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Comedy at the Junction of Popular and Political Cultures in Guinea: The Cases of Gèètö, Tyoptyop, and L'Homme

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This study examines the role that stand-up comedy has played in empowering popular culture, influencing political culture, and limiting the impact of censorship of artistic creativity in Guinea. It explores ways in which public humor, as a distinctive genre of expression, mitigates the effects of Guinea's low literacy rate while optimizing the informational, educational, and recreational potency of orature. It does this through a topical analysis of the works of three comedians who evolved outside the mainstream mass media and developed steady grassroots platforms and loyal audiences while exposing social injustice and moral flaws within their society. The study concludes that, paradoxically, the fact that the state denied them the status of bona fide artists enabled these comedians to remain free from political co-optation, scrutinize societal taboos, and expose the truth in ways that recognized artists could not under the prevailing political circumstances.

Keywords: Cultural policy; Gender relations; Humor; Oral literature; Political culture; Political censorship; Popular culture; Stand-up comedy.

Introduction

This article explores major ways in which comedy exemplifies the power of popular culture to defy political censorship, advance freedom of expression, and contribute to the democratization of political culture in contemporary Africa. It uses the case studies of three popular comedians with distinctive performance styles and attempts to show how each style attracts audiences and how they promote free speech in the West African country of Guinea-Conakry. The article does so from the combined perspectives of political history and social philosophy. The latter perspective refers to the comedians' conjuring up of Islamic and West African religious creeds to fustigate particular social flaws and moral deviancies that affect their society. In a broader context, the article posits stand-up comedy as an integral component of West Africa's enduring tradition of orature or oral literature, wherein masters of the spoken word provide captivating entertainment and engaging reflections on the issues of the day.

We identify the three comedians here by their stage names of Gèètö, Tyoptyop, and L'Homme, respectively. Gèètö performs in improvised neighborhood soirées because he has been denied access to state-controlled media for decades; Tyoptyop performs in established urban clubs; and L'Homme is essentially a street performer. Furthermore, the article addresses the economic aspect of the comedians' career. In doing so, it emphasizes the roles that 'parallel publicists' and 'container music merchants' play in disseminating the comedians' works in the absence of intellectual property rights protection.[1]

The article stems from the study of audiotapes and CDs obtained from Conakry 'container music merchants' and supplemented with the few relevant clips available on YouTube. It also incorporates inputs from Guineans familiar with the influence that these comedians have had on generations of their compatriots longing for engaging entertainment. The inputs were obtained over the past three decades through informal conversations and questionnaire-based interviews that were part of research on projects published subsequently in various formats. The author's personal and professional experience as a former Guinean journalist provided an understanding of the mechanisms that state media employed to censor the art in general. This background proved useful, especially when it came to putting the study in the proper context of Guinea's political and cultural history. The underlying objective of the study is to shed light on the historical evolution of freedom of comedic speech under the major political regimes that have ruled Guinea since independence in 1958: Sékou Touré's single-party regime (1958-1984), General Lansana Conté's military junta (1984-2008), and Alpha Condé's multiparty civilian regime (2010 to present).

In this article, we understand comedy as an art form in which performers utilize humor to entertain while conveying serious messages and, in doing so, brave societal taboos to reach and expose the truth. Moreover, we understand comedy once and at the same time as a universal and culture-centric genre of social expression. Accordingly, the central premise of the article is that the comedians studied here perfected their art by drawing content from the prevailing prepossessions of Guinean society while incorporating aspects of the universal potency of humor, as they exist in Guinean folklore. As such, these comedians represent a microcosm of Guinean popular culture, even though all three are from one of Guinea's many ethnic groups. To be sure, all of them are ethnic Fulani; that is, members of the country's largest ethnic group–40 percent of its 10.5 million inhabitants by the 2014 estimate of the Institut National de la Statistique (2014). These comedians stand also as an embodiment of their generations' quest for social change and freedom of expression in a society grappling with the vestiges of social inequalities and a state that has long practiced political censorship of the art. The place of these comedians' work in the interplay of popular culture and political culture in Guinea can be better appreciated when considered in conjunction with the evolutionary transformation of the Guinean state's official cultural policy and that of the national political culture in which the policy was couched. Hence, the article opens with a brief historical overview aimed at putting Guinean public humor in general, and stand-up comedy in particular, in the proper context. The overview is followed by a thematic study of the works of the three comedians with an emphasis on their respective discursive techniques and artistic styles through which they each confront eminently controversial issues in seamless and entertaining ways. Lastly, the article contrasts the proven ability of stand-up comedy to defy political censorship with the uncertain economics of it in contemporary Guinea.

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[1] In this context the term 'parallel publicists' refers to individuals who contribute to the propagation of a performer's works outside the formal, mainstream media system. 'Container music merchants' are so called because they sell musical artifacts (videos, CDs, and DVDs) in shipment containers skillfully turned into secure kiosks placed along sidewalks and other such accessible places.

Guinean Public Humor in Historical Context

Contemporary Guinean society is the product of the amalgamation of several major ethnic groups and numerous smaller ones based on treaties that colonial France, Britain and Portugal, and the Republic of Liberia made in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries.[2] The major groups are the Fulani or Peuhl, Mandeka or Malinké, Soso, Kissi, Loma or Toma, and Kpele or Guerzé. The smaller ones include, but are not limited to, the Jallonka, Koniagui, Bassari, Badiaranke, Mano, Lele, Landouma, and Baga. Prior to European colonial occupation, the Fulani and Mande in particular, had established centralized state systems with discernible aristocratic classes, bureaucracies, standing armies and, most importantly for the present study, a class of professional storytellers and entertainers known as *jeli*, *jali* or *griots*.[3] The other ethnic groups were mostly organized into smaller political entities encompassing a few villages each.

