge (communicated through artistry including and beyond text); 3. propositional knowledge (intellectual knowledge and theories that are logically structured in text or numbers); and 4. practical knowledge (knowing "how to"). Experiential knowledge (1) is "evident only in actually meeting and feeling the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or things" (Heron 1996: 33) and was gained through my musical and ethnographic immersion in Mali and Burkina Faso. Presentational knowledge (2) becomes evident through an intuitive grasp of the significance of imaginary patterns expressed in graphic, plastic, moving, musical form and verbal art forms (Heron 1996: 106), as communicated through my analyses in Chapters

⁹ Peter Reason contributed to later developments of co-operative inquiry (Reason and Hawkins 1988; Reason 1999).

Three, Four and Five. Practical knowledge (4) - “knowing how to exercise a skill” (Heron 1996: 33) - was both a means to undertake the research and an outcome of my investigations, while propositional or intellectual knowledge (3) was “interdependent with [the] three other kinds of knowledge” (Heron 1996: 33) and has been the dominant mode in writing my thesis.

Theory and method

As a professional performer, I have harnessed a range of theories in performance studies from the work of Badrin (2016), Beeman (1997), Rasmussen (2004), Rink (2002), Small (1977, 1987, 1998), and Stucky and Wimmer (2002). In particular, I have been inspired by the writings of Baily (2001), Roe (2007), and Heron (1996), whose ideas about performance research *with* people resonates with my collaborative research approach, which comes naturally to me as a musician. As musical performance in Mali and Burkina Faso is regarded as an ordinary part of socialization in the community (Keïta 2011), the performance as research method is well suited to exploring the processes of social and musical change surrounding the *kamalengoni*.

Often in performance research, the investigator and the human object of study have distinct roles whereby the researcher ultimately claims the power to shape the discourse. In my view, performance research should be conducted and designed in the same manner as any kind of artistic work. Consider Collingwood (1938: 324) on where any artistic work (including music) does not belong to a single artist:

The work of artistic creation is not a work performed in any exclusive or complete fashion in the mind of the person whom we call the artist. That idea is a delusion bred of

individualistic psychology ... This activity is a corporate activity belonging not to any one human being but to a community.

Hence, I question why an academic performance research project about music, and the musical data generated, belongs to a single researcher. After all, performance is an inherited human activity common to all people (Small 1998: 5), and musical collaboration, even for the soloist, operates as a universal and fundamental human activity that connects people across barriers of language, age, gender and race (Turino 1999: 241). For music, Collingwood's quote resonates with the view of Brazilian musician and politician Gilberto Gil: "I can't claim a work as mine as it belongs to us all, along with a higher spiritual force ... time is truly the great alchemist that transforms all. I am only a little grain of sand."¹⁰

With issues of intellectual property in mind, I acknowledge that while I have encouraged my research respondents to contribute to my research, I have exclusively managed the outcome. In recognition of the inevitable inequity between scholars and those with whom they study in stark contrast to the collaborative nature of my life as a musician, I searched for a research approach where the asymmetrical roles of the researcher and the researched could be mediated and could alternate according to the needs of the dynamic nature of creating music in the moment. To this end, I discovered that performance studies prioritize my interest in process above product, as expressed by Stucky and Wimmer (2002: x):

¹⁰ From Gil's introduction to his song "Iansã" (an African spiritual entity) during a concert in 1973 after returning from political exile. See

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q03QjHyDyMw&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 29.1.20].

Translated by the author.

Performance studies is *fundamentally* relational, dynamic, and processual. Such rigorous indeterminacy and openness make many uncomfortable about PS. ... When texts, architecture, visual arts, or anything else are looked at by performance studies, they are studied “as” performances. That is, they are regarded as practices, events, and behaviours, not as “objects” or “things.” Thus, performance studies do not “read” an action or ask what “text” is being enacted. Rather, performance studies inquire about the “behaviour” of, for example, a painting: the ways it interacts with those who view it, thus evoking different reactions and meanings, and how it changes meaning over time and in different contexts; under what circumstances it was created and exhibited.

In this way, I have investigated not only the musical choices and behaviours of *kamalengonifɔlaw* but the behaviours of the musical objects they collectively appropriate and manipulate to express individuality. My performance studies approach has enabled my research participants to choose or move between the roles of co-researcher and research subject, allowing for a fluid, multilateral relationship.

In particular, Small’s ideas about musicking have influenced my thinking. Schechner (1987, 2002, 2003, 2004), and Turner’s (1975, 1987, 1988) ideas on ritual, liminal space, and social drama resonate with *malandragem*. Schechner expanded performance studies beyond its self-imposed boundaries of the theatre by providing alternative views on concepts such as ritual, performance processes, and global and intercultural performances across a spectrum of disciplines. He explains, “what is or is not performance does not depend on an event in itself but on how that event is received and placed” (Schechner 2002: 38), revealing to me that some events are considered less as performance than others.

The concept of “bi-musicality” (Hood 1960) - recently summarized by Bailly (2001) -has been expanded by Tenzer (2006: 34) in a way that speaks to me as a

multi-instrumentalist who works across cultures: “the well-established ethnomusicological model of bi- or trimusicality is inadequate to describe us anymore; ... we are approaching multi- or a virtual panmusicality.”¹¹ I was also interested in aspects of engaged ethnomusicology (Schippers 2010: 134) with a focus on the idea of “giving back knowledge” to the examined culture. Ideas of performing ethnomusicology (Solis 2004, Weiss 2005) and the issues of the transmission of traditional music in social contexts (Wiggins 2005) have helped me to cement ideas together and think about how to connect formal and informal epistemologies.

Collaboration through performance practice involves interaction between musically skilled individuals aiming to create shared understandings not previously acquired (Roe 2007: 22; Schrage 1990) and has enabled me to conduct research *with* people rather than *on* them. Researchers unavoidably have many powers (Heron 1999: 18), especially when they are cultural or class outsiders. By employing collaborative performance as a research method, not only do all participants share power in the creative process, but they can empower themselves with the meaning generated from the products of the creative process.¹² For musicians, however, collaboration can be arduous where substantial compromise is demanded, but successful decisive outcomes can pave the way to a meaningful collective existence. Like most forms of ethnography, the collaborative aspect of my performance as research demanded a deep level of cultural immersion, understanding, and trust and awareness emerging from a significant commitment to others for prolonged periods of cultural exchange and dialogue.

¹¹ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of writing, my final performance presentation was rehearsed via video conferencing, perhaps introducing a new concept of “virtual musicality.”

¹² Ultimately, this should be reflected by co-authorship, but this is not available to me within the PhD structure so must remain an aspiration for the future.

As in my homeland, *malandragem* as a framework can reveal an alternative epistemological structure in the analysis of the cross-cultural musical exchanges that take place in studios and public performances. However, cross-cultural collaborative performance practices stimulate transformation, adaptation and knowledge transfer, which often implicates certain kinds of power structures in groups within cultures (Campbell 2003). The manifestation of power unfolds differently, whereby people decide by negotiation how power should move from one to another using *malandragens* (Capoeria 2014). Where power moves to empower some and de-power others (Foucault 1980), for me, the notion of *malandragem* is present. In Mali and Burkina Faso, poverty and political oppression have contributed to the rise of a new tradition, which I see as an important framework to develop my reflections about the emergence of *kamalengoni* practices. When individuals are materially deprived, they often instigate unique and creative solutions to craft, adapt and transform (Santos 2011). These creative solutions thrive due to the scarcity of resources and other basic necessities of survival, especially in situations where war and conflict are the norm (Silva 2019) and impose ethical challenges on musicians.

The role of music may be perceived as a weapon of resistance (O’Connell 2011) to oppressed people and

those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly. This conversion is so radical as not to allow for ambivalent behaviour ...

Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth (Freire 1970: 43).

It requires a commitment to the crafting of a new kind of existence (Freire 1970) and “re-existence” (Walsh 2021) in the process of obtaining peace. By redefining and re-signifying life (Walsh 2021: 475), re-existence is a strategy to recreate positive

approaches to life, avoid discord, and overcome old challenges to promote a sense of collective accomplishment. As applied to music, the idea of re-existence manifests powerfully in situations of marginalisation and scarcity, as exemplified by the emergence of the *kamalengoni*. In the case of *kamalengonifɔlaw*, they have helped to craft an entire musical tradition and change the social norm of a conservative musical sphere. The creative approaches and strategies of *kamalengonifɔlaw* are acts of re-existence, akin to recycling in the material world. For many *kamalengonifɔlaw*, re-existence relies on transcultural materials and knowledge to engineer their creativity. Musical ideas and meanings are not only recycled to create something better, but to overcome discord amongst players and create new performance techniques and materials that can generate new pathways to secure both survival and peace and the endurance of a musical tradition.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this thesis points out two ways people engage with the endurance of tradition. The first focuses on preserving an invented tradition, while the second focuses on producing differentiation of an invented tradition (Fujita 2019), which I argue to be the case with *kamalengoni* music. Each of these approaches can offer complex and dissimilar challenges in the construction of a culture, musical transmission, and musical transformation. The transformation of tradition is inevitable either way. The ethnomusicologist Takanori Fujita (2019: 10) called this particular phenomenon of change in music tradition “puzzling” in his research on the contemporary transmission of *nō* theatre where preservation inevitably generates the transformation of tradition:

excessive fidelity and painstaking replication have the paradoxical tendency to generate new details. Say, for example, that we have here a predetermined movement of sound (a sonic pattern). Let us suppose that this sonic pattern appears in a song in a variety of

positions. This movement of sound, then, display subtle differences depending upon the context of the various positions to which it is adapted. Suppose that at some point a faithful replicator has faithfully traced this sound-movement, whose length changes slightly according to the context in different parts of the song. Then suppose that for the sake of convenience in teaching, that individual has assigned a different name to the sound-movement in each of the different positions where it appears. Perhaps the goal of that naming was indeed to make possible a more faithful reproduction of details. But the end result would be that each and every detail (i.e., the sound pattern in its various contextual forms/lengths) becomes standardized, and that, as a result, the details themselves are reshaped (Fujita 2019: 10).

By notating and naming some of the motifs I perceive to be important to *kamalengoni* music as “*jagamin* products” – an etic term that takes a cue from *kamalengonifola* but combines Bamanankan and English words - I too run the risk of standardizing a concept that is freely created and traded between players.

Before understanding *how* to invent to preserve, *what* is being preserved requires an explanation. I am referring to musical repertoires, performance techniques and conventional ensembles, where conservative Malian and Burkinabe musical spheres expect a faithful reproduction of musical details. *Jeliw* and *donsow* fall into the “Unchangeable” category (see below), but their “excessive fidelity” operates in a more fluid manner than described by Fujita (2019). Rather than offering a painstaking replication of a sonic pattern, *jeliw* and *donsow* “quote” sonic patterns, repertoires, and performance techniques from the past. Failing to do so would be deemed inventing to transform instead of inventing to preserve. The use of new elements in the performances of *jeliw* and *donsow* is encouraged and appreciated although is restrained in a way that they can simultaneously delineate past and modernity as opposites in their performances. Charry explains,

Older Jelis in particular often express the view that modern electric dance music does not have the historical depth of their own tradition, and they distance themselves from modern dance bands because they do not uphold the ancient hereditary sanctions on who may play certain kinds of music. Younger Jelis may be less concerned with such social distinctions, yet they remain keenly aware of the different kinds of training and sensibilities involved in the two worlds (2000: 243).

Jeliw and *donsow* invent to preserve in order to disseminate tradition and to safeguard their lifestyle and social status. New musical trends and technologies can be adopted as long as they recall the past and ensure the continuity of tradition, but the actual music is inevitably transformed. For example, many *kora* players nowadays use pre-recorded backing tracks to perform at live concerts. The repertoire, in many cases, continues to be very traditional or very close to the source despite fresh re-interpretations.

Another invention to preserve is the use of *kora* notation systems to transmit musical knowledge. For example, I witnessed pupils at Balla Fasséké Kouyaté Conservatoire in Mali preparing for a practical exam by practising a faithful reproduction of details from a musical score of a traditional *kora* piece. By employing this method, the use of oral tradition as the only means of musical transmission is transformed. As pupils attempt to reproduce the score in front of them, the way of learning and playing the *kora* is changing, but for some, the traditional repertoire is being preserved. Yet it is important to understand that the written representation of a piece portrays only one musician's interpretation of one particular version of a traditional piece. Hence, only one particular version among many is being preserved.

The “what” and “how” to invent to preserve is often the result of the collective thought of different groups sharing an experience that preservation has occurred. Although new details reshape traditions (Fujita 2019: 10), inevitably either preserving or producing differentiation, processes and experiences in tradition occur according to the following mind frame.

A. Unchangeable

- The preservation of tradition.
- Closed membership or ascription.
- The past and modernity as opposites.
- New technologies recalling the past.
- Invention to preserve.

B. Changeable

- The production of differentiation in a tradition.
- Open to all through the choice.
- The past and modernity are allies.
- New technologies inventing the future.
- Invention to transform.

Column A lists the features of faithful replication, whereby strict frameworks are imposed. These frameworks are effective, usually long lasting and are disseminated orally. For example, *kora* players believe that new musical elements are acceptable as long as it is exclusively inherited musicians who create to ensure that the past is safeguarded. Column B lists a more open framework, where a wider array of musicians can produce differentiation in tradition. These musicians are less concerned with excessive insistence on recalling the past because individuals from Column A already do this. However, the musical resources of the past are appreciated and used in abundance as a crucial resource to further develop musical repertoires, performance techniques, and conventional ensembles. For musicians falling into Column B, quoting a musical phrase, repertoire, or performance technique of the past is a choice, not an obligation. Also, new technologies are very often integrated with the purpose of producing differentiation rather than recalling

the past. I am not saying here that Column B musicians do not recall the past; rather, they are committed to inventing and transforming by combining the past and modernity as allies to invent the future. In this sense, Column B aptly reflects the mind-frame and attitude of *kamalengonifɔlaw*.

The driving force to change one tradition is often stimulated by contact with another, whereby the encounter results in a new form (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). West African nations, including Mali and Burkina Faso, are linked, and were exposed to culture contact through their long history of epic battles, empires, changing borders, and European colonization. First to coin the term “invented traditions,” Hobsbawm and Ranger demonstrate how new traditions emerge in the African continent, and how these encounters occurred due to European colonization between the 1870s and 1890s. For example, invented traditions were generated when Europeans:

define[d] themselves as natural and undisputed masters of vast numbers of Africans. They drew upon European invented traditions both to define and to justify their roles, and also to provide models of subservience into which it was possible to draw Africans ... the revived and invented rituals of craft unionism were used by white workers to *exclude* Africans from participation (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 212, 213).

The strategy of excluding Africans on their own continent during the nineteenth century uplifted whites to be perceived as agents of “modernization” to a neo-traditional African thought and conduct. They imposed, enforced and drew on “invented traditions in order to derive the authority and confidence that allowed them to act as agents of change” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 220-221). Europeans did this in two ways:

One was the acceptance of the idea that *some* Africans could become members of the governing class of colonial Africa, and hence the extension to such Africans of training in neo-traditional context. The second - and more common - was an attempt to make use of what European invented traditions had to offer in terms of a redefined relationship between leader and led. The regimental tradition, after all, defined the roles of both officers and men; the great house tradition of rural gentility defined the roles of both masters and servants; the public school tradition defined the roles of both prefect and fags. All this might be made use of to create a clearly defined hierarchy in which Europeans commanded and Africans accepted commands, but both within a shared framework of pride and loyalty. Thus if the traditions which workers and peasants had made for themselves in Europe did not exercise much influence on Africans under colonialism, invented European traditions of subordination exercised a very considerable influence indeed (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 220-221).

An example of an African tradition invented by the coloniser is the construction of the chief in the Mandé world traditions as it eliminates the term “king,” which brought devastating consequences, as explained by Graeme (2006: 56):

To enforce direct rule, the French colonial authorities only recognised those who had been empowered as chiefs, and they paid these appointed rulers a wage as they would a civil servant. The effect of this action was twofold - to deprive the Mandé rulers of a significant proportion of their income and to distance the ruling families from the general population.

Long before *kamalengonifɔlaw* emerged, musicians also adapted to conform to colonial needs by changing musical tradition:

Though a large percentage of a *griot*'s repertoire still described heroic endeavours and the histories of old Mali, these were now supplemented by topical narratives, instrumental music, and popular songs (ibid.: 56).

The *griot*'s value as a historian and repository of knowledge became less significant to his new patrons than the melodious songs and tunes ... Tunes with moral values and codes of conduct are no longer particularly admired (Darbo 1980: 13).

A kind of adaptability was also mimicked later as European political structures were consolidated in Mali after independence from France:

Griots adapted the praise songs conventionally performed on behalf of "great men," that is, influential and wealthy patrons, to the new situation by portraying the president and party officials as successors of mythical heroes. They insinuated that the new rulers perpetuated pre-colonial traditions of leadership (Dorothea 2002: 04).

Educational institutions also became spaces where Europeans subordinated and influenced African thought and conduct. Being from a colonized country myself, where I struggled to obtain formal education, I recognized subordinating behaviours at the Malian music conservatoire Balla Fasséké Kouyaté in 2017. The teaching models in several disciplines, the assessment system, and the institutional agenda appeared to forward European methods rather than local systems of knowledge. French, which is compulsory, is the main language of knowledge transfer in the institution as it is considered more authoritative than indigenous languages among teachers and pupils. In Mali and Burkina Faso, French colonization did not decimate local languages completely, as happened to many languages in Brazil with Portuguese colonization. I was puzzled about why audio, text, and video teaching

resources are often translated into written and spoken French rather than left in the most spoken local language, Bamanankan. Daouda Dao, a music teacher at the conservatoire, who had recently started his PhD in ethnomusicology, explained to me that using French facilitates people from other parts of the world to consider coming to Mali to study music. It also enables Malian musicians to study abroad through scholarship exchange schemes.¹³ Although these provide important opportunities for Malians with a high level of French literacy, the policy excludes many of the musicians who have provided the knowledge presented in this thesis. Although all of my respondents also were able to speak French to some degree, some had only basic spoken French skills and literacy. In particular, the musicians who live outside of urban or tourist areas have only limited French. The language requirements at Balla Fasséké Kouyaté would likely exclude most *kamalengoniflaw* as both students and teachers. The overarching financial incentive for the institution to attract international students is driven by foreign fees that are ten times higher than local ones.¹⁴ It could be argued that Balla Fasséké Kouyaté's language policy has more to do with the survival of the institution than that of the musical traditions it commodifies.¹⁵

The colonial inheritance within Malian music institutions inadvertently mediates and promotes an agenda where Europeans are benefitted and viewed as “leaders,” while Africans must compromise and are “led” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 220-221). In this way, French culture and epistemology has an ongoing impact on the thought and behaviour of indigenous Malians. Unequal collaborations within

¹³ Pers. comm., Daouda Dao, Bamako, Mali, 6.6.17.

¹⁴ See admission fees: <https://conservatoireartsmali.wordpress.com/inscripcion/> [Accessed: 20.4.22].

¹⁵ Pers. comm., Daouda Dao, Bamako, Mali, 6.6.17.

colonial educational settings have the capacity to impose change on local traditions as subaltern groups must adhere (Spivak 1988) to hierarchical European structures in order to obtain loyalty and succeed. By contrast, outside the European agenda implemented at music institutions harnessing European modes of learning, oral musical traditions resist wholesale change but slowly adapt:

music does not usually involve radical departures, bold new ideas, or highly original contributions. It is characterized instead by a very subtle expansion of the repertoire through the modification of existing songs and their accompaniment (Knight 1975: 11).

My field trips revealed that Malian and Burkinabe people do not entirely separate tradition from modernity. As Charry states,

Traditional and modern in a Mandé context do not refer to opposing sides of battle with impenetrable lines, or to blind adherence to colonial lexical categories and mentalities, but rather reflect states of mind that can be fluidly combined and respected in innovative and often humorous ways (2000: 24).

Similarly, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 247) state,

societies had certainly valued custom and continuity, but custom was loosely defined and infinitely flexible. Custom helped to maintain a sense of identity, but it also allowed for an adaptation so spontaneous and natural that it was often unperceived.

Tradition welcomes constant change as a strategy to maintain a sense of identity and continuity, while it is itself transformed or new traditions emerge.

Hobsbawm and Ranger also opine that it is easier “to invent a tradition than modify it and make it flexible once invented” (ibid: 211) stressing that the past as

tradition (when a tradition was invented) and modernity as tradition (when a tradition is modified) co-exist as opposite forces, which defends their coined term “invented tradition” as distinct from “genuine tradition.” Hobsbawm and Ranger asserted that no tradition is static and discuss “unconsciously evolving custom” (ibid: 236) in contrast to invented tradition, where change is intentional and conscious. They did not examine, however, invention as a continuous, intentional, and practical action that becomes the norm. My framework of the tradition of invention forwards inventiveness as a custom and a conscious attitude to managing tradition and celebrating past and modernity as allies, which grants the sense of continuity while tradition is transformed.

Conventional methods of teaching and learning music within European traditions are rigid and systematic and are often micromanaged by an expert, whereas the approach within West African traditions is more fluid, where pupils are not only free to learn from the mistakes they make, but they are encouraged to experiment and “fail.” Such process not only helps learners develop a solid musical identity, but it also allows students to participate in redesigning and re-signifying tradition. In contrast to Western and African perceptions, “The interface between tradition ... and modernity ... is thus a key issue in contemporary African cultural criticism, one to which students of music stand poised to make a theoretical contribution” (Agawu 2016: 44).

The difference in “genuine tradition” and “invented tradition” is usually delineated by expressions such as “new” or “older” traditions. However, “new” and “old” traditions have contrasting frameworks that shape them: one is where invention constantly *preserves* a tradition (such as in some forms of Western art music), and the other is where invention constantly *changes* a tradition (a feature

particularly associated with forms of African and Afro-diasporic musical traditions, 1960s free jazz and 1970s Brazilian *pagode*). In the latter, there are few restrictions to what composers and musicians can or cannot invent, but not all changes are appreciated, popular or reproduced. The only limit of change for a *kamalengonifola* is knowing when and how to implement new inventions, which are discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Inventive musical devices and materials employed for invention to change tradition are central to my research. The musical product is, indeed, influenced by past musical traditions but is free from imposed limitations of tradition. While musical conventions such as particular tempos, chord progressions, and tunes are used to preserve jazz as a tradition, musicians of certain styles such as bebop and free jazz experience these conventions as restrictive, in that they limit potential to invent freely.

Like US free jazz, Brazilian *pagode* or West African *kamalengoni* music emerged as youth inventions breaking free from the creative tyranny of more conservative musical systems. In this sense, inventiveness becomes a symbol for success and survival, one that celebrates a tradition of inventing the new rather than a tradition that invents in order to preserve the old. I am calling this progressive mentality the tradition of invention, where the old is always new and pervasive change is a norm. I argue that *kamalengoni* music is one such tradition of invention due to how inventiveness is adopted, managed, and praised by other players. Within this model, the invention *is* the tradition.

Exploring alternative solutions to understanding music cross-culturally remains one of the most challenging tasks to scholars and musicians of our era (White 2012). My thesis attempts to push the boundaries of accepted theories and methods by using the systems outlined above. By superimposing *malandragem* as a

cross-cultural theory, I focus on the cultural nuances and social symbolism of *kamalengoni* music that makes it a tradition of invention. Coming from a tradition of deep cultural music symbolism myself, I can offer my personal experience and reflections with an overlapping insider and outsider perspective. I hope to make a unique contribution with my experimental methods of collaboration and performance across traditions to answer the research questions: What musical thinking, performance techniques, composition processes, and inventiveness win the approval of other *kamalengonifɔlaw* and are celebrated by the wider culture? What motivates *kamalengoni* players to constantly invent and how is knowledge communicated between musicians? How do *kamalengoni* players assess the performance of their peers? Has the *kamalengoni* been institutionalised, and if so, with what consequences? How does the performative production and transmission of sonic signatures, which I call “*jagamin* products,” transform existing styles and socially elevate a musician to the status of *kamalengoni dankɔrɔba* (hero)?

The performance aspect of this thesis

My written PhD is accompanied by three performance recordings to illustrate the discussions, illustrations, and transcriptions herein. Two of the three recordings are of my own performance while the third is a collation of African performers. Part One takes the form of a pre-recorded Lecture Demonstration I recorded on my own, while Part Two is the Recital I recorded with an ensemble of two other musicians (see the programmes in Appendix II). As well as the Lecture Demonstration and Recital recordings, I compiled an accompanying DVD of performances I filmed of several of my teachers during my field trips to Mali and Burkina Faso in 2015 and 2017 (see List of Video and DVD Examples). Where the performances in any of the three

recordings correlate directly to transcriptions and relevant discussions in this thesis, they are signposted by (*).

In the Lecture Demonstration (Part One), I explain the *kamalengoni*'s organology and illustrate the many developments of the instrument's structure over time and how these have enabled or demanded innovative performance practices. In my Lecture Demonstration I used twelve- and sixteen-stringed *kamalengoniw* to demonstrate the array of common performance techniques. I also demonstrated the Brazilian *cuíca* drum.

The Lecture Demonstration is subdivided into four key periods: Phase I (1960-1983), Phase II (1984-1999), Phase III (2000-2009) and Phase IV (2010-2020). I devised these four phases (detailed in upcoming chapters) to introduce the main techniques and structural changes to the instrument up to the time of writing. The phases also highlight the pivotal and iconic *kamalengoni* musicians who can be credited for the major changes in organology and performance practice.

The four-phase structure also shaped my Recital (Part Two). As this thesis was completed during an uncertain and dangerous time, where most of the UK population was quarantined due to COVID, musicians were not allowed to perform with audiences in public spaces, so my initial performance plan was compromised and required me to think about an alternative approach. Due to the difficulties the lockdown posed, I also had to make last-minute decisions about the repertoire on the day I recorded the Recital as this was the only time I was able to meet and work alongside my musicians. Things were complicated by a few unexpected issues so I had to make several changes. For example, one of the musicians brought a heptatonic rather than pentatonic *bala* (xylophone) by mistake, so I substituted the

planned piece “Bora” for “Aye Lamén” (both composed by Adama Yalomba) in order to accommodate the change in instrumentation.

In the Recital, I showed how particular musicians of the four key periods, known for various innovations, have gradually integrated new performance techniques and musical technologies into their *kamalengoni* playing styles. In Phase I, I showed the *kamalengoni*'s strong ties with the *donsongoni* harp and the early *wassoulou* genre. I then demonstrated changes in Phase II, where some *kamalengonifɔlaw* started to take inspiration from *jeli* traditions, resulting in changes to the harp's organology (particularly by adding strings) which allowed players to develop new performance techniques and appealing sonic signatures I call “*nagamin* products” (explained in Chapter Three). I showed how these changes and the introduction of some *jeli* repertoire provided *kamalengonifɔlaw* with a wider arrange of musical choices beyond the *donsongoni* tradition and *wassoulou* traditions. Phase III gave rise to even more challenging performance techniques. I touched on how access to different musical instruments, expanded ensembles and the use of technologies influenced how *kamalengonifɔlaw* developed their musical ideas. I gave a practical example of how a local player would consider celebrating past and modernity as allies by integrating the old and the new. Finally, I explain how Phase IV *kamalengonifɔlaw* are inventing and further developing alternative performance techniques such as the use of interlocking cyclic phrases composed of four voices. Further, some players are drawing from the heptatonic tonal system of the *jeli* repertoire, at times on *kamalengoniw* in pentatonic tunings.

Summary of the chapters

In this chapter, I have introduced the *kamalengoni* in broad terms, outlined the project's main research questions, reviewed the relevant literature, explained my theory and methods, and described the content of the recordings accompanying this thesis. Chapter Two introduces the concept of the chosen musician called *kɔnɔ* (songbird) and the esoteric forces that guide musicians, *nyama*. The chapter also explains the regional oral history from which all musicians draw, and the *kamalengoni*'s origin, history and cultural nuances and dissemination in Mali, Burkina Faso and beyond Africa. I introduce some of the iconic players and the phases that emerged before showing the fluid connection and exchange of knowledge that boosted the transformation of *kamalengoni* music. Chapter Three comprises explanations of the harp's organology, performance techniques, and a guide to my notation system, which has been designed to engender practical understandings of the *kamalengoni*'s performance practices. The text reveals how certain techniques have been adopted to create “*nagamin* products,” which are communicated from one *kamalengonifɔla* to another. These sonic signatures allow communication locally and across borders by assembling an informal connective network I call “the *kɔnɔya* web.”

Chapters Four and Five take the reader into the heart of my performance-based method and include copious audio, video, and notated examples to illustrate my explanations. Like my Lecture Demonstration and Performance, these two chapters are organised around the four phases; Chapter Four examines Phases I and II and Chapter Five looks at Phases III and IV. Both chapters feature some of the *kamalengoni*'s iconic musicians, who have negotiated their uncertain circumstances by creatively engaging with transformation processes within the music, instrument

construction, performance techniques, and their social worlds. My conclusion chapter presents the outcomes of my research as well as a comprehensive overview of the findings.

Chapter Two

Kɔnɔya, the Kɔnɔ, and the Dankɔrɔba

Kɔnɔya, the art of the *kɔnɔ* (*wassoulou* musician), is a practical concept that has not yet been explored specifically in terms of the art of the *kamalengonifɔla*. Just as *jeliya* pertains to the art of *jeliw* (*griots*) and *donsoya* refers to the art of *donsow* (hunters), *kɔnɔya* refers to the artistic processes and output of *kɔnɔw*, a new class of musician who plays secular music predominantly for entertainment (*nyenaje*). *Kɔnɔya* embraces both singers and instrumentalists, and although *kɔnɔya* is not limited to *kamalengonifɔlaw*, the harp is essential for its existence.

This chapter introduces *kamalengoni* practices from diverse geographical areas in Mali, Burkina Faso, and beyond by dividing *kɔnɔya* into four temporal phases.¹ As outlined in Chapter One, the harp first emerged in Mali in the 1950s, then diffused into Burkina Faso in the 1990s, and is now played beyond the African continent. Phase I (1960-1983) includes only Malian musicians, Phases II (1984-1999) and III (2000-2009) introduce Burkinabe players, while Phase IV (2010-2020) includes the younger generation of African and non-African musicians.

¹ The four phases are the author's approach to demonstrate how the *kamalengoni* and its forms of music transmission have evolved. The dates refer to an approximation of when some important key events took place based on the information provided by respondents, music albums, videos, and academic research.

***Kɔnɔw*, *nyama*, and the management of unseen forces**

Over time young Malian and Burkinabe players have negotiated their way out of the conservative social restrictions required to play musical instruments and they have seized the freedom to practise all types of repertoires through the use of the *kamalengoni*. In Mali, this new class of musicians (including singers, guitarists and *kamalengonifɔlaw*) call themselves *kɔnɔw* (birds), a concept which has deep meanings within the culture.² In Burkina Faso, *jeliw*, who are from a different social axis, have appropriated the *kamalengoni* as an instrument for the musical education of young boys. Unlike *jeliw* (*griots*) and *donsow* (hunters), whose right to play music relies on endogamous caste and cult membership, the *kɔnɔ* is the first kind of musician outside the traditional caste system in Mali who can succeed in the music profession by choice rather than by ascription (Durán 1995).

Both *jeliw* and *donso* musicians are *nyamakalaw* (those from the artisan caste). Their sacred musical traditions, instruments, repertoire, and performance techniques are largely constructed to manage *nyama*, which is a powerful force believed to be present in all living things, inanimate objects, and unseen elements of the material and spiritual world.³ Hunters are considered the Mali Empire's engineers (Durán 1999: 143). Because of their ability to control *nyama*, crafts people such as blacksmiths, musicians, poets, potters, leatherworkers, woodcrafters and above all, hunters, have a special role in Mandé society.

² In Mandé culture, birds symbolize wisdom, human spirituality, and all types of beautiful singing (Durán 1995).

³ *Nyama* has loose parallels in other African cultures. For example, the Yoruba *àṣẹ*, known as *axé* in Brazil, is similarly important among musicians as an essential ingredient that influences people's decision-making, their role in society and creativity in the performing arts, especially in music.

Donsow are known for their technical abilities and knowledge of flora, fauna, medicine, and sorcery. As a *nyamakala*, the hunter is trained to be a bush scientist and uses music as a tool to control *nyama* and protect the community. His apprenticeship not only involves learning how to kill animals to serve the community, but he is privy to the secrets of controlling the esoteric, unseen *nyama*, which is released once the animal dies (Ferrarini 2014: 48). *Nyama* is considered to be an unpredictable and dangerous force, making the *donso* musician essential for spiritual protection. It is through the *donso*'s incantations, which are believed to neutralize any negative *nyama* when the animal is slaughtered, that a balance is established. In *jeliya*, *nyama* manifests itself through the restricted domains of oral praise and the use of a speech mode known as *tarikou*, and playing musical instruments is traditionally ascribed to *jeliw* musicians. The musical traditions of *donsoya* and *jeliya* have markedly different functions in society in comparison to Western music, which is largely for entertainment (Charry 2000).

Being detached from the social responsibilities and taboos of *jeliw* and *donsow*, Wasulu's young *kamalengonifɔla* (*kɔnɔw*) have been able to find creative alternatives that have helped shape the future of secular music within their religiously conservative Muslim society. Yet *kamalengoni* musicians, with their lack of proximity to *nyama*, are still searching for ways to fit into the social soundscapes of Mali and Burkina Faso. On the one hand, the absence of *nyama* in *kamalengoni* performance facilitates an alliance between tradition and modernity, where music purely for entertainment is allowed. On the other hand, the *kamalengoni* has created a liminal space that has unsettled, restructured and challenged the very role of music, the musicians, and their place in traditional Mandé society. Victor Turner's views on

liminality being “the problem in the middle” are adapted in this thesis to resonate with the *kamalengoni*'s status when he explains that:

the very word ‘entertainment’ means the liminal in English, for it means literally, from the Latin, ‘to hold between’ to be neither this nor that, but the problem in the middle – a problem which staged in liminal surrounds ‘entertains’ rather than threatens (1988: 41).

Although the *kamalengoni* has only been around since the 1950s, the instrument went on to evolve into a fully-fledged tradition by the 1970s with the popularity of *wassoulou* music in Mali and the 1990s in Burkina Faso. Yet, to a certain extent, it is still regarded as an outcast tradition by *nyamakalaw* musicians. The only reason the *kamalengoni* has been able to continue is due to the delicate agreements that have been carefully negotiated between *jeliw*, *donsow* and *wassoulou* musicians, as the *wassoulou* singer Coumba Sidibé (in Durán 1999: 162-163) explains:

[The] elders were against it. They couldn't understand why we should bring this culture to many people; for them it was something reserved for hunters' society... When we started doing this, the hunters rose up and protested everywhere. They felt it was unacceptable to have hunters' music played for public amusement. So Brulaye and I, we bought them kola nuts, chickens, even goats and local alcohol [as sacrifices] to as their pardon. We told the elder hunters we promised not to touch the secrets of their ancestors. But any village that didn't have a *kamalengoni nyenaje*, the village was not a nice place to be.

In the early development of *wassoulou* music, hunting elders organized themselves to condemn the *kamalengoni* music due to the fear that their own sacred,

restricted tradition would be diffused beyond the hunting social circle. *Jeliw* had different concerns, fearing that the rise of the *kamalengoni* and *wassoulou* music generally would threaten their dominance in public performances, thus having a direct impact on their way of life and economic security as

the *kamalengoni* becomes the symbol of a new movement that tries to shake up the neo-colonial mentality. They reject the wooden language of the griots and their eternal praise for a corrupted elite. The texts of the *wassoulou* music are closer to the people, the rough and rusty sound of the *kamalengoni* expresses a rebel aesthetic, close to the earth, and the shanty town. In the studios, they fight over the *kamalengoni* virtuosi, who become the “guitar heroes” of *wassoulou* “rock”... (Graeme 2006: 209).

Having survived the ordeals of colonisation, both *jeliw* and *donsow* felt that this new class of musicians, the *kɔnɔw*, could have a devastating impact on their privileged roles granted by birth right or membership. Despite reservations, the popularity of *wassoulou* music has contributed to the dissemination and status of *jeliw* and *donsow* musical traditions. Nevertheless, as their *jeliw* and *donsow* contemporaries are so socially powerful, *kɔnɔw* musicians continue to negotiate a path to obtain their own social relevance and recognition. For example, while there are *donsow* societies and *jeliw* associations throughout Mali and Burkina Faso, there is not an equivalent organisation dedicated to furthering the *kɔnɔw* tradition and *kamalengonifɔlaw*. There is only one festival dedicated to the *kamalengoni*, which has taken place annually since 2015. Yoro Diallo is its president, and it is called the *Yanfolila Kamalengoni Festival*. The director of the festival, Berthe Abdoul, told me it attracted 25,000 people in 2017 and that numbers were expected only to rise for

the fifth festival in 2018.⁴ He mentions the hard work involved in making the *kamalengoni* tradition sustainable because players continue to struggle without government support. Their solution is to instigate creative strategies to overcome the social challenges, thus crafting alternatives to guarantee the continuity of the new tradition called *kɔnɔya*.

***Kɔnɔya* (the art of *kɔnɔw*)**

Each distinct art form develops its own philosophy, social roles, artistic discipline, and musical system, despite borrowing concepts and ideas from predecessors and contemporary forms. As I have outlined, specific lineages practise *jeliya* and subscribed members of hunters' societies practise *donsoya*. Whereas both of these art forms are strongly related to the esoteric power *nyama*, *kɔnɔya* is less concerned with *nyama* so its work is free from these esoteric responsibilities, at least in theory. "Don't you know that *kɔnɔya* demands a little sorcery? (*Ai ma kɔnɔya, dɔɔni y'a rɔ?*)" (Seydou Camara as quoted in Cashion 1984: 137-138).

With reference to musical art forms in West Africa, entertainment is a recent and overemphasised concept introduced by foreign commentators (Charry 2000). First, *kɔnɔya* uses a musical language that does not always fit into Western categories or the ideas that practitioners hold about their own emerging art form. Second, *kɔnɔya* offers an insider framework to make sense of the rise of *kamalengoni* music and the growing web of practitioners at home and abroad, which I call "the *kɔnɔya* web." As a framework, the term helps to understand the history, educational structure, and evolution of *kamalengoni* practices across borders. The

⁴ Pers. comm., Berthé Abdoul, Bamako, Mali, 26.10.17.

same framework can be used to research singers, guitarists, percussionists, and other instrumentalists in relation to the emerging *kɔnɔya* world.

Kɔnɔya absorbs from and is influenced by the dominant art forms of *jeliya* and *donsoya*, including their repertoires, dances, style of attire, musical instruments, history, approaches to creativity, use of language, philosophy, identity, spiritual beliefs, and social behaviours. Conversely, although the more traditional art forms are conservative and concerned with the maintenance of customs, they are also influenced by *kɔnɔya*. Despite adopting contemporary music technologies and performance styles (Schechner 2006), one of the primary aims of *donsoya* and *jeliya* is to use “proverbs, stories and especially ... ‘lineages of knowledge’ [as instrumental tools to recall] the past in Mandé ... music and song.”⁵ *Kɔnɔya* works in the opposite way, where change and invention drive practitioners to distance themselves from older creations without losing the sense of continuity of the old while change occurs and as time passes. As a recent art form, *kɔnɔya* tries to stand out by remaining current and at the same time, by combining tradition with modernity as an intrinsic strategy of survival.⁶ This unique progressive attitude makes *kɔnɔya* a tradition of invention rather than a tradition of preservation.

The word *kɔnɔ* (or *kono*) often refers to the singers of *wassoulou* music rather than its instrumentalists, as in the case of the *kamalengonifɔlaw*. However, Abou

⁵ Theodore Konkouris (2014: 19) researching coined the term “lineages of knowledge” in relation to Mandé hunters’ musical ceremonies. He argues that this process of preservation to recall the past is intentional, consensual, negotiated and imposed on hunters’ tradition.

⁶ Durán states, “the art of *kono*, on the other hand, is song, not speech: they see themselves as the voice of the people, free of any restrictions, whether of gender, age, performance mode or repertoire” (1995: 111).

Diarra informed me that “*kamalengonifɔlaw* call themselves *kɔnɔ* too”⁷ and that his teacher, Vieux Kanté, confirmed this status in the song “*Kɔnɔ*” (Bird) (presented in Chapter Four). Both men and women who perform *wassoulou* music may call themselves and be recognized as *kɔnɔ*. The *kamalengoni* is played mostly by men and only in rare exceptions by women. Not all *kamalengonifɔlaw* are *kɔnɔ* singers (*kɔnɔ donkilidala*). Often *kamalengonifɔlaw* who sing are the most well-known by the general public consuming *kamalengoni* music.⁸

Kamalengonifɔlaw also commonly introduce themselves to others with the following: “*ne ye musicien ye, ne be kamalengoni fɔ*” (I am a musician, I play the *kamalengoni*) or “*ne ye artisty ye*” (I am an artist).⁹ The latter is also used to refer to each other by changing the Bamanankan first-person pronoun *ne* to a third-person pronoun *a*. During fieldwork in Bamako, Sikasso, and Bobo-Dioulasso, I only heard *kamalengonifɔlaw* refer to each other and themselves as *kɔnɔw*, often within song lyrics. For example, Kanté, who sings and plays the harp, honours *kɔnɔw* singers such as Oumou Sangaré in his lyrics (see Chapter Four). It is also common for *kamalengonifɔlaw* to praise other players. In theory, the title *kɔnɔ* is used for musicians from the Wasulu region who play *wassoulou* music, but in practice it can be used for musicians who choose the profession by choice rather than ascription, such as Salif Keïta, who is from the *horon* caste so would not normally sing.¹⁰ The popular Malian rapper Mylmo posted on Facebook that Burkinabe artist Ramatou

⁷ Pers. comm., Abou Diarra, WhatsApp, 17.4.19.

⁸ I am using the term *kamalengoni* music generally to refer to all musical styles in which the harp is adopted.

⁹ I explain more about “speaking the *kamalengoni*” in Chapter Four.

¹⁰ Pers. comm., Adama Yalomba, Bamako, Mali, 9.4.17. Keïta’s song “*Kɔnɔ*” could be interpreted as his claim to be a *kɔnɔ*.



Plate 2.1: Rama N’Goni playing *kamalengoni* in a televised concert, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. 21.6.19. Photographer Unknown.¹¹

Traoré (stage name Rama N’Goni) with her “*n’goni*” (*kamalengoni*) and “voice,” “is a complete musician artist.”¹² N’Goni is a current but rare example of a female vocalist/*kamalengoni* player (Plate 2.1) Kokanko Sata from Mali, is another exception from the previous generation, where women are usually singers, dancers, or play portative hand percussion.

¹¹ Pers. comm., Rama N’Goni, WhatsApp, 23.7.19. Photo courtesy by Rama N’Goni.

¹² See

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10216902942628307&set=pob.1307390770&type=3&th eater> [Accessed: 7.4.20].

There are also instances where *donsow* and *jeliw* call themselves *kɔnɔw* (Durán 1995: 111). In the context of *kɔnɔya*, however, using *kɔnɔw* for *kamalengonifɔlaw* reflects their musical status and identity as part of a wide network that connects practitioners of the instrument, including *kɔnɔw* from Mali, Burkina Faso and beyond.

***Kɔnɔya* phases and their main exponents**

I have organized the *kamalengoni kɔnɔya* web into four temporal phases to obtain a rough descriptive overview of developments in the performance techniques, performance strategies and technologies adopted by individual *kamalengonifɔlaw*. From 1950 to the time of writing, there have been several *kamalengonifɔlaw* who have shaped the harp profoundly. While some *kɔnɔw* are legendary stars, others are less popular or even completely unknown in the mainstream. In the following chapters, I have chosen individuals based on their musical achievements rather than their popularity.

I have arranged the main developments of the *kamalengoni* tradition from 1960 to 2020 into a simplified timeline to feature some of the individuals who have instigated (and potentially will instigate) enduring change in Figure 2.1.¹³ Some of the musicians named in the diagram, particularly in Phases I and II, have already died but overall, most are still very active today. As it is not possible to encompass

¹³ This diagram reflects the data I had collected at the time of writing and which I discuss in further detail in Chapters Four and Five.

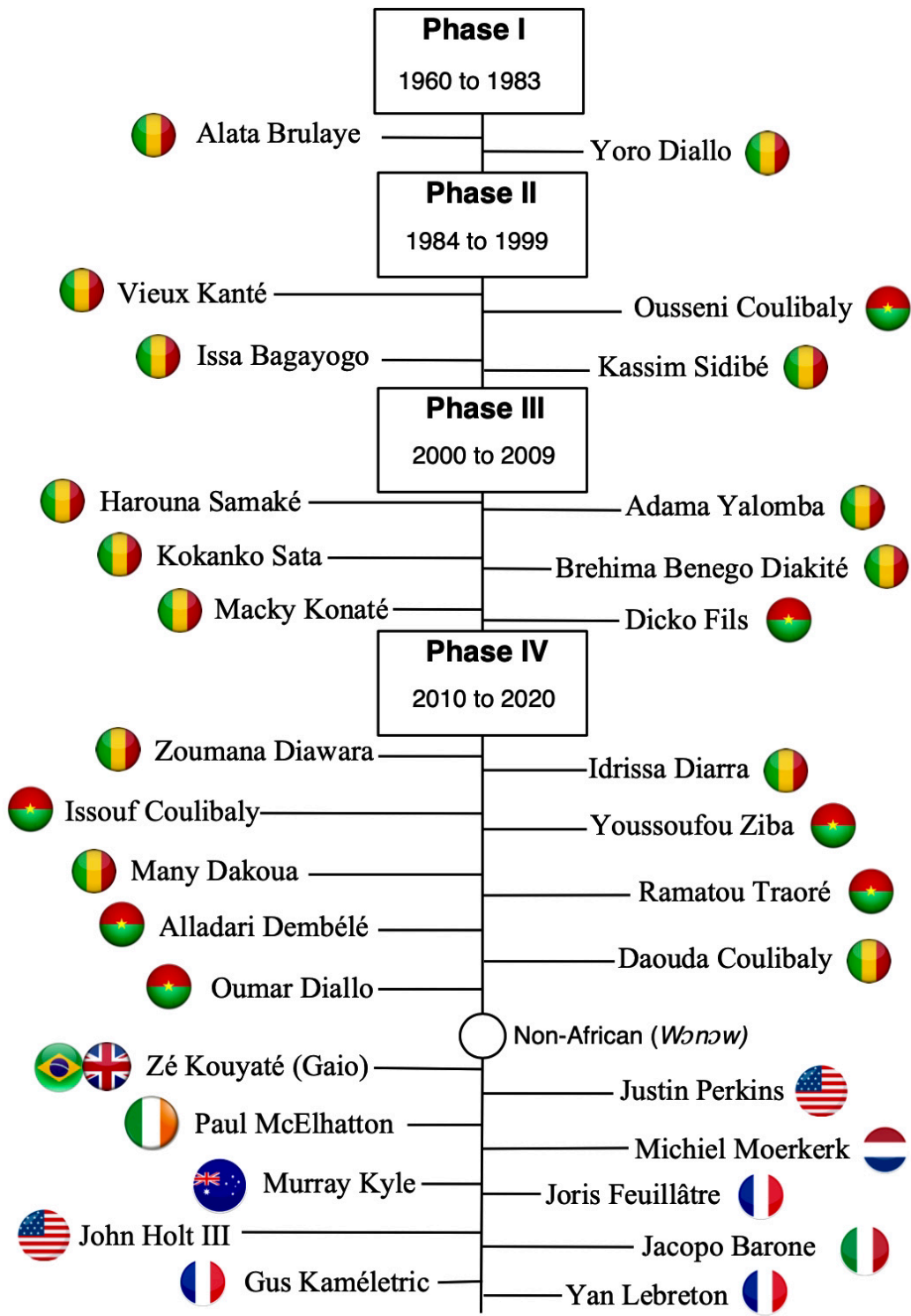


Figure 2.1: The four phases of *kɔnɔɔ* and their main exponents (*).

the many *kamalengonifɔlaw* who made very important contributions to the construction of *kɔnɔya*, musicians have been selected to exemplify the instrument's creative inventions in terms of performance techniques, organology, and the use of auxiliary technologies, such as guitar effects. It has also not been possible to include the numerous influential deterritorialized *kɔnɔw*, such as Abou Diarra and Adama Koité (both in France) and Ibrahim Diakité (Spain), although it is important to note their essential role in expanding the *kɔnɔya* web.

While Malian (and later, Burkinabe) musicians dominated the early phases, non-African performers have become increasingly important following the dissemination of the tradition outside the continent. Since the 1980s, non-Africans interested in the *kamalengoni* have collaborated with African artists in different capacities, often bringing them to perform outside the African continent. This can be a profitable enterprise, particularly for West Africans in soft economies. A colonial dynamic, whereby European sponsors lead, and African musicians are led, is still pervasive today. However, things are slowly changing as *kamalengonifɔlaw* become more independent and knowledgeable so can create a fairer, mutually beneficial exchange relationship.

Although the *kamalengoni* emerged at some point in the late 1950s, I begin the diagram in 1960, the year Mali became independent from France. It was during this initial period of cultural change in Mali that the *kamalengoni* became a symbol of youth and advancement. This post-independence period brought broad social change, technological exploration, and new forms of cultural consumption, as exemplified by *wassoulou* music. The four phases above help to highlight several aspects of change in the instrument's organology and performance techniques.

The harp allowed and reflected individual and collective needs to innovate according to sociocultural, musical, and material delimitation. In Phase I, one or two male *kamalengonifɔlaw* and a *karinyan*¹⁴ comprised the most usual performing line-up. During the initial period of this phase, most performances were acoustic without pick-ups or microphones. Several performers could sing and play the harp simultaneously, such as Alata Brulaye (who claims to be the inventor of *kamalengoni*), and Yoro Diallo (who claims to be a *kamalengoni* innovator).

The *kamalengoni* performance technique in Phase I is very similar to that of its predecessor, the *donsongoni*. Like its precursor, it only had six strings. Diallo stated, “*Jeneba Yoro dun be kamalengoni mina lon minna Moussa Doumbia, kamalengoni tun ye silaba kelen ye*” (The day Djeneba’s son started playing *kamalengoni* with Moussa Doumbia, the *kamalengoni* only used the standard hunters’ music *siraba kelen* [cyclic phrase format]).¹⁵ The “standard” he is referring to relates to both the repertoire and performance techniques of the *donsongoni*.¹⁶ After the inclusion of the *kamalengoni* as a pivotal instrument in *wassoulou* bands later in Phase I, the performance techniques and function of the harp further developed and was also influenced by other musical instruments such as the *fle*,¹⁷ *soku*,¹⁸ guitar, bass, keyboards, and drum kit.

From the end of Phase I to the beginning of Phase II, the *kamalengoni*’s organology began to change, gradually expanding from six to twelve strings. This provided increased possibilities for new performance techniques and sounds afforded

¹⁴ The *karinyan* is a cylindrical metal scraper.

¹⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdD-CoTUIZw> [Accessed: 28.4.20].

¹⁶ See more about *kamalengoni* performance techniques from Phase I in Chapter Four.

¹⁷ One-stringed fiddle (literally “horse’s tail”).

¹⁸ Cane flute.

by the additional strings. This, and other changes, allowed *kɔnɔw* such as Vieux Kanté to innovate, mix, and craft performance techniques considered unique for the *kamalengoni*, such as bending strings and squeaky techniques. The inventions in Phase II resonated across Malian national borders into Burkina Faso and beyond. This phase allowed further musical possibilities as performers from different places experimented with the harp and collaborated, stimulating *kɔnɔw* to continue to invent attractive new music in terms of performance techniques and repertoire. The achievements of some of the most successful *kamalengonifɔlaw* sent a strong and clear message to future generations: musical freedom, collaboration, and the ability to invent are essential ingredients for musical and material success.

This inventive approach resonated throughout Phase III, where *kɔnɔw* sought diverse musical influences, technologies, and human resources and continued to expand upon previous performance techniques and experimented with new materials to transform the harp even further. For example, although the pentatonic scale remains the most prevalent in *wassoulou* music, Phase III musicians began to experiment with heptatonic and chromatic scales. International demand and interest in the harp challenged *kamalengonifɔlaw* to find new pathways to disseminate their knowledge to a public outside of Wasulu. Alternative perspectives and ideas influenced their performance to serve two distinct audiences, one national and the other international. By Phase III, it also became common to hear *kamalengoni* singers adding a foreign language to their songs. As well as connecting to audiences across borders, this was also a strategy to demonstrate their ability to invent and stand out from local *kamalengonifɔlaw*. For example, Mangala Camara's song "Fisseri Wale" (Ungrateful) uses the Brazilian Portuguese he extracted from the song "Água de Beber" (Drinking Water, 1963) composed by Antonio Carlos Jobin, from

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.¹⁹ The strategies throughout Phases I, II, and III that further developed performance techniques elevated *kamalengonifɔlaw*'s musical performances to an outstanding level and promoted long-term connections.

The real-time (inter)connectivity between *kamalengonifɔlaw* and their audience increased and reached its peak in Phase IV. By this period, more *kɔnɔw* had access to technologies such as mobile phones, computers, and the internet, which they used for communication, education, networking, and self-promotion. In Phase IV, some *kamalengonifɔlaw* have formal institutional training, which has become an additional resource for musical transmission. This phase is a peak moment that may offer the *kamalengonifɔlaw* of future phases even more social prestige and sustainable economic rewards and professional status across the globe. Phase IV's young generation has further developed and invented new performance techniques, playing positions, repertoire and organological change. In this fourth phase, the number of strings increased from twelve (from the end of Phase III) to eighteen. While some of these inventions were crafted locally, others were highly influenced from outside Africa as a result of non-African musicians starting to learn, adapt and transform the *kamalengoni* to suit their repertoires and aesthetics.

The global dissemination of recordings and the emigration of *kamalengonifɔlaw* beyond Africa inspired non-African musicians to learn the harp and, consequently, pursue their own careers as *kamalengonifɔlaw*. The chorus of Kanté's song "Kɔnɔ" presents the relevance of the dissemination of *kɔnɔya* internationally during Phase III when he sang:

¹⁹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ORJTPjmDGQ&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 2.8.19].

I yaala i yaalala i yaala kɔnɔw bi yaala

Wander, you wandered, modern birds wander

The appropriation of the *kamalengoni* by foreigners started at the end of Phase II and continued throughout Phase III, but the active presence of foreign *kamalengoni* performers became most evident during Phase IV. For this new kind of musician, I have invented the term *wɔnɔ* (pl. *wɔnɔw*), fusing the English slang “wannabe” with “*kɔnɔ*” (Plate 2.2). Unlike the negative connotations of the English word wannabe, my invented term is intended to be playful rather than disparaging as I too am a *wɔnɔ* by my own definition. The appearance of *wɔnɔw* has been significant in terms of the international dissemination of *kɔnɔya*, especially for the *kamalengoni*. The rise of the international *wɔnɔ* community has important implications for the future of African-based *kamalengoni* communities as *wɔnɔw* frequently travel to Africa to obtain a deeper knowledge and then import it back into their own communities. “That is when it really sets in,” says *wɔnɔ* Justin Perkins:²⁰

You get it a bit when you first get there just because it is so different, but when you stay there for a couple of months at a time, and come back here, it’s like, “Wow!” And when you see two places like these that exist simultaneously, just the discrepancy in how people live, and people’s values, and what they think is important, it blows your mind.²¹

²⁰ Perkins is an American student of the Malian *kɔnɔ* Vieux Kanté and leads a band called Toubab Krewe.

²¹ Interviewed on 11.12.08 for Grateful Web Interviews. See <https://www.gratefulweb.com/articles/grateful-web-interview-toubab-krewe> [Accessed: 24.2.20].

The possibility of travelling to Mali or Burkina, however, is not available to many *wɔnɔw*. Those who can travel often adapt what they have learned and devise alternative forms of *kamalengoni* pedagogy such as creating notation systems.²² Despite some of their creative approaches, *wɔnɔw* are not the major driving force of *kamalengoni* innovation, especially in terms of performance techniques. There are some exceptions to this, however, and further investigation may provide a better understanding of the extent to which *wɔnɔw* are influencing *kamalengonifɔlaw* in Africa.



Plate 2.2: A group of *wɔnɔw* playing and learning *kamalengoni* in Dolus, Poitou-Charentes, France, 23.4.19. Photographer Joris Feuillâtre.²³

²² See Chapter Three for more on organology changes and music notation.

²³ See

<https://www.facebook.com/LaMaisonDuNgoni/photos/rpp.202021269901316/1965643916872367/?type=3&theater> [Accessed: 25.2.20].

As well as increasing travel of non-Africans to West Africa, the invention of the *wɔnɔ* has also brought numerous advantages to individual *kamalengonifɔlaw*. Those who created *kɔnɔya* were able to travel outside of Africa; *kamalengonifɔlaw* were partly responsible for giving birth to the *wɔnɔw* as a strategic invention that exponentially extended the *kɔnɔya* web. *Wɔnɔw* increased the demand for and consumption of *kamalengoni* recordings and teachers. *Kɔnɔw*'s approach, particularly in terms of encouraging the integration of the harp into *wɔnɔ* soundscapes, prompted mutual collaboration where the *wɔnɔ* was pivotal in supporting the presence of African musicians abroad: for example, in the contexts of organizing commercial ventures revolving around concerts, workshops and the two-way trade of knowledge, instruments and music technologies in their own countries. In another instance, Malian *kɔnɔ* Harouna Samaké promoted his first album *Kamale Blues* internationally and led a workshop organized by the Dutch *wɔnɔ* Michiel Moerkerk (Plate 2.3).²⁴ Similarly, France-based Malian *kɔnɔ* Abou Diarra's pupil, the French *wɔnɔ*, Joris Feuillâtre, often organizes workshops, explaining that:

In 2008 I had the immense opportunity to meet Abou Diarra during his first visit to France. This encounter changed my vision regarding the practice of *kamalengoni* in its natural environment. I found myself moved and challenged; this triggered my will to sharpen my skills to allow other musicians like me to perform their art in the pure Malian/West African tradition. In 2013, this new vision opened a new path for my personal and professional journey.²⁵

²⁴ See <https://www.oneworldsmusic.com/harouna-samake-kamale-blues> [Accessed: 18.8.19].

²⁵ Translated by Carmen Weissen. <https://lamazonidungoni.com/joris-feuillatre/> [Accessed: 25.2.20].



Plate 2.3: Michiel Moerkerk (standing, centre) with Harouna Samaké (to his left), Rotterdam, Netherlands, 3.7.19. Photographer Arnold Hölzken.²⁶

Feuillâtre's novel direction is depicted in Plates 2.4 and 2.5, which provide examples of how non-Africans' musical methods and aspirations can diverge from those of African *kamalengoniflaw*.

The images illustrate the differing spiritual engagement and perception of *wɔnwɔ* and *kɔnwɔ* (a large issue that is beyond the bounds of this thesis). While the first photograph shows how Feuillâtre combines *kamalengoni* music with group meditation, both plates reveal a European pedagogical framework of organized group workshops. Another departure from West African practice is that most of the students are women. By integrating non-African elements into his pedagogy, Feuillâtre has been successful in attracting many new followers from different

²⁶ See

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2371762749581184&set=t.100001424178031&type=3&theater> [Accessed: 24.2.19].



Plate 2.4: Joris Feuillâtre (standing) playing *kamalengoni* while others meditate in Dolus, Poitou-Charentes, France. Photographer Unknown.²⁷



Plate 2.5: Joris Feuillâtre (centre) teaching *kamalengoni* to a group of *wonow* beginners at Mon Petit Comptoir, France, 31.8.18. Photographer Denise Roz.²⁸

²⁷ See <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=3204636676217560&set=pb.100000137787992.-2207520000.&type=3&theater> [Accessed: 25.2.20].

²⁸ See <https://www.sudouest.fr/2013/08/31/au-son-du-kalamen-goni-1155081-1538.php> [Accessed: 24.2.20].

musical and cultural backgrounds, thus expanding the *kɔnɔya* web in France and beyond. Although foreigners' understandings and methods can be a significant departure from West African practice, their modified approaches can nevertheless stimulate community interest in and engagement with the source tradition, thus generating income for and raising the international status of *kɔnɔw*.

In my case, I am a *wɔnɔ* who aims to extend the theoretical framings and academic discourse about *kɔnɔya*. Additionally, alongside learning how to play *kamalengoni* with Harouna Samaké, Adama Yalomba, Zoumana Diawara, Idrissa Diarra and Daouda Coulibaly in Mali and Oumar Diallo in Burkina Faso, like other *wɔnɔw*, I am expanding the possibilities of the *kamalengoni* through musical practice and instigating changes in organology. In so doing, I have noted a long-existing economic and social imbalance across *kɔnɔya* phases between *kamalengonifɔlaw*, which is important for two reasons. The first is access to resources, wealth and mobility, which affects *kamalengonifɔlaw*'s chances of success in continuing, inventing and changing tradition. (This pertains mostly to resources within Africa.) The second reason is the part that mobility, technologies, inventions, and relative wealth of *wɔnɔw* have played in shaping the *kamalengoni*'s musical transmission within Africa.

The scope of my research does not allow me to address both of these crucial points in detail. However, they are important to keep in mind as I reference this disparity throughout the thesis. Back to the first reason: within Africa, a *kɔnɔ* who has better access to material resources, international networks and, therefore, financial stability may have more impact on expanding *kɔnɔya* than an unknown, musically superior *kɔnɔw*. This discrepancy in resources affects the power dynamics

and reflects a *kamalengonifola*'s social status, thus generating a hierarchy affecting performers' incomes. To explain this disparity of access to public performance, recording spaces, the media, material resources, and business networks, I have devised a model comprising three main levels (Figure 2.2).

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
national festivals	African festivals	global festivals
nationally prestigious stages and venues	African prestigious stages and venues	prestigious stages and venues
poor-quality musical instruments	medium-quality musical instruments	high-quality musical instruments
basic technologies	standard technologies	outstanding technologies
basic music studios	standard music studios	prestigious music studios
national media (TV, radio)	African media (TV, radio)	global media (TV, radio)
national networks	African networks	global networks
inability to influence policy	inability to influence policy	capacity to influence policy
capacity to influence musical trends	capacity to influence music trends	capacity to influence music trends
nationally renowned stars	African renowned stars	globally renowned stars

Figure 2.2: The three levels of access to resources in *kɔnɔya*.

This diagram offers the reader an overview of the resources within several different categories. As an individual's musicianship is only loosely related to these resources, musicianship alone does not guarantee success. Those on the first level struggle with almost no access to the resources needed to progress; in the second, they have some access but have difficulty surviving and progressing; while the third group has all the necessary resources to achieve their goals of objective success. It is important to realise that several of these players started at Level 1 and gradually rose to Level 3, although there are cases where a *kɔnɔ* proceeded straight from the first to the third level if the right opportunities are provided. These include recording a hit

song or instrumental piece, joining the band of a star artist (such as Oumou Sangaré), earning money from another profession to fund access to material resources, receiving patronage via marriage to a foreigner, or through having a local or international wealthy or influential business partner. These access points can also have negative consequences: for example, the inability to maintain fame or attract work opportunities, unforeseen national security threats (such as war), health issues, addiction, or divorce.

The diagram reveals that Level 1 constrains *kənɔw* to their national or even regional borders, while Level 2 allows mobility to other areas of the African continent, and Level 3 includes all the above as well as having the strong advantage of the global opportunities that may arise. For example, advanced music technologies, including cutting-edge computer software, pickups, tuners, microphones, and mobile phones can help a *kamalengonifɔla* succeed professionally. The aim to innovate and develop their sound using these tools appears to be an opportunity shared by all, but technologies and materials are often inferior, non-existent, or simply unknown. A Level 3 *kamalengonifɔla* can influence policy due to the power and status he or she imposes on others, which is not the same for other levels of access. Individual excellence in terms of musicianship can have the power to influence musical trends in exceptional cases, where *kamalengonifɔla* refer to brilliant players as *dankɔrɔba*. This term, which can be loosely translated as “hero,” has solid ties to the epic of Sunjata, the thirteenth-century founder of the Mali Empire.

The Sunjata epic and the *dankɔɔba*

Praise for Sunjata Keïta (ca 1218–1255) are pervasive in the utterances of Mandé musicians, most particularly *griots*.²⁹ Although Sunjata does not feature in *kɔɔ* songs to the same extent as in repertoires of *nyamakalaw*, he is nevertheless important for *kamalengonifɔlaw*. One reason for Sunjata’s relevance to *kɔɔya* is that he was a *donso*, and the *donsongoni* harp (played by *donsow* musicians), is one of the ancient musical instruments that inspired Alata Brulaye to invent the *kamalengoni*. As Yoro Diallo pointed out, the *kamalengoni* repertoire in Phase I was deeply rooted in the *donso* tradition, which (alongside *jeliya*) has preserved praise songs for the founding hero, Sunjata.

Another reason why Sunjata is significant for today’s *wassoulou* musicians is that he is said to have created the very caste system that delineates *jeliw* and *donsow* and excludes *kamalengonifɔlaw*. In the Mandé caste system, *nyamakalaw* (which includes *jeliw* and *donsow*) have an exclusive birth right to play music. As the system marginalises anyone else who aspires to a music profession, a group of young men in the 1950s sidestepped the traditional musical ascription systems of *jeliw* and *donsow* by inventing a new musical instrument and tradition and claimed the right to play music. Although *kɔɔw* disrupted centuries of tradition by playing music despite the traditional prohibition, they nevertheless contribute to the dissemination of Sunjata’s heroic legacy. *Kɔɔw* are not classified as *nyamakalaw*, but to a certain extent, they also carry the beliefs and behaviours of the caste.

²⁹ Sunjata is known by various other names, including Son-Jara (Lion Thief), Manding Diarra, Sogolon Djata (Son of Sogolon), Naré Maghan, and Sogo Simbon Salaba.

The Sunjata epic's influence is much wider than Mali and continues to shape a collective psyche across the many ethnic groups in the Mandé world today. Conrad explains,

[W]hile the Sunjata tradition is as deceptive as any corpus of oral sources can be, it deserves to be consulted for information about ancient Mali ... [there is a risk of] nourishing an illusion instead of contributing to knowledge of the subject (1992: 147-148).

One of the historical myths in the epic speaks of a chiefdom in the town of Farakoro, where Magham Konfara (Magham the Handsome) was told by hunter diviners that he would father a great hero. That hero's name was Sunjata Keïta. In most *fasaw* (praise songs) and *donsomanaw* (hunters' tales), Keïta is praised as a great hunter, warrior, and king, and is considered to be knowledgeable in the art of sorcery. After winning an epic battle against the leader of the Susu people, Sumanguru Kanté,³⁰ in an area that today encompasses southeast Mauritania, Keïta united all the kingdoms in the region and founded the Mali Empire in 1235. This moment defined the ultimate and inexorable moral opposition of good versus evil (Conrad 1984: 39), which still exerts a major influence on the social behaviour of contemporary Mandé people.

Brooks (1993: 100) has tracked the growth of the Manding diaspora across West Africa commenting:

³⁰ Also spelled Soumarouo, Soumaro, or Soumaoro.

In the Sahel and savanna zones Mandékalu horse warriors imposing the Mandé tripartite social order prevailed over power associations ... Essentially Sundiata and Sumanguru represent the two basic and conflicting principles of Mandé society and of groups in Western Africa generally.

When Keïta was preparing to assert his claim over the kingdom, Kanté was the most powerful ruler in the region and was feared by other monarchs. As Keïta's main regional rival, Kanté is described as a profane, Machiavellian tyrant who was prevented from ruling the entire Mandé world due to Keïta's interference (Bulman 1999). Following his accession to the throne in the late twelfth century, Kanté defeated nine kings, whose heads served as fetishes inside a macabre chamber (Niane 2006: 38). He was a feared sorcerer and was said to have cut his footwear and seats from human skin.

Kanté was known as The Untouchable King (Niane 2006: 38). Unlike other men, it is said that even *jinn* (pre-Islamic spirits) had revealed themselves to him. A pivotal event in this and other epics is the first appearance of the iconic sacred xylophone, the *bala*. This episode captures the significance and role of esoteric powers in the process of creating, practising, and playing musical instruments in the Mandé world.³¹ As reported in the Keïta epic, he explained that a *jinn* took Kanté to his cave and brought out the *bala*, *balafo kɔlɔma* (mallets), *bala sɔsɔ* (wrist bells) and the *dundun muntunkurun* (a cylindrical double-headed drum).³² Interested in obtaining these and other instruments from the *djina maghan* (king of the *jinn*),

³¹ David Conrad, email, 30.1.19.

³² Ibid. I learned this musical instrument is “A double-headed, cylinder-shaped drum, a name that corresponds to the sound it makes (i.e., onomatopoeic). In Maninka legend, the names of certain instruments become proper nouns, as in the case of Dunun Mutukuru, which, like the sacred *bala* called Susu Bala, is a musical and spiritual icon.”

Kanté listed the instruments over which he claimed ownership before bargaining with the *jinn*:

I made a fire (Indeed)

I made the *dugulo bolon* [harp] (Indeed)

I made the *kòwòrò* [pentatonic pluriac] (Indeed)

I made the *donsongoni* [hunters' harp] (Indeed)

I made the three-stringed *bolon* [war harp] (Indeed)

After that, I made the *sòròn* [*kora*-like harp] (Indeed)

After that, I made the *kora* [*griot* harp] (Indeed)

But I have never seen this kind of instrument. (Indeed)³³

A *bala*, which the Susu people claim is the original instrument described in the epic, is kept in a shrine in Niagassola in northeastern Guinea, which is now recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The *bala* and other musical instruments continue to have a direct link to sorcery and esoterism among Mandé musicians as it is believed that they carry the unseen power of *nyama*.

The *kamalengoni*, which originated quite recently compared with the ancient instruments in the Kanté epic, is known for having the ability to mimic other musical instruments, such as the *ndan*, *kora*, *donsongoni*, and *bala*. *Kamalengonifɔlaw* continue to mimic these musical instruments as a source of inspiration today. Burkinabe *jeli* and *kamalengonifɔla* Adama Koïta in Castellanos explained the power of music in connecting people with a particular time and place when he mimicked the *bala* repertoire in his *kamalengoni* playing:

³³ David Conrad, email, 30.1.19. He provided only the English translation.

Those are the old *balafon* pieces. Whenever you find yourself playing in front of an old man who was around back then, here is what he would say: “My boy, what you do is good, you remind me of a day!” Maybe he will be willing to tell you a story from his time through the melody you’ve just played (Castellanos 2019: 93).³⁴

A particular episode in the Sunjata epic reveals the hero archetype as a musician, which involves Kanté and Keïta’s personal *jeli*, Balla Fasséké Kouyaté, who is believed to be the first *griot*. Kidnapped by Kanté, Kouyaté found a way to break into his secret chamber while Kanté was away from the kingdom. The *jeli* found the magical *bala* received from the *jinn* and started to play it with mastery. However, Kanté knew immediately that someone was playing his *bala* and returned to his palace to kill the *jeli*. The Guinean historian Djibril Tamsir Niane (2006: 39) explains that a painting (Plate 2.6) captures the exact moment that the powerful sorcerer, Kanté, enters the room with rage in his eyes and Kouyaté immediately composes a praise song to calm him:

There he is, Soumaoro Kanté
All hail, you who sit on the skins of kings
All hail, Simbon [master hunter] of the deadly arrow
I salute you, you who wear clothes of human skin
All hail, you who wear clothes of human skin
I salute you, you who sit on the skins of kings.

(Niane 2006: 39)

³⁴ *Ça, c’est les anciens morceaux de balafon. Quand tu joues devant un vieux qui a vécu en ce temps-là, il va dire: “Ah mais, mon petit, ¡c’est bien ce que tu fais! ¡Tú me rappelles une date!” Peut-être qu’il voudra te raconter une histoire de son temps à travers cette mélodie que tu viens de jouer.* Translated by Carmen Weissen, 28.2.20.



Plate 2.6: Painting of Kanté catching Kouyaté playing the Susu Bala
by Mohammed Chéjan Kromah.³⁵

The *jeli*'s words, musicianship and extraordinary skills disarmed Kanté, who decided not to kill Kouyaté. He listened to the praise with attention and admiration, his anger vanishing as the *jeli* elevated his deeds to the level of a hero, by calling him "Simbon." "Under the skilful hand of Balla, the instrument had found its master" (Niane 2006: 39). Kanté's decision made the war with Keïta personal and inevitable. This episode shows the function that music, spiritual and political power, and rivalry are intertwined in the history and imagination of Mandé societies. Despite being kidnapped by Kanté, Kouyaté was modest and used his extraordinary abilities to praise the king. In doing so, he escaped a very difficult situation where his life was endangered.

³⁵ This painting was commissioned by David C. Conrad for the International Conference on Mandé Studies, University of Kankan, Guinea 2005.

The Sunjata epic continues to shape Mandé musicians' identities and expected behaviour, where modesty and the imperative to seek creative solutions through outstanding musicianship are essential to raise social status and avoid rivalry or tension. Vieux Kanté (Phase III) demonstrates the continuity of the past directly from the Kouyaté and Kanté episode in his song “Kɔnɔ”:

*Nuru Soma, Karabali Soma,
Mandé soma fɔlɔ, ani Mandé soma laban,
Han Sine denke,
Iye, ja ngana wele kadi ko ne bɛna ngana jɔn wélé?
Abubakari n'bi wélé
Sɛkɛ ni babi Kouyaté, Kukunba ni Bantanba,
Naninani ni Kamasiga, Farima Dusɔkɔ den,
Sumaoro bɔnsɔn,
Cɛ i télɛ kɛ ko mandi bɛɛ la,*

Great sorcerer (or seer) from Nuru, Karabali,

The first and last Soma from Mandé,

Son of Sine,

Oh, praising heroes is pleasing, who am I calling out among the heroes?

I'm out calling Aboubakari,

The strongest hawk, Kouyaté, Kukunba and Bantanba,

Naninani and Kamasiga, son of Farima Dusoko,

Descendant of Sumaoro,

Man, live your life, not everyone survives a battle.³⁶

³⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdV40iAS9QQ&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

Musicians receive special treatment and recognition from patrons (audience and individuals from caste families, especially *jeliw*), as the great *jeli* singer Koudiaté Kouyaté reveals:

We humans will depart from this earth, one way or the other. If not by day, then by night; there's no escape from death. Greetings to all of you descendants of the royal family of Mandé, descendants of Sunjata Keita. He did not do anything wrong in this world, but he too departed - death comes to us all. He came from the Mandé people, was raised by the Mandé people and remained with them; and his *jeliw* always had special treatment. War built Mandé, war destroyed Mandé. You, descendants of Sunjata, the guardians of Mandé, should continue to look after Mandé matters (Durán 1999: 126).

Despite the distinct attributes of *kɔnɔw*, the myths and musical values of *jeliw* and *donsow* strongly influence the social structure and power dynamics of *kɔnɔw*. In Mali and Burkina Faso, a *jeli* master musician can be called *nyagara*, while in *donsoya* (the art of hunters) a master musician can be called *waraba*. In the *kamalengoni* practices of *kɔnɔya*, the term *dankɔrɔba* is loosely parallel to *nyagara* and *waraba*, although it is important to note that *dankɔrɔba* can be used across art forms. Deeming someone a *dankɔrɔba* separates them from the ordinary and the usual. *Jeliw* and *donsow* praise Sunjata Keita as the ultimate *dankɔrɔba* model, where only God is considered to be greater than Keita in the Mandé world.³⁷ Reasons to praise a person or ancestor as a *dankɔrɔba* may be their heroic deeds, extraordinary abilities, or remarkable achievements. That said, a *dankɔrɔba* as a hero archetype can carry a wider meaning in different contexts.

In a musical context, to call a *bala* player a *dankɔrɔba* could be interpreted as elevating his status or musicianship close to the level of Kouyaté, the archetypal *bala*

³⁷ Pers. comm., Kadially Kouyaté, Bamako, Mali, 14.4.14.

player in the Keïta myth. Today, when a *kamalengonifɔla* calls another *kamalengonifɔla* a *dankɔrɔba*, they are praising the musician for their extraordinary ability to play the harp. However, it also means that a player has accrued great achievements in their life journey beyond music, such as fame, social power, knowledge, prestige, and both material and network resources.

This chapter has introduced *kɔnɔya*, the *kɔnɔ* and the concept of the *dankɔrɔba*. While some of the four *kɔnɔya* phases were shaped by major historical events that generated change, they are also marked by key musicians who contributed to the evolution of the *kamalengoni* across time. *Kɔnɔya* levels point out how the discrepancy of resources can constrain a *kamalengonifɔla*'s ability to compete, innovate and survive. The frameworks I have provided for the four *kɔnɔya* phases and three levels provide theoretical models for investigating the strategies that *kamalengonifɔlaw* have adopted in their pursuit of performative excellence and the surviving and thriving that can result in recognition as *dankɔrɔba* by other players. This chapter has also shown that a Malian and Burkinabe *kɔnɔ*'s latest invention, the *wɔnɔ*, emerged following the contact with and access to the transmission of *kamalengoni* music beyond the African continent. As a result, organology inventions, expanded repertoires, and new technologies are combined then traded. Amongst other strategies, notation systems for the *kamalengoni* are a recent creation coming from the outside and has facilitated *kɔnɔya* transmission from *wɔnɔw* to new foreign learners.