Irrespective of their internal political organization and the size of their polities, these communities shared two characteristics that are particularly relevant to this study: they all developed compelling art forms that included comedy and storytelling; and they all had a worldview according to which it is undignified to satirize and mock the state ruler. Doing so is bound to undermine the ruler's power, and influence and weaken state authority. In a 1993 interview, Guinean dramaturge Wolibo Doukouré expounded the traditional worldview in these terms:

> In traditional West Africa, *griots* played roles akin to those of modern-day journalists, diplomats, advisors to rulers, storytellers, and archivists. As such, they had the power, the right, the duty, and the skills to speak truth to authority and hold it to account. They were the voice of the voiceless and ensured that rulers served the legitimate interests of the nation. The *jeliba* or master griots (who were closer to the rulers) could discharge this paramount duty safely and effectively because they maintained all along a high degree of decorum toward the dignity of the ruler and the authority of the state. In other words, rulers and *jeliba* operated under an unwritten contract of mutual trust and respect, which allowed them to serve the superior interests of the nation confidently and dutifully.[4]

Sékouba Bambino Diabaté, a musical star and a descendent of a respected *griot* family, corroborated Doukouré's analysis, adding that the Western idea of freedom of expression involving intrusive criticism of the private lives of public officials is alien to *griots*' concept of duty. Diabaté argued that one major reason why contemporary African states censor the media and the arts is that too many African journalists and artists behave in ways that cause governments to perceive them as adversaries. He was quick to clarify, though, that his view on the matter is not an endorsement of any sort of cult of personality that tends to portray political leaders as infallible. Between the two extremes, he insisted, "there must be a reasonable middle ground where leaders can be compelled to be accountable to the people without infringing the core African values."[5]

To the question of whether cult of personality was not exactly what *griots* created around traditional African rulers, Mamady Goblo Dioubaté responded with a thought-provoking explanation. According to this descendant of a *griot* lineage, when traditional *griots* chanted the praises of a king in public, they executed two intersecting tasks at once. On one hand, they accomplished an exclusive public-relations mission on behalf of the state (embodied in the king) by reassuring the king's subjects that they had every reason to trust and be loyal to their ruler, because he had their interests and well-being at heart. On the other hand, the *griots* held the ruler to account by reminding him that he owed his throne to the people because a leader without followers is a lonely wanderer. Dioubaté explained that this is the reason why *griots* generally couched their praises of a ruler in his genealogy. In doing so, they reminded the ruler that he was the heir to a family of dedicated servants of the people and the continuator of the family's noble deeds.[6]

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[2] On the formation of French Guinea, see Rivière (1971); De Benoist (1979); Camara (2007).

[3] For more information on the role and status of the *griots* in West African history and cultures see Hale (1990); and Camara (2010).

[4] Wolibo Doukouré is a Guinean writer and dramaturge. He is the author of numerous writings on Guinean art during the Socialist Cultural Revolution (see Works Cited under Doukouré).

[5] Sékouba Bambino Diabaté is a Guinean *griot* and musician (see Works Cited under Diabaté).

Doukouré explained that we could better understand the evolution of cultural policy and political culture in Guinea by examining it with the preceding in mind. He further explained that considering this evolution would help bring to light the significance of comedy at the junction of popular and political cultures in Guinea, especially for readers who are not familiar with the country's cultural and political history. Doukouré was alluding to the fact that during the first decades of Guinea's independence (1958-1984), the ruling Democratic Party of Guinea (*Parti Démocratique de Guinée* – PDG) was the force that determined state cultural policy. So much so that Guinea's political culture conformed to the populist political program that the party articulated in a movement referred to as the Socialist Cultural Revolution (*Révolution Culturelle Socialiste* – RCS). Although the PDG only officially proclaimed the RCS in 1968, the beginnings of the movement go back to 1964 when President Sékou Touré announced the official adoption of a socialist path inspired by Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, and Castroism.

One of the main official objectives of the RCS, as stated in the charter that was proclaimed in August 1968, was the "rehabilitation and decolonization of African cultural values and artistic genius" in accordance with the political ideology of the PDG.[7] Consequently, artistic creativity was regimented to conform to the bottom-up structural organization of the PDG youth movement known as the Youth of the African Democratic Revolution (*Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine* – JRDA). Performers of all fields were to belong to JRDA artistic groups or musical bands and periodically compete in artistic festivals at the local, district, provincial, and national levels, respectively. Comedy was an integral part of JRDA artistic creation often enacted in the form of stage plays in strict accordance with party norms. The other national platform available to comedians was the national radio station officially called Voice of the Revolution (*Voix de la Révolution*) which broadcast weekly storytelling programs in Guinea's six major native languages. Cultural policy relegated independent or 'freelance comedians' like Gèètö, L'Homme and, to a limited extent, Tyoptyop to the rank of 'underground troubadours' and confined them to whatever platforms and audiences they could garner.

Paradoxically, the implicit ostracism (no written rules sanctioned the practice) gave these 'freelancers' more freedom of expression among grassroots audiences. To be sure, unlike JRDA artists and performers, they were under no obligation to serve as echo chambers for the single-party regime in relaying its political rhetoric. This is not to say that they had the freedom to disregard underlying party norms, if only because the party could plant informants in their audiences. After all, as popular culture had it, 'walls have ears, windows have eyes'. In fact, according to Thierno Dyaaka Souaré, a former host of cultural programs in the Fulani language for the *Voix de la Révolution*, the main reason why he never invited Gèètö on his programs was that Gèètö's stories and jokes we riddled with profanities. Souaré further explained that although the works of Gèètö and other 'underground troubadours' were not necessarily subversive toward the PDG, they did not adhere to the core mission of the RCS. For that reason, he, an employee of the state radio station, was not at liberty to air Gèètö's comedy.[8]

At any rate, during the PDG era, the themes of the three comedians studied here intersected on different levels. The themes included the following: Islamic ethics; trust and moral self-worth/self-discipline; material wealth and power; love, marriage, fidelity, and infidelity; friendship and betrayal; family values; and gender relations. As a matter of general practice, they would embed political opinions and criticism in the comedic narrative centered on these themes. Gèètö and L'Homme skillfully incorporated riddles and proverbs, a method central to African oral literature. In general, all three used the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove by resorting to social fiction by way of addressing real-life societal problems that they would not otherwise openly touch under the prevailing political circumstances.

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[6] Mamady Dioubaté AKA Goblo is a Guinean *griot* and art critique (see Works Cited under Dioubaté).

[7] For more information on this pronouncement, see Touré (1968, 1972, 1977, and 1982).

[8] Thierno Dyaaka Souaré is a former political commentator and cultural program host for the Voice of the Revolution in Fulani (see Works Cited under Souaré).

Since the downfall of the PDG regime in 1984, the political environment has become progressively propitious to freedom of expression, including through the arts. During the reign of General Lansana Conté (1984-2008), particularly after the introduction of political pluralism in the early 1990s, the state relaxed its grip on the arts and, at a slower pace, on traditional mass media (the print media, radio, and television, in that order). As a result, competition intensified as a newer generation of performers emerged with a different stylistic trend. Unemployed college graduates formed independent networks of art promoters, just as established foreign comedians, such as Jean Miché Kankan (whose real name is Jean-Michel) of Cameroon, loomed large on the African arena. In this changing environment, veteran comedian Sow Baïlo Tyoptyop and newcomer Tonto Kendeka became national stars for a brief period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. The constant competition for power and influence that the introduction of multiparty politics made possible and the multifaceted culture of intrigue that ensued provided much-needed material, and so did the birth of *Le Lynx*, a nationally acclaimed satirical weekly newspaper. With the preceding in mind, I focus in the next pages on some of the creative ways in which Gèètö, Tyoptyop, and L'Homme perfected techniques borrowed from West African popular culture to address issues in Guinea's political culture.

Gèètö: Comedic Activism for Change

Gèètö is a tailor by trade and a comedian by vocation. He hails from Timbi Madina, an ancient town in the highlands of Futa Jallon, home to the deeply religious Fulani of central and northern Guinea. He does not have formal Western education but has gone through the traditional Koranic education that consists mainly of learning to read and write using the Arabic alphabet and memorizing the holy book of Islam. This aspect of Gèètö's background is significant because early on in his career as a comedian, he made the social inequality upon which the old Fulani order was based the prime target of his comedic activism. The goal, as he put it back in the late 1970s, was to compel his people to restore "the divinely ordained natural equality among the sons and daughters of Adam."[9] He thus framed his narrative at a dark period for the Fulani elite, a sizeable number of whom became political prisoners on suspicion of taking part in what the PDG leadership termed in 1976 the Fulani Plot against the Guinean Revolution.

On Social Inequality and Injustice

Gèètö's philosophy of the divine right of all to equality is antithetical to the highly stratified socio-political system that his ancestors instituted in eighteenth-century Futa Jallon under the guise of spreading Allah's message and following His will. In effect, the quasi-theocratic polity that Fulani proselytizers created in the 1700s rested on the supremacy of a few clans of immigrant pastoralists and the subjugation of native agriculturalists.[10] The natives opposed the annexation of their land by the newcomers and resisted conversion to Islam, which they saw as an instrument of domination. Thus, by denouncing the regime of inequality created in the name of Allah, Gèètö confronts a key facet of his own upbringing, which is what enlightened disruptors have often done in history.

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[9] Excerpt from a live performance that Gèètö gave in Kenyen, Conakry, in April 1979 (see Works Cited under Gèètö, 1979).

[10] On this see also William Derman (1973). *Serfs, Peasants, and Socialists: A Former Serf Village in the Republic of Guinea*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Boubacar Barry (1976). *Bokar Biro: le dernier grand almamy du Fouta Djallon*. Paris: ABC; and Maladho Diallo (2002). *Histoire du Fouta Djallon*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Upon defeating the fragmented communities of natives in their so-called jihad, the Fulani instituted a quasi-theocratic federation with nine provinces where Fulani self-proclaimed nobles subjected the natives to serfdom, alleging that Allah had willed His 'noble' servants to subjugate the infidels they converted. Gèètö confronts the injustice head on and underscores its absurdity by pointing out that the Prophet Muhammad and his warriors did not subjugate the Meccan idolaters upon defeating them. What they did, instead, was free the vanquished Meccans from idolatry by destroying the numerous tribal idols that they worshiped and compelling them to accept Allah as the only deity and Islam as their religion. The point here is that from the example of the Prophet, one learns that converting a populace to Islam does not give proselytizers the right to enslave the neophytes. Gèètö punctuates the story with utterances such as, "there is no bigger sinner than he who falsely accuses Allah of willing the subjugation of one people by another in His name" (Idem). He counters the old claim that 'noble' Fulani rightfully owned their serfs, saying: "the only way you could rightfully own your so-called serfs would be if you created one half of their being while Allah created the other half" (Ibid). Lastly, he confronts corrupt Fulani clerics with the following question: "How can you claim to hold your neophytes' key to Heaven when you don't even understand that your blasphemous claims and misguided behaviors actually destine you to the eternal fires of Hell?" (Ibid) Gèètö backs his harsh objections and questions with selected Koranic verses that he recites with strong conviction, albeit with minor mispronunciations. A loose analogy to Gèètö's stance on this issue would be that of an American descendent of former slave owners citing the Bible to fustigate the long-abolished institution of slavery, but also racial discrimination against African Americans, which is very much alive.