The following chapter presents the organology, performance techniques, notation systems and essential terminologies of the *kamalengoni*. First, it addresses current issues in notation systems and second, it offers an alternative approach to transcribing *kamalengoni* music to effectively shed light on individual *kɔnɔw*

performance techniques and non-verbal communication. Finally, my notation system helps to reveal how West African *kamalengonifola* craft sonic signatures, which I have termed “*jagamin* products.”

Chapter Three

Organology, Performance Techniques, Notation, and Terminology

Since the *kamalengoni*'s rise in popularity in the late 1970s in Mali, it has passed through numerous transformations in terms of instrument construction, tuning systems, and performance techniques. Whereas Durán (1995) described the traditional *kamalengoni* in Mali over twenty years ago, this chapter takes into account its considerable evolution since the mid-1990s. The *kamalengoni* has now changed to a point where some of the older musicians in Mali, who pioneered the instrument's repertoire and performance techniques, at times disapprove of certain innovations brought back to Mali from other countries, including Burkina Faso. This attitude I witnessed is, to a certain extent, comparable with the hunters' way of looking at the *kamalengoni* as captured by Strawn:

Senior *donso ngoni* players refer comically to the sound of *kamalen ngoni* playing—and more significantly to the sound of *donso ngoni* playing that is infused with *kamale[n]* *ngoni* styles—as "*chirin chirin charancharanw*," saying that such noise cannot enter the heads and hearts of hunters in order to function meaningfully as the *donso ngoni* does (Strawn 2011: 181-182).

Spain-based Malian Musbaba Traoré, who crafts *kamalengoni* using Chinese cooking pots, explains,

Many I consider to be elders of the [*kamale*]ngoni do not like [my way of making the harp]. They say a true ngoni is made with calabash not that [metal cooking pot resonator] ... this [instrument] you play is interesting but is not an [*kamale*]ngoni ... I nod quietly because I respect them and all they have achieved; it is thanks to them I can play my ngoni today ... I just smile back and continue crafting them in the way I like.¹

When Burkinabe Alladari Dembélé came to visit Mali on 18.9.17 with his eighteen-stringed *kamalengoni*, I witnessed a mix of discreet, comic, and playful comments from several people (including my respondents) as to whether this harp should be classified as a *kora* rather than a *kamalengoni*. This shows that as well as being liberated from the taboos and adherence to the past of the *donsow* and *jeliw* musicians, the *kamalengoni*'s young musicians not only have the freedom to experiment and innovate, but to do so has become an expectation. This does not mean, however, that the outcome of any invention will be without resistance, at least initially.

Changes in the instrument's organological and performance practices have been accelerated by: 1) the diffusion of the instrument to neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso in the 1990s, where it found new forms; 2) musical collaborations with non-African musicians (*wɔnɔw*); and 3) increased access to music technologies in West Africa, such as amplification and guitar effects pedals. The *kamalengoni* can be played acoustically or amplified with electronic pick-ups glued to the bridge and/or strategically attached to other areas inside or outside of the resonator. Additional accessories are tuning devices (designed for Western music), *kamalengoni* stands, and straps to facilitate static and mobile performance.

¹ Pers. comm., Musbaba Traore, Bamako, Mali 2.7.17.

The two distinct approaches to the *kamalengoni* in Mali and Burkina Faso are reflected in its organology, as musicians continue to experiment with the instrument's materials and construction, and the introduction of innovative performance techniques. The number, thickness, and material of strings, their tuning, the way of holding the instrument, and the gentler tone of the Burkinabe *kamalengoni* immediately differentiate it from the Malian harp. The changes instigated by Burkinabe musicians are largely attributable to their differing aesthetics and performance practices, many of which result from the way the instrument is held (as is further explained in the Performance Techniques section below). While Burkinabe players tend to execute the higher notes with a soft and delicate sound quality (similar to *kora* players), Malian musicians aim for a tougher sound with a lower pitch, less resonant sound, and percussive attacks which are closer to the *donsongoni* in technique and sonority. The two emerging schools of playing the *kamalengoni* in Mali and Burkina Faso are continuing to evolve and diversify as I write.

***Kamalengoni* organology**

The *kamalengoni* is classified as a bridge harp (where the bridge is perpendicular to the soundtable), or a spike harp, which is a West African structure where the neck passes through the resonator with a slightly curved or straight neck, which is often made of wood or bamboo and protrudes at the opposite end (Plate 3.1).² Tuned around a perfect fourth higher than the *donsongoni* (Durán 1995: 118), the *kamalengoni* was originally made with six strings. By the end of Phase I,

² For further details of the *kamalengoni*'s structure and the Bamanankan names for its various components, see Castellanos (2019), Charry (2000), and Durán (1995).

kamalengoni makers began adding strings and now, in Phase IV, the harp can have as many as eighteen strings as musicians continue to experiment with its construction and tuning. Figure 3.1 chronologically (according to the *kɔnɔya* phases) lists the key changes in the *kamalengoni*'s structure, materials, and the addition of accessories, which collectively transformed the harp's organology.³



Plate 3.1: A wooden bridge tied at the bottom with a metal wire, Bamako, Mali, 20.9.19. Photographer Idrissa Diarra.

³ As I explain further on (in relation to the expansion of strings), it is now difficult to determine the precise time frames of the *kamalengoni*'s organological changes so this chart is approximate rather than exact.

	Phase I 1960-1983	Phase II 1984-1999	Phase III 2000-2009	Phase IV 2010-2020
Resonator materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gourd (<i>bara</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local metal cooking pot (<i>barama</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gas container (<i>gásbara</i>) • snare drum shell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese cooking pot (<i>barama</i>) • acoustic guitar resonator • metal container • tennis racket frame • Brazilian <i>tamborim</i> • no resonator
Number of strings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • six • eight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ten • twelve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fourteen • sixteen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eighteen
Handle material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bamboo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wood 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wood and metal
Soundtable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goatskin • deerskin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buffalo skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nylon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wood
String material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rope • fishing line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • metal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classical harp 	
Tuning method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leather • rope • wooden machine heads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nylon • metal machine heads 		
Accessories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buzzing idiophone on neck • personalized artistic design (names, dates, etc). • amulet (<i>giriri</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pick-ups • microphones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guitar effects pedals • electric tuners • strap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stand

Figure 3.1: Key innovations in organology and accessories (*).

Across all phases, the *kamalengoni* resonator is often smaller than that of its predecessor, the *donsongoni*, and is typically between 20cm and 37cm in diameter.⁴ Changes in the resonator are the most visually and aurally explicit. In Phase I, resonators were traditionally made from a gourd (*bara* or *fle*) and in Phase II, the first *kamalengoniw* made with local metal cooking pot (*barama*) resonators appeared. Makers went further in Phase III with the use of metal gas cylinders (*gasbará*) and the shells of snare drums, while Phase IV brought more radical changes.⁵

⁴ Pers. comm., Musbaba Traoré, WhatsApp, 13.1.18.

⁵ I learned how to make a *kamalengoni* in Mali in 2015 and in 2018, in line with the tradition of invention, I decided to craft a *kamalengoni* using a resonator made from a *tamborim* (a small single-headed Brazilian frame drum).

Almost half of the resonator is cut out and the opening is covered with animal hide (*golo*) to create the soundtable (Figure 3.2, vi). In Phase I, goatskin (*bagolo*) or deerskin (*manganigolo*) was used and in late Phase II/early Phase III, synthetic materials such as nylon have also been used for the soundtable. Traditionally, the skin is attached to the resonator with nails or tacks (v) but in the case of the metal resonators in Phases II-IV, screws are used. A sound hole (*wo*) is also cut out of the gourd (vi) which is normally between 7 cm and 10 cm diameter, large enough for the player to put his hand inside to collect the money that is inserted by listeners.

Around the edge of the resonator, four bamboo (*bóo* or *boferen*) or wooden (*yri*) spikes pierce the skin in eight places. Two of these spikes function as dowels (*bolomenelan*) (viii) which, since Phase II, musicians have used as handles to hold the instrument in place, while the other two spikes, at right angles to the dowels (ii), pass under the skin soundtable and create pressure from the inside, pushing up the central area of the soundtable to stretch it tightly. A trapezium-shaped wooden bridge (*so*) (iv) in the middle of the soundtable is held in place by the tensioned strings. A rope or length of metal wire wraps the top and bottom parts of the wooden bridge from both the front (*sosigilan*) and back (*sokɔjuru*); this is joined by the same wire at the lower end of the neck (*bɔkala*) (ix) holding the wooden bridge taut. Another string made of leather or other material attaches the handles to the neck. Once joined together, the knotted area (*takala*) is called the “little male slave” (*jɔnkeni*), as hunters also describe it on the *donsongoni* (Strawn 2011: 172). The harp’s neck is thought of as a human torso and the handles are imagined to be human arms, creating the image of a man with his hands tied behind his back.

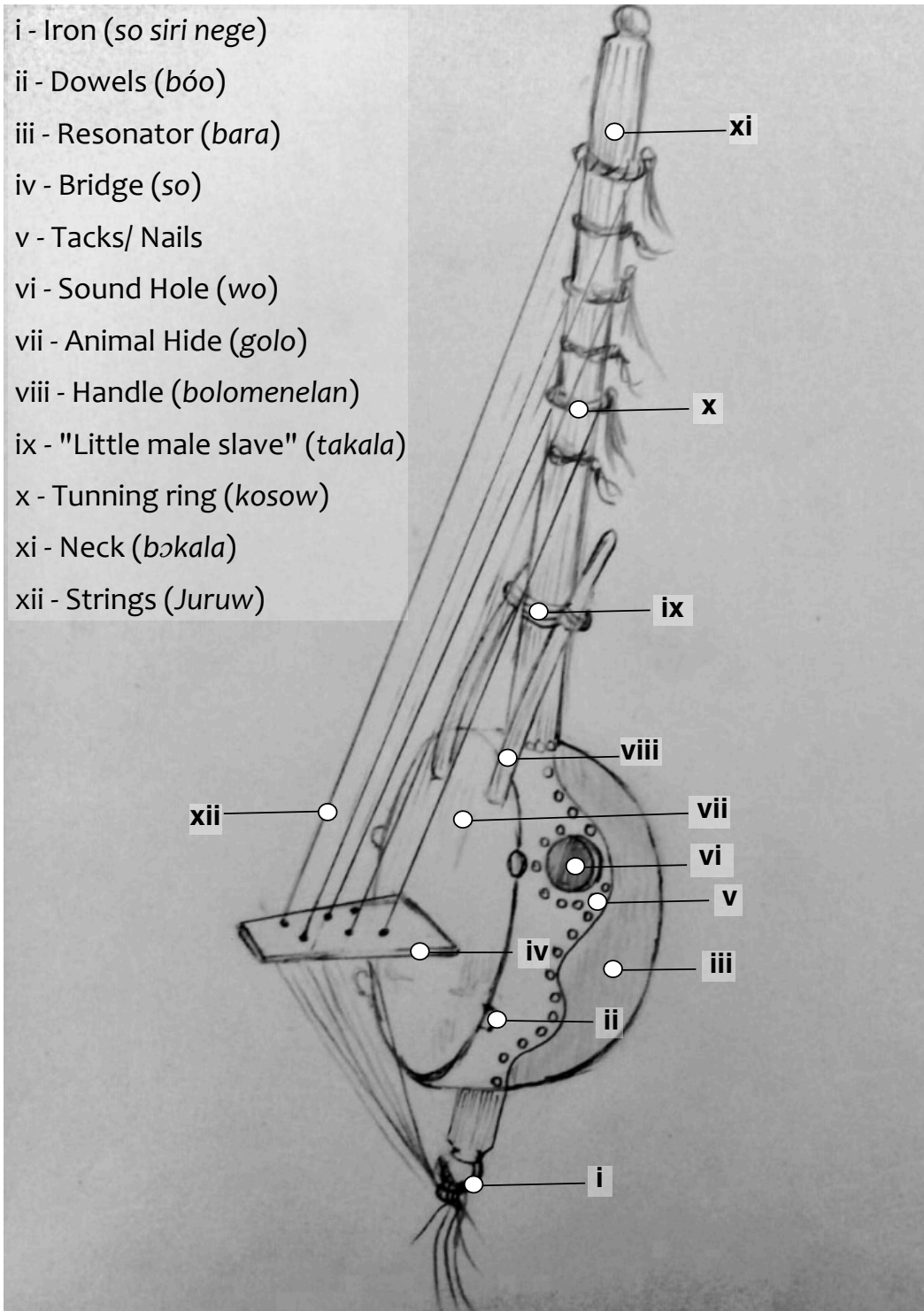


Figure 3.2: *Kamalengoni* structure.

Drawing by Alex Mesquita Alves in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 28.6.19.

The strings (*juruw*) (xii) can be made of twisted rope, nylon, metal or even animal nerves and are usually of unequal length. The use of thinner strings provides higher pitches and a more percussive sound in comparison to the *donsongoni*, a sound that attacks due to its sonic register. Where Malian players prefer thinner strings, in Burkina Faso the strings are generally thicker, mimicking the *donsongoni*. However, for those mimicking the *kora*, *kamalengoniw* with added strings have a variety of string gauges. Employing a more delicate and less percussive timbre, which is most common in Burkinabe *kamalengoni* playing, has started to influence a young generation of Malian *kamalengonifɔlaw*.⁶

Although the bridge holds the strings in place, another common alternative is for the strings to be tied to an iron ring (i) (*so siri nege*) located at the base of the neck, where it protrudes from the resonator and passes through the wooden bridge. (It is not clear when this particular organological change took place.) From either the bridge or the iron ring, each string is attached to specific points on the neck, where they are traditionally tuned with rings (x) (*kosow*) made of leather, silk, or other material(s). Since late in Phase I, many *kamalengoniw* are now made with wood and metal tuning keys (*konege*), which were developed for the *kora* from Western guitar machine heads.

Plate 3.2 shows Yoro Diallo, who was one of the first players to use a pick-up on a six-stringed *kamalengoni* in Phase I.⁷ A square rather than round sound hole has been cut out of the resonator to accommodate the controls, and there is an additional hole for a jack socket. The strap gives the musician flexibility to hold a microphone,

⁶ Idrissa Diarra and Adama Koïte are two players who employ this Burkinabe approach on the *kamalengoni*.

⁷ Pers. comm., Yoro Diallo, Bamako, Mali 7.5.17.

which helps him to perform certain performance techniques as microphone stands are not always available. These accessories are not always easy to access in Mali and Burkina Faso, but shortages have stimulated *kɔnɔw* to invent new solutions, which have further transformed the harp.



Plate 3.2: Yoro Diallo and his amplified six-stringed *kamalengoni*, Magnambougou District, Bamako, Mali, 7.5.17.

Conversely, accessories are readily available to *wɔnɔw*, but they struggle to find some of the essential raw materials to craft the *kamalengoni* in its traditional form. Sourcing African materials, such as gourds, outside of the continent can be difficult and expensive, so has pushed *wɔnɔw* to adapt. French *wɔnɔw* Gus Kamalétric provides a particularly interesting example; he developed a unique *kamalengoni*

design by using a tennis or badminton racket frame in place of the traditional gourd resonator (Plate 3.3).



Plate 3.3: A sixteen-stringed *kamalengoni* with tennis racket resonator, Amiens, France, 16.1.20. Photographer Gus Kamalétric.

Performance techniques

I do not know of a consistent set of terms in Bamanankan or European languages to portray many of the *kamalengoni*'s performance techniques, so I have been charged with the task of developing a new terminology to convey what I have learned aurally and visually from my African teachers.

Where the Malian *kamalengoniw* had acquired the harp's repertoire, performance techniques, and its organology from the pentatonic *donsongoni* harp,

Burkinabe *kamalengoni* law began to absorb influences from the pentatonic Jula *bala* (xylophone), the heptatonic *bala*, and the heptatonic twenty-one-stringed *kora* harp, the influence of the latter resulting in a new playing position. The original playing position of the *kamalengoni* is similar to that of its Malian predecessor, the *donsongoni* (Plate 3.4), hence, I call this position the *kamalengoni*'s “*donso* position” (Plate 3.5).



Plate 3.4: Mpa Diarra playing the *donsongoni* (*donso* position). Segou, Mali, 4.2.17.



Plate 3.5: Zoumana Diawara playing the *kamalengoni* (*donso* position), Bamako, Mali. Photo by Kempes Sacko. 9.7.18.⁸

The more recent innovation that is now widely adopted by Burkinabe players harnesses the playing position of the *kora* (Plate 3.6), which I have named “*kora* position” (Plate 3.7). Both the *donso* and *kora* positions can be adopted while sitting

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2151210181788537&set=pb.100006987277760.-2207520000.1561292783.&type=3&theater> [Accessed: 23.6.19].

or standing, with or without the use of a strap or a stand. The way the instrument is held determines the fingering, plucking and damping techniques.⁹ The *donso* position allows for techniques that create an aggressive and choppy sound, whereas the techniques of the *kora* position allow notes to reverberate for longer, the sound being more delicate and relaxing.



Plate 3.6: Toumani Diabaté playing the *kora* (*kora* position), New York, Photo by Rick McGinnis, July 1996.¹⁰



Plate 3.7: Idrissa Diarra playing the *kamalengoni* (*kora* position), Maison Des Jeunes de Bamako, 18.9.17.

⁹ “Damped” and “muted” are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

¹⁰ <http://someoldpicturesitook.blogspot.com/2017/06/toumani> [Accessed: 23.06.19].

When played in *donso* position, the two ranks of strings are mostly plucked by the thumb and index fingers of the left hand, while the thumb of the right hand plucks the string while holding the instrument in place at the same time, using fingers 2, 3, 4, and 5.¹¹ Figure 3.3 shows the basic finger of each rank (and hand) in the *donso* position. The lines between the notes on the staff and the bridge represent the six strings of a traditional *kamalengoni*, which is divided equally into two ranks of three strings and tuned in a pentatonic scale. (See a discussion of tuning below in the section on *kamalengoni* notation.)

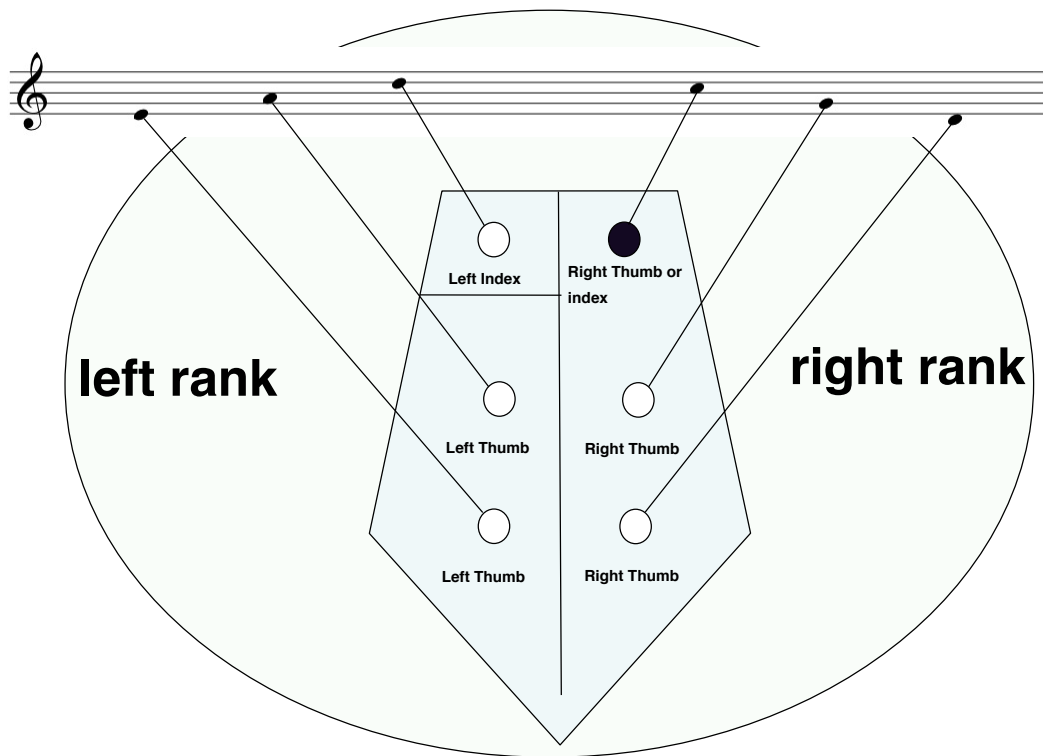


Figure 3.3: Ranks, tuning, and fingering of a traditional six-stringed *kamalengoni*.¹²

¹¹ Left-handed players reverse the position the instrument is held and also reverse the tuning.

¹² This diagram is an adaptation of Strawn's illustration of the *donsongoni* (2011: 181).

Each of the strings has a particular name. Durán (1995: 188) points out that the strings on the left rank (from the lowest pitch) are called *bajourou fitini* (the little big string), *jemanje juru fitini* (the little string in the middle) and *den juru fitini* (the little child string). The strings on the right rank are called *bajourouba* (the big string), *jemanje juru kumaba* (the big sounding middle string) and *kumabal denjuru* (the big sound/child string). The black disk on the top-right of the bridge indicates that both the thumb and the index finger of the right hand can play that string. Although the thumb is used more than the index finger on this rank, the left rank has a string reserved only for the index finger of the left hand.

There are various plucking techniques to obtain a range of timbres; the *donso* and *kora* positions each have two plucking techniques (*):¹³

Donso technique 1 (Plate 3.8): the neck is gripped with fingers 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the right hand leaving only the right thumb available to pluck, while fingers 3, 4 and 5 of the left hand hold the hand post leaving finger 2 and the thumb free to pluck.

Donso technique 2 (Plate 3.9): fingers 3, 4, and 5 of the right hand holds the neck. Finger 5 can be loosely placed under or above the neck, allowing the hand moves away from the neck with finger 2 and the thumb plucking. As with *donso* technique 1, the left hand holds the hand post with fingers 3, 4 and 5, while the index finger and thumb pluck the strings.

¹³ See the Lecture Demonstration and Recital videos for further information about plucking techniques.



Plate 3.8: *Donso* technique 1
(Harouna Samaké).



Plate 3.9: *Donso* technique 2
(Many Dakoua).



Plate 3.10: *Kora* technique 1
(Daouda Coulibaly).



Plate 3.11: *Kora* technique 2
(Adama Yalomba).

Kora technique 1 (Plate 3.10): the hand posts are held symmetrically by fingers 3, 4, and 5 of each hand, allowing the index fingers and thumbs to pluck the strings in a similar formation to a *kora*.

Kora technique 2 (Plate 3.11): if the musician is standing and playing without a strap, fingers 3, 4 and 5 of the left hand hold the post to carry the entire weight of the instrument. This frees up all the fingers of the right hand to strum, although it is standard to use the index fingers and thumbs. This technique can also be used when sitting, in which case the left hand is not bearing all of the weight as the instrument would be resting on the legs, a chair, the floor, or on a *kamalengoni* stand. With this added support, finger 2 and the thumb of the left hand are also available for plucking.

Unlike in *kora* techniques 1 and 2 and *donso* technique 2, which all use the thumb and index fingers of both hands to do the plucking, *donso* technique 1 is the only one that combines the index finger and thumb of the left hand and the thumb of the right hand. The use of fingers 3, 4, and 5 of either hand to pluck strings in *donso* and *kora* positions is a possibility, but rarely adopted (see examples 5.7 and 5.8).

Beyond the most common schemes above, there are five main ways of holding the hand posts:

- (a) finger 5 of the left hand (Plate 3.12);
- (b) fingers 4 and 5 of the left hand (Plate 3.13);
- (c) fingers 3, 4, and 5 of the left hand (Plate 3.14);
- (d) fingers 3 and 4 of the left hand (Plate 3.15) and, less commonly,



Plate 3.12: LH finger 5 holds the instrument (a) (author).



Plate 3.13: LH fingers 4 and 5 hold the instrument (b) (author).



Plate 3.14: LH fingers 3, 4, and 5 hold the instrument (c) (author).



Plate 3.15: LH fingers 3 and 4 hold the instrument (d) (author).

(e) fingers 4 and 5 rest on the top of the resonator, while only finger 3 of each hand holds the hand posts, which only occurs when adopting *kora* plucking technique 1 (Plate 3.16).

The above possibilities can also be mirrored with the right hand holding the post.



Plate 3.16: Fingers 3 hold the instrument (e) (Daouda Coulibaly).

Each playing position provides distinct technical challenges for the player, who must slowly adapt to the new position. *Donso* technique 1 involves physical strength, where the right-hand thumb has a very powerful attack on down strokes due to the number of fingers holding the neck. This sound aesthetic started to change from late Phase II, where the musicians tended to outperform Phase I musicians in

terms of the sheer range of techniques and breadth of repertoire, which by then included a variety of styles such as *jeli* music, reggae and pop.

Based on my respondents' information regarding the evolution of *kɔnɔya* phases, Figure 3.4 helps us to understand the key moments in which the techniques emerged. Phase IV was not innovative in this respect, perhaps because the focus was on the addition of strings and experimentation with tuning. The dominance of *donso* positions from Phase I to Phase II is indicative of the cultural influence of hunters' music and its strong significance today for *kamalengoni* music transmission across the *kɔnɔya* web.

Phase I 1960-1983	Phase II 1984-1999	Phase III 2000-2009	Phase IV 2010-2020
<i>donso</i> technique 1	<i>donso</i> technique 2 <i>kora</i> technique 1	<i>kora</i> technique 2	<i>donso</i> technique 1 <i>donso</i> technique 2 <i>kora</i> technique 1 <i>kora</i> technique 2

Figure 3.4: Key moments in performance techniques (*).

Preferences for how the *kamalengoni* is held and the techniques used also influence how the instrument is built. For example, the spaces between the strings are wider on harps where the musician's repertoire requires using a lot of *donso* techniques 1 and 2. The average gap between the strings is around 2.5 cm on the six-stringed harp, 2.3 cm on the eight-stringed harp, 2.1cm on the ten-stringed harp, and 2cm in the twelve-stringed harp. These measurements vary according to playing style, taste, and finger size. The spacing determines the level of difficulty to cross ranks (more on this below), particularly on *kamalengoniw* with more than twelve strings. But again, finger size is also a factor. As the number of strings increases, the

space between them is reduced to approximately 1.5 cm on the fourteen-stringed, approximately 1 cm on the sixteen-stringed, and approximately 0.8 cm on the eighteen-stringed instrument. This reduction in space imposes some limitations but pushes players to create alternative performance techniques and find timbres that are less associated with the *donsongoni* and are closer to the *kora*.

Figure 3.5 explains the addition of strings to the pentatonic *kamalengoni* in relation to the four phases. By following the anti-clockwise circular movement above and below the staff in this diagram, one can see a gradual increase of strings according to the phase (*).¹⁴ The traditional pentatonic, six-stringed *kamalengoni* of Phase I (D-E-G-A-C-D¹) was expanded with two extra low strings (A and C, indicated by the arrow from D¹ to A above the staff). Four more strings were added in the course of Phase II; two were at the bottom and four at the top, taking the harp up to twelve strings (A-C-D-E-G-A¹-C¹-D¹-E¹-G¹-A²-C²). It is difficult to determine the precise moment in time, but around late Phases II and early Phase III, fourteen- and sixteen-stringed *kamalengoniw* appeared, where one or two strings were added at the top and one or two were inserted at the bottom (E-G-A-C-D-E²-G²-A²-C²-D²-E³-G³-A³-C³-D³-E⁴). Finally, the most recent innovation at the border of Phases III and IV is the eighteen-stringed *kamalengoni*, which includes two extra high notes (G⁴ and A⁴).

¹⁴ See the Lecture Demonstration and Recital videos for further information about the addition of strings in in each phase.

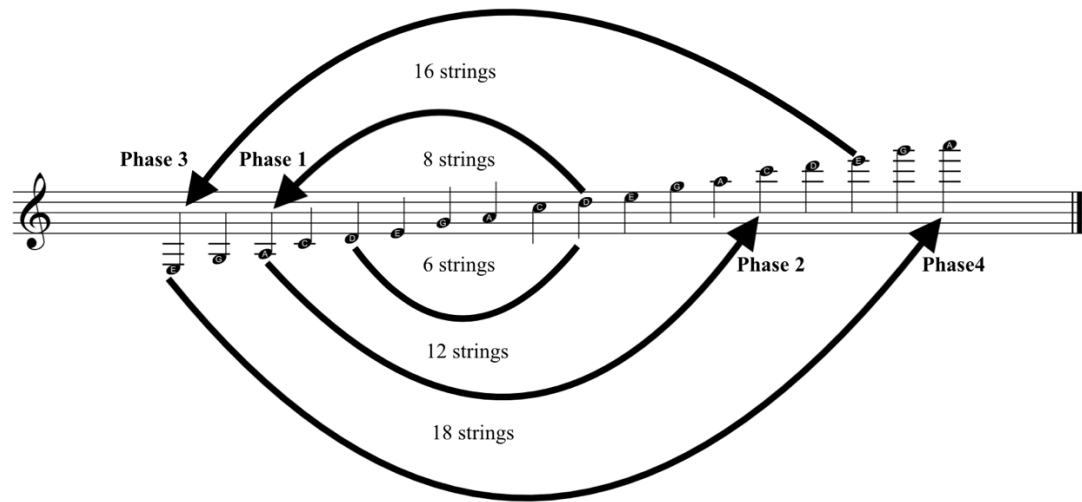


Figure 3.5: The gradual increase of strings across the four *kənɔya* phases (*).

The continuing organology changes from late Phase II onwards illuminate the relevance of the *jeliw* playing position and performance techniques influencing *kamalengoni* music transmission. Figure 3.5 points out the initial integration of *kora* performance technique 1, which started during Phase II. Malian Vieux Kanté and Burkinabe musician Oussen Coulibaly use this technique, and a variation of the position can be seen in Phase III with Adama Yalomba. The union between *kora* and *donso* positions with musicians' access to new musical styles (beyond *wassoulou* music) across phases has extended *kamalengoni* performance techniques, scales, and vocabulary, taking them to a new level.

***Kamalengoni* notation**

To borrow Knight's (1971: 23) words, my explicit aim in notating the *kamalengoni* is to "show a consistency with the music being transcribed, both in conception and format." My aim is that "the researcher and the musician are moving closer in the perception of the music." Being a more experienced musician than researcher, I understand that an unavoidable consequence of transcription is that it "generates a

visual product, which, to permit analytical examination, can be fixed in time” (Shelemay 1998: 156). This pitfall is especially problematic for traditions such as the *kamalengoni*, which commend experimentation and rapid change. On rhythm, Shelemay cautions of the “drawbacks of using Western symbolic-linear notation for representing music outside the Western cultural orbit ... and its tendency to force African music into a rigid, binary time continuum” (ibid.: 157). In actuality, staff notation has no power to do so; only its human users can do that.

Musical transcription demands an aural (as opposed to intellectual) process, and for me as an Afro-Brazilian, kinaesthetic engagement is equally essential. Efforts to learn and document the sounds of distant peoples can now also rely on online resources to “transcribe music without studying it *in situ*” (Shelemay 1998: 161) whereby YouTube makes a new kind of musicking possible, as well as facilitating a contemporary armchair ethnomusicology. I am, of course, privileged to have lived among some of the greatest living *kamalengonifola*, but ironically, I am also advantaged by my underprivileged upbringing in a shantytown, where music was learned through osmosis with the body.

The upsurge of foreign learners of the *kamalengoni* (*wɔnɔw*) has begun to generate rudimentary teaching materials to communicate the techniques and repertoire of the instrument. Many foreigners rely on audio and/or video recordings rather than notation to learn or teach *kamalengoni* music outside Africa. For example, a pupil of Ibrahama Sanou and Driss Diarra, the *wɔnɔ* Paul McElhatton

(Plate 3.17),¹⁵ incorporates home-made video classes on websites to help *wonow* newcomers, particularly in Dublin, Ireland.¹⁶



Plate 3.17: (From left) Paul McElhatton, Sidiki Dembélé, and Tommy Moore, Down With Jazz Festival in Dublin, Ireland, 2015.¹⁷

To my knowledge, there are no commercial pedagogy materials for the *kamalengoni*, only the handful of web pages and YouTube videos produced by *wonow* designed to reinforce in-person lessons and attract new students. Aside from some rudimentary notation appearing in *kamalengoni* scholarship and on *wonow* web pages, I am not aware of previous or current notation systems that comprehensively

¹⁵ McElhatton was born in 1976 in Ireland and began studying West African music from 2002 in The Gambia, Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso, with a particular interest in studying *donsoya* from Burkina Faso. He studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, graduating with an MSc in African Politics in 2012.

¹⁶ See five *kamalengoni* video classes taught by Paul McElhatton at <https://www.afroeire.com/kamele-ngoni-lessons/> [Accessed: 25.2.20]. The *kamalengoni* he makes and sells, as well as workshop and performance tickets for concerts and lessons with visiting African players, are also advertised on this website.

¹⁷ See <https://www.afroeire.com/sidiki-dembele-sextet/> [Accessed: 25.2.20].

communicate the pitch, rhythm, fingering, timbre, extended performance techniques, and tuning of the instrument. The notation system I am developing and using in this thesis is imperfect and will require ongoing refinement, particularly as I receive constructive feedback from the musicians and scholars who use it.

I have been left to my own resources in terms of developing a notation as, during my fieldwork in Mali, I only met one African *kamalengonifola* who knew how to read and write music, and he was unaware of any online notation resources for his harp. Up to the time of writing, the *kamalengoni* notation of others I have seen provides only basic information on pitch and rhythm with only rudimentary information about fingering and timbre. A few practice-based web pages for the *kamalengoni* also give simple technical guides for how to produce notes on the harp.¹⁸

Examples 3.1 and 3.2 present the notations of a scholar and a non-academic practitioner respectively. The first (by Castellanos) is a very limited descriptive notation using conventional staff notation to convey the pitch, rhythm, and timbre (the cross denoting a muted note). The colours in Example 3.1 are intended to draw the reader's attention to particular notes. The second example (by Feuillâtre) uses a graphic notation to convey a simple rhythm in binary meter with pitch represented by numbers (with a European *solfège* key in the top left of the example). The numbers indicate the pitch, the colour coding indicates which hand is plucking the note, and the key on the top right endeavours to differentiate which finger of the "high hand" is used but is unclear. Feuillâtre's notation is accompanied by two audio recordings of the piece. The first (probably performed by Feuillâtre) is a slowed-

¹⁸ For example, see <https://planetngoni.com/courses/techniques-and-exercises/> [Accessed: 9.5.22].



Example 3.1: Notation for a phrase in “Sirabakelen” by Castellanos (2019: 48) as played by Alata Brulaye.¹⁹

TUNING

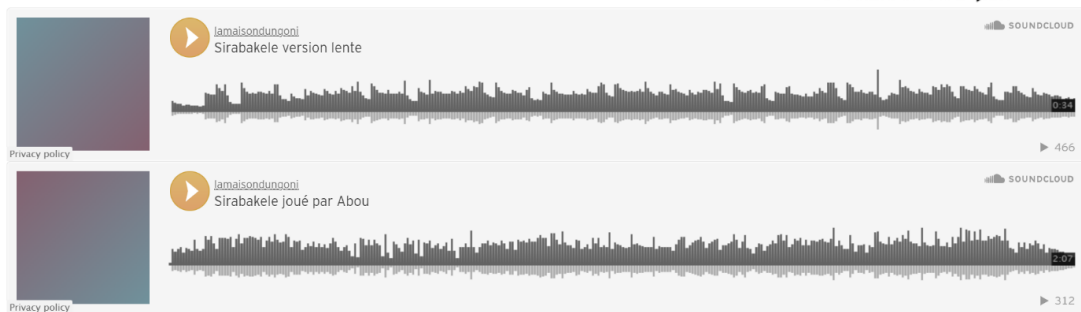
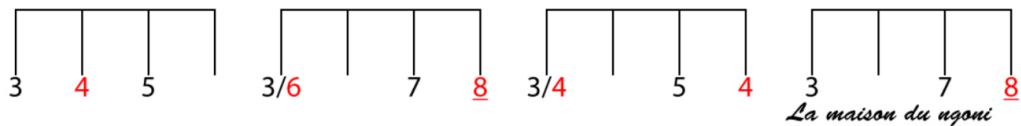
1:B 2:D 3:E 4:F# 5:A 6:B 7:D 8:E

HOW IS IT WRITTEN

x: High hand thumb | x: low hand | x: low hand index

Sirabakele la base

[/la_heading]



Example 3.2: Notation for phrase in “Sirabakelen” by Joris Feuillâtre.²⁰

down, ternary version of the notation, while the second (by Abou Diarra) is in swung binary. In both examples, representing routine techniques such as a finger crossing from one rank to the other, harmonics, and string bending, are likely beyond the capacity of these notations.

¹⁹ For more *kamalengoni* musical transcriptions see Castellanos (2019).

²⁰ From <https://lamaisondungoni.com/portfolio/sirabakele/> [Accessed: 25.2.20].

On seeing how rudimentary the existing *kamalengoni* transcriptions are and how little information is communicated, I began to develop a *kamalengoni* notation that can denote some of the common technicalities, and in doing so, provide a more accurate representation of the musical and technical essentials of *kamalengoni* performance. My system was originally intended to be a descriptive notation to provide the analyses in this thesis, but it is feasible that it could also be used by aspiring Western players as an entry-level prescriptive notation.

Although I had only simple *kamalengoni* notations to draw from in developing my notation, the *kora* notation of Knight (1971) is relevant. He claimed, “where the purpose is to give the reader a general impression of the sound of the instrument, or of the melodic line extracted from the overall texture, staff notation does this very well. If the purpose is to show the performance technique while learning or teaching the instrument, a tablature ... is preferable” (ibid.: 28). Given that, likely, most Western *kamalengoni* learners cross over from playing another string instrument (as in my case), they are more likely to be familiar with tablature than staff notation, which reinforces Knight’s argument for using tablature. However, as the notation in this thesis is designed primarily to serve an analytical (descriptive) purpose, and my modified staff notation gives easy access to a wider range of readers than would tablature. Agawu (2003: 66) stresses, “it makes sense to use the existing notation, however imperfect ... as a communal practice, we should train our efforts toward the superior and extensive use of staff notation so as to make African music unavoidable in scholarly circles.” Agawu has been a consistent advocate for staff notation, partly because it is the prevalent notation in the African academy and among scholars of African music, and also because of its capacity for adaptation.

Knight lists several aspects of *kora* playing that are more efficiently represented by tablature, but the *kamalengoni* poses fewer notation challenges than the *kora*. Firstly, the *kamalengoni* has fewer strings (six to eighteen) than the twenty-one stringed *kora*, and its pentatonic tuning is generally simpler and has a significantly smaller range than the heptatonic *kora*. I nevertheless agree with Knight that tablature is in some ways better equipped to represent some performance practices. For example, the representation of rank crossing is spatially illustrated by tablature so is immediately easy to understand whereas my system of adding x or $2x$ for rank-crossing of the thumb and index finger respectively requires the reader to imagine the kinaesthetic movement. However, I believe that staff notation is better equipped than tablature to capture the rhythmic complexity of the *kamalengoni*.

Another notation issue to consider is the representation of tuning. Knight states that there is no standard pitch for the tone centre of *kora* tunings, but that there is “a standard pitch area” (1971: 28). This will have changed since his publication in 1971 with the internationalisation of *kora* playing and the common instigation of machine heads and guitar tuners. The *kamalengoni*, which is essentially an urban tradition, has undergone similar changes to the *kora* to a point where the tone centre is quick and easy to transpose with machine heads, and where the tempered scale aesthetic is more dominant than previous microtonal tunings derived from the *donsongoni* in Phases I and II.

Unlike *kora* players, *kamalengonifɔlaw* do not appear to have a “standard” pitch level (i.e., tone centre). Unless playing with a band, they determine their pitches individually according to sound aesthetics (bearing in mind that the *kamalengoni* was originally tuned around a perfect fourth higher than the *donsongoni* (Durán 1995: 118). *Kamalengonifɔlaw* also tune their instruments

according to the context. Playing with a fixed-pitch instrument such as a *bala* can dictate not only the tone centre but the microtones, whereas a band gig with a keyboard will demand a perfectly tempered tuning.

There are obvious limitations in staff notation in terms of representing non-tempered scales; arrows can imprecisely represent microtones, but they can create a cumbersome score. Where Knight (ibid.: 30) proposes a convincing argument for a “tuning signature” to indicate four common *kora* tunings, there are so many new tunings emerging from *kamalengonifɔlaw* that trying to categorise the most common ones with a tuning signature would constitute a substantial study, which would likely be outdated by the time my research is available. Since the *kamalengoni* is such a new tradition, it is even questionable whether standardized tunings (like the *kora*’s) had enough time and regional variation to develop.

In terms of the *kamalengoni*’s tonal system, my primary focus is the basic *relative* pitch of the strings and how these impact performance practices. I am less interested in shifting tone centres and the microtonal composition of the various tunings. This hierarchy reflects the apparent priorities of the *kamalengonifɔlaw* with whom I worked. Most tune their instruments with a guitar tuner and do not discuss the microtonal composition of their tunings. In summary, while my transcriptions are all at concert pitch to display the many possibilities for tone centre, the notes on the staff do not always represent tempered pitches.

Malian and Burkinabe *kamalengoni* tunings mirror one another (Figure 3.6). The lowest note on the Malian *kamalengoni* (highlighted in bold) is located on the right rank, while on the Burkinabe instrument, it is on the left. The same structure applies regardless of the addition of more strings and/or the type of scale adopted. The staff notation in Figure 3.7 illustrates the maximum range available on an

Mali			Burkina Faso		
		12 strings			12 strings
	8 strings	C A		8 strings	A C
6 strings		G E	6 strings		E G
D C	D C	D C	C D	C D	C D
A G	A G	A G	G A	G A	G A
E D	E D	E D	D E	D E	D E
	C A	C A		A C	A C

Figure 3.6: Hand rank arrangements in Mali and Burkina Faso.²¹

RH= Right Hand
LH= Left Hand

Mali: RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH
Burkina Faso: LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH

Figure 3.7: String range and hand rank arrangement in Mali and Burkina Faso.

eighteen-stringed pentatonic *kamalengoni* and the mirrored hand positions adopted in Mali and Burkina Faso. Lest this be a tight formula, Plate 3.18 depicts an entirely different playing position.

As with many instruments in staff notation, the fingers are numbered from 2 (index) to 5; however, the thumb, conventionally represented by the number 1 in the staff notation, does not receive a number as the index finger and thumb are the most used digits of both hands. Figure 3.8 illustrates the use of the thumb and index fingers of each hand playing on its own rank using *donso* technique 2. The first note

²¹ My transcriptions mostly follow the Malian system, where the lowest string is played with the right hand and the highest string is played with the left hand, which is the opposite of the Burkinabe system.



Plate 3.18: Alternative playing position for reverse tunings, Rama N'goni (left) and Zoumana Diawara, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 12.9.17.²²



Figure 3.8: Notation of fingering with its respective rank.

represents the left hand (LH) playing on the left rank (LR) while the second note represents the right hand (RH) playing on the right rank (RR).²³

²² Players use this position as a last resort in instances where Burkinabe and Malian *kamalengonifola* attempt to play each other's harp with a hand arrangement difference. The Ivorian *kamalengoni* hand arrangement is the same as the Burkinabe, so the same situation applies to Malian and Ivorian players trying to play each other's harp. Nevertheless, it could also be the case that a player is left-handed and arranges the harp to match his needs.

²³ I experimented using triangular noteheads combined with classical note heads as an extra option to help students differentiate the left-hand rank from right-hand rank. Although students seem to find it helpful for music analysis, for tracing finger movement and for locating strings, benefiting those unfamiliar with a more classic notation system, I retained normal noteheads throughout the thesis.

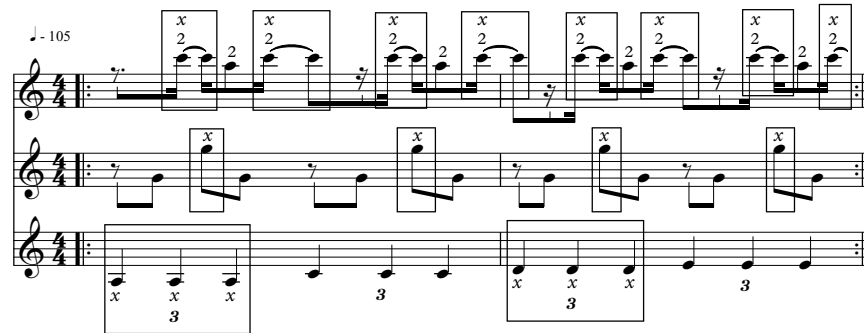


Plate 3.19: RH index finger crossing to the left rank (author).



Plate 3.20: RH thumb crossing to the left rank (author).

polyphony and polyrhythms (played by one musician) in Example 3.5 exemplify the high level of independence and rank-crossing fluency displayed by advanced *kamalengoniflaw*.



Example 3.5: Rank crossing in three voices (*kora* technique 1).

The *kamalengoni* has four main timbres (*).²⁶ Two of them are open tones (Figure 3.10) which are achieved by either plucking a string and letting it ring freely or by both plucking a lightly or hardly touched string to generate a harmonic. Durán reports that musicians call the harmonic technique “the secret of *ngoni*” (1995: 120). The knuckle of the thumbs or the tips of the left and right index fingers on either hand can be used to produce harmonics on any available string. I represent harmonics with the conventional symbol °.



Figure 3.10: Notation with and without harmonics.

The other two timbres are kinds of muted tones (Figure 3.11), which are achieved by executing a “heavily staccato” technique known as *ka dere* (Durán 1995: 120). The first (notated with a staccato) is created by plucking a lightly damped string. The

²⁶ See the Lecture Demonstration video.

second (notated with a staccato plus parentheses) is a more percussive timbre that is achieved when plucking a strongly damped string.



Figure 3.11: Muted tone notations.

The capacity to create slight variations in pitch with muted tones depends on the playing position adopted. Several areas of the fingers, hands and wrists are used to damp strings and create muted tones (Plate 3.21). The black dot areas are used more frequently than the white dot areas, which are sometimes employed to execute specific kinds of timbres.

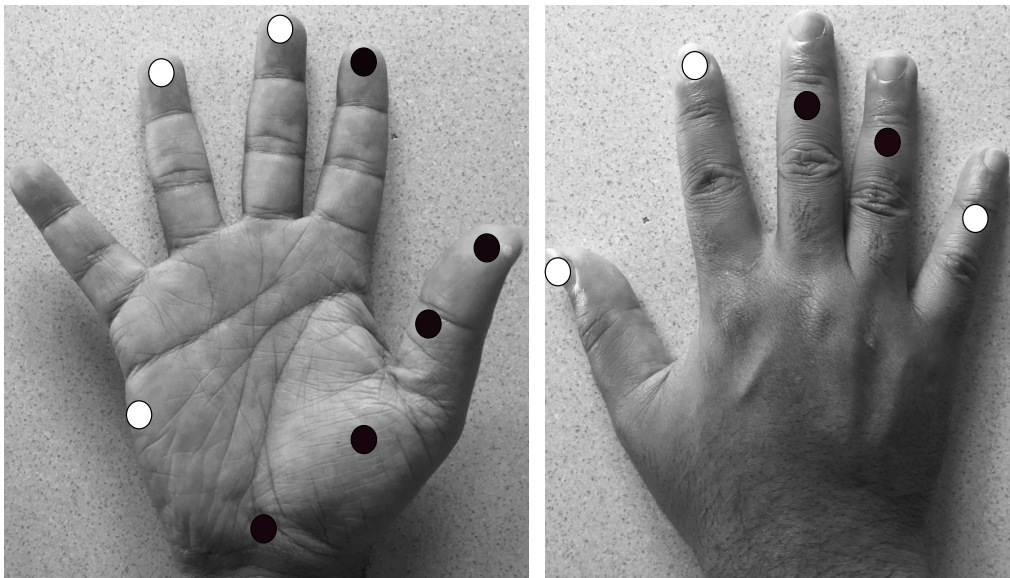


Plate 3.21: Areas of the hands used to produce muted and open timbres (author).

The squeaking effect²⁷ and the natural wah-wah sound effect are arguably the most idiomatic of all the *kamalengoni*'s sound effects, setting it apart from other harps such as the *kora* and *donsongoni* (Figures 3.12 and 3.13).

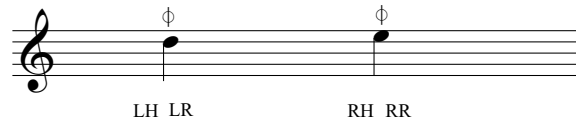


Figure 3.12: Squeaking effect notation (*).



Figure 3.13: Wah-wah effect notation (*).

The squeaking effect is produced by spitting on the hand and:

- a) pinching the string with the thumb and finger 2 and pressing it with the front of finger 3 and the back of fingers 4 and 5 (Plate 3.22); or
- b) pinching the string with the thumb and finger 2 and gripping it with the inside of fingers 3, 4, and 5 further down the string (Plate 3.23).

²⁷ Margasak (2016) wrote that Vieux Kanté's "squeaky sounds" seem to imitate the Brazilian *cuíca* (friction drum).

<https://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2016/10/18/discovering-malian-kamale-ngoni-virtuoso-vieux-kante> [Accessed: 06.4.17].



Plate 3.22: Squeaking effect pinching technique (a) (author).



Plate 3.23: Squeaking effect pinching technique (b) (author).

Using either (a) or (b), the fingers then slide up and down the string in rapid or slow motion to produce the desired sound. This technique can also be applied simultaneously to more than one string. The wah-wah effect is produced by playing one or multiple strings with the thumb or index finger of either hand. The left hand holds the handles with fingers 3, 4 and 5 and while the strings are sustaining, the harp is very quickly moved forward and backwards several times.

Another important technique is *portamento*. The first two notes in Figure 3.14 only designate the starting point and direction of the *portamento* but not the pitch destination. To produce a *portamento*, the thumb of either hand plucks a string of the opposite rank and the thumb, finger 2, or the hypothenar area of either hand (located near finger 5 on the side of the palm) slides up or down to apply tension to the plucked string (Plate 3.24). The third and fourth notes of Figure 3.14 illustrate bends, where the notes return to their starting pitch. To produce this effect, the LH thumb plucks a string in the right rank and the RH thumb, can be used to apply tension to the plucked string to control the pitch (Plate 3.25). The bending and *portamento* techniques allow players to perform an indeterminate number of notes on each string. The length and thickness of a string and other organology elements sometimes make this technique difficult.



Figure 3.14: *Portamento* and bending notation (*).

The *kamalengoni* produces a *tremolo* effect by using the index finger of the right hand to rapidly strum one or more open strings while the left hand holds the harp in place (Plate 3.26; notes 3 and 4 of Figure 3.15). The simultaneous

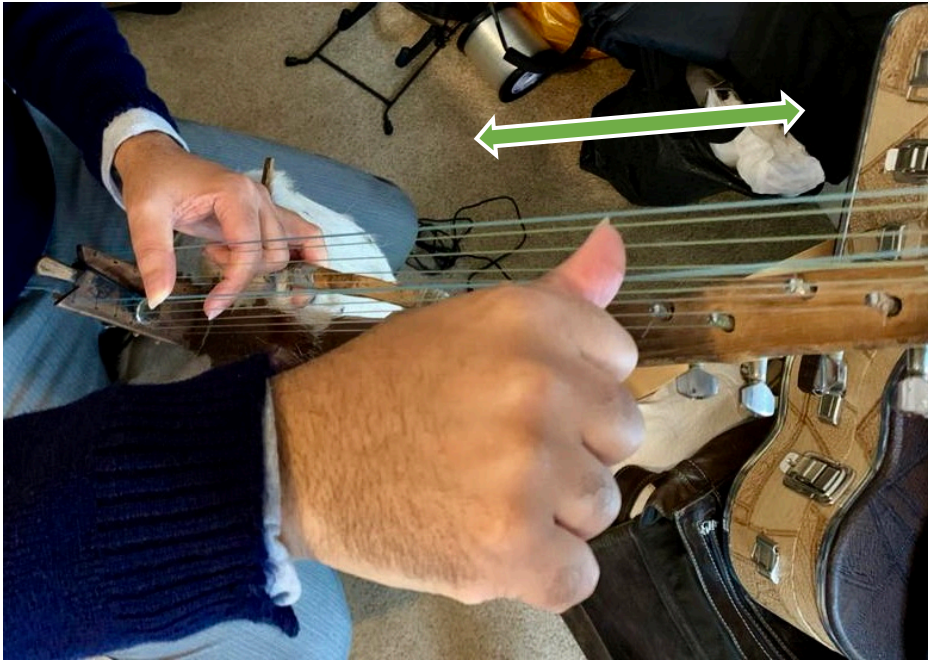


Plate 3.24: *Portamento* hand position (author).



Plate 3.25: Bending hand position (author).



Plate 3.26: *Tremolo* hand position (author).

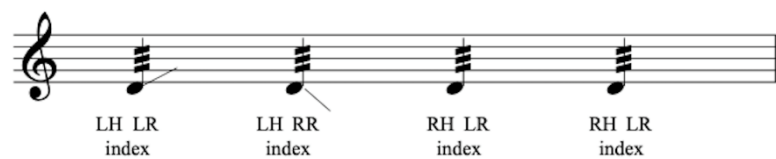


Figure 3.15: *Tremolo/portamento* and *tremolo* notation (*).

tremolo/portamento technique is produced as the index finger of the right hand strums the string with rapid reiteration while: a) the LH thumb slides along the string (Plate 3.27); b) LH finger 2 slides along the string (Plate 3.28); or c) the hypothenar area of the LH palm slides along the string (Plate 3.29). Both legs, a strap, or a



Plate 3.27: *Tremolo/portamento* with the LH thumb (author).



Plate 3.28: *Tremolo/portamento* hand position with the LH index finger (author).

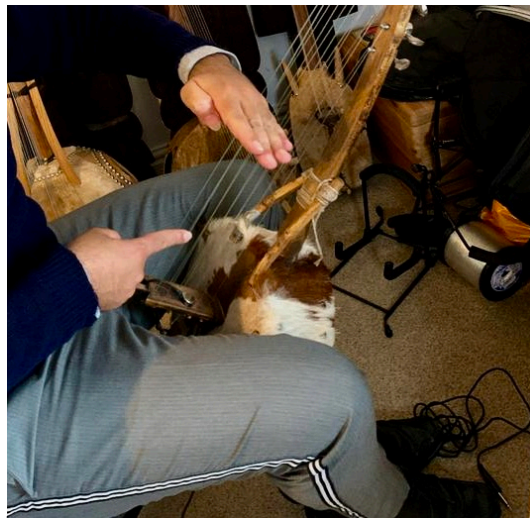


Plate 3.29: *Tremolo/portamento* with the hypothenar area (author).

kamalengoni stand must support the harp to allow both hands freedom when performing this technique. As with the *portamento*, the notation for the *tremolo/portamento* only gives the starting point pitch of the note (notes 1 and 2 or Figure 3.15).

Having described the *kamalengoni*'s organological structures, main performance techniques, and the notation I have developed to represent these, I am now in a position to explain the central concept and function of the *nagamin* product more fully.

The *nagamin* product

My term “*nagamin* product” refers to sonic signatures that *kamalengonifɔlaw* consider to be in some way musically exceptional and inventive. The creation of *nagamin* products is often attributed to specific *kamalengonifɔlaw* and they evolve when circulated among players and during improvisation. Performing *nagamin* products to their full potential is not as easy as it may initially appear. Durán (1995: 120) explains the *kamalengoni*'s performance style (*fɔlicogow*) as comprising two main parts: “the leg of the *ngoni*” (*ɲonisin*), which can be classified as an ostinato, and “musical bargaining” (*teremeli*), which refers to the instrument's improvisational function. When performed in an individual's recognisable style, the final sound product of either the *ɲonisin* or *teremeli* can manifest as a sonic signature that is attributable to a specific *kamalengonifɔla*, location, and/or time frame. My term for this evocative kind of sonic signature derives from the infinitive Mandékan verb *ka fɛn nagamin*, (to mix). Several of my teachers explained that *kamalengonifɔlaw*

revisit everything they have learned and “mix” (*nagamin*) it all to arrive at their musical products (*).²⁸

The *nagamin* product can also be a performance technique introduced or developed by a particular player. For example, in Phase II the squeaky sound technique is widely attributed to Malian *kamalengonifɔla*, Vieux Kanté, while the prevalence of open timbres is a feature of Burkinabe player Ousseni Coulibaly. In Phase III, highly embellished ornamented melodies using fast bending techniques and savvy stage performance skills are idiomatic of the Malian, Harouna Samaké. Novel ways to hold the harp also changed the possibilities for performance techniques. For example, Malian *kamalengonifɔla* Adama Yalomba became well-known for the *kora* technique 2.

A *nagamin* product also encompasses organology, where modifications to the instrument, such as changing the material of the resonator and altering the sound production or adding strings, ultimately affected the stylistic sound and tuning. The iconic sounds of the high pitches of the eighteen-stringed *kamalengoni* of Burkinabe *kamalengonifɔla* Alladari Dembélé in Phase IV are often confused with the look and sound of the *kora*. A *nagamin* product can also encompass technology, including live amplification, guitar pedals, studio techniques and production values, such as artificial effects like reverb and EQ. The Malian *kamalengonifɔlaw* Yoro Diallo (Phase I), Issa Bagayogo (Phase II) and Burkinabe Dicko Fils (Phase III) are renowned for this kind of innovation. Finally, a *nagamin* product can refer to a “sound,” just as genres such as R&B, or an ensemble line-up (drum kit, keyboards, programmed drums, etc.) are said to have a sound.

²⁸ See the Lecture Demonstration and Recital videos for a further understanding of the practical applications of *nagamin* products.

Ultimately, a *nagamin* product helps to create a liminal space, a moment and condition of uncertainty, which exerts a difference that is embedded in the sound and overall performance.

Discovering the concept of “*ka fɛn nagamin*” through practice

In April 2017 in Mali, I gained a full understanding of the concept of *nagamin*. I made this connection after buying six mangoes in a street market near my house in the Magnanbougou district of Bamako while carrying my harp to Zoumana Diawara’s house.²⁹

It is 2 pm, and Zoumana Diawara is outside practising *kamalengoni*, as is usual here in Daoudabougou.³⁰ Friends and relatives of different ages surround him while he plays his interpretation of the cyclic phrase of “Jeliya.” Cars, motorcycles, and horses throw dust in the air from the dry earth and sand in the street. The women, as always, are cleaning and working, while people walk about, and children play with each other amongst animals, rubbish, and clouds of flies. This is a very hot day close to the end of the mango season in Bamako, so there are plenty of flies. I greet Diawara and everyone else nearby, and without a pause in playing the *kamalengoni* he returns my greeting. The youngest of his friends stands up and offers me his seat, and Diawara looks at the empty chair and gestures for me to sit. I look at the boy and thank him. I sit down and start tuning my *kamalengoni* from C to G, the tone centre of the other harp (Figure 3.16). As I lower the three C strings to B on my twelve-stringed harp to accommodate

²⁹ Like Adama Yalomba and Harouna Samaké in 2015, Diawara advised me in our last class in 2017, “You must have constant contact with your musical instrument.” I have since developed the habit of always carrying my *kamalengoni*.

³⁰ This event took place on 25.4.17.

the G tone centre, Diawara plays the cyclic phrase slowly for me so I can copy it (Example 3.6) (*).³¹

Break time now; Diawara and I are eating a mango each and the remaining four are shared between the children, adult friends, and family. We throw the mango seeds on the ground in front of us and Diawara starts to play a bit more and I join him again. While playing I become distracted as I was worried that somebody may stumble on a seed. I stop for a moment, put my *kamalengoni* on the chair and move the seeds aside. As I'm doing this, Diawara suddenly incorporates three fast, complex, and beautiful musical ideas I had not heard before (Examples 3.7 to 3.9). I then hear him increasing the density of the quaver cyclic phrase with semi-quavers and accented notes (Example 3.10). He creates another interesting variation by accentuating the second and fourth muted semiquavers of beats two, three and four (of Example 3.10), thus drawing out a new offbeat melody (G, B, G, D, G, B) (*).³²

Mesmerized, I stare at Diawara in surprise, and he smiles at me, noticing he has my attention and appreciation. He then goes into a virtuosic mode, displaying a seemingly endless library of exceptional musical ideas. I become curious about the performance strategies that enable him to produce these sounds on his *kamalengoni*. He laughs in response to my facial expression as I express my admiration, and he shakes his head, saying with humour, “Gaio, *a man gele, I be se*” (Gaio, it's not hard, you can do it). I reply, “*Ayi a ka gele yere yere, ne te se de*” (It's very hard, I can't do it). I sit down again and continue to play the simple cyclic phrase, and he immediately begins to improvise again, both of us laughing. I watch his hands closely, trying to make sense of his use of interlocking melodies and syncopation. Diawara takes a short break and I transcribe some of the things he played from memory. I keep asking myself,

“What kind of theoretical and technical resources inform the way he generates and develops musical ideas?”

³¹ See the Lecture Demonstration and Recital videos, where I perform this particular *nagamin* product.

³² See the Lecture Demonstration and Recital videos.

When we resume, I play along and listen to Diawara’s unfolding musical ideas while gazing at the discarded mango seeds on the ground in front of us. Suddenly, I make a connection between sound and image, whereby each seed symbolizes a particular musical idea. I keep smiling and shaking my head uttering an elongated “nooooooo zuuuu” (an expression of amusement) and Diawara laughs louder. Again, my response seems to encourage him, and he responds by creating more astonishing phrases. He seems to play with added emphasis when I respond with surprise, piling on the concepts and momentum until a new idea emerges as a motif from where more ideas can be generated.

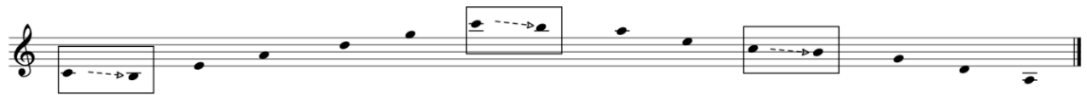


Figure 3.16: Returning Cs to Bs for the tone centre, G.



Example 3.6: First *nagamin* product in “Jeliya” performed by Zoumana Diawara (tuning A-B-D-E-G *kora* technique 1) (*).



Example 3.7: Second *nagamin* product in “Jeliya” performed by Zoumana Diawara (tuning A-B-D-E-G *kora* technique 1).



Example 3.8: Third *nagamin* product in “Jeliya” performed by Zoumana Diawara (tuning A-B-D-E-G *kora* technique 1)³³ (*).

³³ See the Recital video.



Example 3.9: Fourth *nagamin* product in “Jeliya” performed by Zoumana Diawara
(tuning A-B-D-E-G *donso* technique 1).



Example 3.10: Fifth *nagamin* product in “Jeliya” performed by Zoumana Diawara
(tuning A-B-D-E-G *kora* technique 1)³⁴ (*).

Although I had known Diawara since 2015, at the time of this meeting in 2017 he was still wary of showing me what he considered to be his “musical secrets.” He had initially refused permission to record and insisted that I should be able to memorize everything, which I had tried to do despite the large amount of information. He began to occasionally let me record his playing, although doing so was always subject to a new request. Nevertheless, he did not always seem comfortable when I asked for permission to record during lessons. Because of this restriction, many of the musical examples I present are transcribed from memory rather than from recordings of Diawara’s performances. His reluctance to permit recordings did, however, help to develop my capacity to memorize.

Our teacher-student relationship became more relaxed over the remainder of my field trip (January – November 2017). When demonstrating fast, complex passages, he began to slow down without me having to ask and even guided my hands to the right area of the strings. He also began allowing me to closely investigate his playing positions and fingering techniques, which he had made

³⁴ See the Lecture Demonstration and Recital videos.

difficult at the beginning of our working relationship by moving while he was playing to obscure my view.³⁵ Rhythmic precision and signalling must be mastered, helping musicians to memorize or predict certain aspects of the music (Chaffin et al 2009) which are often directed at vocalists (Maxwell 2003: 46) and *kamalengonifɔlaw* as an intrinsic ingredient.

Rhythm is a fundamental element that every singer must master. They rely on it to cue them at entries, breaks, changes, solos, and endings, and on what appropriate repertoire choices they need to make in impromptu situations (Maxwell 2003: 46).

The more time we spent together, the more my rhythmic precision improved. My ability to observe and recognize non-verbal performative cues between musicians and their audiences also grew. Diawara's highly developed left- and right-hand independence, and his capacity to explore complex rhythmic patterns in impromptu situations, largely define his musical personality. Although all players are expected to possess rhythmic mastery, it is uncommon to find *kamalengonifɔlaw* with such a high standard of musicianship and control as Diawara. The examples above show how fast he can create and execute his melodically and rhythmically complex *nagamin* products. The fact that he is also an accomplished percussionist, which is not unusual for *kamalengonifɔlaw*, may partly explain his rhythmic sophistication on the harp. As I performed with him, I reflected on how I might transfer my multi-instrumental knowledge into my harp playing.

³⁵ As the trust built over the year, he started inviting me to social gatherings with his friends, which helped our pedagogical relationship.

Determining the process of “mixing” (*nagamin*)

The invented traditions that result from cultural contact over time grow out of countless “micro-inventions” between individuals in the moment. The early creative encounter I had with Zoumana was the perfect moment to test how “invention” can occur and give immediate feedback. This section explores the processes of “mixing” that resulted from my experiment to throw some Brazilian musical material into a *kamalengoni teremeli* (improvisation). Diawara signalled to me by tilting his head which I took as a cue to improvise. My spontaneous reaction was to recall a rhythmic motif from the instrumental piece “Só Pra Mim” (Just for Me) by the Brazilian composer Alfredo da Rocha Viana aka “Pixinguinha” (1897-1973) (Example 3.11). I remembered how my Brazilian mandolin teacher Paulo Sá used to demonstrate the Afro-Brazilian characteristic of rhythmic motifs often used in *choro* and *samba* musical styles.³⁶ I used this particular pattern to experiment with how it would sound and how Zoumana would respond.

Still playing, I instigated a three-step scheme to test the concept of mixing (*nagamin*) in practice with Diawara: 1) exact imitation; 2) insertion of material from other *kamalengonifɔlaw* into an embellished version of (1), and 3) pushing the boundaries by inserting foreign material into the improvisation. I played back my best imitations of what Diawara had played in Examples 3.6 to 3.10, then I moved to step 2 of my scheme by playing an embellished version of the musical exercises that Coulibaly (Example 3.12) and Idrissa Diarra (Example 3.13) had taught me. I had also heard Diawara playing these exercises to construct his *nagamin* products.

³⁶ I studied with Brazilian mandolin player Paulo Sá at the Villa-Lobos School of Music in Rio de Janeiro in 2002.

Diawara reacted with a wide smile, which I understood to be his approval, then he responded with some denser polyrhythmic improvisations. Noting my struggle to keep up with him, he returned to playing the basic cyclic phrase, laughing as if we were communicating and playing a game. I smiled back and instigated the third step of my test by introducing rhythmic motifs from “Só Pra Mim” into his “Jeliya” variation (Example 3.14). I intentionally reversed the order of the groupings of the Brazilian motif (Example 3.15). The notes played by my RH thumb created accents (Example 3.14), which heightened the syncopation without losing the core rhythmic elements of Diawara’s variation (Example 3.10). He seemed excited and looked at my hands with a facial expression of surprise. He had not responded to my

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Só Pra Mim". It consists of ten staves of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The chords indicated above the staves are: Dm/F, E7, A7, C7, F, A7/C#, D7, Gm, Dm, Eb, A7, Dm, D, A7, D, D, B7, B7, E7, F#7, Bm, E7, A7, D, A7, D, B7, Em, Gm6, D/F#, B7, E7, A7, D. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and slurs. A specific rhythmic motif is highlighted with a circled '6' above it. At the end of the score, there are instructions: "Ao § e ¶" and "Ao § e ¶ Fim". The page number "91" is centered at the bottom of the score.

A close-up of a rhythmic motif in 2/4 time. The motif consists of six eighth notes, with a circled "6" above the notes, indicating the number of notes in the motif.

Example 3.11: Excerpt from “Só Pra Mim” highlighting a memorable rhythmic motif³⁷ (*).

³⁷ From (Pixinguinha and Carrasqueira 1998: 91).



Example 3.12: Daouda Coulibaly exercise (Bamako, Mali, 16.7.15)³⁸ (*).



Example 3.13: Idrissa Diarra exercise (Bamako, Mali, 7.6.17)³⁹ (*).



Example 3.14: Employing the Afro-Brazilian rhythmic motif in “Jeliya” by the author (tuning A-B-D-E-G *kora* technique 1)⁴⁰ (*).



Example 3.15: (A) original rhythmic motif of “Só Pra Mim.” (B) reversed motif.

playing in this way before, but I had seen this reaction when he listened to other *kamalengonifɔlaw*. I took his response as an affirmation that my mixing (*nagamin*) was acceptable, if not successful. He confirmed with, “Ehhhhhh Gaio, *ahãm* (Oh Gaio, that’s it), *namu, i ya famu sisan*” (I’m listening, you understand it now).

Following our prolonged exchange of smiles as we continued to play, Diawara asked where my inspiration had come from. As I struggled to explain with my intermediate Bamanankan while playing simultaneously, he started to mimic

³⁸ See the Lecture Demonstration video.

³⁹ See the Lecture Demonstration video.

⁴⁰ See the Recital video.

what I did and then began to embellish it. Going into full virtuoso mode again, he danced in his chair with evident excitement while improvising with the Afro-Brazilian motif he had just claimed. Reflecting on the bodily response of this *kamalengonifɔlaw*, I took it as an indication that I had successfully “mixed” and “communicated” in a recognisable manner using musical materials that were deemed appropriate to the tradition. I then realized that I might have even created my first “*nagamin* product.”

Chapter Four

Iconic Musicians and their *Nagamin* Products in Phases I and II

This chapter explains the performance techniques, arrangements and creative stylistic choices instigated by innovative musicians from the beginnings of the *kamalengoni* tradition up to the turn of the century. As explained in Chapter One, although *kamalengonifɔlaw* do not segment the development of their tradition into discrete time frames, I have determined four distinct phases in the evolution of the *kamalengoni* that cluster key changes in its organology and performance techniques. This chapter focuses on Phase I (1960-1983) and Phase II (1984-1999), in which those who developed the idiom in these early phases paved the way for future players to become innovators. Several iconic *kamalengonifɔlaw* not only instigated the most radical changes, but they established the imperative to innovate in a manner that created the tradition of invention, which evokes the brazen attitude of the Brazilian *malandro*.

In the Mandé world, the intellectual property of a creative musical work differs from that of the West.¹ Although ownership can be debated in the

¹ The common practice of appropriating the musical ideas and style of others in Mali is sometimes misinterpreted by *wɔnɔw* as theft of intellectual property. Durán (2007: 12) challenges Maxwell (2003: 228) on this point: “[Oumou Sangaré’s] songs are recognized by almost all of her listeners as modernized versions of other people’s or cultural groups’ repertoires: namely love songs or wedding songs.” During my fieldwork, I observed that various kinds of appropriation are common and

construction of *nagamin* products (sonic signatures), it is common for musicians to appropriate musical ideas created by others and then reproduce them in their own way. Durán (2007: 12) explains, “Well-known Malian artists draw heavily on traditional repertoires; it is generally recognized that the originality lies in their musical arrangement, choruses, and performance style.” As I demonstrate, it is the stylistic features and innovative techniques of individuals which create the *nagamin* products that become identified with particular players, even when someone else is performing them. This chapter focuses on the pivotal individuals in Phases I and II who consolidated the *kamalengoni* tradition while expanding its possibilities.

Iconic musicians in Phase I (1960 to 1983)

I have chosen to discuss two musicians who established the *kamalengoni* in its formative years: Alata Brulaye Sidibé and Yoro Diallo.² Brulaye’s legacy is an essential starting point in any discussion of the *kamalengoni*’s creation and transformation, while Diallo is known for his development of the virtuosic performance techniques that helped to establish a *kamalengoni* identity that is distinct from the hunters’ *donsongoni*. Diallo also modernised the instrument and increased its popular appeal through his approach to recording and his entrepreneurial activities.

Claiming to be the creator of *kamalengoni* (Durán 1995), Alata Brulaye laid the foundation of the informal school that disseminated *nagamin* products across time and space. Some hunter musicians, however, argue that they played the

acceptable practice in the Mandé world, despite generating tension between musicians from time to time.

² Although his last name is Sidibé, he is best known as Alata Brulaye.

instrument before Brulaye (Conrad 2002). In his only interview with Durán just months before he passed away in 1997, Brulaye said:

I used to play *ndan* [pluriac] from the age of ten, but the *ndan* had wire strings and a small voice. One day a marabout told me to turn around the calabash resonator as God did not like it facing downwards. So, I made a harp like the hunters' harp, only smaller, for kids, but I used the same way of playing as the *ndan*. The hunters' harp is for the elders. It's only for the *marafatigi* [those who own the hunters' rifle]. With the youth harp, there are no limits on who can hear it and what we can play on it. Here in Wasulu, everything is *donsoya* [the art of hunters]. When you hear *kamalengoni*, it doesn't have the power of *donsoya*, but it has the sounds of *donsoya*. If you can play the *kamalengoni*, it means you can play *donsongoni* (Durán 1999: 159)

Alata Brulaye's claim to be the progenitor of the instrument, however, is sometimes challenged by other musicians. For example, in the song "Walignouman" (Good Deeds), Yoro Diallo appears to reference other *kamalengonifɔlaw* who came before Brulaye in the town of Ganadugu:³

Sani k'an se Alata Buru ma

Ngoni tun ye Gana Dugu

Before I talk about Alata Buru⁴

There were some [*kamale*]ngoni [players] in Gana Dugu⁵

³ Located in the Sikasso region of east Wasulu. The main town is Finkolo Ganadugu. Pers. comm., Mamadou Cissoko, Bamako, Mali, 26.7.17.

⁴ Alata Buru is a nickname for Alata Brulaye.

⁵ "Walignouman" (Good Deeds) by Yoro Diallo. Seydou Production, 1999. Translated by Aminata Moneketa, 3.8.19. Translated and edited by Wilfred Willey Abdoul, 21.4.20.

Although he credits Alata Brulaye as the first virtuoso, his lyrics are ambiguous in terms of whether he also made the first *kamalengoni*:⁶

N'Golofla mansa kela ni ye fana?

O Golanfla mansa Alata Buru di.

Who was the first man to play *kamalengoni*?

The first man was the virtuoso Alata Buru.

Yoro Diallo recognizes Brulaye's skills and highlights the importance of praising the good deeds of others in the following lyrics:

Mɔgɔlu n'be wale juman lɔn

An ye mɔgɔyi kojuman lɔn.

Oh, people, I have to be grateful

We should always praise people for their good deeds.

Whether or not the inventor of the new harp during the 1950s, “Alata Brulaye was the first to be recorded on the *kamalengoni*” (Durán 1999: 162), first with his niece Coumba Sidibé in 1977 (Charry 2000: 80) and six years later on his solo album, *Spécialite du Kamalén N'goni* (1983).⁷ Since Brulaye is revered and praised as a virtuoso by other *kamalengoni* virtuosos, such as Diallo, I became curious about what elements lead to a *kamalengonifɔla* becoming recognised as a virtuoso by other *kamalengonifɔlaw*. This issue also motivated me to investigate the cultural aspects,

⁶ Pers. comm., Manshow, Bamako, Mali, 3.7.17.

⁷ Different sources give various dates for the release of this album, from 1981 to 1983.

challenges, and resources that shaped the way practitioners conceive their *ḡagamin* products in the context of the generation in which they emerged.

Alata Brulaye forwarded a progressive ethos that not only marked *kənḡya* Phase I but resonated among *kamalengoniḡlaw* across subsequent phases. He also stated, “There are no limits on who can hear it [the *kamalengoni*] and what we can play on it” (as quoted by Durán 1999: 159). The ability to play other instruments also contributes to the construction of *ḡagamin* products; Plate 4.1 shows several *kamalengoniḡlaw* playing other instruments. Brulaye, too, was a multi-instrumentalist who initially played the *ndan* (Durán 1995), which is also called *kamalendan* (youth *ndan*) (Durán 1999: 159).