On Gender Inequality

Another sensitive issue that Gèètö tackles is gender inequality. He does this in an unconventional and quite provocative way by opposing male domination and female ruse in stories that require a deep understanding of Fulani culture and Guinean society to grasp. One such story is about the tangled web of a young couple undermined by greed and infidelity and terminated in due course thanks to the ruse of an older woman. In this story, the young husband is the only child of a wealthy man. He marries a young woman after rejecting several others without realizing that his bride is only interested in stealing two boxes of gold and diamonds that his late father left him. She plans the theft with the help of another young man whom she seduced into becoming her boyfriend for that sole purpose. In addition, she gets the unsolicited help of an elderly female neighbor who, unbeknown to her, is on a benevolent mission to protect the interests of the gullible young heir. The elderly woman convinces the young husband to take a short trip, come back earlier than promised, hide in a room adjacent to their conjugal bedroom and listen. Then she arranges a date for the young lovers. In the heat of the pillow talk that followed their lavish dinner, the woman reveals that she has stolen her husband's most precious inheritance (the gold and diamonds) and is now looking for a pretext to divorce him and get away with the fortune. She tries hard to convince the boyfriend to marry her once she has divorced. However, the elderly neighbor had warned him against going too far, so he rejects the offer and leaves in the middle of the night. The next day the husband confronts his adulterous and thieving wife, takes back his fortune and divorces her.

The lesson here is that the benevolent ruse of the elderly woman defeats the treacherous behavior of the greedy and unfaithful bride and saves the wealth and social standing of the betrayed husband, using the naïve romantic adventure of the boyfriend.

The elderly woman does this for three reasons: first, because the young husband's late father had been her benefactor in times of need; second, because she sees it as her womanly duty to save the young bride from herself and her dishonorable behavior that is a disgrace to womanhood; and three, because she can. In this latter reason resides the most powerful message of Gèètö's social philosophy regarding the balance of power between the genders. That message draws from a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad according to which men are superior to women in 50 percent of life's scope and inferior to them in the other 50 percent. Hence, both genders need one another equally in order to fulfil 100 percent their human raison d'être. In this story, the underlying idea is that by enduring arbitrary gender inequality throughout most of human history women have developed survival mechanisms that are poised to manifest themselves in the form of something that men are quick to interpret as female innate treachery, especially when they feel threatened in their social manhood. Those survival mechanisms become more sophisticated as a woman matures. Their manifestations also become increasingly effective and puzzling to men stuck in their virtual universe of male superiority.

Gèètö's forceful evocation of the example of the Prophet Muhammad as the righteous path does not amount to some Salafist call for a blind return to seventh-century Islamic practices, however. On the contrary, Gèètö calls for progress and justice. He wants his Muslim society to modernize and advance with the rest of the world while remaining true to its authentic self, which includes ridding itself of the anachronistic mentality that brought about the baseless social injustices fustigated in the comedian's stories.

Interestingly, on both issues, social injustice in Fulani society and gender bias, Gèètö's social philosophy seems to converge with the political ideology of the PDG regime. In effect, the regime put much emphasis upon the abolishment of all forms of social inequality and social injustice, including the subjugation of women through polygamy, among other things. The PDG pursued, rather aggressively, a dual program of women's liberation and youth empowerment, which yielded tangible results in crucial areas such as academic education and professional training, equal opportunity in employment, and political participation. In a sense, then, the evidence contradicts the argument of Thierno Dyaaka Souaré cited earlier alleging that Gèètö's work did not adhere to the core mission of the RCS. The contradiction begs the question whether, in fact, the state media's ostracizing of Gèètö did not emanate from the Fulani establishment (his own people) who may have viewed him as a renegade activist out to sink their boat from within.

Mouctar Pilimini Diallo, a host of cultural programs for *Radio Rurale Labé* (Community Radio of the city of Labé) gave this question serious thought during our conversation on media, culture, and politics in Guinea. He cautioned researchers against rushing to judgment by making too much of the seeming convergence between Gèètö's advocacy for social justice and the PDG political ideology. Diallo argued that to draw conclusions on Gèètö's stand on issues from his words alone is to miss the point of his narrative.[11] His argument recalls that of Karin Barber (1987: 1-78) who writes that in many African art forms "meaning cannot be extrapolated from the words alone but is conveyed by all the elements in combination." This is so, Barber explains, because these art forms "make their effects through a combination of music, dance, costume, mime, song, and speech." So, what value does music add to Gèètö's comedic activism?

Music as Added Mystic to the Story

Diallo suggested that music adds enigma to Gèètö's story telling. He insisted that unless scholars consider this factor, they might not fully grasp the many subtleties of the comedian's masterful castigation of real-life flaws. In effect, on several of his available tapes, talented female singers accompany Gèètö, with instrumental support from the equally talented guitarist Jeli Sayon Kouyaté. The suave melody of Kouyaté's guitar provides a soothing background against which the singers render heartening lyrics that help put the stories in the proper historical and/or mythical and cultural context. A case in point would be the incorporation in Gèètö's criticism of Fulani quasi-theocracy discussed earlier of four legendary Mande songs: *Duga* or The Vulture, *Fama Dènkè* or Prince, *Alalake* or It is God's Will, and *Saya Manyi* or Death Is Terrible. Each of these iconic songs conveys a message of considerable moral and emotional profundity. Sung in this exact order in the background of the story summarized above, they give it new literary and philosophical dimensions. Consider these excerpts from two of these songs: *Duga* and *Fama Dènkè*.

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[11] Mouctar Pilimini Diallo was a former schoolmate of mine. He became a program host and, then, an administrator for *Radio Rurale Labé* (see Works Cited under Diallo). *Radio Rurale Labé* is part of a network of provincial radio stations that were established in the late 1980s in the regional capitals of Labé, Kankan, Kindia, and N'Zérékoré.

From Duga[12]

Mawula, Mawula, Karadige!
No man speaks against the vulture
When the eagle is not on wing.
The beer drinkers behind the river
And bitterness never meet.
Ah Karadige!
The brave is a man of the moment
But where are the braves of yesteryear?
No matter how good a man may be,
Words will be said behind his back.
O Vulture of majestic flight!
Vulture of beautiful flight!
One bird, four wings.
O bird who floats in the skies
Yet can scratch the ground.
When the bird lands
He gouges a well
A well of God
Like a well in the Mande mountains.
Ah Mawula! The offering of white cola by evil
Is not new to the Vulture.
Who would speak against the Vulture?
Samanyana Basi spoke against him
And his head was cut off
And his great throat was cut open.
Ah Bajubanen!
You might say a sacrificial bull of a Mande brave.
It is said that the poor man,
If he should speak of the affairs of kings
Will be given away as a gift by the king.

As one may suspect, the mythology behind the song *Duga* is a tragic one. It pertains to the tyrannical behavior of a Mande despot whose ruling style consisted of instilling fear into the populace through intimidation, violence, and manipulation. The authors of this epic followed a long-standing Mande tradition, which is to associate a ruler with a given animal whose overarching characteristics match, in the *griots*' imagination, those of the ruler in question. Thus, despite the occasional flatteries injected in *Duga*, the reference to the vulture as the central character is fully expressive of the disreputability of the ruler fictionalized in the song.

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[12] On this version and more on *Duga* in general, also see Ministère de l'information du Mali, 1971, BM 30L 2505, and BM 30L 2506, and Bird 441-477.

From *Fama Dènkè*[13]

Don't weep, Prince
Weeping is not good.
Don't weep, Prince
You are the son of a lion
You are a Great Prince
Yours is not mere earthly greatness
It is from God
God blessed you with greatness.
Don't weep, son of a lion
Calm down, Great Prince.
Do not weep
Great Princes do not weep.
Please, calm down, Great Prince.

In contrast with the ruler associated with the vulture in *Duga*, the prince in *Fama Dènkè* is referred to as son of a lion for a reason: the lion is a symbol of gentle strength and protective power. In fact, the lion is perceived as such throughout Africa, and the perception is eloquently expressed in the saying, "The lion need not proclaim its lion-ness; it just needs to be itself." In the figurative context of *Fama Dènkè*, however, being the son of a lion is not enough to make one a lion, for it is incumbent upon a prince to earn the crown of his father in good time or else fall into disgrace and oblivion. Such was the case of Dyaulé Karamogho, a son of nineteenth-century West African ruler Samory Touré, to whom *Fama Dènkè* was originally dedicated. The background to the song is as follows: as part of the peace treaty that Samory Touré and the French reached in March 1886 in accordance with which the French recognized his authority under their protectorate, Samory sent Karamogho on a state visit to France. The ruler later suspected his son of conspiring with the French and had him sentenced to death in disgrace. *Fama Dènkè* is reportedly a homage to Karamogho, the son of a lion who never got to became one.

Mouctar Pilimini Diallo and Justin Morel Junior seemed to concur with one another that when analyzed together as one compact artistic performance, Gèètö's retroactive criticism of Fulani social stratification and the songs *Duga* and *Fama Dènkè* may reveal a veiled denunciation of the PDG dictatorship as well. Morel pointed out that other artists have modified the same songs into flattering hymns to President Sékou Touré in the height of the RCS.[14] In Gèètö's case, however, as Morel opined, one ought to contrast the flattery of a Mande prince in *Fama Dènkè* with the ominous depiction of the 'Vulture King' in *Duga*. He further suggested that the contrast between the two musical narratives might well be applicable to the discrepancy between Sékou Touré's populist discourse and the oppressive nature of his regime. Incidentally, it is worth noting that Sékou Touré was a descendant of Samory Touré on his mother's side. Morel, a seasoned cultural journalist and a musical analyst, pointed at the chronological succession of the four songs in Gèètö's performance and suggested that the crescendo is a compelling subtle indictment of injustice. To be sure, the crescendo goes from the hymn to an honorable prince to the sarcastic laudation of a tyrannical king, and from there to the quasi-liturgical invocation of God's inescapable will and to the sad evocation of death as the unavoidable end to all lives, including those of the rich and powerful.

In the final analysis, as Diallo and Souaré averred, whatever may have caused the national media to ostracize Gèètö was ultimately irrelevant because the comedian developed a strong attachment to the freedom of expression that he and his audience had built outside the official sphere of mass media. With powerful discursive techniques available to him and with the existence of equally marginalized, though talented, musicians like Jeli Sayon Kouyaté and his singers, Gèètö could happily forgo the straitjacket of the Socialist Cultural Revolution. Diallo explained that he understood Gèètö's free spiritedness when, years after the fall of the PDG regime and the relative relaxing of political censorship, the comedian repeatedly declined invitations to perform on his program. As explained later in the article, the bond thus created between ostracized performers and their grassroots audiences represented a tacit breach into the citadel of state censorship, and Gèètö is one of its architects.

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[13] *Fame Denkè*, translated from a French version by the author.

[14] Justin Morel is a former cultural journalist at the Radio Television Network of Guinea whose director he later became. He is also a former administrator for UNICEF's Conakry bureau and a former minister of Information (see Works Cited under Morel). Although 'Junior' has become a de facto integral part of his name, it is a nickname that was given him when, as a high school student, he began broadcasting for the Voice of the Revolution in the 1970s.

Tyoptyop: Raising the Stakes without Breaking the Bank

Commonly known as Sow Baïlo, Tyoptyop's real name is Amadou Baïlo Sow. Incidentally, he is known to dislike the nickname Tyoptyop, even though he may have used it as an adolescent already doing comedy and music in his hometown of Labé. He is a college graduate with a degree in meteorology and works for the Guinean National Meteorological Agency. No wonder, then, his fans also refer to him as the 'intello' (slang for 'intellectual'). Tyoptyop's level of education does transpire in his comedy, particularly from the philosophical depth of his narrative contained in the prologues and epilogues to his stories. In fact, one would argue that from a literary standpoint, Tyoptyop is not as good a storyteller as Gèètö and L'Homme. His strength rather resides partly in the richness of those prologues and epilogues and partly in the hilariousness of his jokes. In addition, unlike Gèètö and L'Homme who use the Fulani language with Broken-French expressions here and there, Tyoptyop does most of his stand-up performances in French with a heavy Fulani accent. Sometimes he deliberately exaggerates the accent to make fun of specific characters in specific scenarios.