Plate 4.1: From left, Zoumana Diawara (bass) Many Dakoua (*jelingoni*), the author (*kamalengoni*), Idrissa Diarra (*jembe*), and Harouna Dembélé (drum kit) rehearsing at the Institute National de las Arts (INA), Bamako, Mali 19.11.17.

Like contemporary *kamalengoniḡlaw*, Brulaye was looking to other musical instruments as a source of inspiration for the *kamalengoni*: “I made a harp like the hunters’ harp, only smaller” (Durán 1999: 159). The spiritual and cultural beliefs in his environment affected the way his creativity evolved. For example, he claimed

that reversing the position of the gourd resonator is divinely justified as “God did not like it facing downwards” (ibid.: 159). This statement shows us that instigating inventions outside of accepted norms could generate friction for those who were changing things; thus, Brulaye’s need to attribute the change to Allah. In his song “Allata N’Na” (My Mother Alata), Brulaye reflects:

Ne na n’lô ka n’miri dignε rɔ

Ka n’sii ka n’miri, ka n’lô ka n’miri, eh Alla miri magni, a bε ni Allah cε

Miri ka guɛlen Allah

N’ko miri seba cεbakɔrɔ la

Ban, ni Allah cε miri seba cεbakɔrɔ la nba

Tolongε kuma tε ne tena galon fɔ nin na.

I have been thinking about life

Sitting and standing, oh God, thoughts are so cumbersome

I swear to God

Thoughts are problematic

Strong guys, oh God, thoughts defeated strong guys, oh man, all jokes aside

I said, thoughts can defeat a man, I won’t lie about it.⁸

As explained in Chapter Two, Mali and Burkina Faso became independent from France in 1960 and 1958 respectively, which was around the beginning of *kɔnɔya* Phase I. At this time, *kamalengoni* practice was in its early stages and was slowly growing in popularity on the underground music scene across Mali. As a part of *wassoulou* bands, the new harp became central to this infectious musical genre.

⁸ From “N’Na Allata” by Alata Brulaye Sidibé. *Specialiste du kamalengoni* (1983). Transcribed by Aminata Moneketa 3.8.19. Edited and translated by Wilfred Willey 21.4.20.

Several talented female *kɔnɔw* singers made their names in these bands and some became international divas, such as Brulaye’s niece, Coumba Sidibé. Often invited to perform abroad, the *kamalengoni* was a core ingredient in the newfound success of *wassoulou* music. The accompaniment to “N’Na Allata” gives an insight into how *nagamin* products were constructed during Phase I (Example 4.1).



Example 4.1: *Nagamin* product in “N’Na Allata” (My Mother Alata) by Alata Brulaye (tuning D-E-G-A-C *donso* technique 1).⁹

In Phase I, the *kamalengoni* mostly followed the pentatonic tuning conventions of the *donsongoni* and, like its predecessor, it was usually performed solo or with another *kamalengoni*, one *kariyan* (metal scraper) and a vocalist, as heard on Brulaye’s first album. While one *kamalengoni* plays a cyclic phrase, Brulaye usually created his *nagamin* products while not singing. Due to his ability to masterfully incorporate interesting rhythms from hunters’ music and other genres, Brulaye became immensely popular amongst the young.¹⁰ At the time, he was the one who was said to “speak” with the *kamalengoni*:

⁹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HOWx5u5Pks&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19]. The *kamalengoni* on the original recording uses the tuning Db-Eb-Gb-Ab-Cb, but I transcribed Brulaye’s version up a semitone to reduce accidentals.

¹⁰ The repertoire and rhythms of “Sogoninkun,” “Bari,” “Jagewara,” “Didadi,” “Yankadi,” “Nkirin,” “Cou-Cou,” “Sanudugula,” “Nama Foli,” “Yayoroba,” “Sabunuman,” and “Jitigui” exerted enormous influence on *kamalengonifolaw* (Maxwell 2008), particularly in Phase I.

Gonin bila mɔgɔkan kan nba, gonin bila mɔgɔkan kan, tolongɛ kuma tɛ

N'ye kuma da gonin kan sa, i tɛ kuma kɛ ni gonin nin ye?

Eh Allah kuma ka di gonin ma, tolongɛ kuma tɛ kuma ka di goni ma.

Tune the [*kamale*]ngoni to a human's voice, tune it, all jokes aside

I speak with the [*kamale*]ngoni, can't you speak with this [*kamale*]ngoni?

Oh God, let's leave the [*kamale*]ngoni to talk, all jokes aside, let it speak.¹¹

Example 4.1 shows a *nagamin* product mixing damped and open strings, typical of Brulaye's style. In this example, he employs fast plucking by alternating the thumbs of each hand. The contrast in dynamics between the damped and accented notes helps to create a melodic and rhythmic pattern the listener can follow.

In Example 4.2, Brulaye's note repetitions give added emphasis to the syncopated open notes as they are followed by mildly damping notes of the dyads.



Example 4.2: *Nagamin* product in “N’Na Allata” (My Mother Alata)
by Alata Brulaye (tuning D-E-G-A-C *donso* technique 1).

In Example 4.3, the accented damped notes create a percussive timbre, which is typical of Brulaye's style and is often copied by other *wassoulou* performers across phases. In the last quaver of the first bar, the *acciaccatura* on the thinnest

¹¹ From “N’Na Allata” by Alata Brulaye Sidibé. Maïkano, 1983. Transcribed by Aminata Moneketa 3.8.19. Edited and translated by Wilfred Willey 21.4.20.

string, E, is followed by the lowest string of the right rank, tuned to A, and its higher octave on the opposite rank.¹²



Example 4.3: *Nagamin* product in “N’Na Allata” (My Mother Alata)
by Alata Brulaye (tuning D-E-G-A-C *donso* technique 1) (*).

Brulaye and many other players from Phase I were still quite bound to the *donsongoni* (Durán 2018) in creating their *kamalengoni nagamin* products. Brulaye was himself a hunter, farmer, and *kɔnɔ* from the village of Badani and taught his *nagamin* products to aspiring young hunters in the Wasulu region at a time when radio and recordings had very little influence on *kamalengoni* practices (Durán 1995). In this era, the elders forbade the instrument and deemed *kamalengonifɔlaw* as outcasts who were responsible for corrupting the young.¹³ Nevertheless, this disapproval did not stop young men from playing the *kamalengoni* and spreading its popularity to a point where it became essential in local festivals during Phase I. Thanks to Brulaye’s niece, the popular singer Coumba Sidibé, the *kamalengoni* received wider attention in the 1960s and the instrument was played in increasingly diverse contexts. The *wassoulou* style had become well established by the 1970s and began to influence other kinds of West African music, creating opportunities for upcoming *kamalengonifɔlaw* such as Yoro Diallo (Plate 4.2), who became well known in the 1980s.

¹² For the names of the strings on a six-stringed *kamalengoni* see Durán (1995 and 1999).

¹³ *Samakoro* is a pejorative name used by elders who were shocked and upset by the behaviour of unmarried boys and girls at events where the harp was played.



Plate 4.2: Yoro Diallo playing a six-stringed *kamalengoni* at a wedding, Magnambougou District, Bamako, Mali, 7.5.17.

Diallo, also known as Cɛkɔrɔbani (The Little Old Man), was born in Wassada, a village in the Yanfolila circle in the region of Sikasso, southern Mali. The stories of how he and Brulaye played the *kamalendan* prior to the *kamalengoni* continue to circulate among performers. While Brulaye claimed he was the inventor of the harp, Diallo self-praises in his song “Walignouman” as the one to bring mastery and innovation to the *kamalengoni*:

Jeneba, yoro dun be kamalengoni mina lon minna Moussa Doumbia a

Kamalengoni tun ye silaba kelen ye

Mɔɔɔlu n'bo fo ayi yee

Ce sungurun'i te juru nin lame Moussa Doumbia

Sani k'an se kamalengoni ma tigi tun te kamalengoni no

O golonɔla mansa tere jon di fana?

Jeneba yoro konin na hakili nyuman ye.

The day the son of Jeneba [Yoro Diallo] started playing *kamalengoni* with Moussa Doumbia

Kamalengoni playing was standard

This is what I have to tell you, oh people

Young girl, listen to the sound of this string Moussa Doumbia

Before I got to play *kamalengoni* it had no master

Who was the first virtuoso?

The son of Jeneba is the one who brought innovation.¹⁴

During Phase I, Diallo frequently appeared on radio and television and has become extremely popular since recording several albums. Not only is he one of the foremost *kamalengonifɔlaw*, but he is considered to have put his safety at risk in the face of the magical powers of the *donsow* (hunters) and the envy of other *kɔnɔw*. Fearing for his life, Diallo fled to Côte d'Ivoire during Phase II, returning to Mali at a later point to continue his musical journey.

Diallo's lyrics reveal several important aspects of *kɔnɔya* and the *kamalengoni* in relation to the social environment affecting his musical practices. In the song "Walignouman" (Good Deeds) (1999), Diallo cautions against competition and harmful sorcery, while stressing the importance of freedom and change. He appears to break from conservative notions of the elders that knowledge is fixed in specific beliefs or time frames. In the song "Walignouman," Diallo asserts that the knowledge of the young also matters and should be taken seriously.

Ne ye nin sɔrɔ kamalengoni nɔ o sabu kelen Jeneba yɔrɔ de ye

San'an ka ke nɔgɔn nɛnini di, an tɛ baara nin bɛɛ nɛnini Moussa Doumbia

San'an y'a ke nɔgɔn kɔ kuma di, an tɛ baara nin nɛnini mɔgɔlu

¹⁴ From "Walignouman" (Good Deeds) by Yoro Diallo. Seydou Production, 1999. Transcribed by Aminata Moneketa 3.8.19. Edited and translated by Wilfred Willey 21.4.20.

San'an y'a ke Soma kan donnu ye, an ye baara nin bee jɛɛni ba duniya

I mana me dijɛ rɔ cogo, dɔw b'a fɔ k'an m'i yé.

I credit all knowledge I have on the *kamalengoni* to my mother Djeneba.

Instead of being mean to each other, let's learn [about *kamalengoni*] properly Moussa Doumbia

Instead of talking behind each other's backs, let's learn properly, oh people!

Instead of having recourse to sorcery, let's learn properly here and all around the world

Despite the time you've lived in this world,

there will always be people who have more knowledge than you.¹⁵

Diallo's mission differs from that of his elders. He sees himself as the one bringing innovation, which he is committed to disseminating in a message and mission for the young. In the lyrics of "Walignouman," he says before him "there was not much knowledge about" the *kamalengoni*. Many artists today borrow from and are influenced by Diallo's ideas as he is known for his innovative performance techniques, his creation of *nagamin* products, and his exploration of the harp in relation to modern music technologies and other instruments. Many artists today borrow from and are influenced by his ideas. He told me that before he came along, *nagamin* products were mostly constructed using the standard "Siraba Kɛlɛn" (One Big Road) cyclic phrase (Example 4.4) typical of hunters' music, but his own approach is more inventive.¹⁶

¹⁵ "Walignouman" (Good Deeds) by Yoro Diallo. Seydou Production, 1999. Transcribed by Aminata Moneketa 3.8.19. Edited and translated by Wilfred Willey 21.4.20.

¹⁶ Pers. comm., Yoro Diallo, Bamako, Mali, 7.5.17.

Dense ornamentation became the norm during Phase I, which fascinated upcoming players, for whom it was challenging to replicate. In the piece “Walai Solomani Kana Miri” (Don’t Think About It Solomani)²¹ (Example 4.6). The speed at which it is performed requires an ability to pluck with rapidly alternating thumbs.



Example 4.6: *Nagamin* product in “Walai Solomani Kana Miri” (Don’t Think About It Solomani) by Yoro Diallo (tuning Ab-Bb-C-Eb-F *donso* technique 1).²²

In the song “Walignouman” (Good Deeds) (1999), Diallo praises his mother for all the knowledge she passed to him: “*Jeneba ne bi fo wale niuman na dondo*” (Jeneba I praise you for your good deeds) (Example 4.7).



Example 4.7: *Nagamin* product in “Walignouman” (Good Deeds) by Yoro Diallo (tuning A-C-D-F-G *donso* technique 1)²³ (*).

This excerpt comprises open tones without any damped notes and in the accompaniment (not shown in the transcription) the electric bass plays offbeat notes and the keyboard plays the *kamalengoni nagamin* product in unison. In this track, there is no *kariyan* (metal scraper), which helps to create a sound that departs from the *donsongoni*.

²¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nV0lAPFGJ3A> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

²² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIZdUM85zLo> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

²³ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMyWwfErtjo&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

To close this section, it is interesting to compare Brulaye and Diallo. Both were known for the quality and speed of their *nagamin* products and the high density of ornamentation in their playing. They also shared some lyric content; “N’Na Allata” (My Mother Alata) and “Walignouman” (Good Deeds) by Brulaye and Diallo respectively, both refer to their mothers as their source of knowledge. A way that Diallo departed from Brulaye was with his use of modern technologies and his development of new performance techniques. Some of Diallo’s developments became *nagamin* products that were mimicked and appreciated by the young, while singers copied his lyrics.²⁴ Often, Diallo’s lyrics and *nagamin* products have been copied, recorded, and claimed by others as their own. Despite his impact locally, however, Diallo never broke out of West Africa, and he is little known outside of Mali, Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The same could be said about Brulaye, but his *nagamin* products became well-known and mimicked by several players due to Coumba Sidibé’s recordings.

Both Brulaye and Diallo are the embodiment of the Wasulu *kamalengoni* sound in Phase I,²⁵ their *nagamin* products paving the way for a new music-making tradition. While Brulaye is credited with being the first to disseminate the harp amongst the young, Diallo is acclaimed for his musical innovation and for creating an infrastructure for the harp. An entrepreneur as well as a successful performer, he founded the annual Yanfolila Kamalengoni Festival, which was the first of its kind.²⁶ This event has secured the future of the Wasulu *kamalengoni* by contributing to its local and international propagation. There are, of course, numerous other

²⁴ Pers. comm., Lucy Durán, London, UK, 5.2.14.

²⁵ Pers. comm., Yoro Diallo, Bamako, Mali, 7.5.17.

²⁶ Pers. comm., Berthé Abdoul, Bamako, Mali, 25.10.17. Abdoul is the director of the festival and invited me to perform in 2017.

kamalengonifɔlaw in Phase I who were important to the construction of *kɔnɔya* performance practices, but they have not been mentioned in this chapter due to the constraints of space. Nevertheless, Diallo and Brulaye are essential names that stand out for their core contribution to the development of *nagamin* products, the dissemination of the *kamalengoni*, and their role in widening the *kɔnɔya* web.

Iconic musicians in Phase II (1984 to 1999)

Phase II marks the accelerated transformation of the *kamalengoni*'s organology, performance techniques, and international awareness of the harp. In this section, I discuss five *kamalengonifɔlaw* who exerted particular influence on the political, technological, and musical changes during Phase II. Three of the musicians are from Mali: Vieux Kanté, Issa Bagayogo, and Yoro Diallo's student, Kassim Sidibé. The other two are from Burkina Faso: brothers Ousseni and Lassani Coulibaly. A significant difference between these two groups is that the Malians are *kɔnɔw*, and like most of the Burkinabe *kamalengonifɔlaw* with whom I had contact, Ousseni and Lassani Coulibaly are *jeliw* who have absorbed the *kamalengoni* alongside *griot* instruments such as the *jembe*, *bala* and *kora* as a central part of their *jeliya* artistry. The creative approaches of these five musicians serve as models in a new era of *kamalengoni* performance.

During *kɔnɔya* Phase II, Mali and Burkina Faso were involved in a border conflict, but the resulting social and political problems did not stop *kamalengoni* practices from flourishing even in troubled regions. In this period, several converging factors had a significant impact on *kɔnɔya*, including the influx of new technologies and exposure to a wide range of music genres on the radio, on television, and in the cinema. *Kamalengonifɔlaw* increasingly incorporated

organological modifications to the Wasulu instrument, which was disseminated to other areas of West Africa (especially in Burkina Faso in the 1990s). The harp and its players were also able to adapt to outside (non-Malian, non-Burkinabe, and non-African) music styles and genres. This was particularly prevalent in band settings, which were frequently ethnically mixed. Musicians mixed *wassoulou* music with neighbouring styles and international pop music, thus infusing cosmopolitan sounds into their *nagamin* products.

The harp was only played by a few individuals in Burkina Faso during Phase II and it is not very clear who first introduced the harp there,²⁷ particularly in Bobo-Dioulasso.²⁸ It seems that initially there was not a clear distinction between *donsongoni* and *kamalengoni*:

The *donsongoni* was created by hunters and only recently has it been modernized and evolved with eight, ten, and twelve strings, and so forth. Originally there were no more than six strings. The [donso]Ngoni has been known in Burkina Faso for a long time, but adding strings is pretty recent. I would say that it does not exceed fifteen years as it is. When I arrived here there were no *kamalengoni*. [sic] (Dougoutigui Diabaté 2012, as quoted by Castellanos 2019: 66).²⁹

²⁷ Pers. comm., Issouf Coulibaly, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso 24.8.17.

²⁸ Pers. comm., Issouf Coulibaly, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 14.9.17.

²⁹ Original quote: *Le donsongoni a été créé par les chasseurs. C'est maintenant que les gens l'ont modernisé pour le faire évoluer à huit cordes, à dix cordes, douze, etc. Sinon c'était six cordes, pas plus. On est né trouvé ça, c'est six cordes. Le ngoni est connu au Burkina Faso ça fait longtemps, mais le fait d'ajouter des accords (sic) c'est trop récent. Je peux dire que ça dépasse pas quinze ans comme ça. Quand je suis venu ici, il n'y avait pas de kamalengoni.* (Dougoutigui Diabaté, entretien, 2012). Translated by Carmen Weissen, 21.4.20.

Although Diabaté was discussing organological changes of the *kamalengoni* in the above quote, he refers to it as *donsongoni*. The reason for this confusion is explained by Castellanos:

First, because it [the *kamalengoni*] was little known in the city at the time, the instrument was not featured by the people or other musicians. Secondly, since playing an instrument does not necessarily involve knowing its history, it is rare to find musicians truly capable of providing factual details beyond their own experience (ibid.: 66).³⁰

When in Bobo-Dioulasso, I had a chance to witness some local organological modifications and playing influences, which confirmed Castellanos's observations. I visited Manambiri Coulibaly, a Phase-I musician who taught his sons Oussen, Souleymane, and Lassina Coulibaly (Phase II) and grandson Issouf Coulibaly (now a Phase-IV musician) to play the *kamalengoni*. As I arrive:

Everyone laughs because the dog seems not to like me. It barks loudly and threatens to bite me while I organise my equipment to record Issouf Coulibaly outside the house, where the light is better than indoors. Issouf's grandfather, Manambiri Coulibaly, arrives and Issouf introduces him as his teacher. I ask Issouf if he would mind playing a piece with his grandfather. The old man fetches his *kamalengoni*, which resembles a *kora* in its construction. It is the same as Issouf's harp but is bigger [Plate 4.3]. To play alongside his grandfather, Issouf uses another *kamalengoni* which he calls "*kamalengoni* bass" as it is tuned lower. It is similar to Malian *kamalengoniw* but it is even larger

³⁰ *Premièrement, du fait qu'il était peu connu dans la ville à l'époque, l'instrument n'a pas été mis en valeur, ni par les gens, ni par d'autres musiciens. Secondement, vu que jouer d'un instrument n'implique pas forcément la connaissance de son histoire, il est rare de trouver des musiciens véritablement capables de donner des détails factuels au-delà de leur propre expérience.* Translated by Carmen Weissen, 21.4.20.

[Plate 4.4]. He supports the harp on the floor between his legs and tilts it to one side in the *donso* position. His grandfather also places his harp on the floor between his legs but holds it in a vertical and symmetrical position and tilts it slightly away from him into the *kora* position. Their pentatonic tuning differs from the *kamalengoni* music I had been listening to in Mali. Issouf and Manambiri initiate a cyclic phrase and take turns to improvise.³¹

Manambiri Coulibaly passed on a different way of supporting the instrument to his children, grandson, and others who studied with him. Instead of using the floor, belly, straps and/or knees to hold the harp, he wraps his legs around the resonator to hold the instrument in place, which frees up both hands. However, this supporting technique does not seem to have caught on in Burkina Faso but was adopted by the blind Malian Phase-II superstar Noumousa Soumauro Kanté (1974 - 2005), also known as Vieux Kanté (Plate 4.5). I do not know of a connection between Manambiri Coulibaly and Kanté, which does not preclude one. It is also possible that the two musicians developed this unusual supporting technique independently.

Vieux Kanté is widely “considered to be the best *kamalengonifola* that Mali has ever known”³² and is believed to be instrumental in the international breakthrough of the harp.³³ Through listening to the radio, Kanté interpreted foreign music and introduced diverse elements into his style. He also absorbed many influences during his travels abroad in the early period of the instrument. The

³¹ See DVD 4.1.

³² Frank Van Herk, interview, 18.11.97. See <https://www.volkskrant.nl/mensen/kante-kan-simpel-visdraad-laten-praten-enzingen~b9f5ceba/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F> [Accessed: 5.7.19].

³³ Pers. comm., Hans Taal, email, 2.4.18. Taal played the role of godfather in helping Vieux Kanté build a network in Mali and abroad.



Plate 4.3: Issouf Coulibaly's sixteen-stringed *kamalengoni*,
Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 21.8.17.



Plate 4.4: Manambiri Coulibaly (centre) playing a *kora*-like twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* with
Issouf Coulibaly (right), playing a *donsongoni*-like eight-stringed *kamalengoni*,
Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 21.8.17.



Plate 4.5: A twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* played by Vieux Kanté, Bamako, Mali, 3.18.05. Photograph courtesy of Banning Eyre.³⁴

international success of individual players is held in high esteem by *kamalengonifɔlaw* as they are considered to have opened doors for the whole *kɔɔya* web; thus, global recognition attracts explicit praise from African peers, as in the following song “Kɔɔ” (Bird) by Vieux Kanté:³⁵

I yala, i yalala i yala kɔɔw bi yala (x 3)

I yeeee, N'ko ne be ngana jɔn ma?

Ne mana fɔ kɔɔw ye jɔn ye, Salifou Keita ye kɔɔw dɔ ye

Ne mana fɔ kɔɔw ye jɔn ye, Mori Kanté ye kɔɔw dɔ ye

Ne mana fɔ kɔɔw ye jɔn ye, Alpha Blondy ye kɔɔw dɔ ye

Ne mana fɔ kɔɔw ye jɔn ye, Mori Djeli ye kɔɔw dɔ ye

I yala, i yalala i yala kɔɔw ye jɔn ye (x 2)

³⁴ Pers., comm., Banning Eyre, email, 18.3.18.

³⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdV40iAS9QQ&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

Ne mana fɔ kɔnɔw ye jɔn ye, Kabajan ye kɔnɔw dɔ ye
Ne mana fɔ kɔnɔw ye jɔn ye, Vieux Kanté ye kɔnɔw dɔ ye.

Wander, you wandered, modern birds wander
Who am I calling out among the heroes?
If I ask who the birds are, Salifou Keïta is one of them
If I ask who the birds are, Mori Kanté is one of them
If I ask who the birds are, Alpha Blondy is one of them
If I ask who the birds are, Mori Djeli is one of them
Wander, you wandered, birds wander
If I ask who the birds are, Kabadjan is one of them
If I ask who the birds are, Vieux Kanté is one of them.

Although he did not travel internationally much, he nevertheless praised himself:

“*Ne mana fɔ kɔnɔw ye jɔn ye, Vieux Kanté ye kɔnɔw dɔ ye*” (When I say birds (*kɔnɔ*) are travelling, I mean Vieux Kanté).

During his short life, Kanté developed an array of unique performance techniques to play chromatically on a pentatonic harp, including bending strings and using harmonics. He instigated the bending technique by applying a precise amount of pressure to raise the pitch of a string to produce what later became known as a “jazz note.”³⁶ Kanté also used this technique to mimic speech.³⁷ I first learned the harmonic effect technique in Mali from Daouda Coulibaly³⁸ (14.7.15) and I

³⁶ Jazz notes are discussed further in Chapter Five.

³⁷ See, for example, Kanté using the harp to speak names at 3.46’ at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-S7qa1rTcM&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 13.8.19].

³⁸ No relation to Manambiri, Ousseni, Souleymane, Lassina or Issouf Coulibaly.

developed it further with one of Kanté’s most successful students, Abou Diarra, who I met in Paris in March 2019.³⁹

Kanté’s legacy of *nagamin* products is captured in “Kɔnɔ” (Bird) (Example 4.8), which is crafted using harmonics.⁴⁰ By using his legs to hold the instrument in place (as described above), Kanté’s hands were free to pluck each string individually while damping them to produce harmonics. In both *kora* and *donso* positions, this way of holding the instrument also allowed him to strike multiple strings simultaneously in both ranks, which enabled him to mimic a guitar (bars 2 and 4). “Sans Commentaire” (No Comment) (Example 4.9) also illustrates Kanté’s dense use of harmonics; the final B in this excerpt can only be produced by using a harmonic or the bending technique.



Example 4.8: *Nagamin* product in “Kɔnɔ” (Bird)
by Vieux Kanté (tuning A-C-D-E-G *kora* technique 1) (*).



Example 4.9: *Nagamin* product in “Sans Commentaire” (No Comment)
by Vieux Kanté (tuning A-C-D-E-G *kora* technique 1).⁴¹

³⁹ See DVD 4.2 of Abou Diarra demonstrating how to do the harmonic effects on the *kamalengoni*.

⁴⁰ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhaWmfXeDNU&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 13.8.19].

⁴¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocqW5fJX4U&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

Another innovation in Kanté’s playing was his technique of *tremolo portamento* (detailed in Chapter Three), which is produced by plucking the string(s) with the right hand while rubbing the same string with the palm or fingers of the left hand. Kanté executes this technique at 4’56 in “Κῶνος” (Example 4.10).



Example 4.10: *Nagamin* product in “Κῶνος” (Bird)
by Vieux Kanté (tuning A-C-D-E-G *kora* technique 1).

Kanté also used the *tremolo* technique without *portamento* (Example 4.11), although in this particular instance he is not simultaneously plucking any other strings as he often does.



Example 4.11: *Nagamin* product in “Sans Commentaire” (No Comment)
by Vieux Kanté (tuning A-C-D-E-G *kora* technique 1).

One of the most idiosyncratic features of Kanté’s playing is the squeaking effect, which he produced by spitting some saliva onto his hand and agitating it along the string. He employed this effect on almost every note in Example 4.12.⁴² Using this technique, Kanté was able to imitate the sound of a human or animal howling. Such

⁴² This *kamalengoni* effect resembles that of the Brazilian *cuíca* friction drum. Its squeaking is produced from inside the drum by rubbing a damp cloth along a thin wooden stick. A further example of the *cuíca* can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrwZdd2_bPk&frags=pl%2Cwn [Accessed: 1.8.19]. For a comparison of the *cuíca* and *kamalengoni*, see Banning Eyre at <https://chicagoreader.com/blogs/discovering-malian-kamale-ngoni-virtuoso-vieux-kante/> [Accessed 25.11.16].

innovative techniques made him a force in transforming the *kamalengoni*'s capabilities during Phase II.



Example 4.12: *Nagamin* product in “Sans Commentaire” (No Comment) by Vieux Kanté (tuning A-C-D-E-G *kora* technique 1) (*).

Beyond transforming the way the instrument was played, Kanté also made structural modifications to the instrument. He is credited as being the first to substitute the gourd resonator with a metal cooking pot, an innovation which may have originally been a strategy to manage his visual impairment. Hans Taal, the owner of the Bamako hotel where Kanté used to perform, explained that after Kanté ruined a *kamalengoni* by accidentally sitting on it, his uncle decided to make another one using an iron cooking pot.⁴³ Kanté later modified his metal resonator prototype by increasing the number of strings. When only thirteen years old, he added two strings to the standard six and continued to add strings over the decade that followed. According to *kamalengonifɔla* Daouda Coulibaly, by 2000, he had created the first twelve-stringed *kamalengoni*.⁴⁴

One of the main distinctions of Kanté's *nagamin* products is the high level of technical competence demanded. His precision and versatile way of playing the *kamalengoni* continue to excite *kamalengonifɔlaw*, who understand the technical challenges involved. Hearing Kanté perform led me to question the difference

⁴³ Pers. comm., Hans Taal, email, 20.3.18.

⁴⁴ Pers. comm., Daouda Coulibaly, Bamako, Mali, 15.8.15.

between playing and “speaking” the *kamalengoni*.⁴⁵ Kanté once stated, “my [*kamale*]ngoni can say more words than my voice.”⁴⁶ His legacy and popularity are so significant that in Bamako after he died in 2005, some musicians would call themselves Vieux Kanté as a strategy to emerge from the shadows while paying respect to this master.⁴⁷ The *jagamin* product examples I have presented are taken from his only published recording called *The Young Man’s Harp* (2016), which was followed by a sudden fatal illness when he was only 31. In his short lifetime, Kanté collaborated with national and international artists such as Dutch musicians Dick de Graaf, Jan Kuiper, Hans Dulfer, and the Amsterdam-based group Fra Sound. He maintained, “anyone who can play all Malian music can play all music”⁴⁸ because of its richness and advanced performance techniques.

Like Yoro Diallo and Alata Brulaye, Vieux Kanté’s mission was to carefully craft *jagamin* products to enrich the body of knowledge needed to speak the *kamalengoni*. From all accounts, he was an outward-looking and creative musician. He prophetically said:

There are too few internationally oriented musicians there (Mali). They don’t understand music from other cultures, and to be able to love something you first have to

⁴⁵ The idea of the instrument being an extension of the body and being able to talk with it is something that resonates with my experience as a Brazilian musician.

⁴⁶ Frank Van Herk, interview, 18.11.97. See <https://www.volkskrant.nl/mensen/kante-kan-simpel-visedraad-laten-praten-enzingen~b9f5ceba/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F> [Accessed: 5.7.19].

⁴⁷ Pers. comm., Daouda Coulibaly, Bamako, Mali, 13.8.15. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjobCMPDR48> [Accessed: 15.1.17].

⁴⁸ Frank Van Herk, interview, 18.11.97. See <https://www.volkskrant.nl/mensen/kante-kan-simpel-visedraad-laten-praten-enzingen~b9f5ceba/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F> [Accessed: 5.7.19].

understand it. That is not so difficult, if musicians are good, they can always play together. In music, there are no limits.⁴⁹

Another musician to change the trajectory of the *kamalengoni* was Issa Bagayogo (also known as Techno Issa) (Plate 4.6). Had Bagayogo followed his family's line, he would have been a fisherman or blacksmith, but he showed talent on the *kamalengoni* as a boy. He started releasing recordings in the 1990s but after several failed recording projects he returned to the countryside, only to return to Bamako some time later.

The custom-made way of constructing his *nagamin* products becomes more evident in Bagayogo's performance appearances outside Mali. The pieces "Tounga" (Immigration) and "Gnangran" (Music for Heroes), which Bagayogo performed in 2003 at the Roots and Routes Festival der Weltmusik in Germany, are good examples of how he fuses the *kamalengoni* with electronic beats.⁵⁰ Example 4.13 is from the track "Kouloun" (A Pirogue/Canoe) (at 0'30s) and gives a glimpse into the kinds of *nagamin* products Bagayogo used in combination with electronic beats customised for the dance floor.⁵¹ His six-stringed *kamalengoni* is tuned to a pentatonic scale (Bb-C-D-F-G) and evokes melodic and rhythmic choices closer to both Brulaye and Diallo than Vieux Kanté. This particular example features the crossing technique, where the thumb of the right hand plays heavily damped notes, which creates an interesting effect when combined with the electronic beats.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3ACUcMXFjo> [Accessed: 20.4.22].

⁵¹ See "Kouloun" by Issa Bagayogo at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59F7Ic9UcZM> [Accessed: 14.7.22].



Plate 4.6: Six-stringed *kamalengoni* played by Issa Bagayogo, Germany, 21.3.09. Photograph by Lothar Potnek.⁵²



Example 4.13: *Nagamin* product in “Kouloun” (A Pirogue/Canoe) by Issa Bagayogo (tuning Bb-C-D-F-G *donso* technique 1) (*).

When listening to Issa Bagayogo’s other pieces, his singing appears to be more central to the way he constructs his *nagamin* products. Although it became more common for *kamalengonifɔlaw* to sing in Phase II, Vieux Kanté’s instrumental approach was nevertheless considered to be innovative. However, Bagayogo was also introducing previously unheard innovations despite being fearful of failing again. His album *Sya* (Heritage) (1998) sold 15,000 copies within a year and he was awarded “Malian Song’s Brightest New Hope.” This was followed by the album

⁵² See <http://jazz-live-foto.com/foto-galerie/bagayogo-issa/> [Accessed: 20.4.20].

Timbuktu, which brought a fresh sound incorporating rock, funk, and other cosmopolitan sounds. It was this release that earned Bagayogo international recognition.⁵³ It did not take long for other *kamalengoni* followers to follow Bagayogo's innovations, incorporating them into their performances across Mali and beyond.⁵⁴

Vieux Kanté and Issa Bagayogo's adaptations and inventions also inspired several artists from diverse music genres and ethnic groups to take up the *kamalengoni* as an instrument that harnessed change. For example, *jembe* player Soungalo Coulibaly emigrated from Mali to the city of Bouake in Côte d'Ivoire,⁵⁵ where he created a new genre called *flez* music,⁵⁶ which also incorporated the *kamalengoni*.⁵⁷ During Phase II, *jeliw* from a variety of ethnic groups in Burkina Faso started to use *kamalengoni* as an essential instrument to initiate the musical education of young people (Castellanos 2013), which helped to disseminate knowledge about the instrument as the *kamalengoni* was still not well known in Bobo-Dioulasso during Phase II.⁵⁸ According to my respondents, *jeliw* playing *kamalengoni* in Mali was not as common as in Burkina Faso. It was due to the *wassoulou* music boom of the 1970s that the *kamalengoni* rose in popularity across Mali and beyond. It was in Burkina Faso that *jeliw* were inclined to appropriate the *kamalengoni*. As well as Soungalo Coulibaly's *flez* music in Burkina Faso, *zikiri* and

⁵³ See <https://www.sixdegreesrecords.com/issa-bagayogo/> [Accessed: 20.4.20] for a fuller biography.

⁵⁴ Pers. comm., Adama Yalomba, Bamako, Mali, 11.7.17.

⁵⁵ Bouake is a melting pot of exchange for Guinean, Burkinabe, and Ivorian musicians.

⁵⁶ See <http://djembefola.com/artists/soungalo-coulibaly> [Accessed: 7.10.16].

⁵⁷ *Flez* music fuses Jula, Bobo, Bambara and Wasulu musical traditions. The instrumentation of *flez* music typically incorporates *kamalengoni*, *jembe*, *dundun* (a cylindrical drum), *tamani* (talking drum), acoustic guitar, *karinyan* (metal scraper), and *djidunun* (percussion comprising a downturned gourd inside a larger gourd filled with water).

⁵⁸ Pers. comm., Alladari Dembélé, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 6.11.17.

manden music began to influence each other to create new styles.⁵⁹ Each of these genres created new sounds combining musical instruments that were not traditionally played together, such as pentatonic and heptatonic *balas* (xylophones), which previously had no relationship to the *kamalengoni* as they were on distinct cultural axes.

In Bobo-Dioulasso, the groups Les Frères Coulibaly, Farafina, and the percussionist Adama Dramé and his band became influential (Castellanos 2013). The founders of Les Frères Coulibaly (The Brothers Coulibaly) are the siblings Ousseni, Lassina (Plate 4.7), and Souleymane Coulibaly, who belong to a *jeli* family of the Bwaba ethnic group. My respondent Issouf Coulibaly (Plate 4.8) (mentioned earlier in this chapter) is their nephew. The three brothers could play the *kamalengoni*⁶⁰ along with a range of *jeli* instruments, such as the *jembe*, *bala* and *dundun*. Ousseni and Lassina Coulibaly invented a range of new possibilities as they adapted the *kamalengoni* to fit the musical and cultural elements of their band. Their *kamalengoni* playing was particularly influenced by the *jeli* pentatonic *bala* and *kora*, along with various percussion instruments played by *jeliw*.

Issouf Coulibaly was born in the 1990s, the decade the *kamalengoni* appears to have arrived in Burkina Faso. He followed in the footsteps of his uncles by playing the *jembe*, *bala* and *kamalengoni*. In my early encounter with Issouf playing alongside his grandfather in their house, I later realized that they had played their version of the instrumental piece called “Bonien” (Big Respect), which had been

⁵⁹ *Zikiri* is a new Islamic pop music genre that can incorporate the *kamalengoni*, while *manden* music refers to styles played throughout the Mandé world.

⁶⁰ Pers. comm., Issouf Coulibaly in Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 21.8.17.

Ousséni et Lassina COULIBALY



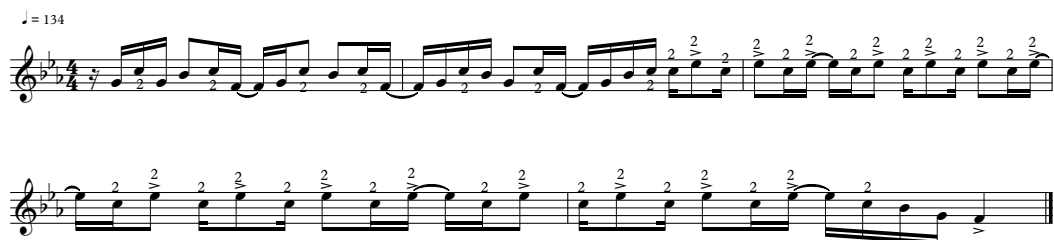
MUSIQUES ET CHANTS DU BURKINA FASO

Plate 4.7: Two gourd-resonated sixteen-stringed, *kora*-style *kamalengoniw* played by Lassina (left) and Ousseni Coulibaly (right), Bobo-Dioulasso, 1989. Photographer unknown.



Plate 4.8: A sixteen-stringed, *kora*-style *kamalengoni* held by Issouf Coulibaly at his house in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 21.8.17.

recorded by Les Frères Coulibaly with two *kamalengoniw* on the album *Anka Dia* (1992). Seeing them play this piece gave me insight into the approaches Ousseni, Lassina, and Souleymane Coulibaly adopted on the *kamalengoni*. I noticed the way their index fingers and thumbs alternated on the same string, and how they used syncopated rhythmic patterns (Example 4.14). The highest notes were often accentuated and created a hemiola.