On Human Nature and the Power of Upbringing

In the prologue to a story that he tells on the origins of Fulani cattle breeding and the ensuing social division of labor between pastoralist Fulani, cobblers, and *griots* Tyoptyop says that a human being is a fusion of a thing made and a thing created. By this, he means that humans make the body through procreation while God creates the soul and injects it into the body. This makes every human being an innate combination of natural and supernatural existence, an ever-evolving nexus of terrestrial and celestial force, wherein the soul constitutes the source of life, consciousness, and moral values. Tyoptyop goes on to explain that the human soul is incapable of containing or conveying innate evilness because it is of divine origin: "nothing from God can be naturally evil," he emphatically affirms.[15] He further expounds the approach, arguing that because each human being is an ever-evolving nexus of terrestrial and celestial force, the social community in which the evolution of that nexus happens is fundamentally responsible for molding its earthly character. At the same time, though, evil exists on its own, independently from society's will, and lurks around us in attempts at penetrating our inner self every time we take a breath. Family upbringing, societal education and grooming, and personal maturity shield each soul from the relentless assaults of evil. Tyoptyop concludes his Rousseauean reasoning by challenging extreme individualism and invoking the well-known African adage according to which it takes a village to raise a child.

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[15] An excerpt from a tape titled "Sow Baïlo au Palais du Peuple" (Sow Baïlo at the People's Palace). Conakry, c.1989 (see Works Cited under Sow, c.1989).

Fast-forwarding, we catch up with our 'intello' comedian in the epilogue to the story. There, he discusses another equally philosophical theme central to what Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka (1990) has termed African sage philosophy. That theme pertains to the age-experience-wisdom triad. Tyoptyop introduces the discussion with this riddle: "Have you ever wondered why young people are always in a hurry even though they have a whole life ahead of them, and why old people always take their time even though they have little time left?"[16] His theory is that the former are chasing time, which they will never catch, and the latter are dragging time knowing well that they will leave it behind, just as their progenitors did and just as their progeny will do. The former has little to no idea what they are after, the latter know too well the consequences of chasing time while under the spell of youth's innocent naivety.

The good thing about all this, as Tyoptyop infers, is that time is tolerant, generous, and nurturing: time begets age, age provides experience, age and experience together reward their holder with wisdom. He insists, nonetheless, that the reward of wisdom does not come automatically to individuals just because they are old and experienced. To these attributes, one must add a crucial asset: trustworthiness. Fulani speakers express the distinction as follows: the difference between a *mawdho* (a wise elder) and a *kiikalaadyo* (an old man) is *mokobaaku* (trustworthiness). The notions of trust and trustworthiness are paramount in traditional West African cultures. Hence, the dearth of it is widely believed to be at the heart of the region's long-standing socio-political crisis. According to this view, the prevalence of political corruption has created a heightened deficit of trust between the state and the ordinary citizenry in nearly every country in post-colonial West Africa. The deficit has resulted in widespread political instability and violence, including full-fledged civil wars in at least five of the region's fifteen nation-states, as the proponents of the view suggest.

Joking Kinship or 'Sanakuyaagal' as a Form of Free Speech

Joking kinship is not a stand-alone theme in Tyoptyop's comedic narrative. It, nonetheless, plays a significant supporting role therein. It enables him to make powerful statements without appearing to be unduly judgmental. Thus, every now and then during a performance, he can be heard referring to questionable deeds as the works of '*Yettè Bariibhè*'; that is, people of the Barry lineage. The latter is one of the four constituent clans of the Fulani ethnic group of Futa Jallon, the others being the Sow, Diallo, and Bah or Baldé. Tyoptyop's reference to *Yettè Bariibhè* as the authors of questionable deeds excoriated in his narrative comes from a traditional West African social institution known in the region as *sanakuya, sanakuyaagal,* or *sanaweyaa* and to English-speaking researchers as 'joking kinships' or 'joking relationships'.

Historians, sociologists, and other social scientists have studied the institution from several perspectives. According to Camara, *sanakuya* rests on a pact that establishes a privileged relationship of solidarity among specific lineages through a system of friendly feud. The founders of the Mali Empire instituted the *sanakuya* system in conjunction with the Charter of Kurukanfuga created in 1236 to govern the nascent Empire following the victory of its first ruler, Sunjata Kéita. For example, in accordance with the alliances that stemmed from the Charter, the Camara are *sanaku* to the Sylla in the Soso ethnic group; the Diallo are *sanaku* to the Bah or Baldé, and the Sow to the Barry in the Fulani ethnic group. Camara further explains that in the Madenka ethnic group, where the phenomenon originated, the system is a bit more complex. Thus, "the Kéita are *sanaku* to the Bérété and Kouyaté, who are also *sanaku* to one another (thus forming a *sanakuya* triangle). In the same community, the Camara are once and at the same time *sanaku* to the Fulani lineages of Diallo, Diakité, Sidibé, and Sangaré of Wasolon who are also *sanaku* to one another (thus forming a *sanakuya* pentagon), as well as to the Kuruma, Fofana, and Sylla, who are also *sanaku* to one another (thus forming a separate *sanakuya* square)" (Camara 2010: 110-111).

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[16] Idem

Arguably, no other West African traditional social institution has empowered so many communities in such a complex web of mutual recognition and self-valuation, which, as Mark Davidheiser points out, includes the critical field of conflict resolution. Davidheiser writes, "Joking relationships are arguably the most effective institution used by mediators in that manner. Joking bonds are particularly intriguing because in some cases they were instrumental in the transformation of long-standing conflicts that had been resistant to prior intervention efforts" (Davidheiser 2016). Thus, being of the Sow lineage, Tyoptyop is perfectly justified under the *sanakuyaagal* pact to use the Barry as the figurative prism that refracts his insinuations on whoever the real target of his comedic criticism happens to be. The creative approach has proved its discursive effectiveness by allowing the performer to convey messages that could otherwise be controversial and sensitive while, at the same time, protecting him against unpredictable backlashes.

This latter factor is revealing because even though Guinean law and politics never officially criminalized comedy, comedians endured the wrath of the unofficial channels that were utilized to hinder freedom of expression in general. In fact, there is ample evidence that independent Guinean performers often feel the need to protect them from retaliation. Regrettably, self-protection can lead to self-censorship which, when pushed too far, becomes more detrimental to freedom of expression than state-sanctioned political censorship. On balance, it is safe to deduce that Tyoptyop's tactful use of one of his society's deeply rooted and widely shared values is a compelling technique of self-protection without self-censorship. Lastly, because joking kinship was designed to build bridges among diverse ethnic and geo-linguistic entities of various political leanings, and because it cuts across present-day Guinea's major ethnic groups (the Fulani, Mandenka, and Soso notably), it enables public humorists to acquire large and diverse audiences.

L'Homme: Breaking Taboos through Humor

L'homme's comedic power resides, arguably, in his extraordinary ability to combine several discursive technics. One of those is condensing an entire social situation into a few verses consisting of a highly crafty rendering of proverbs and adages fitting for the social situation under consideration. Another is infusing those verses with dense moral lessons that leave the careful listener pondering the philosophical message contained in each verse. A third one is delivering the thus enriched verses in a hip-hop like rhythmic style that incites the audience to accompany the ending of each verse with an equally rhythmic and thunderous clapping. At times, the audience would chant verses with him as if to put a stamp of consent on the narrative. This interactive style of street entertainment often attracts passers-by, prompting the growing crowd of spectators to form a circle that becomes the perimeter of the entertainer's stage, so to speak. Inside this circle, L'Homme moves back and forth and side to side at the rhythm of the spectators' claps accompanying his cadenced semi-poetic declamations. He punctuates the declamations, such as the samples shown below, with hilarious jokes generally received with loud laughter. Soon, excited audience members rival each other in throwing money on a tower or blanket strategically spread inside the circle for that purpose. These live donations constitute a major component of the comedian's earnings.

To appreciate the literary value of L'Homme's comedy in conjunction with Guinean popular culture, it is now fitting to examine his take on several key topics. I chose vanity and humility, the meaning of truth, and polygamy and the meaning of infidelity, because each of these topics brings to bear a pivotal component of that popular cultural.

On Vanity and Humility (Manti è Munyal)[17]

We bragged about electricity
And God sparked lightning
And we could brag no more!
We bragged about sugar
And God brought honey
And we could brag no more!
We bragged about air conditioning
And God unleashed a hurricane
And we could brag no more!
We bragged about life
And God brought death
And we could brag no more!

L'Homme snaps his fingers as he utters these verses, thereby creating a cadence that keeps the audience involved and entertained. The comedian marks the transition from one theme to another by acknowledging past and present benefactors in the following manner:

We give thanks to [name of the benefactor]
The proud husband/wife of [name of the spouse]
The blessed father/mother of [name or names of offspring]
A venerable resident of [city or town of residence].[18]

L'Homme's aversion for vanity and belief in humility expressed in the previous verses stem from a long-standing moral code by which ordinary Fulani families abide. Fulani scholar Thierno Mamadou Samba Mombéya (c.1765-1850) was known for being a strong advocate for humility, as this statement attributed to him attests: "I am sitting on my mound of knowledge and gazing at my mountain of ignorance."[19]

On the Meaning of Truth (Ko Hondhun Woni Gonga)[20]

Night and day make a truth.
Life and death make a truth.
Man and woman make a truth.
Health and illness make a truth.
Knowledge and ignorance make a truth.
High and low make a truth.
Big and small make a truth.
Hot and cold make a truth.
Right and left make a truth.
Front and back make a truth.
Young and old make a truth.
True and false make a truth.
Hard and soft make a truth.
Sweet and sour make a truth.

According to this dialectical deduction from the pairs of mutually complementary opposites, the concept of truth is once and at the same time absolute and relative. It is absolute insofar as the mutually complementary opposites are objective and are not liable to manipulation by human whim or consciousness. It is relative in that each opposite in each pair owes its objective validity to the relative nature of its very essence. For example, 'young' is always a relative measurement of existence within a particular segment of infinite time, and so is 'old'. 'Low' and 'high' are equally relative situational measurements within

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[17] On Vanity and Humility (*Manti è Munyal*), translated from Fulani by the author.
[18] Translated from Fulani by the author.
[19] For more information on the writings and thoughts of Thierno Mamadou Samba Mombéya see also Alfa Ibrahima Sow (see Works Cited under Sow, 1971).
[20] On the Meaning of Truth (*Ko Hondhun Woni Gonga),* translated from Fulani by the author.

a particular segment of infinite space. Moreover, L'Homme's emphasis on '*a* truth' as opposed to '*the* truth' raises a critical ontological question. That is, is there a universal abstract truth (i.e., *the* truth) and if so, would it be the outcome of an interfusion of categories of factual truths? Otherwise, do individual categories of factual truths owe their trueness to the a priori validity of a universal abstract truth independent of factuality? Whatever the answer, it is doubtful that L'Homme would bother with such analytical abstractions of his matter-of-fact representation of the truth. What is certain is that from the standpoint of popular culture, he does contribute to the formulation of them, if for no other reason than because he offers a down-to-earth view on something as complex as the truth.

On Polygamy and the Meaning of Infidelity

For anyone with some degree of familiarity with Guinean culture, a public challenge to the preconceived ideas about polygamy and marital infidelity from a Fulani man with a traditional upbringing is counterintuitive. Yet, that is exactly what we find in a story that L'Homme has told repeatedly, including in his native conservative town of Daara Labé. The story is a fictionalized trial of a young woman whose polygamous husband accuses her of committing adultery. In this story, a trial is held and the judge surprises everyone by siding with the woman's attorney who not only advises his client to admit defiantly to the extra-marital affair, but also urges the court to find her not guilty on the ground that she has been victimized by both her husband and the town at large. The attorney argues that it is utterly unfair to allow a man twice his wife's age to have her and three other wives and enjoy a pre-established number of romantic nights with each while the others are forced to await their turn like a piece of land awaiting the next rainy season to regrow its grass.