Example 4.14: *Nagamin* product in Burkina Denou We (Children of Burkina) by Les Frères Coulibaly (tuning Bb-C-Eb-F-G *kora* technique 1).⁶¹

⁶¹ *Burkina Denou We* by Farafina (Realworld 1993).

Manambiri Coulibaly referred to his *kamalengoni* as a “*ngoni kora*”; Ousseni and Lassina Coulibaly were listed as playing the “N’goni (Cora)” on the credits of their cassette (Plate 4.9). The melodic and rhythmic interlocking of the *kamalengoni* is linked to the pentatonic *bala* of their family (highlighted on the cassette cover). While in Burkina Faso, I was able to closely examine the timbres and performance techniques of the Bwaba, which had influenced the *kamalengoni* sound in Bobo-Dioulasso (Castellanos 2013). The nuances of the Burkinabe-style *kamalengoni* can also be heard on the album *Anka Dia: Musique et Chants du Burkina Faso* by Les Frères Coulibaly and Issouf Coulibaly’s contemporary band Djembekan.⁶²

The various *jeli* influences become evident when listening closely to how their cyclic phrases and embellishments borrow from the *bala* rather than the *donsongoni*.⁶³ The track “Burkina Denou We” (Children of Burkina) exemplifies how their *jagamin* products provide polyrhythmic and interlocking lines with accentuated hemiolas, a device often found on the pentatonic *bala* (Bb-C-Eb-F-G) and percussion instruments such as the *jembe*.⁶⁴ In terms of performance techniques, the *kamalengoni* requires the use of both index fingers alternating rapidly. Damped notes are avoided, allowing the harp to ring over the accompanying *bala*. Compared to the punchier sound of the heavily damped Malian *kamalengoni* style, the ringing sound of the Burkinabe aesthetic is attributable to the influence of the more sustained notes of the *kora*. Using the same pentatonic scale (Bb-C-Eb-F-G) and two

⁶² Pers. comm., Issouf Coulibaly, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso 21.8.17.

⁶³ Pers. comm., Zoumana Diawara, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso 15.9.17.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwQ3o44bmCg&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

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**Ousséni et Lassina
 COULIBALY**
**MUSIQUES ET CHANTS
 DU BURKINA FASO**

FACE : A
 1. BABA OUE "Allez dire à mon père....." * 5'33
 2. BURKINA DENOY YO "Burkinabé, levez-vous !" * 6'05
 3. DJAMANA BURKINA FASO "Peuple du Burkina Faso" * 5'57
 4. DEMBADON "Danse de baptême" Traditionnel 5'04
FACE : B
 1. WOLOFOUDON "Danse Wolof" Traditionnel 5'39
 2. DJELI DON "Danse des griots" Traditionnel 3'57
 3. A TO "Laisse tomber tes trucs bizarres" * 5'29
 4. LA MOGO YA "On est venu pour vous réjouir" Traditionnel 7'19
 * compositions de Ousséni et Lassina Coulibaly
INSTRUMENTS : Djembé, Balafon, Doudoumba, Lounga Bara, Maracas
 N'goni (Cora)

Enregistré le 19 mai 1989 au STUDIO 11 de la Maison de la Radio, Genève

Plate 4.9: Track list of *Musiques et Chants du Burkina Faso* (1989).

Photographer unknown.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ See <https://www.discogs.com/release/14779581-Ousséni-Et-Lassina-Coulibaly-Musiques-Et-Chants-Du-Burkina-Faso/image/SW1hZ2U6NDQ0NDgwNjY=> [Accessed: 21.4.20].

kamalengoniw on “Bonien” (Big Respect), the approach of Issouf Coulibaly’s uncle to the creation of *nagamin* products uses open tones in a similar fashion to that found in Example 4.15.⁶⁶ The register of one *kamalengoni* is lower than the other and the pentatonic scale differs from the tempered Western pentatonic scale where “the tones appear to be about 220 cents, having its minor thirds around 270.”⁶⁷



Example 4.15: *Nagamin* product in “Bonien” (Big Respect) by Les Frères Coulibaly (tuning Bb-C-Eb-F-G *kora* technique 1)⁶⁸ (*).

When I tried to play Issouf Coulibaly’s *kamalengoni*, I discovered that the tuning was arranged in a mirrored way, so everything that would have been done in Mali using the right hand is, instead, played with the left hand. I also noticed other major differences in terms of sound, performance techniques, and organology between Burkinabe and Malian *kamalengoniw*. Burkinabe performers often use *kora* technique 1, keeping their hands attached to the respective ranks analogously to *kora* players. Open tones dominate the texture and have longer note values than damped notes (as shown in Examples 4.14 and 4.15). The use of the cross-rank technique is also avoided, which may be because the strings are closer together, more like the *kora* string spacing. The more widely spaced strings of the Malian *kamalengoni*

⁶⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M4KbwM0Cas&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

⁶⁷ I am grateful to my examiner, Trevor Wiggins, for pointing this out.

⁶⁸ *Bonien* by Farafina (Real World 1993).

enable musicians to easily insert their fingers between strings to pluck a string on the opposite rank. The absence of the heavily accented and damped strings (common in Malian *kamalengoni*) provides a much softer tone in Burkinabe *nagamin* products.

The ensemble Les Frères Coulibaly is not only admired and respected for their musical achievements but they are celebrated for performing on several international stages. They helped to transform former Burkinabe traditions and the group became a model for change by influencing others with the Bwaba *bala* style of playing the harp.⁶⁹ As a result, other *jeliw* in Bobo-Dioulasso followed the same path.⁷⁰ The scope of my research did not allow me to examine, in depth, whether *jeliw* from other areas of Burkina Faso and beyond were mimicking this particular playing style.

Around the same time in Mali, one of Yoro Diallo's apprentices, Kassim Sidibé, started to expand his networks, even joining Oumou Sangaré's band in the 1980s (Plate 4.10), with whom he recorded extensively, along with other well-known Malian artists. Only much later did he record his first solo album, called *Sabou* (Facilitator or Guardian Angel) (2007) (Plate 4.11). Sidibé's *nagamin* products became well known and were copied by many other players, as Oumou Sangaré's songs were immensely popular among youngsters from all corners of West Africa and beyond.⁷¹ Thanks to Oumou Sangaré, Sidibé's *nagamin* products were added to the *kamalengoni* canon in

⁶⁹ Bwaba *bala* music uses a pentatonic tuning different from that of the Wasulu *kamalengoni*. Each *bala* of the Senufo, Lobi, Siamou, Bwaba, Bobo, Sambla ethnic groups has its particular characteristics, tuning, local repertoires, and specific styles of playing (Castellanos 2013).

⁷⁰ Pers. comm., Issouf Coulibaly, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 21.8.17.

⁷¹ Pers. comm., Many Dakoua, Bamako, Mali 5.7.17.



Plate 4.10: Kassim Sidibé, Foune Diarra (left), and Alhassane Sissoko, BlaBla Bar, Bamako, Mali. 22.6.15. Photographer Alex Duval Smith.⁷²



Plate 4.11: Cassette cover of Kassim Sidibé's first album.

Photographer unknown.⁷³

⁷² See <https://twitter.com/alexduvalsmith/status/612953190124941312> [Accessed: 21.4.20].

⁷³ See <https://co.napster.com/artist/kassim-sidibe/album/sabou> [Accessed: 15.8.19].

Phase II. Performing alongside (mostly female) popular singers is a common strategy to obtain success as a *kamalengonifɔla* (as with Alata Brulaye’s opportunity to accompany his niece, Coumba Sidibé, who was a star of Phase I).

Kassim Sidibé is considered to be a *kamalengoni* hero as his substantial use of ornamentation is widely admired by *kamalengonifɔlaw*. In “Fanta Ni Mone” (A Poor Man’s Struggle) (Example 4.16), almost all the notes are embellished as rapid and punchy passing notes.⁷⁴



Example 4.16: *Nagamin* product in “Fanta Ni Mone” (Poor Man’s Struggle)

by Kassim Sidibé (tuning A-C-D-E-G *donso* technique 1).⁷⁵

Many Malian *kamalengonifɔlaw* today continue to mimic the *nagamin* product in “Fanta Ni Mone.” The originality of a *nagamin* product relies both on the one who created it and the player who transforms it. In Kassim Sidibé’s case, his originality lies in his precision and in his unique way of performing. On this track, the arrangement of instruments is performed as a call and response with the harp.

⁷⁴ Pers. comm., Kassim Diallo, Bamako, Mali, 15.4.17.

⁷⁵ From Oumou Sangaré’s album *Denw* (Children) (1996). See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLJYpHO4LZg> [Accessed: 5.4.21].

The *kamalengoni* stands out against the brass, wind, and string instruments (tenor saxophone, trombone, trumpet, flute, and violin). However, the brass and wind instruments do not include ornamentations as passing notes, as in Kassim’s performance. The intervals between notes and the speed at which they must be executed may offer challenges to the brass and wind instruments. Sidibé’s *nagamin* products show us that the *kamalengoni* is a sophisticated, modern, and adaptable musical instrument, which can absorb ideas from other instruments as it did with the *ndan*, *donsongoni*, and *bala*. At the same time, the *kamalengoni* enriches, influences, and challenges the performance techniques and developments of other musical instruments, as demonstrated, for instance, by how Kassim Sidibé’s *nagamin* products were mimicked by the wind and brass instruments in the arrangement. The progressive character of the *kamalengoni* is largely attributable to the endless striving of its musicians to overcome the technical limitations of their instrument.

Like other *kamalengoniflaw*, Kassim Sidibé’s progressive approach to the construction of *nagamin* products took place in Phase II during a wave of social and political transformation. In the song “Fanta ni Mone” (A Poor Man Struggles), Kassim Sidibé’s *nagamin* products symbolise and embody a particularly nostalgic moment of social struggle. It was also a moment of great international dissemination and consumption of *wassoulou* music and a growing community of *kamalengoniflaw*:

Ko Paris ville janjo diyara Sangaréla, ha banna i ni wula

Ko Alemaji janjo diyara kɔnɔnin na, banna

Ko Lɔnduru kunben diyara kɔnɔnin na, ha banna i ni wula

Ameriki janjo diyara Sangaréla jɔn bee n’i dakan

Ko Pays-Bas kunben diyara kɔnɔnin na

Ihii fama Ala

Ma ko kelen dan duniya kuma te ke fukari nena, hé banna.

Good afternoon! The little songbird has received a massive welcome

The tours in Paris have been a huge success

The German tours have been a huge success

The welcome in London for the little songbird has been massive, ah blessed one

The American tours have been a success, it is destiny

The Dutch tours were also a success

Praise to God!

Cowards do not take part in serious discussions.⁷⁶

Interpreting the above song in a Brazilian cultural context, it was performed at a time when international touring brought financial and social success, and where those who were “brave” and able to do extraordinary things could walk amongst the *malandros*. The celebration of Oumou Sangaré’s achievements also reflected upon the musicians working with her (such as *kamalengonifɔla* Kassim Sidibé); walking alongside *malandros* has the capacity to elevate backing musicians to the *malandro* status. While the national and international success of the *kamalengonifɔlaw* accompanying the biggest stars grew exponentially during Phase II, the pressure on them to invent attractive *nagamin* products that are capable of communicating to audiences beyond the African continent increased the competition between players. An adjustment of objectives, whereby *nagamin* products were crafted to exert a

⁷⁶ “Fanta ni Mone” (A Poor Man Suffers) by Oumou Sangaré. Mali K7 SA, 1996. Translated by Wilfred Willey 21.4.20. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yfmaI3J3hg&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

lasting influence on the tradition, enabled *kamalengonifɔlaw* to “take part in serious discussions.”

Conclusion

By determining my own four distinct phases in the evolution of the *kamalengoni* I have concluded that it was an instrument used primarily to accompany singers during Phase I, at which time it was mostly influenced by Wasulu hunters’ music. That started to change in Phase II, when musicians began to further develop their performance techniques and record instrumental pieces, which had already been established by players of better known *jeli* musical instruments, such as the *jelingoni*, *bala* and *kora*.

During Phase II, modification of the organology of the *kamalengoni* was instigated by both Malian and Burkinabe *kamalengonifɔlaw*. *Jeliw* in Burkina Faso added handles, skin, and additional strings, and they instigated performance techniques that mimic the *kora*. Two kinds of *kamalengoniw* were established; one that looks, sounds, and is played like the *donsongoni* (with minor modifications) and the other in Burkina Faso, that looks, sounds, and is played like the *kora*. Both *kora* and *donso* techniques 1 and 2 were employed, allowing the players to explore different performance techniques. These included striking the rank of strings (similarly to a guitar) and the use of *tremolo*, *portamento*, *tremolo/portamento* bending, and squeaking techniques.

Although some of my respondents confirmed that late in Phase II, *jeliw* in Mali were also using the *kamalengoni* to educate young people in musicianship, others told me that this was not the case in Mali due to the strong rivalry based on financial competition between *kɔnɔw* and *jeliw*. The contact between Burkinabe and

Malian *kamalengonifɔlaw* appears to have been minimal during Phase II.

Recordings, festival performances, and national television appearances were the prevailing avenues for musical exchange and dissemination. Also in Phase II, Western instruments, such as keyboards and electric guitars, were routinely incorporated into *kamalengoni* performances, while global popular music genres disseminated through television and radio influenced the way *kamalengonifɔlaw* created and delivered their *jagamin* products. Not only were extended performance techniques employed to play the *kamalengoni*, but they were incorporated into the performance practices and education of *jeliw* from Burkina Faso playing the *kora*, *bala*, and most particularly those playing percussion.

The treatment of the *kamalengoni* sounds using contemporary technologies such as guitar pedals and studio effects, and the incorporation of drum programming moved the instrument into the pop realm. Artists such as Salif Keïta and Oumou Sangaré helped to popularise the instrument inside and outside of Africa. As the popularity of the *kamalengoni* escalated, a fresh wave of new iconic players appeared. They were looking back to Phases I and II for models to build on and outward for new ideas. The innovation of this new wave of musicians who were orientated towards popular music saw the birth of *kɔnɔya* Phase III.

Chapter Five

Iconic Musicians and their *Nagamin* Products in Phases III and IV

As the *kamalengoni* pushed into the twentieth century with Phases III and IV, the instrument shed its limitations to a point where there was virtually no repertoire its musicians could not approach. The number of strings (*juruw*) increased dramatically to as many as eighteen for some performers, while increased online exchange and the emigration of African *kamalengonifɔlaw* expanded the *kɔnyɔ* web radically, inviting the influence of non-African music styles. As Durán said of this period:

[T]he *kamalengoni* now moved beyond the world of *wassoulou* music, and its playing technique has become virtuosic; some players have added up to [more than] four extra strings and the use of machine heads for tuning is now widely adopted (Durán 2007: 6).

This chapter examines the expanding and inventive ways of approaching the playing and making of the *kamalengoni* in its later phases, and how these stimulated additional performance techniques and “*nagamin* products,” recognisable musical ideas that can be an idiomatic motif, phrase, melody, or a novel performance technique. *Nagamin* products act as sonic signatures, which can usually be attributed to an individual or a lineage of *kamalengonifɔlaw*. Inventions during Phases III and IV were informed by the previous phases but were increasingly targeted at international consumers and an increasing contingent of non-African players and

fans. As *kamalengonifɔlaw* are keen to interact with foreign musicians, I was invited to perform live and in the studio with some respondents. This gave me close access to some significant musicians, allowing me to identify their performance techniques, analyse particular musical and cultural nuances, and to witness their processes of creating, transmitting, and transforming *nagamin* products to a refined level.

To examine the quality of technical excellence and the originality of *nagamin* products during this period, I return to the Afro-Brazilian concepts of “exceptional performative strategies” and the *malandro* (a person who has successfully executed these exceptional performance strategies). The popular Brazilian phrase “*malandro é malandro*” (winners are winners) in Brazil carries a related meaning to the Bamanankan saying, “*bε tε welle dankɔrɔba ye*” (not everyone can be called a great man).¹ The characteristics expected and associated with the *malandro* in the domain of music communicate musicianship excellence, a particular brand of moral code, and the adoption of certain behaviours.² The *malandro* not only knows what he wants but he must have the courage to overcome problems by blending charisma with unusual creative strategies to obtain his goals. The achievements of the *malandro* or *dankɔrɔba* are often associated with a risk-taking attitude.

Alongside the expanding *kamalengoni* repertoire, array of performance techniques, and organological modifications, Phase III also saw the emergence of the

¹ Pers. comm., Musbaba Traoré, WhatsApp, 10.4.17. The term *dankɔrɔba* is also adopted for social contexts beyond music. See Chapters One and Two for the historical and social relevance of the terms *dankɔrɔba* and *malandro* in their respective cultural contexts.

² Brazilian musicians refer to these exceptional performance strategies as “acts of *malandragem*,” a cultural concept invoking performance excellence that attracts attention, admiration, and desire. *Malandragens* can be created, copied, and employed by others, but not everyone will be recognized as a *malandro*.

first known women to play this instrument, which I describe before the section in this chapter focussed on Phase IV.

Iconic musicians in Phase III (2000 to 2009)

While television and radio were of primary importance in the previous phases, *kamalengonifɔlaw* became increasingly engaged with the Internet in Phase III, which enabled them to substantially expand the international networks that began to form in Phase II. In terms of the instrument, *kamalengoniw* with more than the traditional six-stringed structure become more common, as did heptatonic and chromatic tunings. Performance techniques such as bending, *portamento*, *tremolo*, finger crossing, squeaking, and natural wah-wah, were expanded upon. Elements of difference and surprise became important stylistic features, though they were introduced into performances with restraint and economy to maintain the aesthetic of the unexpected.

Social change during this period resulted in larger numbers of *jeliw* playing the *kamalengoni* and the rare appearance of female players. As the harp spread socially and geographically, there was a burgeoning influence of local musical instruments such as the *bala* (xylophone), *jelingoni* (lute), and *kora*. Further, several *kamalengonifɔlaw* were about to raise their profiles and launch solo careers through playing with artists with international profiles such as Oumou Sangaré, Salif Keita, and Toumani Diabaté. The *kamalengonifɔlaw* most discussed in this section are the Malians Harouna Samaké, Adama Yalomba, Kokanko Sata, Macky Konaté and Brehima Benogo Diakité and Burkinabe musician Dicko Fils.

Harouna Samaké (Plate 5.1) was one of the first *kamalengonifɔlaw* to build his status through the reputation and calibre of the artists who hired him. Not only

did he become internationally known through working with several West African stars, but also significant was his entry (and hence the appearance of *kamalengoni*) into other regional traditions, as explained by Durán (2007: 21):

[Salif Keïta] is from Joliba, a village in the Mandén heartland, north of Wasulu, and his musical style is predominantly Maninka, which is heptatonic, whilst the songs of Wasulu and of the *kamalengoni* are pentatonic. Nevertheless, on his last two albums, *Moffou* and *M'Bemba ... the kamalengoni*, played by Harouna Samake, is a heavily featured instrument, for example on the track *Madan*. Another example of a Maninka singer who has used the *kamalengoni* is the *jeli* from Guinea, Sekouba Bambino Diabaté. Samake plays on the track *Balonta* from the album. This represents a new stylistic departure for both singers, and reflects the importance of the *kamalengoni* in Mali today, and the extent to which it now transcends regional styles.

Harouna Samaké's level of musicianship and knowledge allowed him to create a sense of continuity from Wasulu music into different musical systems.



Plate 5.1: Harouna Samaké playing the *kamalengoni*. Photographer unknown.³

³ See <https://www.harounasamake.com/official> [Accessed: 3.4.22].

Born in 1974 in the area of Dissan, a small village in the Bougouni region of southern Mali, Samaké is a self-taught multi-instrumentalist and draws from many local and foreign musical influences to shape his *nagamin* products, from which he has created an alternative and distinctive sound. Samaké was the only musician in his family and at the age of seven, he started to play the one-stringed musical instrument called *pati kolombani*, later adding two extra strings to mimic the sound of the *kamalengoni*.⁴ When I interviewed Harouna Samaké in September 2015, he said that two local *kɔnɔw*, Amara Traoré and Zoumana Traoré, had been impressed with his skills and inventions in playing the *pati kolombani* and suggested that he should play *kamalengoni* instead. He told me that after collecting all the material to make his first *kamalengoni*, he immediately started playing the harp during his free time after working with his father. It was challenging because his father did not want him to be a performer, which is why he did not consider making *kamalengoniw* as his main job.⁵ He went on to say that he arrived in Bamako in 1988 to stay with his uncle and became friends with the *kɔnɔ* Seydou Konaté. The *wassoulou* singer Sali Sidibé (1960-2019), to whom he kindly introduced me when I was staying in his house in 2015, visited Seydou Konaté's house and heard the young Harouna Samaké playing *kamalengoni*. She very much enjoyed it and invited him to join her band as an official member.

Sali Sidibé gave Samaké the kick-start he needed for his career as a *kɔnɔ*. From the age of fourteen, Samaké's undeniable playing skills were noticed by numerous high-profile musicians such as the Malians Salif Keïta, Nahwa Doumbia and Bassekou

⁴ The *pati kolumbani* is a one-stringed instrument with a wire attached to a metal powdered milk container resonator, fixed by a small piece of bamboo.

⁵ Pers. comm., Harouna Samaké, Bamako, Mali, 16.8.15.

Kouyaté, and the Guinean singer Sekouba Bambino. Samaké has also participated in important music collaborations with acclaimed celebrities outside of Africa, such as Grammy winners Béla Fleck and Bonnie Raitt. Through travelling around the world as a supporting musician and with his own band, Samaké gained the experience to develop as a producer, composer and multi-instrumentalist, leading to the release of his first solo album “Kamale Blues” in 2018 (Plate 5.2).

Samaké started recording this CD in 2015 while I was staying with him. Our days were initially spent in conversation and in *kamalengoni* lessons (Plate 5.3) and as time went on, in the studio. After one of our classes, Samaké told me he wanted to learn to sing in English. I was surprised when he played me his new song called “Try Voice” and I felt honoured when he asked me for some suggestions. I shared my thoughts with him, and on the following day, he invited me to do our lesson in his highly equipped home studio at the top of his house. Our class was ending as Yaya Diarra (the studio engineer) arrived to work with Samaké. From my fieldnotes:



Plate 5.2: Front cover of Harouna Samaké’s first album *Kamale Blues* (2018). Artwork by Carolina Vallejo.



Plate 5.3: Lesson on eight-stringed *kamalengoni* with Harouna Samaké (left), Bamako, Mali, 19.8.15. Photographer Mohamad Harouna Samaké.

It is very hot in here. I'm sitting in the corner as Samaké records one of his *jagamin* products over the introduction theme of an instrumental piece. He's just asked me to bring my *pandeiro* and record. I immediately get it and tune it while Harouna helps me to figure out what microphones to use. We are both very happy and smiling at each other. I ask if he can record a video while I play. He nods and remains with me in the room while I record. I put on my headphones and signal to Yaya to press play. The entire *jagamin* product was atypical compared with what I had previously heard on the *kamalengoni* [Examples 5.1 and 5.2]. I try to add to it using some *pandeiro* techniques that resemble the *kariyan* [metal scraper]. I play some *samba*, *maracatu*, and *forró* rhythms, which I had tried to teach Harouna and his student Youssouf Daba Diarra two days before. As I finish recording, Samaké and I walk towards Yaya, laughing. He plays it back to us. We celebrate our first intercultural encounter of mixing Brazilian sounds with Malian *kamalengoni* by hugging each other.⁶

Three years later I learned that Samaké had used and credited my playing on “Try Voice” (Plate 5.4).

⁶ See DVD 5.1: Harouna Samaké recording process of “Try Voice” (*).

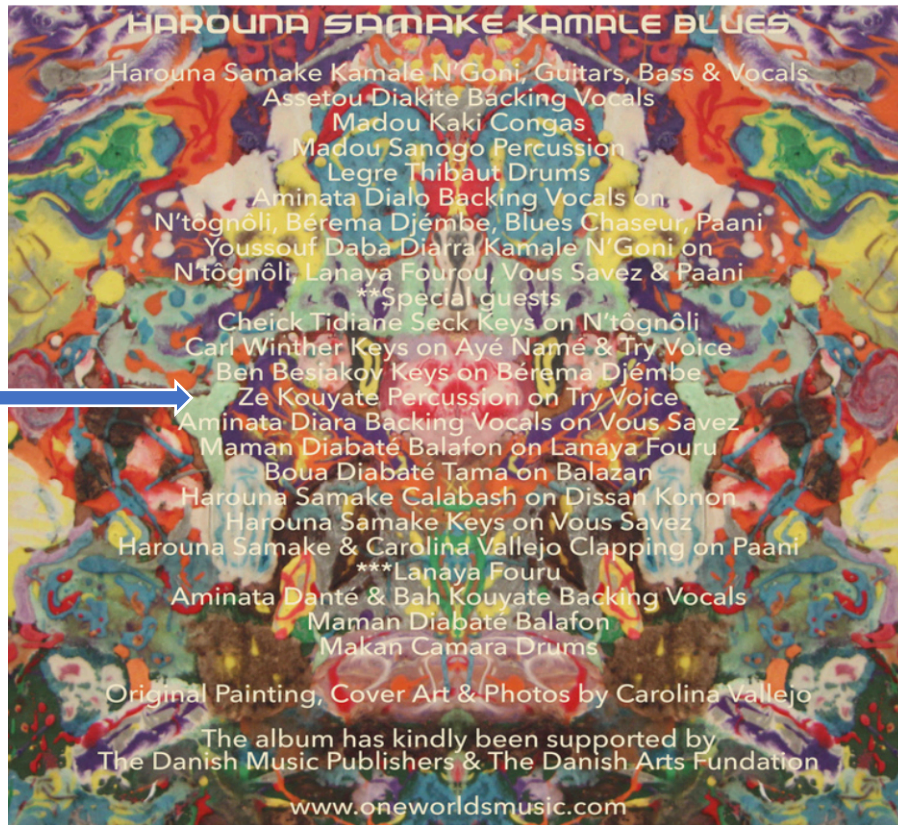


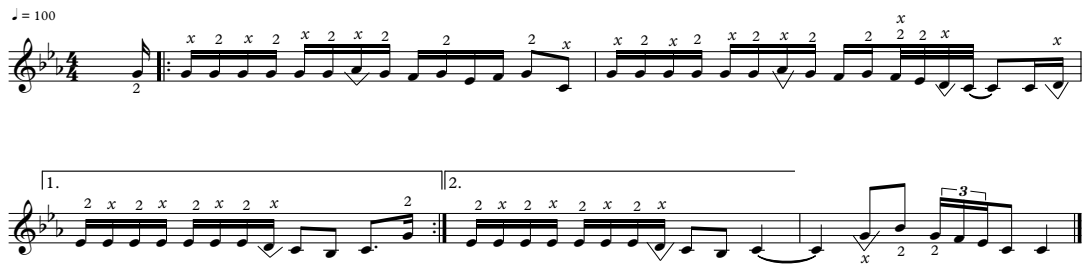
Plate 5.4: Credits on the back cover of *Kamale Blues* (2018).

Samaké's style can be identified by several features. He is motivated to work with heptatonic tunings, which appear to have become more prevalent in his playing when he was working for Salif Keïta in a musical setting where he encountered a variety of tonal systems. Example 5.1 shows Samaké's technique of plucking two strings simultaneously (involving coordination of the thumb and index finger) to build his *nagamin* product, while Example 5.2 exemplifies his use of "jazz notes," instigated with a bending technique.



Example 5.1: *Nagamin* product in "Try Voice" by Harouna Samaké.
 (tuning Bb-C-Eb-F-G *donso* technique 2)⁷ (*).

⁷ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qL8VjQ7ucog&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19] and the Lecture Demonstration video.



Example 5.2: *Nagamin* product in “Try Voice”
by Harouna Samaké (tuning Bb-C-Eb-F-G *donso* technique 2) (*).

The idea of introducing notes and phrases that seemed out of context became normalised in Phase III. One of the prominent avenues for this aesthetic of surprise was the jazz note, an English term *kamalengonifɔlaw* use to describe unusual notes outside of the tuning system adopted. These notes, which can be produced with innovative performance techniques to raise the pitch of a string by a semitone or tone, can be heptatonic notes in a pentatonic tuning, or chromatic notes in a diatonic heptatonic tuning, or even chromatically tuned notes. For example, bending up to a C# in the pentatonic tuning A-C-D-E-G or in the heptatonic tuning C-D-E-F-G-A-B would be called a jazz note. The term can also be used for innovative tuning, such as A-C#-D#-E-G, in which case the major 3rd (C#) and augmented 4th (D#) (both departures from the traditional minor pentatonic tuning) are described as jazz notes. Some players also use *solfege* to name the note, such as “dó jazz” (a raised tonic) and “ré jazz” (a raised 2nd). For example, if the *kamalengoni* is pentatonically tuned to A-C-D-E-G and the player uses a performance technique such as a bend to produce a C#, this is considered a “jazz” note.

Samaké displays his virtuosity by inserting jazz notes several times throughout “Try Voice” (Example 5.2) with complete control and expertise. His *kamalengoni* is tuned to Bb-C-Eb-F-G and he introduces the altered notes D and Ab

with this fast-bending technique, which is a technical challenge. Further, he uses the bending technique to play notes that are part of the pentatonic tuning on a different string (the G in the last bar), which enables him to keep his fingers in one place.

Harouna Samaké has recorded on more than fifty albums and is considered Mali's foremost *kamalengonifɔla* from Phase III. As well as his own work as a recording artist, he produces other musicians in his studio, supports local artists and has taught *kamalengoni* to local *kɔnɔw* (one of the best-known being Zoumana Diawara) and *wɔnɔw*. Despite his remarkable achievements and high status, the Balla Fasséké Kouyaté Conservatoire in Bamako will not accept him as a teacher as he has no qualifications recognized by the academy and is unable to read or write language or music, which is a common predicament for high-level *kamalengonifɔlaw*.⁸

Another major figure in Phase III is the *kɔnɔ* and pop star from Segou, Adama Traoré, known as Adama Yalomba (Plate 5.5).⁹ He was given this nickname by the public, who loved one of his first popular compositions called “Yalomba.” Born in 1970, he learned how to play the *ndan* pluriac alongside his father, who was a comedian and farmer.¹⁰ Later, he learned the *jelingoni* (lute), *kamalengoni* and the guitar, and he has become well-known for his instrumental and vocal musicianship across West Africa and internationally. In our interview in 2015, Yalomba said he arrived in Bamako in 1993 and joined several popular bands. His acclaimed album *M'bora* (Let's Go) (2001) brought him great national popularity and in 2003, he

⁸ Pers. comm., Daouda Dao, Bamako, Mali, 6.6.17.

⁹ The word “Yalomba” means charismatic, very likeable or joyful, qualities frequently respected in Malian *dankɔrɔbaw* and Brazilian *malandros*.

¹⁰ Pers. comm., Adama Yalomba, Bamako, Mali, 1.8.15.

became known by Western audiences after appearing at the Festival in the Desert.¹¹ Known for his superlative ability to arrange, sing and embellish phrases on the *kamalengoni*, he has collaborated with several Malian international stars, such as *kora* player Toumani Diabaté, singer Rokia Traoré, and the *ngoni* (lute) player Bassekou Kouyaté.



Plate 5.5: Adama Yalomba playing the *kamalengoni* at the Afrika Festival Hertme, The Netherlands, 2007. Photographer Johan Gerrits.¹²

Yalomba informed me that he initially used the pentatonic *kamalengoni* before changing to a heptatonic instrument, but his guitar expertise led him to

¹¹ A three-day music festival in Northern Mali, Timbuktu that used to occur annually. The festival had to stop due to the ongoing civil unrest in Mali since 2012.

¹² See <http://johangerrits.com/concerts/hertme2007/> [Accessed: 2.9.19].

explore alternative tunings. In this case, the organological changes made by Yalomba qualify as *nagamin* products as they open up wider possibilities in terms of performance techniques (Plate 5.6). Yalomba was married to a *jeliw* and was often required to accompany her on the guitar at traditional events for many years. He started using the *kamalengoni* so he had to adopt heptatonic tunings for the *jeli* repertoire. He also found this tuning useful when collaborating with visiting Western musicians.¹³ While studying the *kamalengoni* with Yalomba, like Samaké, he invited me to collaborate and perform live with him on several occasions. This was a much-appreciated opportunity for which I am very thankful as it greatly enhanced my research. It is thanks to Yalomba that I recorded with the celebrated Malian singer Amy Koïta in 2015. I was invited to play the Brazilian ten-stringed mandolin, the *pandeiro* (single-headed frame drum), and to sing on two tracks: one for Yalomba and another for Amy Koïta (Plate 5.7).

Like musicians in other places in the world, *kamalengonifɔlaw* work hard to achieve high levels of musicianship, financial security and, in some cases, international fame. High achievers can be praised by other *kamalengonifɔlaw* as *dankɔrɔbaw*, a status that is not easily achieved or sustained. As explained in Chapter Two, to call someone a *dankɔrɔba* is a meaningful and positive gesture. Yalomba makes reference to the *dankɔrɔba* in his song “Nagnumani” (a person’s name):

Ne bɛ n’patroŋa tagama, sungurun numan tɛ sɔrɔ dankɔrɔba tagama kɔ

Ne bɛ n’ɛkiseya tagama,

Masakɛ denmuso tɛ sɔrɔ ɛkise tagama kɔ,

ne de ye Nagnumani ɛɛ ye

¹³ Pers. comm., Adama Yalomba, Bamako, Mali 2.8.15.



Plate 5.6: Adama Yalomba (left) playing a fourteen-stringed *kamalengoni* with the author (right) playing a twelve-stringed *kamalengoni*, at the Baco Djicoroni District of Bamako, Mali, 17.10.17.



Plate 5.7: Recording session on a Brazilian ten-stringed mandolin with Amy Koïta (right) at her house in Djelibougou, Bamako, Mali in 1.8.15. Photographer Adama Yalomba.¹⁴ (*)

¹⁴ See DVD 5.2: Adama Yalomba and Amy Koïta recording.

I walk like a *dankɔɔba*
because beautiful women can't be conquered without walking with pride
I walk like a brave person, a king's daughter can't be conquered without a proof of bravery
I'm Nagnumani's husband.¹⁵

One of the cultural nuances revealed through these lyrics is that players care about how others perceive them beyond their musicianship and musical content. In the context of *kamalengoni*, “walking with the pride of a *dankɔɔba*” is a pathway to social prestige and the freedom to produce musical masterpieces. Bravery is achieved when an individual is determined to win when facing challenges considered almost impossible to most:

Ko ne ka yelen yirila, yiri masa yiri la, ka taga masa dunun ta
Wari masa dunun ta, sanun masa dunun ta, ka too di dugu masa ma
Dugu masa k'anw sɔn muso saraman na, a ye ne sɔn wari muren na
A ye ne sɔn sanun muren na, a ye ne sɔn diaman muren na
Ko ne de yelenna yirila, ko ne kera Nagnumani cɛ ye
Wa ne bɛ n'dankɔɔba tagama, ne de ye Nagnumani cɛ ye
Ne bɛ n'patroja tagama, ne de ye Nagnumani cɛ ye

I have been summoned to climb a tree, a majestic tree, to retrieve the royal drum
The royal drum of money and gold, and return it to the king
Then the king rewarded me with a beautiful woman, he gave me one pound of money
He rewarded me with one pound of gold and diamonds
I'm the one who climbed the tree, and that's how I became Nagnumani's husband
Hence, I walk fearlessly, and I'm Nagnumani's husband
I walk like a *dankɔɔba* because I'm Nagnumani's husband.¹⁶

¹⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARitoeCtfnw&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 4.9.19].

¹⁶ Also from “Nagnumani” by Adama Yalomba. See

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARitoeCtfnw&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 4.9.19].

Adama Yalomba found his place amongst the *dankɔrɔbaw*, but he does not call himself one; that is for others to assess according to his achievements, as is the case for the *malandro*. Thus, one of the sought-after qualities of a *dankɔrɔba* is “proof of bravery” or musical courage, which separates the *dankɔrɔba* from the rest.

Many other *kamalengonifɔlaw* during Phase III were also searching for a way to find their place amongst the *dankɔrɔbaw*. One such player was Souley Kanté, a singer and *kamalengonifɔla* from Wasulu, who stated: “Despite the success I have in my country, I’ve never had the chance to go on tour since I began my solo career. I hope I will fill this gap by trying to enter international showbiz.”¹⁷ His words demonstrate his ambition to succeed because “a man with no wealth is unlucky.”¹⁸ It is the aspiration to become a *dankɔrɔba* that inspired many other Phase-III *kɔnɔw* to work hard and find their place amongst “the lucky ones.” Mangala Camará also expresses his aspiration for global success in the song “Fisseri Wale” (Ungrateful):

Ali mana kɛ so kɛ di fisiri wale ma, A t’i wali juman lɔn
Wali jugu maɲin de, n’balimalu i wali jugu maɲin
Wali jugu maɲin de, n’balimalu i wali jugu maɲin
I denba kéréte n’sɔn na fanin koron na
N’ k’an jugu yaala duniya la

Even if you give out your best stallion to the ungrateful

He would not be grateful

Bad deeds are toxic

¹⁷ *Ali ni sanga be ne la n’fasola, kabini ne kelen ye dɔnkilida damine ne ma deli ka tournée kɛ Mali kɔkan*. Transcribed and translated by Wilfred Willey 17.4.20. See <https://www.last.fm/music/Souley+Kanté/+wiki> [Accessed: 18.7.19].

¹⁸ From the song “Kono ba e fo” (Greetings from the Songbird) by Souley Kanté. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmG1IbwikZM&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 3.8.19].

Give me back my rag [trust given]

So that I can take my child around the world.¹⁹

This song was inspired by the Brazilian hit “Água de Beber” (Drinking Water) by Antônio Carlos Jobim. Camará adapted the melody and rhythm of the Brazilian song to “quote” (just as one sees in jazz) the melody in “Fisseri Wale” (*).²⁰ (Compare Example 5.3 and 5.4, where the Malian version rhythmically displaces the phrases). The track was a national hit in Mali and was played constantly on the radio and shown on national television.²¹ As well as its musical components, the cosmopolitan elements are the electronic production and the Portuguese chorus, “*Água de beber, água de beber camará.*” (Drinking water, drinking water comrade) but in Mali that was re-contextualized and translated as “I have water comrade, I have water”).²² Minimal external (i.e., cosmopolitan) elements (as with Issa Bagayogo in Phase II) were enough to transform his *kamalengoni* sound, and bring Camará national stardom and the status of *dankɔrɔba*.

¹⁹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ORJTPjmDGQ&frags=p!%2Cwn> [Accessed: 2.8.19].

²⁰ To test Camará’s sophisticated approach, I composed a piece called “Jarabi” (Love). The tune is sung in English using only the Bamanankan word *jarabi* in the chorus, just as was done with “Água de Beber.” *Jarabi* is often used in popular *kamalengoni* music in Mali and Burkina Faso. I also quoted a well-known phrase from Minnie Riperton’s hit “Loving You” (1974) at 0’44. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9I3UTG1dSTc> [Accessed: 3.7.21], and at 1’54: <https://soundcloud.com/zekouyate/jarabi?si=be7526b42c984400aed0b0abf14519fd> [Accessed: 3.7.21]. Although the twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* is tuned in pentatonic, the overall harmony progression I arranged for the other instruments is not restricted to this. This pop-style composition also uses rhythms such as the Brazilian *baião* musical style and Cuban salsa. Each style serves as cues so musicians can know where the breaks and improvisations are in the piece.

²¹ Pers. comm., Abou Kone, Bamako, Mali, 30.5.17.

²² Wilfred Willey, email communication to the author, 21.4.20.



Example 5.3: Original melody and rhythm in “Água de Beber” by Antônio Carlos Jobim.



Example 5.4: Adapted melody and rhythm in “Fisseri Wale” by Mangala Camará.

Another *kamalengonifɔlaw* worthy of mention in Phase II is Brehima Benego Diakit  (Plate 5.8). Following in Samak ’s footsteps, Diakit  recorded and toured with Oumou Sangar  many times (Example 5.5 and Example 5.6). Largely due to the exposure brought through Sangar ’s national and international success, Diakit ’s *nagamin* products are widely known and copied by other *kamalengonifɔlaw*. He was also Sali Sidib ’s *kamalengonifɔla* for a long time. Samak ’s *nagamin* products operated in a similar fashion when he was accompanying Sali Sidib  and Nahwa Doumbia. In both examples, the harps are tuned to a pentatonic scale and the



Example 5.5: *Nagamin* product in “Djarabi Nene” (Shivers of Love) by Brehima Benego Diakit  (tuning D-E-G-A-C, *donso* technique 1).²³



Example 5.6: *Nagamin* product in “Dugu Kamalenba” (The Village’s/Town’s Womaniser) by Brehima Benego Diakit  (tuning D-E-G-A-C *donso* technique 1).²⁴

²³ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqzfmgoVqI> [Accessed: 3.7.21].

²⁴ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnYzKJrbVY0> [Accessed: 3.7.21].



Plate 5.8: Béla Fleck (left), Oumou Sangaré (front), Seckou Bah (back) and Benego Diakité (right), Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, UK, 19.7.20. Photographer KM's Live Music Shots.²⁵

nagamin products are recognisable idiomatic motifs, which are considered simple but rhythmically catchy. Diakité also creates *nagamin* products through the stylistic manipulation of timbre, which conveys the *wassoulou* sound. The ability to mimic other players and to innovate is particularly challenging, yet Diakité shows how it can be done within the *wassoulou* music spectrum.

Another performer who innovated a performance technique in Phase III was Yoro Diallo's student Macky Konaté (Plates 5.9 and 5.10). When using *donso* technique 1, he holds the *kamalengoni*'s neck with his strong hand so that he can use the nails on fingers 3 and 4 of his other hand to construct his *nagamin* products (Example 5.7). The first time I saw him perform (Plate 5.10) I was surprised to see him using this technique to obtain chromatic notes on a pentatonic *kamalengoni* (Ab-

²⁵ See <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kmlivemusic/7683017898/sizes/l/> [Accessed: 11.4.20].

Bb-C-Eb-F) and I have yet to see another performer using it. I regard this idiomatic performance technique as a *nagamin* product. Konaté often uses the technique when performing with Yoro Diallo (Plate 5.9).²⁶ Konaté is not only well-known for this performance technique, but he is renowned for his instrument building, where he uses his electronic skills to install pick-ups inside the harp. His *nagamin* products, such as innovative cyclic phrases, are much appreciated by other *kamalengonifɔlaw*. Zoumana Diawara, a *kamalengonifɔla* from Phase IV, told me on several occasions that Harouna Samaké, Adama Yalomba, Youssouf Daba Diarra, Brehima Benego Diakité and Macky Konaté are all considered to be Phase III *kamalengoni dankɔrɔbaw*. Another of Macky Konaté’s *nagamin* products is his performance technique of strumming, which often sounds like two harps (Example 5.8.).



Example 5.7: *Nagamin* product in “Yriba” (Big Tree)
by Macky Konaté (tuning Ab-Bb-C-Eb-F *donso* technique 1)²⁷ (*).



Example 5.8: *Nagamin* product in “Yriba” (Big Tree)
by Macky Konaté (tuning Ab-Bb-C-Eb-F *donso* technique 1)²⁸ (*).

²⁶ See DVD 5.3: Yoro Diallo playing at playing at a wedding with Macky Konaté.

²⁷ See the Recital video.

²⁸ See DVD 5.4 and the Lecture Demonstration video.



Plate 5.9: Macky Konaté playing an eight-stringed *kamalengoni*, Niaymakorobougou District, Bamako, Mali on 26.7.17.



Plate 5.10: (From left) Yoro Diallo, Rasta du Kamalengoni, and Macky Konaté playing *kamalengoni* at a wedding in Magnambougou district of Bamako, Mali on 7.5.17.

Another change in character during *kɔnɔya* Phase III was instigated by Burkinabe *kɔnɔ* Moulaye Dicko, also known as Dicko Fils (Plate 5.11). He was born in 1975 in a small village near the capital, Ouagadougou, and was the sixth of fourteen children. He took Koranic studies in Mali,²⁹ and while there he was exposed to the music of Ali Farka Touré, Salif Keïta and Oumou Sangaré. To my ears, Fils' *nagamin* products heavily rely on electronic elements, which derive from Issa Bagayogo's innovations (Phase II). Fils' approach takes full advantage of current technologies, including amplification and guitar pedals, and in the studio, EQ and effects such as reverb. Example 5.9 illustrates his use of simple pentatonic motifs (in tuning C#-E-F#-G#-B), which he combines with digital samples to generate cyclic phrases.



Plate 5.11: Dicko Fils playing a ten-stringed *kamalengoni* in The Niger Festival, Segou, Mali, 2016. Photographer unknown.

²⁹ In West Africa, Koranic studies are associated with schools or colleges specialising in teaching Islamic religion.



Example 5.9: *Nagamin* product in “Wakati” (Time)
by Dicko Fils (tuning C#-E-F#-G#-B *donso* technique 1)³⁰ (*).

Non-Malian musical influences also inform Fils’ musical creativity. Reggae music became a source of inspiration when he travelled to Abidjan in 1992. Once he joined the cross-cultural band called Le Faso Kanou, his *nagamin* products incorporated elements from Burkinabe, Cameroonian, Ivoirian, and Congolese musicians. The band aimed to use modern Western instruments to mimic traditional West African instruments without any of the constraints of tradition, inspiring Fils to learn the *kamalengoni*, which he quickly mastered. His *nagamin* products incorporate a mixture of Jula and Fula traditional music influences, along with less traditional sounds of pop music. Along with his performance techniques and arrangements, his outstanding singing abilities had already won him several national and international awards.

Along with his contribution to the *kamalengoni* tradition with his unique playing and vocal skills, Fils also made excellent video clips that captured cultural elements of the Burkinabe people. The *kamalengoni* plays a central role in these videos, which have brought him great success with more than three million views on YouTube in 2019 alone. Pieces such as “Laawol” (Bless)³¹ and the less popular “Wakati” (Time) highlight his recipe of creating simple but effective *nagamin* products. Fils released his first album in 2005, and he has continued to record

³⁰ See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-6PV_dJutA [Accessed: 23.8.21].

³¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= fpNar4wLI> [Accessed: 23.8.21].

albums almost every two years since then.³² His capacity to implement *jagamin* products has added to the *kɔnɔya* web through his strong relationship with Western genres and his harnessing of new technologies. His popularity and *dankɔrɔba* status in Burkina Faso are rare there, and he has helped to inspire young musicians who had no former knowledge of the *kamalengoni* to pursue serious careers playing the instrument.³³

Juxtaposing iconic *kamalengonifɔlaw* in Phase III

Juxtaposing some of the musicians discussed above makes explicit their unique contributions to the *kamalengoni* tradition. Unlike Macky Konaté (Example 5.7), Harouna Samaké, Youssouf Diarra, and Adama Yalomba do not alternate the thumb and/or index finger to cross ranks. A unique aspect of Yalomba's playing is that he is the only *kamalengonifɔla* I am aware of (at the time of writing) who concurrently uses a heptatonic tuning and *kora* technique 2.

Both Samaké and Yalomba make excellent use of the many performance techniques available, such as repetition, accentuation, and ornamentation. Both of these musicians play with such impressive virtuosity that I find it impossible to say that one has a higher level of musicianship than the other. Their stylistic differences, however, show up with closer listening, which reveals the details that distinguish their styles. Samaké's *jagamin* products employ many cosmopolitan influences within his cyclic and embellished phrases but also show a strong bond with the *wassoulou* music tradition. The case of Yalomba is different as although he also

³² FAMA 2015 (Faso Music Awards)-Best Artist of the Year Special Ado Leontine Gorgo Award, Golden Kundé Golden Kundé award for the best music of Burkina Faso in 2016.

³³ Pers. comm., D-King, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 13.9.15.

adopts cosmopolitan motifs to create *nagamin* products, they are less strongly linked to *wassoulou* music, especially in his more recent work. While Samaké often uses *donso* techniques 1 and 2 and *kora* technique 1, Yalomba mostly uses *kora* technique 2. These contrasting choices result in Samaké using more damped notes and Yalomba opting for more open notes.

Until recently, Samaké only composed *nagamin* products to accompany singers and play instrumental harp music, but Yalomba composes both lyrics and *nagamin* products primarily to accompany himself, and occasionally other artists. These different pathways also show how the regional area, musical style, and available work can influence the development of each performer. Their approaches differ in other ways. Yalomba plays a fourteen-stringed *kamalengoni* made with a metal gas container resonator (*gasbará*) (Plate 5.6). Not only does the resonator alter the sound production but the number of strings affects the tuning and sound. To produce “jazz” notes, Samaké uses performance techniques to alter the pentatonic tuning of the eight-stringed *kamalengoni*, whereas Yalomba uses a heptatonic tuning on his fourteen-stringed harp. On the track “Tɛgɛɛ Fɔla” (Example 5.10), his harp is tuned to B-C-D-E-F#-G-A in the following arrangement:

C	B
A	G
E	F#
D	C
B	A
G	E
F#	D
C	B

Yalomba strategically places the notes G-F# on one rank, with E-D on the other, allowing him to play these notes rapidly and so create clusters that are plucked by

the index fingers. While the index finger of the left hand plucks G and F# almost simultaneously, the index finger of the right hand can do the same with E and D in the third bar of Example 5.10. Therefore, by only plucking once with each index finger, Yalomba can execute four notes instead of having to alternate between strings while playing the heptatonic tuning descending from high to low strings. This allows him to produce highly embellished ornamented melodies by using rapid and effortless plucking techniques, considered by other *kamalengonifɔlaw* to be iconic and savvy.



Example 5.10: *Nagamin* product in “Tegerɛ Fɔla” (Clap)
by Adama Yalomba (tuning B-C-D-E-F#-G-A *kora* technique 2)³⁴ (*).

Both Yalomba and Samaké are significant Phase-III musicians as they provided models that laid the foundation for Phase IV. They are regarded as *dankɔrɔɓaw* due to their successful achievements as performers and their courage to invent, re-contextualize, and further develop the musical possibilities the *kamalengoni*. Samaké stated, “The role of Malian artists is to produce masterpieces to entertain citizens and guide them on the right path.”³⁵ Both of these artists are

³⁴ See DVD 5.5 and the Lecture Demonstration video.

³⁵ “Mali artisilu jɔyɔɔ ye fɔli duman yé, ka jamanadenw bɔ nanafin jugu la, k’u sɔn miiriya numan fene la nfa.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qL8VjQ7ueog&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19]. From “Try Voice” – Harouna Samaké. Seydou Production, One World Records 2018. Translated and transcribed by Aminata Moneketa 4.8.19. Edited by Wilfred Willey 21.4.20.

loved and revered throughout Mali, Burkina Faso, and beyond because of their ability to produce masterpieces and due to their remarkable life achievements.

To become a renowned *kamalengonifɔla*, more than talent is needed; wide dissemination of one's playing is key. Yalomba and Samaké have performed at prestigious international festivals, and their distinct playing can be heard in movies, documentaries, and video clips, and both musicians have given countless television interviews. Macky Konaté, who is less known but is also widely praised, is popular for being Yoro Diallo's band member. Accompanying a popular artist and being the popular artist are recognized as two different achievements.

Female *kamalengonifɔlaw* in Phase III

Though rare, the first female *kɔnɔw* (vocal performers) began to accompany themselves on the *kamalengoni* during this phase. Malian musician, Sata Doumbia, also known as Kokanko Sata (Plate 5.12), is one of the exceptions to *kamalengoni* gender norms.³⁶ Longley (2005) explains that her nickname, Kokanko, is the name of a small bird, which is believed to have supernatural powers and is said to be capable of foretelling the future and alerting travellers to dangerous events on the road. This nickname also invokes the generic term for Wasulu singers, *kɔnɔ* (songbird). Sata was born in Siekrolen, a small village in the Wasulu region of Mali, and before taking up the harp she performed at local wedding ceremonies playing the *guita*.³⁷ She assumed that men would not teach her to play the *kamalengoni* and decided to make one and teach herself.

³⁶ Due to the distribution of labour in Malian Islamic society, girls and women are unlikely to pursue the playing of musical instruments beyond hand-held percussion (Durán 2018).

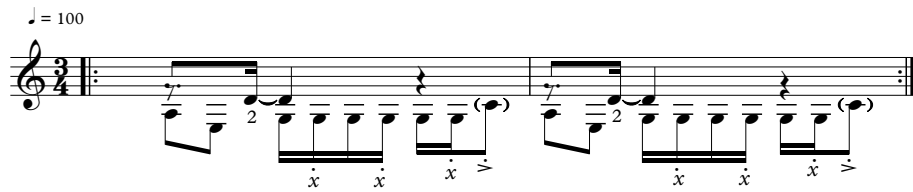
³⁷ A gourd idiophone, which is played by striking the round side with the fist to generate a bass sound.

Sata's lyrics express the challenges of being a woman in Malian society, with themes such as betrayal in love, difficulty with close friends and family, and trouble in business. After performing at the Barbican in London in 2002 as part of Damon Albarn's Malian music band, she was contracted to record a solo album by Jon's Records and she released her album in 2005. Her vocal interpretation and *jagamin* products played on the pentatonic *kamalengoni* are in the style of *wassoulou* music (Example 5.11) (*).³⁸ In the video, it is possible to see how she is skilled in rank-crossing using the thumbs in a very precise manner and singing simultaneously, which is very difficult to coordinate. However, in the *jagamin* product in the piece "Bi



Plate 5.12: Kokanko Sata playing an eight-stringed *kamalengoni*, Bamako, Mali 2015. Photographer unknown.

³⁸ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRarbGyck0k> at 3:51 [Accessed: 28.4.20].



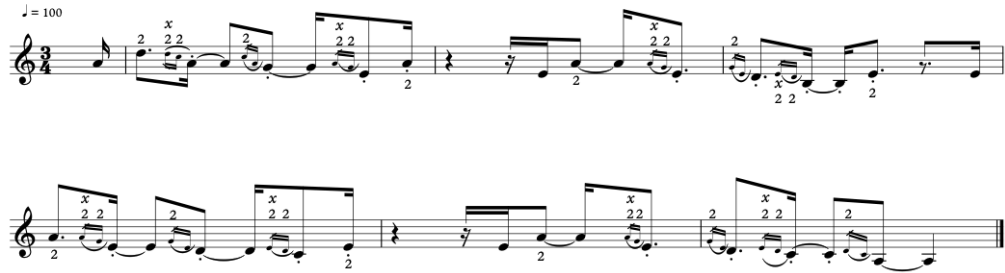
Example 5.11: *Nagamin* product in “Mogo Te Djin Laban Don”
 (No One Knows How the World Ends) by Kokanko Sata Doumbia
 (tuning A-C-D-E-G *donso* technique 1).

Mogoya” (Today’s Humanity)³⁹ (Example 5.12) on her album *Tieba* (Big Man),⁴⁰ I noticed a difference in her rank-crossing technique). This *nagamin* product requires the performer to master the use of the crossing technique using the index finger, which helps the player achieve greater speed. I had not previously heard or seen this technique, but I later learned that it was Harouna Samaké who played on “Bi Mogoya.”⁴¹ This example is significant in illustrating how *kamalengoniflaw* collaborate with one another to take advantage of all opportunities to embed their *nagamin* products in the works of other *kamalengoniflaw*. Kokanko Sata’s achievements and her position in society highlight issues concerning gender equality in a social system that imposes strict limitations on girls and women. To my knowledge, she is the first female *kamalengonifla* to travel abroad, and although this could potentially make her a symbol for aspiring female *kamalengoniflaw*, she is not very well-known among female musicians.

³⁹ See the Recital video, “Bi Mogoya.”

⁴⁰ See the Recital video, “Sogodounou.” I demonstrate how “Bi Mogoya” seems to be a nod to the track “Sogodounou” by Nahawa Doumbia, a singer from the same phase. (*Sogo* means animal or meat and *dounou* means drum.)

⁴¹ Pers. comm., Abou Diarra, Paris, France, 4.3.19.



Example 5.12: *Nagamin* product played by Harouna Samaké on “Bi Mogoya” (Today’s Humanity) by Kokanko Sata Doumbia (tuning A-C-D-E-G *donso* technique 2)⁴² (*).

Notably, the only Burkinabe female *kamalengonifɔla* I know of, Rama N’Goni (Plate 5.13), was surprised when I told her about Kokanko Sata. Journalist Koné Saydoo seemed equally surprised in a review of N’Goni’s performance (Plate 5.13), confirming that is highly unusual for women to play the *kamalengoni*:

A woman playing [*kamale*]ngoni; odd combination according to purists and the gatekeepers of tradition. On the contrary! ... Down with the taboo! From the Country of Honest Men ... Rama, a pure talent. A questioning voice ... Rama plays an instrument, sings (like Oumou [Sangaré]) and enjoys dancing. When she puts her [*kamale*]ngoni down to sing, Moumouni Coulibaly plays the *kora*.⁴³

Further, Saydoo’s comparison of N’Goni and Malian international star Oumou Sangaré reveals the strong link between Mali and Burkina Faso and N’Goni’s emerging status as a female *dankɔrɔbamuso.tion*

⁴² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEluYCWvOjQ&frags=pl%2Cwn> [Accessed: 1.8.19].

⁴³ Online article dated 8.3.20. See <https://www.fr.masa.ci/masa-2020-rama-ngoni-la-voix-qui-interroge> [Accessed: 10.4.20]. Translated by Carmen Weissen, 21.4.20. Saydoo confuses the *kamalengoni* with the *kora* in the last sentence of the quote, which is common among lay people. This confusion between the instruments is becoming even more prevalent as *kamalengonifɔlaw* increase the number of strings of the *kamalengoni* and often hold it like a *kora*.



Plate 5.13: Rama N’Goni playing a six-stringed *kamalengoni*, Abidjan Art’s Show Market (MASA). Photographer Unknown.⁴⁴

Rama N’Goni told me her father taught her how to play the *donsongoni* and that she adapted her knowledge of this instrument to learn the *kamalengoni*.⁴⁵ When she was a child, she sometimes played the *kamalengoni* publicly alongside her father and she began to perform without him as a young adult. When I asked N’Goni if she knew of other scenarios where young girls or women played the *kamalengoni* or *donsongoni*, she could not recall hearing of other female players in Burkina Faso, nor had she seen women playing either of the instruments on the radio or on television. She reported that women playing certain musical instruments, particularly stringed instruments, is considered “a bit odd.” Although N’Goni is an anomaly, her performance style as a female *kamalengonifɔla* – being able to integrate the traditionally female roles of singing and dancing into her instrumental performance - has brought her a degree of success, demonstrating that attitudes are slowly

⁴⁴ See <https://www.fr.masa.ci/masa-2020-rama-ngoni-la-voix-qui-interroge> [Accessed: 10.4.20].

⁴⁵ I interviewed Rama N’Goni in Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 12.9.17.

changing. Although male *kamalengonifɔlaw* can also dance when they perform, N’Goni makes the dance aspect a vital element of her performance.

I saw women playing many kinds of musical instruments in Mali and Burkina Faso and at the Institut National des Arts de Bamako (INA) I witnessed women performing among men in public settings on instruments traditionally associated with males, such as the *jembe*, *bala* and *kora* but the *kamalengoni* is not commonly played by women. During my time at INA, I did not witness women showing an interest in playing stringed instruments such as the *jelingoni* (lute), the *donsongoni*, or the *kamalengoni*. The only time I saw a female student playing the *kamalengoni* was in a lesson given by Daouda Coulibaly, but the young woman seemed disinterested. I can only speculate that her apparent indifference can be explained by the conservative gender values around hunters’ instruments and the taken-for-granted gendered distribution of musical labour. When I asked Wassa Kouyaté, Wassa Sogoba,⁴⁶ emerging artists, other female instrumentalists, and Oumou Sangaré⁴⁷ if they knew of any female *kamalengonifɔla*, the response was always no.

The emergence of even anomalous female *kamalengonifɔlaw* in Phase III is a significant change. The rarity of female players, however, has continued into Phase IV. In *wassoulou* music (and in *jeli* performance), female singers receive the most public attention so can earn significant financial success. It is conventional in *wassoulou* bands to share the takings between all members; however, if women sing and play the *kamalengoni*, fewer people share the profits. This may encourage female players to become more auto sufficient and less dependent on male

⁴⁶ Wassa Kouyaté is a Malian *jeli* singer, *kora* player, keyboardist, and graduate of INA and Wassa Sogoba (also Malian) is an accomplished percussionist and *balani* (xylophone) player who also graduate from INA.

⁴⁷ Pers. comm., Oumou Sangaré, London, UK, 10.4.19.

kamalengonifɔlaw in the future. If more women were to play *kamalengoni*, alternative pathways for the dissemination and transformation of the harp could open up.

Iconic musicians in Phase IV (2010-2020)

The new generation of *kamalengonifɔlaw* had many more tools to hand than their predecessors in Phases I to III as technology took an even more prevalent role during Phase IV. *Kamalengonifɔlaw* increased their knowledge of online platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, while the use of the apps Viber and WhatsApp became ubiquitous on handheld devices. This gave *kamalengonifɔlaw* increased access to music and musicians outside of Africa and presented opportunities to share their performances online. The substantial increase in communication between African *kamalengonifɔlaw* and *wɔnɔw* facilitated knowledge exchange between players across the globe, while African *kamalengonifɔlaw* were becoming increasingly skilled in production, using the latest programming software such as Cubase and digital recording software such as Pro Tools. Video production was also within easier reach for this generation of *kamalengonifɔlaw*, so visuals became more important in the presentation of their musical culture. These technological tools gave *kɔnɔw* even more freedom to experiment and a stronger possibility of international success, which was not an option for musicians at the beginning of Phase I.

Another of the striking distinctions in Phase IV is the increased *kora* influence on *kamalengoni* practices than in previous phases. This change first started in Burkina Faso, where several players from Bobo-Dioulasso structurally altered the *kamalengoni* to resemble the *jeli* harp by holding the *kamalengoni* like a *kora*, employing *kora* performance techniques, incorporating up to eighteen strings, and

using heptatonic tunings. In Burkina Faso, the *kamalengoni*'s relationship with the *kora* has become so explicit that it is not unusual for people to refer to the *kamalengoni* as a *kora*. On the bus returning from Ouagadougou to Bobo-Dioulasso in September 2017, I met a performer who referred to his *kamalengoni* as a *kora*, which surprised me at the time. I said that I thought his instrument was a *kamalengoni*, and he replied that I was correct and explained that he usually introduced it as a *kora* because people are unfamiliar with the *kamalengoni* but value the *kora*.⁴⁸ Burkinabe *kamalengonifɔla* Alladari Dembélé reinforces this view:

People focus on the piano, [*jeli*]ngoni and guitar. I myself often go out with my *kamalengoni* and the children look at it and think that it is a guitar or *jembe* but they can never tell it is a *kamalengoni* because they do not know *kamalengoni* here in Bobo. Children today are running around from the age of five, six, eight and ten, and when you ask them, they cannot tell you the difference between the *kora* and the *kamalengoni*.⁴⁹

Another example appears in the credits of a Farafina album (Plate 5.14), which lists the *kamalengoni* as *kora*. Although there are tracks with both *kora* and *kamalengoni*, the *kamalengoni* is always called a *kora*. The *kamalengoni* with added strings and a high tuning is named the “Kora lead,” while the other with fewer strings and a lower tuning is named “Kora Bass.” Disseminating knowledge of the *kɔnɔya* web in academic institutions and in the media may help to untangle the

⁴⁸ See “Cheikhna Demba” on the Recital video, where the *kamalengoni* mimics *kora* aesthetics by using multiple open tones and gentle string plucking.

⁴⁹ Pers. comm., Alladari Dembélé, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 6.9.17.



Plate 5.14: Credits on *Kanou* (2001) by the Burkinabe group Farafina.

popular confusion between the different kinds of harps in the region such as the *kora*, *donsongoni*, and *kamalengoni*.⁵⁰

During my fieldwork in Mali, I found that young Phase-IV musicians were not only more numerous than *kamalengonifɔlaw* in earlier phases (some of whom have died), but they were more available and eager to work with me. Further, by Phase IV, the *kamalengoni* tradition had become more musically diverse.

⁵⁰ Pers. comm., Idrissa Diarra Bamako, Mali, 20.7.17.

Consequently, I was able to study the *kamalengoni* and conduct ethnography with Zoumana Diawara, Idrissa Diarra, Many Dakoua, Daouda Coulibaly, and Harouna Dembélé in Mali, and Oumar Diallo, Issouf Coulibaly, Badri Kone, Ramatou Traoré, Alladari Dembélé, and Youssoufou Ziba (D-King) in Burkina Faso, all of whom have the potential to take the *kamalengoni* tradition in new directions.

Zoumana Diawara (Plate 5.15), also known as Salvador Zoumana, was born in 1993 in Bamako and resides there today in Daoudabougou District, near the centre of the city. He started his career as a musician (playing mostly percussion) when he was a teenager, but in his early years, he was involved in some trouble such as street fighting, which was due to the stress of his personal circumstances.⁵¹ For Diawara, playing music was a therapy that gave him personal relief and became his passion and profession. As a young man he developed an interest in strings by playing a one-stringed musical bow mostly played by male children in Mali called the *pati kolomba* (Plate 5.16).⁵² The lyrics of a popular song called “Pati Kolomba” speak of childhood issues of trust and jealousy in Mali: “*I ne jugu bɔ na, an bɛ ɲɔŋɔn fɛ nka an mandi*” (You don’t look at me with your bad eye, we are together but we are not friends). Diawara then learned the *donsongoni* with the legendary musician and hunter Toumani Kone⁵³ and he later learned the *kamalengoni* with Phase-III musician Seckou Coulibaly (Plate 5.17) before developing his skills with Harouna

⁵¹ Pers. comm., Zoumana Diawara, Bamako, Mali, 7.5.17.

⁵² Daouda Dao, email communication to author, 26.5.18. He explained that at the present time, it is infrequent to see this instrument in the streets of the cities or in the villages, though it used to be more common. The *pati kolomba*’s resonator is a tin can (usually for powdered milk) and is open with no skin sound table. The bike wire string is attached to the curved neck at one end, the other end being attached to the can. The organological structure of the instrument appears to mimic gourd-resonated harps such as the *bolon*, *kamalengoni* and *donsongoni* (Charry 2000).

⁵³ Pers. comm., Zoumana Diawara, Bamako, Mali, 2.4.17.



Plate 5.15: Zoumana Diawara playing a twelve-stringed *kamalengoni*,
Institute Nationale De las Arts (INA), Bamako, 13.11.17.



Plate 5.16: A *pati kolomba*, Bamako, 4.6.18. Photographer Daouda Dao.



Plate 5.17: Seckou Coulibaly (left) playing a double-necked, sixteen-stringed *kamalengoni* at his barber shop with Zoumana Diawara. Daoudabougou District, Bamako. 27.6.17.

Samaké, also from *kɔɔɔya* Phase III. Although Diawara initially learned the *kamalengoni* informally, he is now very serious about his academic studies.⁵⁴

Among my many respondents across all phases, Daouda Coulibaly and Zoumana Diawara are the only *kamalengonifɔla* I worked with who had studied in music institutions. I do not know of other high-level *kamalengonifɔla* able to read music and apply Western theory to teach, transmit and transform the *kamalengoni* explain *nagamin* products using Western staff notation. He graduated from the Institut National des Arts de Bamako (INA) in 2018, and he is currently studying at Balla Fasséké Kouyaté Conservatoire. With both formal and informal musical knowledge, Diawara combines oral traditional elements learned on the street with Western academic systems. As an instrumentalist, he performs with important names in the Malian music scene such as Trio Da Kali’s founder and *bala* player Lassana Diabaté (Plate 5.18), with whom Diawara has made several overseas appearances.

Diawara’s musicianship allows him to construct *nagamin* products in four voices (Example 5.13). The *nagamin* product in “Batoma” is an idiomatic cyclic phrase that relies on open strings, is played at a high volume and is rapid, and demands total independence of all four fingers.⁵⁵ Although I have witnessed other *kamalengonifɔlaw* who can do this, such as Adama Yalomba and Harouna Samaké (Phase III), and Oumar Diallo, Badri Kone, Daouda Coulibaly and Idrissa Diarra (Phase IV), Diawara is often commended by other *kamalengonifɔlaw* for the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ See DVD 5.6.



Plate 5.18: (From left) Zoumana Diawara, Lassana Diabaté, and Marian Sangaré rehearsing in Yrimadjo District, Bamako, 14.7.17.

♩ = 70

Example 5.13: *Nagamin* product in “Batoma” (person’s name) by Zoumana Diawara (tuning A-C-D-E-G *kora* technique 1)⁵⁶ (*).

⁵⁶ Batoma is a female name given to girls who are born directly after one of their grandmothers dies. See the Recital video.

impressive speed and precision with which he executes this particular *nagamin* product, which has elevated him to the status of an emerging *dankɔrɔba*. He locates his inspiration “between the *bala* and the *kora*”⁵⁷ and has shared a playlist of his favourite music with me, which includes the well-known *kora* player from Mali, Ballake Sissoko, and the Guinean singer and *kora* player, Mory Kanté.

Prior to my trip to Bobo-Dioulasso, I explained to Diawara that I would like him to come to Bobo-Dioulasso so he could play alongside some Burkinabe musicians and allow me to examine the relationship between Malian and Burkinabe performance techniques and styles in situ. I travelled alone to Burkina Faso and after meeting some local *kamalengonifɔlaw* in Bobo-Dioulasso, I contacted Diawara and asked him to come and play with some renowned musicians in the region. He became curious and was able to take five days out of his schedule to work with me. I organised the financial logistics and necessities for him to travel from Bamako to Bobo-Dioulasso and stay with me in the place I was renting.

In both Mali and Burkina Faso, it is expected that when there are two or more *kamalengonifɔlaw* playing together, each musician should contribute with interesting *nagamin* products (especially in instrumental pieces). This generated some interesting musical materials in the Malian-Burkinabe encounters I observed. During his time in Burkina Faso, Diawara enjoyed playing alongside most of the players to whom I introduced him, but he was only impressed by Oumar Diallo, who he befriended from their first musical encounter (Plate 5.19).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Pers. comm., Zoumana Diawara, Institute Nationale De las Arts (INA), Bamako, Mali, 24.10.17.

⁵⁸ The encounter between Zoumana Diawara and Oumar Diallo generated significant data in the form of a cross-cultural *nagamin* product case study, which I intend to publish in the future.



Plate 5.19: Burkinabe Oumar Diallo (right) recording with Malian Zoumana Diawara, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 15.9.17.

Diallo (b.1983) first began playing after seeing a man in his neighbourhood playing a *kamalengoni* made from a *gasbará* (gas cylinder) at a wedding ceremony. He fell in love with the harp and asked the Burkinabe *kamalengonifɔla* Madou Kone to teach him, but after some time Diallo had to stop playing and work as a bus conductor until receiving a *kamalengoni* in payment for helping a friend move to the village of Banza. This instrument gave him the means to abandon his conducting job and join Moussa Bagalo's band. This kick-started Diallo's professional *kamalengonifɔla* career and today he is a member of the Bobo-Dioulasso band, Farafinko, in which he plays percussion and a twelve-stringed *donsongoni*-style *kamalengoni* alongside his peer Alladari Dembélé, who plays an eighteen-stringed, *kora*-style *kamalengoni*.

Diallo explained the influence of the *kora* on his *kamalengoni* approach:

The artist who truly inspires me today is Toumani Diabaté. I play *kamalengoni* but I used to listen to Toumani Diabaté a lot, especially one of his tracks on an album I am not able to recall now, which starts with a *kamalengoni*. The rest of this album, I also listen to it a lot. I wish I could meet him in person, even if we don't play together. If we could converse together, that would inspire me so much.⁵⁹

Diallo has created several instrumental compositions on *kamalengoni* that show Diabaté's influence.⁶⁰ Although Diallo's performance technique of choice is *donso* technique 2 (which typically generates a lot of damped notes), on most of the occasions I had the opportunity to witness him playing he produced predominantly clean and sustained open tones like a *kora* rather than damped notes, which one expects from *donso* technique 2.⁶¹ This demonstrates that the technique adopted does not necessary restrict players; they can adopt *donso* technique 1 or 2 and still able to mimic the *kora*'s sound, and conversely, *kora* technique 1 or 2 can mimic the *donsongoni*'s sound. Example 5.14 presents a polyphonic four-part *nagamin* product, which demonstrates Diallo's unusual way of using *donso* technique 2.

Example 5.14: *Nagamin* product in “Farafina Mogo” (African People)
by Oumar Diallo (tuning A-C-D-F-G *donso* technique 2)⁶² (*).

⁵⁹ Pers. comm., Oumar Diallo, Houet, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 15. 9.17.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See DVD 5.7.

⁶² See the Lecture Demonstration video.

Diallo’s usual *kamalengoni* partner, Alladari Dembélé, is also influenced by the *kora* but explained that the Malian player, Adama Yalomba (Phase III) is a major influence on his style. In particular, he reported that he admires Yalomba’s approach to performance techniques, tuning systems, and the desire to constantly invent fresh ideas by melding traditional elements with popular music.⁶³ In contrast to Yalomba, who uses a heptatonic tuning, Dembélé plays an eighteen-stringed *kamalengoni*, which is pentatonic except for a strategically placed jazz note on the thinnest and highest string (D-F-G-A-C-C#), which makes chromatic lines possible (Example 5.15).⁶⁴ Although the C# gives Dembélé the ability to play both the minor and major third, he mostly uses this extra resource as a passing note. Both the tuning and the additional strings alter the final sound to create a unique *nagamin* product.



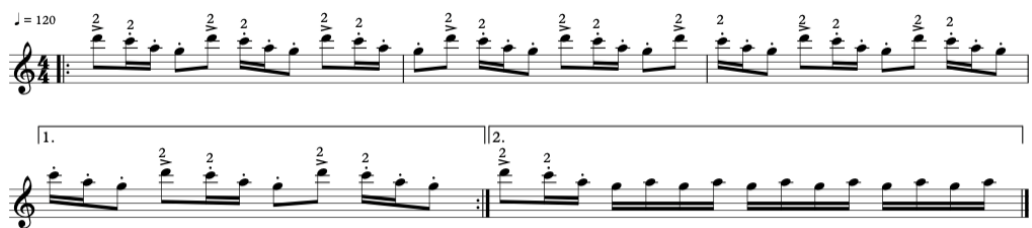
Example 5.15: *Nagamin* product in “N’Terike” (My Friend)
by Alladari Dembélé (tuning D-F-G-A-C-C# *kora* technique 1) (*).

Example 5.16 shows one of Dembélé’s *nagamin* products (extracted from a duet with Diallo) where he plays in a higher register than Diallo (Example 5.17) as they alternate to craft *nagamin* products by slightly mimicking each other (Plate 5.20). Examples 5.18 and 5.19 are extracted from the same duet by Diallo and Dembélé, where they take turns to play their two-voice cyclic phrases.⁶⁵

⁶³ Although Dembélé declared that Yalomba is one of his major influences, I have never seen him using Yalomba’s preferred performance technique, *kora* technique 2.

⁶⁴ Pers. comm., Alladari Dembélé, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 6.9.17.

⁶⁵ For clarity, Examples 5.18 and 5.19 are two-voice *nagamin* products that Dembélé and Diallo played alternately in response to one another. I first learned this performance practice from Phase-III



Example 5.16: *Nagamin* product in “N’Terike” (My Friend)
by Alladari Dembélé (tuning D-F-G-A-C-C# *kora* technique 1).



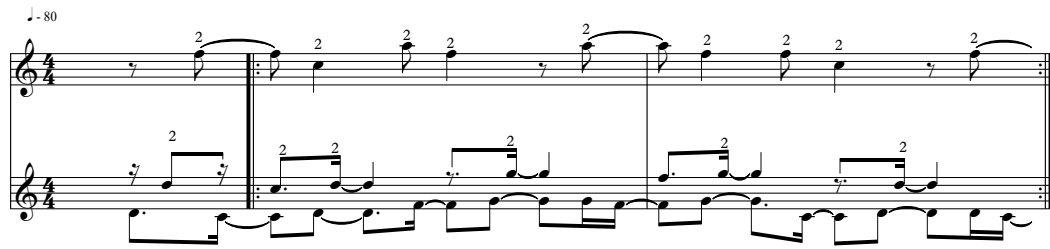
Example 5.17: *Nagamin* product played by Oumar Diallo in “N’Terike” (My Friend)
by Alladari Dembélé (tuning A-C-D-F-G *donso* technique 1) (*).



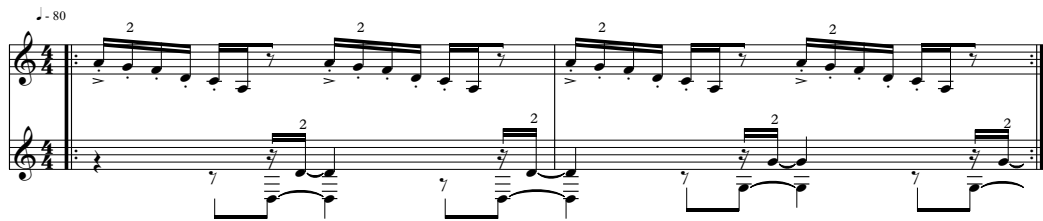
Plate 5.20: Alladari Dembélé (left) playing an eighteen-stringed, *kora*-style *kamalengoni* Oumar Diallo playing a twelve-stringed, *donso*-style *kamalengoni* Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 6.9.17.⁶⁶

musicians Harouna Samaké and Adama Yalomba and Phase-IV players Zoumana Diawara, Daouda Coulibaly, Oumar Diallo, and Idrissa Diarra.

⁶⁶ See DVD 5.8: Alladari Dembélé *kora*-style and Oumar Diallo *donso*-style.



Example 5.18: *Nagamin* product in “N’Terike” (My Friend)
by Alladari Dembélé (tuning D-F-G-A-C-C# *kora* technique 1).



Example 5.19: *Nagamin* product played by Oumar Diallo “N’Terike” (My Friend)
by Alladari Dembélé’s (tuning A-C-D-F-G *donso* technique 2).

Although Burkinabe players, such as Issouf Coulibaly, Badri Kone and Alladari Dembélé, have been a more prevalent force in introducing aspects of the *kora* into *kamalengoni* practice, there are now also *kamalengonifɔlaw* in Mali who incorporate *kora* techniques and aesthetics. One example, Mali-based musician Idrissa Diarra (Plate 5.21), stated:

I realized that there is a connection between *kora* and *kamalengoni*, and I said, “Why not try to modernize it a little bit?” ... I found that my style of playing *kamalengoni* is very similar to the ways the *kora* is played [and] at the same time I also included the *balani*⁶⁷ into my style, you see? So I said, “Why not create my own style? Many ideas came to my mind.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ A small pentatonic *bala*.

⁶⁸ Pers. comm., Idrissa Diarra, Bamako, 20.7.17.

Raised by a family of Bobo *jeliw*, Diarra was born in 1989 in Abidjan in The Ivory Coast. He initially learned how to play the *bala*, *jembe*, and other percussion instruments and sometime later when visiting his family in a village, his cousin gave him his first *kamalengoni* and taught him how to play it.⁶⁹ He joined the group Bwazan,⁷⁰ and moved to Bobo-Dioulasso in 2005 and to Bamako in 2006, where he now lives and directs Bwazan and his own ensemble, KaDriMo.⁷¹



Plate 5.21: Idrissa Diarra playing a sixteen-stringed, *kora*-style *kamalengoni* with Kalifa Kone playing a pentatonic *balani*, Meson de June, Bamako, 26.7.17.

Idrissa Diarra spoke about his strong musical connections with the *kora* and *balani*, which he uses (rather than the *donsongoni*) as a foundation to create his *kamalengoni* music. He says,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Bwazan” means “Bobo children” in both Jula and Bwa languages (pers. comm., Issouf Coulibaly, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 21.8.17).

⁷¹ The name of the band comprises the first two letters of the band members’ names.

My old brother, Kalifa [Kone], plays the *balani* very well. When he plays the *balani*, I listen to him and my other brother, Bassidi [Kone] with attention. I have a group called Bwazan with them both. The group is very well known in Mali and represents Mali across the world. When I saw the group assemble for the first time, the way they were playing influenced my style of playing because I enjoyed it a lot. This applies to whatever instrument I play, which can either be the [*kamale*]ngoni or another instrument, but generally I play the *kamalengoni* a lot. Because I also play *jembe* people don't know I play the *kamalengoni* but when people see me playing the *kamalengoni* they tell me, "Please stop playing *jembe* and dedicate [yourself] to the harp instead." So, this motivates me a lot to continue, and when I see this group playing, I adapt my *kamalengoni* style with other instruments, which I am able to mimic in many ways if I have my [*kamale*]ngoni.⁷²

Despite being from the *jeli* caste, the Malian celebrity Abdoulaye Diabaté - who calls himself a *kɔnɔ* (Durán 1995) - is the kind of artist Diarra plays alongside. Diarra is a creative *kamalengonifɔla* and musical innovator who is influencing Bamako's musical landscape with his highly original playing. When people listen to Diarra's ways of adapting ideas from the *balani*, *jembe* and *kora*, he is admired by various *kamalengonifɔlaw* from previous generations. On several occasions I have witnessed Diarra using rhythmic patterns of the *balani* or *jembe* in his *jagamin* products, which I found challenging to replicate. In Example 5.20, he uses a *jembe* rhythm.⁷³

⁷² Pers. comm., Idrissa. Diarra, Bamako, Mali, 21.10.17.

⁷³ Like Diarra, most of the Phase-IV *kamalengonifɔlaw* I worked with are multi-instrumentalists, all of whom are influenced by the *kora* to some extent.



Example 5.20: *Nagamin* product in “Aw ni Bara” (Thank You)
by Idrissa Diarra (tuning A-C-D-E-G *kora* technique 1).⁷⁴

The *kora* influence has also an important role in the musical aspirations of the Malians Many Dakoua and Harouna Dembélé, who are very active musicians. Dakoua is from Ké-Macina in southern-central Mali and Dembélé is from Bamako in the south. Dakoua plays the *kamalengoni*, *jelingoni* and *kora* while Dembélé is often hired to play *jembe* and drum kit but is not well known for his *kamalengoni* playing. Perhaps it is the eclectic background of these musicians that laid the foundation for their unusual performance experiments and showmanship. Their collaboration provides a good example of an embodied approach to pooling creative resources; these musicians cross their arms to reach the right rank of each other’s harps (Plate 5.22).⁷⁵ They need to complete each other’s *nagamin* product by knowing, predicting, or suggesting melodic and rhythmic pathways. Throughout my field trips and up to the time of writing, I have not witnessed this unique performance practice anywhere else. This may be because this way of playing is not musically efficient. Dakoua and Dembélé’s idiomatic approach is nonetheless highly significant in terms of demonstrating the lengths to which *kamalengonifɔlaw* seek experimental ways to break the norm and exert individuality.

⁷⁴ See DVD 5.9: Idrissa Diarra playing a *kamalengoni* made with a gas cylinder resonator.

⁷⁵ See DVD 5.10: Many Dakoua and Harouna Dembélé sharing *kamalengoniw*.



Plate 5.22: Many Dakoua (left) and Harouna Dembélé crossing hands on a sixteen-stringed *kamalengoni* (left) and a twelve-stringed *kamalengoni*, Magnanbouyou District, 5.7.17.

Some of Dakoua's other performance techniques - including unusual playing positions and tunings (e.g., A-C#-D-E-G) (Example 5.21) - differ from those of Harouna Dembélé, but together, their novel performance practice is impressive and has attracted the attention of other *kamalengoniflaw*. For example, when I met the Malian Phase-III *kamalengonifla* Macky Konaté to explain my research and asked if I could film him, I showed him ten seconds of a Many Dakoua video. Konaté commented, "This young man plays the *kamalengoni* very, very well. Who is he?"⁷⁶ With admiration, he pointed out a sponge between the ranks near the bridge of Dakoua's harp (Plate 5.23), which impedes the string resonance to generate damped

⁷⁶ Pers. comm., Macky Konaté, Bamako, Mali, 7.5.17.

notes, freeing up the hands for rapid plucking.⁷⁷ The sponge here is one use of technology to produce an effect in Dakoua’s *nagamin* products (*).⁷⁸



Example 5.21: *Nagamin* product in “Takamba Fɔli” (Takamba Music)
by Many Dakoua (tuning A-C#-D-E-G *kora* technique 2)⁷⁹ (*).



Plate 5.23: A twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* with a sponge between the ranks, Nottingham University, 25.6.18.

As explained earlier in this chapter, another area of creativity that accelerated in Phase IV was the use of guitar pedals and outboard effects units to process amplified *kamalengoniw* live and in the studio (Plate. 5.24). Although some *kamalengonifɔlaw* still prefer an acoustic or unprocessed sound, many contemporary players (both old and young) use diverse effects to generate sonic differentiation. For

⁷⁷ See DVD 5.12: Many Dakoua playing a *kamalengoni* with accessories.

⁷⁸ See the Lecture Demonstration video for an illustration of the use of the sponge.

⁷⁹ See DVD 5.11: Many Dakoua playing *takamba* music on the *kamalengoni*.

those *kamalengonifɔlaw* who prefer the acoustic sound without effects, their recordings do not seem to even enhance the natural reverb of the *kamalengoni* (as one often hears in *kora* productions for the foreign market). Dakoua finds it crucial to merge technologies and claims his audience and other *kamalengonifɔlaw* he admires appreciate how he utilizes them. The sound quality of the *kamalengoni* can be easily transformed by effects and can create explicit differentiation that may be recognisable to particular players. In this respect, the aesthetics of sound processing can identify a player so can therefore be regarded as a *nagamin* product.



Plate 5.24: Types of guitar pedal effects used by *kamalengonifɔlaw*, Magnanbougou District, Bamako, Mali, in 5.7.17.

Conclusion

The more I learned from various musicians in Phase IV, the more I could identify the intellectual, cognitive, and musical processes they use to transfer repertoires and performance techniques from one instrumental tradition to another. In Mali and Burkina Faso, two names from Phase III were commonly

referenced as musical inspirations to Phase-IV *kamalengonifɔlaw*: Harouna Samaké and Adama Yalomba. For example, Many Dakoua stated:

There are plenty of artists from Wasulu inspiring me but our great master Adama Yalomba, he comes from the same region I do [Kémacina], so he and his music really inspire me. I listen to him as well as watch him play.⁸⁰

Other Phase-IV musicians reference Samaké and Yalomba without being able to name them. For example, I witnessed an exchange between Zoumana Diawara (ZD) and Issouf Coulibaly (IC) I:

IC: Today, the artist inspiring me to play the *kamalengoni*, I don't know his name, but I know he plays with Salif Keïta. I listen to Salif Keïta's music a lot and his *kamalengoni* playing style inspires me a lot.

ZD: Harouna Samaké, he's my teacher!

IC: I don't know him, but I listen to him a lot and I like his style of playing *kamalengoni*. There was my uncle, may God bless him as he already passed away, he was a *kamalengonifɔla* called Fousseny Coulibaly. He also inspired me a lot.⁸¹

This exchange between Diawara and Coulibaly is a testament to the organic role of the *kɔnoya* web, whereby critical encounters can bind *kamalengonifɔlaw* across borders, serving as a rich resource for musical transmission and transformation.

In the following and final chapter, I address the marginalisation of legendary *kamalengonifɔlaw* and draw conclusions about their relationship to Mali's and Burkina Faso's educational institutions.

⁸⁰ Pers. comm., Many Dakoua, Bamako, Mali, 16.11.17.

⁸¹ Pers. comm., Issouf Coulibaly and Zoumana Diawara, Bobo-Dioulasso, Mali 15.9.17.

The Tradition of Invention: Final Conclusions

Through the study of a single kind of instrument, this thesis contributes to the understanding of non-linguistic musical transmission, invention, and transformation. Such insistent transformation continues to re-invent the *kənɔya* web and ensure that it remains fresh and exciting. The tradition of invention in *kənɔya* is a cultural attitude and behaviour that sets out to distinguish oneself in a musical environment where one of the primary aims is to engender surprise and provoke change rather than protect tradition. As I have explained, *kamalengoni* is a tradition of invention, whereby bold creativity is demanded. This cultural attitude, however, in some ways resembles the invention of tradition as presented by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) in that provoking change in musical practice (as opposed to actively obeying and restraining it, as is usual among *donsow* and *jeliw*) serves an overall aim to preserve the *kamalengoni* tradition. The inventiveness of *kamalengoni* is the *malandragem* that has safeguarded its continuity.

My thesis demonstrates how musicians' will to instigate change became an expected behaviour and operated from the margins and within in-between spaces, unlike *jeliw*, whose historical status allows them to attach themselves to wealthy benefactors in politics and commerce. *Kamalengonifɔlaw* were initially viewed as a disruptive force that threatened traditional musical hierarchy. Their elders considered them to be too progressive and criticized them for corrupting tradition and other

youth. Inventing tradition, however, allowed *kɔnɔya* to re-exist in between traditions and in new spaces that have contemporary meaning rather than a static ontological reality. *Kɔnɔya* is a musical practice that does not delineate past from present by highlighting the differences between so-called tradition and modernity. With time, *kamalengonifɔlaw* specifically and *kɔnɔw* generally, have found their niche through their success on the international stage. By Phase IV, *jeliw* began to play the *kamalengoni*, *kamalengonifɔlaw* started to play with and for *jeliw*, *jeliya* influenced *kɔnɔya*, and *kɔnɔya* impacted *jeliya*. A sense of continuity is maintained through every act of transformation. *Kamalengonifɔlaw* crave innovation rather than preservation because there are other traditions around them doing just that. *Kamalengonifɔlaw* compete to invent the next generation of exceptional performance strategies. Further research could identify if the concept of the tradition of invention might be extended to other new musical instruments.

In Chapter One I introduced the *kamalengoni* and explained my methods and theoretical frameworks used in this research. To lay out and identify what virtuosity and outstanding creativity mean in *kamalengoni* music, I introduced the Brazilian framework of *malandragem*, which helped me to explore the intercultural multi-sensorial performance methods that *kamalengonifɔlaw* use to exercise their creativity. I gave an in-depth explanation of *kɔnɔya* in *kamalengoni* practices in Chapter Two by introducing the instrument's background, relevance, impact, and connections both nationally and internationally. Then, I introduced a general timeline of pivotal individuals contributing to shaping this tradition. I presented a model explaining the levels of access *kamalengonifɔlaw* have to resources and the many strategies they adopt to instigate communication locally and across borders.

Undertaken through individual practice, I frame this informal network as “the *kɔnɔya*

web.” In Chapter Three, I introduced the organology and performance techniques of the instrument, along with a descriptive notation that can communicate an understanding of the complex performance techniques of the *kamalengoni*. I also devised the conceptual term “*nagamin* product” to explain how *kamalengonifɔlaw* elevate their personal status in a way that exerts an enduring influence on the tradition.

The notation system I designed for the *kamalengoni* in Chapter Three gave me the tools to reveal the intricacies of *nagamin* products in Chapters Four and Five. I explained the practical and organological innovations, virtuosity, and creativity of selected individuals, many of whom uplifted their social status to international recognition. In Chapter Five, I discussed the expansion of the *kɔnɔya* web from Mali to Burkina Faso and beyond. A *nagamin* product is a vital force that influences musicians, ensures musical transmission, and engenders transformation. They challenge, fascinate, and attract new players as they engage in the informal, endless journey of mastering the *kamalengoni*. Although still rare in Mali and Burkina Faso, institutionalised methods of communicating knowledge of the *kamalengoni* are recent. This lack of institutionalisation, however, gives *kamalengonifɔlaw* the freedom to invent *nagamin* products according to their surrounding musical experiences.

This thesis provides a concise study of the *nagamin* products to evidence the elemental aspect of composition, performance, musical transmission, creativity, and the continuous transformation of *kamalengoni* practice. Identifying a framework for musical change across the four *kɔnɔya* phases lays bare the strategies musicians have engaged in to elevate themselves to survive the social and resource challenges around them. This ethos requires an ability to use the past and present as allies to

generate a sense of continuity into each new invention. Only the most outstanding *kamalengonifɔlaw* can sustain themselves.

Always breaking from tradition, musicians are constantly making choices concerning, for example, playing positions (*donso* techniques 1/2 and *kora* techniques 1/2), organological innovations, the use of music technologies and accessories (pedals, pick-ups, straps, tuners, loops), new tuning and performance techniques, stylish attire and overall presentation, and musical gestures. Some of these choices become exceptional performance strategies, adopted to display a virtuosity and outstanding individual creativity that results in an elevated social status and, most importantly, their ability to combine all of those strategies to re-exist life and music through the *kamalengoni*. The resulting *nagamin* products, which are embedded in the musical repertoire and life itself, communicate through music and can gain the attention and praise of other *kamalengonifɔlaw*. It is through these exceptional performative strategies that some players manage to elevate their social status to communicate more widely.

A timeline (from the 1960s to 2020) comprising four phases highlights the major characters from Mali and Burkina Faso who have contributed to the evolution of the *kamalengoni* and the ethos that makes *kɔnɔya* a tradition of invention. Although *kamalengonifɔlaw* who emigrated and settled outside Africa made crucial contributions that helped to reshape *kɔnɔya*, both inside and outside the African continent, the main focus of the thesis has been to talk about the players residing in their own countries. More research on *kamalengonifɔlaw* who live outside Africa could enrich this work and reveal crucial information about change in musical transmission and transformation between *donsow*, *jeliw*, *kɔnɔw* and *wɔnɔw* who plays the *kamalengoni* professionally. Research focusing on the role that the

kɔnɔya's levels play in music transmission and transformation between *donsow*, *jeliw*, *kɔnɔw* and *wɔnɔw* players is a recent but crucial aspect in *kɔnɔya* that could provide a further understanding of issues of authorship of *nagamin* products, created or mimicked to differentiate between cultures. Practical and theoretical approaches to examining how musicians overcome local and foreign conservative traditions and/or regulations reveal musical collaboration as a means of changing soundscapes.

The future of the *kamalengoni* tradition

The lack of an organised group or fraternity in *kamalengoni* practices allows individual freedom to innovate. It also generates misinformation and can result in the monopolisation of knowledge that stops musicians from evolving their informal music education. This thesis explains musicians' ideas of belonging to one musical group ideology over another (Castellanos 2019) where, unlike the *jeliw* and the *donsow* with their organised societies and governmental support, *kamalengonifɔlaw* are only informally linked to heritage institutions, higher education, and the formal economy. Musicians can study a range of *jeli* instruments, such as the *kora*, *jelingoni*, *bala*, and *djembe* in higher education music schools, (particularly in Mali) but there are no formal *kamalengoni* schools in Mali or Burkina Faso. Several of my respondents recognize that this weakens the possibility of cultural and economic sustainability:

Zoumana Diawara: It doesn't exist, it doesn't exist [shakes his head]. People consider the *kamalengoni* a simple instrument, which has only one purpose and function. They

think it can only be used to play *wassoulou* music. [*Kamalengoni* is one of] several instruments with no formal places to learn.¹

Idrissa Diarra: I don't know any schools where they teach *kamalengoni* music and that is the weakness of [playing] *kamalengoni*. That's one reason people are not interested; there is no place to learn it. The way we do it is by getting inspired by someone else, then you search for the person and try to meet with them and watch them. That is the alternative as there are no schools.²

Abou Diarra: Our community loves this instrument, but we are not able to organise or afford a *kamalengoni* school by ourselves.³

D-King: If you go to a music school you could easily learn all kinds of musical instruments, for example, guitar, piano, drum kit [because] generally, our music schools follow the Western musical instrument system. Now, a *kamalengoni* school, to be honest, I have not seen one here, I have not seen it yet [and] I also have never met anyone who studied at a *kamalengoni* school either. I have not seen that kind of music school here [in Bobo-Dioulasso].⁴

These comments, the evidence accumulated, and my learning experiences in Mali and Burkina Faso resonate with observations made by J. H. Kwabena Nketia more than half a century ago:

¹ Pers. comm., Zoumana Diawara, Bamako, Mali, 24.10.17.

² Pers. comm., Idrissa Diarra, Bamako, Mali, 18.10.17.

³ Pers. comm., Abou Diarra, Paris, France, 4.3.19.

⁴ Pers. comm., D-King, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 14.9.17.

The perpetuation of African tradition has depended very largely on the opportunities created in a community for learning through participation, through imitation and slow absorption rather than institutional methods. ... if traditional instruction is to be maintained, it cannot be done entirely by traditional methods or by relying largely on [an] informal enculturative process (Nketia 1961, as cited in Wiggins 2005: 74).

As the status of the *kamalengoni* rose through the success of selected players, some *kamalengonifɔlaw* began to attend music colleges to elevate their intellectual knowledge and performative skills. International collaborations led to new ways of approaching the instrument⁵ and generating *nagamin* products that speak to both African *kamalengonifɔlaw* and audiences across borders. However, oppressed by poverty and the threat of violence, or even war, few Malians or Burkinabés can dedicate their lives to a career as a *kamalengonifɔla*, attending music schools, or developing strong international ties.⁶ The low level of access to resources of each individual playing the *kamalengoni* in Mali and Burkina Faso continues to have a significant negative impact on musicians.⁷ Nevertheless, each *kamalengonifɔla* operates like a radio antenna, connecting the entire *kɔnɔya*'s web into a collective force, which continues to grow as new individuals tune in to its frequency. The more *kɔnɔya* progresses locally, the more it is generating a global impact.

Wiggins reported that the Ghanaians he interviewed were usually strongly in favour of the preservation of tradition, but they seemed to take little account of the interests and motivations of the young people or changes in tradition when it is taught in schools (Wiggins 2005: 74). As long as the methods for learning are

⁵ Pers. comm., D-King, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, 14.9.17.

⁶ Pers. comm., Many Dakoua, Bamako, Mali 5.7.17.

⁷ See Figure 2.2 in Chapter Two, which shows the various levels of access.

relevant “in terms of their own lives” (ibid.: 75), *kamalengoni* formal education could be effective in both Mali and Burkina Faso. The two forms of musical transmission, i.e., enculturation and institutional learning, could operate as allies to enrich the body of knowledge despite their differences in approach and ethos. The institutionalisation of *kamalengoni* may challenge what it means to be a *dankɔɔba* as it may generate standardized composition methods and performance techniques, as well as select a specific repertoire for the formal requirement of assessing a player, thus forming a canon that is disconnected from *dankɔɔbaw*. The ability to perform what is written (as opposed to how it is interpreted) may be a way to determine who is a good *kamalengonifɔlaw*. Again, this would be dislocated from the *dankɔɔbaw* who created and are re-existing the tradition.

The dramatic change in musical transmission that institutional learning can bring could create conflict with several other controversial challenges, such as the possibility of non-*kamalengonifɔlaw* examining the musicianship of a *kamalengonifɔlaw*. What would be assessed in the academy? Most importantly, will mature *kamalengoni dankɔɔbaw* from past phases be recognized and integrated into these institutions, despite their lack of formal education and qualifications? Their perceived freedom of musical choice(s) may be blurred. Thus, unwanted new pressures (exams, deadlines and less time playing the harp) may emerge.

The best possible scenario for the *kamalengoni* is that institutionalisation that fully respects other forms of learning alongside the academy may provide new pathways to the *dankɔɔbaw kamalengonifɔlaw* of the future. That may help to transform tradition, preserve knowledge and support impoverished communities of brilliant young players. Access to formal tools may help local *kamalengonifɔlaw* to encode *nagamin* products of iconic players from the past. The Malian

kamalengonifɔla Yoro Diallo from Phase I is still alive and actively performing and is considered a national treasure by the *kamalengonifɔlaw* community, though not by heritage institutions. Incorporating musicians such as Yoro Diallo, Harouna Samaké, Kokanko Sata, and Adama Yalomba in Mali and Dicko Fils, Issouf Coulibaly and Rama N’Goni in Burkina Faso into institutional teaching would enable systematic learning for young West African musicians and the growing community of *wɔnɔw*.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative research into *nagamin* products from key *kamalengonifɔlaw* could equip musical institutions in Africa to formalise the instrument in educational institutions. The gathering of tools combining oral knowledge with written systems designed specifically for *kamalengoni* could help tackle the challenges of including the harp in institutionalized bodies in Mali, Burkina Faso and across the globe. The notation system I devised for this research could be further developed to help provide methodological tools in collaboration with living musicians who are regarded as heritage treasures from the earliest phases. A new *malandragem* advances *kamalengoni* practices as a tradition of invention for future generations. A project that could generate the first series of *nagamin* products could take the form of a songbook featuring specific *kamalengonifɔlaw*.

Not long ago, on his first visit to Brazil, the *jeli* Sotigui Kouyaté said that “in life there is what one owes, what one wants, and what one can”⁸ while the composer and pianist Duke Ellington once said, “The wise musicians are those who play what they can master” (Klickstein 2009: 14). Acquiring university degrees may help musicians to develop that wisdom, yet there are no guarantees of obtaining a

⁸ See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJd1te_3piI [Accessed: 30.4.20].

successful outcome, even from the best guidance and training. For me, having learned in the shanty towns of Brazil, the *malandragens* of music-making came naturally in the poverty-stricken neighbourhoods of West Africa, where I observed *kamalengonifɔlaw* execute across phases without formal education. This experience has led me to reflect on how to create in an extraordinary fashion in the eyes of those self-taught masters. Their influence has had a profound impact on my process of reflection, empathy and, ultimately, love and friendship. It takes imagination, skill and focus to create a melody with new note combinations and intervals yet creating something extraordinary is a cultural aesthetic.

In the words of my teacher Harouna Samaké, “*Bee ki I dio yoro fa*” (Everybody must give their best). The action of doing one’s best can transcend the access (or lack of it) to resources in Mali and Burkina Faso. With the *kamalengoni*, everything can be turned into beauty from the raw materials for creating the instrument, its sounds and the musician’s performing techniques. But after having employed *malandragem* as a transferable method to rationalise performance excellence in Mali and Burkina Faso, I realise that innate talent in music ultimately needs to be developed and solidified. After much study and reflection of *nagamin* products, the reality is that the medium's knowledge and the ability to perform music live will create opportunities for a tradition of invention to re-exist and perpetuate itself through inventions perceived by others as extraordinary.

The most important factor that distinguishes the *malandro/dankɔrɔba* from other resourceful and socially clever musicians around the world who have transcended their circumstances through music is their everyday proximity to death. In places like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Brazil, where inequalities are steep and explicit, innocent people’s lives are routinely taken by criminals, lawbreakers in

uniform enacting state violence, those imposing European colonialism heritage, and preventable disease. When one's life is at stake, the cognitive and intellectual resources required to defend oneself have a different quality for struggling musicians in more affluent and equal societies. Ultimately, creativity manifests itself differently in situations of shortage (Santos 2011), where alternative frameworks are generated due to scarcity circumstances. *Malandragem* is one of these frameworks which operates effectively to rationalise performance excellence in areas of high life risk, poverty and corruption, such as Mali and Burkina Faso.

As humans we continue to change ourselves and change who we are;⁹ the process of such change challenges us to the core of our everyday existence. *Kɔnɔya* in *kamalengoni* practices is a recent result of cultural change that took place half a century ago and which has been in a permanent state of adaptation up to the twenty-first century digital revolution. At the time of writing, *kɔnɔya*, like everyone else, will be using *malandrags* to survive a pandemic. Accustomed to problems of survival in civil society and on the edge of war zones in Mali and Burkina Faso, no doubt *kamalengonifɔlaw* will be pursuing their music to alleviate the latest challenges, changes, and pressures.

⁹ See 2018 interview with Ray Kurzweil <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DW6thQ-bZw> [Accessed: 23.12.18].

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Appendix I

Glossary of Foreign Words and Musical Terms

Bamanankan (also known as Bambara) is a Mandé language of the Niger-Congo classification. Bamanankan is one of a cluster of northern Mandé languages, which linguist Charles Bird (et al. 1977) designated as Mandékan. Other languages in the group include Maninka (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mali) and Mandinka (The Gambia and southern Senegal). Bamanankan is a first language for approximately fifteen million people in Mali (80% of the population) and has numerous mutually intelligible dialects, including Somono, Segou, San, Beledugu, Ganadugu, Sikasso, and Wasulunke, which is spoken in the Wasulu region of Mali. “Standard” Bamanankan is the main African language in Bamako and was the main dialect used to conduct this research.

Most of the African terms listed in this glossary are Standard Bamanankan and its dialect Wasulunke, and Maninka and are designated Mandékan. Modern Bamanankan incorporates many French and Arabic loan words, including transliterated loan words and word formations. These are marked where appropriate. Only plurals that are frequently used in the thesis are included.

* * *

axé (Brazilian Nagô) - esoteric force believed to be present in all things.

bala (Mandékan)/*balafon* (Malinké/French) - type of gourd-resonated xylophone with wooden keys.

balani(n) (Mandékan) - a small, pentatonic *bala*.

bara (Mandékan) - gourd traditionally used as a resonator for the *kamalengoni* and other harps.

barama (Mandékan) - metal cooking pot.

bɔ (pl. *bɔw*) (Mandékan) - bamboo piece used in *kamalengoni* construction.

bɔkala (Mandékan) - *kamalengoni*'s neck.

bolominslan (Mandékan) - *kamalengoni*'s dowels (that also function as handles).

Candomblé - Afro-Brazilian religion created and practised primarily by slaves and their decedents.

capoeira (Portuguese) - Afro-Brazilian martial art/dance that evolved during slavery to resist colonial oppression.

cuíca (Portuguese) - double-headed friction drum played in Brazilian *samba* and popular music.

dankɔrɔba (pl. *dankɔrɔbaw*) (Mandékan) – literally hero; experienced individual who is extremely powerful, successful in life achievements, and very knowledgeable.

donso (pl. *donsow*) (Mandékan) - hunter.

donso position - etic term devised by author (from *donsongoni* playing position) where the resonator rests on the belly, chair or floor and the neck is slanted upward and held with the strong hand).

donsongoni (pl. *donsongoniw*) (Mandékan) - generic term for hunters' harp.

donsoya (Mandékan) - the art of hunting.

exú - (Nâgo) - spiritual entity in Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions Umbanda and Candomblé.

gasbará (French/ Mandékan) - metal gas cylinder used as a resonator in

kamalengoniw. From French loan word *gas* and Bamanankan *bara* (gourd).

girigiri (pl. *girigiriw*) (Mandékan) - protective amulet.

golo (pl. *gollow*) (Mandékan) - animal hide. The name of the animal can be used as a prefix, e.g., *bagolo* (goatskin), *manganigolo* (deer skin), *misigolo/sigigolo* (buffalo skin).

griot (pl. *griots*) (French) - generic name for West African inherited oral historians/musicians

hɔrɔn (Mandékan) - Mandé free-born noble class.

jeli (pl. *jeliw*) (Mandékan) - word for *griot* in northern Mandé languages.

jeli ngoni (Mandékan) – lute played by *jeliw*.

jeliya (Mandékan) - art of the *jeli*.

jinn (Arabic loan word in Mandékan) - pre-Islamic spirits.

juru (pl. *juruw*) (Mandékan) - string, cord, cable.

ka dere (inf. verb) (Mandékan) - heavily staccato plucking technique of the *kamalengoni*.

ka fɛn jagamin (inf. verb) (Mandékan) - to mix.

kamalendan (Mandékan) - small six-stringed pluriac (also known as *ndan*).

kamalengoni (pl. *kamalengoniw*) (Mandékan) - West African bridge harp originally with six strings but now up to eighteen strings.

kamalengonifɔla (pl. *kamalengonifɔlaw*) (Mandékan) - *kamalengoni* player.

karinyan (Mandékan) – cylindrical metal idiophone scraper.

kɔnɔ (pl. *kɔnɔw*) (Mandékan) - literally bird, musician by choice.

kɔnɔya (Mandékan) - the art of the *kɔnɔ*.

kɔnɔya web - etic term devised by author for a growing international network of individuals practising *kɔnɔya*.

konege (pl. *konegué*) (Mandékan) - metal tuning keys.

kora (Mandékan) - heptatonic West African twenty-one stringed bridge harp played by *jeliw*.

kora position - etic term devised by author (from *kora* playing position) where the resonator is held symmetrically with the bridge facing the player.

koso (pl. *kosow*) (Mandékan) - tuning ring made of leather, silk, or other material.

malandragem (pl. *malandragens*) (Portuguese) – 1) a cluster of exceptional verbal and non-verbal performance strategies perceived as crucial to elevate a piece of artwork to a high professional degree of competence; 2) A socially constructed ethos that intertwines historical, aesthetic, and cultural nuances accepted as strategy for survival and as a way of gaining social power.

malandro (Portuguese) - one who has successfully employed *malandragem*.

malandro (f. *malandra*) (Portuguese) - individual who successfully employs *malandragem*.

jagamin product (Mandékan/English) - etic term devised by the author for a recognisable sonic signature that can be an idiomatic motif, phrase or melody. It can also encompass organology, where modifications to the instrument (such as kind of resonator, number of strings, use of technology) alter the sound produced. It encompasses technology, including live amplification and guitar pedals, and studio techniques and all sorts of production values.

ndan (Mandékan) - small six-stringed pluriac (also known as *kamalendan*).

ngoni (Mandékan) - generic name for chordophones, including lutes and harps. A prefix may be added, e.g., *jeli ngoni* (*jeli* lute), *donsongoni* (hunters' harp), and *kamalengoni* (youth harp).

ngonisen (pl. *ngonisenw*) (Mandékan) - literally "leg of the *ngoni*," *kamalengoni* ostinato.

nyama (Mandékan) - unseen force present in all things and believed to be vigorous in metals, plants, animals and human speech and hands.

nyamakala (Mandékan) - hereditary artisan caste encompassing those who control *nyama* such as musicians, hunters, blacksmiths, and leatherworkers.

nyenaje (Mandékan) - kind of secular music for entertainment.

pagode (Portuguese) - musical genre created in the 1980s in Brazil, which mixtures *samba* with pop music.

rank crossing - a *kamalengoni* performance technique where the thumbs and index fingers pluck strings across ranks.

so siri nege (Mandékan) - iron ring attaching strings to the *kamalengoni* resonator.

takala (Mandékan) - the knotted area that attaches handles with the neck of the *kamalengoni*.

teremeli (Mandékan) literally "musical bargaining," improvisational function of the *kamalengoni*.

Umbanda (Portuguese) - Afro-Brazilian religion branch of Spiritism and Candomblé.

Wasulu - region straddling southern Mali, eastern Guinea and northern Côte D'Ivoire.

wasulu fɔli (Mandékan) - genre of semi-acoustic music from the Wasulu region that has been popularised in Mali since the 1970s. Also known as *wassoulou* music.

wɔnɔw (English/Mandékan) - etic term devised by author for non-African

kamalengoni players.

wo (Mandékan) - hole (in the *kamalengoni* resonator).

wassoulou (Mandékan/French) – genre of music from the Wasulu region.

yiri (Mandékan) - wood.

Zé Pelintra (Portuguese) - one of the *exú* spiritual entities in Brazilian Umbanda.

Appendix II
Lecture Demonstration and Recital Programme

PART ONE: LECTURE-DEMONSTRATION

Organology (corresponds with Chapter Three)

Overall *kamalengoni* structure.

The resonator.

Strings.

Tunings.

Decoration and accessories.

Performance Techniques (Chapter Three)

Playing positions.

Plucking techniques.

Effects and extended techniques.

Amplification and effects.

***Nagamin* Products**

Phase I (Chapter Four)

Performance techniques.

Ornamentation.

Phase II (Chapter Four)

Performance techniques.

Western influence.

Phase III (Chapter Five)

Performance techniques.

Tonal change.

Phase IV (Chapter Five)

Performance techniques.

PART TWO: RECITAL

Phase I

1. Piece: “N’Na Allata” by Alata Brulaye.

Instruments: twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* (Zé Kouyaté), *karinyan* (scraper)
(Landing Mané) and voice (Moussa Dembélé).

Style: *donso*.

Performance techniques: *donso* techniques 1 and 2.

Tuning: D-E-G-A-B.

Nagamin product(s): The relationship between ornaments of muted and open notes.

Phase II

2. Piece: “Jeliya.” Traditional.

Instruments: twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* and voice (Zé Kouyaté), sixteen-stringed
kamalengoni (Moussa Dembélé), and *jembe* (Landing Mané).

Style: *jeli*.

Performance techniques: *kora* technique 1.

Tuning: D-E-G-A-B.

Nagamin product(s): An understanding of how sonic signatures are created for
kamalengoni.

3. Piece: “Sarala” by Cheick Tidiane Seck.

Instruments: twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* and voice (Zé Kouyaté), *bala* (xylophone)
(Moussa Dembélé), and *jembe* (Landing Mané).

Style: *kɔnɔ*.

Performance techniques: *kora* technique 1.

Tuning: D-E-G-A-C.

Nagamin product(s): Rhythmic influence on the construction of sonic signatures.

Phase III

4. Piece: “Sogodounou” by Nahawa Doumbia.

Instruments: twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* (Zé Kouyaté), *karinyan*, *jembe* (Landing Mané), and *bala* (Moussa Dembélé).

Style: *kɔnɔ*.

Performance techniques: *donso* techniques 1 and 2.

Tuning: D-F-G-A-C.

Nagamin product(s): Recalling the past using more advanced technologies as a strategic resource to construct sonic signatures.

5. Piece: “Aye Lamén” by Adama Yalomba.

Instruments: twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* (Zé Kouyaté), *bala* (Moussa Dembélé), and *jembe* (Landing Mané).

Style: *kɔnɔ*.

Performance techniques: *kora* technique 2.

Tuning: D-F-G-A-C.

Nagamin product(s): The use of a pentatonic harp to accompany heptatonic melodies as a strategy to construct sonic signatures.

Phase IV

6. Piece: “Cheikhna Demba” by Ballaké Sissoko and Toumani Diabaté.

Instruments: twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* (Zé Kouyaté) and sixteen-stringed *kamalengoni* (Moussa Dembélé).

Style: *jeli*.

Performance techniques: *donso* techniques 1 and 2, *kora* technique 1.

Tuning: D-F-G-A-B.

Nagamin product(s): Adaptation of the traditional heptatonic tuning of the *jeli kora* repertoire played on a pentatonic *kamalengoni* as a strategy to construct sonic signatures.

7. Piece: “Batoma” by Yoro Diallo.

Instruments: twelve-stringed *kamalengoni* (Zé Kouyaté), *bala* (Moussa Dembélé) and *bara* (gourd percussion) (Landing Mané).

Style: *kɔnɔ*.

Performance techniques: *kora* technique 1.

Tuning: D-E-G-A-C.

Nagamin product(s): The use of interlocking cyclic phrases of four voices as a strategy to construct sonic signatures.

Appendix III Notation Symbols

	open tone plucked by thumb		open tone plucked by index finger
	open tone plucked by thumb on opposite rank		open tone plucked by index finger on opposite rank
	damped note plucked by thumb		damped note plucked by index finger
	heavily damped staccato plucked by thumb		heavily damped staccato played by index finger
	harmonic plucked by thumb		harmonic played by index finger
	<i>portamento</i> (ascending)		<i>portamento</i> (descending)
	<i>tremolo/portamento</i> (ascending)		<i>tremolo/portamento</i> (descending)
	<i>tremolo</i>		bend
	squeaking effect		wah-wah effect