L'Homme chooses to somewhat simplify the scenario by making the judge an unmarried man. He does not tell us, however, what the verdict is, nor does he explain the aftermath of the trial, except to say that due to the judge's stand on polygamy, every eligible bachelorette in town wants him for a husband. On the other hand, the comedian's silence on the outcome of the trial is probably even more telling. For one thing, oral literature tends to leave much to the listener's imagination by being sketchy, sometimes on key aspects of a story. In this case, one is inclined to extrapolate that L'Homme's lack of elaboration on such key aspects seems to leave the listener at a four-way crossroads. In the crossroads, one way goes from the past that instituted polygamy toward a future without polygamy and one comes from the future to facilitate a painless decantation of the past. The third and fourth ways go from left to right and vice versa, with a flow of ideas, some innovative and revolutionary, some old-fashioned and reactionary. Moreover, the silence seems to challenge the listener to give the story a second life, as it were, by imagining reasonable possibilities to fill the gap left by the narrator. At any rate, L'Homme's take on polygamy is as daring as Gèètö's take on the Fulani tradition of social inequality and Tyoptyop's on various problems that tend to undermine the accountability and legitimacy of the state in Guinea and elsewhere in West Africa.

In Guinea, Stand-Up Comedy Does Not Pay the Bills

In a March 2014 conversation with blogger Fatoumata Keïta of Africaguinee.com, Tyoptyop lamented, "in Guinea art doesn't pay. Even though the country is renowned for its artistic resources, experienced artists do not get any support" (Keïta 2016). This statement is not entirely accurate, if only because a good number of Guinean artists have made a decent leaving as musicians or dancers, for example. It would be more accurate to apply the statement to comedy and not to the arts in general. The question then is this:

Why is comedy not economically profitable in Guinea? I would argue that part of the answer goes back to the political regimentation of art during the PDG era discussed earlier.

Just like the media and academia, art flourishes where freedom of creativity and expression exists. Under the PDG and its *Révolution Culturelle Socialiste*, art served politics and ideology and, in the process, the independence and creativity of artists in general, and comedians in particular, were stifled. Performers of all sorts had only a small window of opportunity to utilize their talents in a gainful manner; for example, by performing at social ceremonies such as weddings and the like. Meanwhile, musicians and dancers who belonged to the national performance groups and musical bands qualified as government employees. The *Ballets Africains* and the *Ensemble Instrumental National* were among the top performance groups. National musical bands included *Bembéya Jazz National*, *Kélétigui et ses Tambourini*, *Balla et ses Balladins* and a few more. The PDG cultural policy did not recognize stand-up comedy proper as a bona fide art form, probably because comedians have the near-natural tendency to be free spirited and, therefore, harder to censor, once unleashed.

Under those circumstances, stand-up comedians often relied on networks of informal sponsors and benefactors on one level and 'parallel publicists' on another, to make money from their performances and supplement their livelihood anchored on actual professions such as tailoring for Gèètö and meteorology for Tyoptyop. As indicated earlier, L'Homme acknowledges his informal sponsors and benefactors during his performances every time he says:

> We give thanks to 'A'
> The proud husband/wife of 'X'
> The blessed father/mother of 'Y'
> A venerable resident of 'Z'

Gèèto acknowledges his in a similar manner. As well, while performing, both would have a towel or a blanket spread inside their circle of spectators as a donation depository. Ordinary spectators drop on that towel or blanket whatever amounts of money they can spare, keeping in mind that everyone is watching. Wealthy members of the audience hand the performer larger sums of money. Some even give, rather ostentatiously, fancy clothing or other such valuable material gifts. Only the performer and his inner circle know the amount of money and the actual value of material gifts obtained at any given performance. 'Parallel publicists' also play a noteworthy role in the expansion and maintenance of these comedians' fan clubs. One such category is that of taxi drivers, especially long-distance drivers also known in some sources as 'bush taxi'. They contribute by playing the tapes of these comedians for their passengers, some of whom end up purchasing the tapes from people of another category referred to as 'container music merchants'.

As one can note, Guinean 'free-lance comedians' do not seem to operate in accordance with formal business models. This state of affairs, added to the fact that the earnings of street and neighborhood performers like the ones studied here are not subject to taxation, makes it impossible to assess with precision the degree to which stand-up comedy in Guinea is economically gainful on the micro level. On the macro level, however, the place of stand-up comedy in the cultural economy of humor in Guinea is more complex than financial profitability, or the lack thereof. We could best appreciate that place by understanding comedy for what it truly is, namely, an integral component of Guinean art and culture. For example, being a people-centered performer often earns a 'free-lance comedian' a status of grassroots celebrity, which carries tangible and intangible benefits alike.

For a while (late1980s to mid-1990s), the slow liberalization of artistic creativity in the post-PDG era aroused the hope to see the tide turn in favor of Guinea's talented comedians, along with other artists. At the same time, Guinean comedians found themselves pitted against more established competitors in West Africa and abroad. Even the few independent agencies that formed around the promotion of art in general paid limited attention to stand-up comedy and, therefore, did little to remedy its marginalization. In fact, not even the tragicomedy *La Face de l'Empire* (The Face of the Empire) released in 1985 made serious strides. Art and literature aimed at unveiling the true nature of Sékou Touré's regime, as *La Face de l'Empire* purported to do, seemed to appeal to the psyche of various categories of Guineans in the immediate aftermath of the fall of that regime. Nonetheless, the popularity of this theatrical production by Guineans returning from exile and disgruntled fellows at home did not last.

Lately, however, as the political instability that marked the latter decade of the Lansana Conté reign and the brief rule of Moussa Dadis Camara (December 2008-December 2009) receded with the election of Alpha Condé (2010), young entrepreneurs have been launching new artistic groups or revamping existing ones. *Nimitè Théâtre de Guinée* is one such group whose stated mission is to contribute to civic education and the promotion of Guinean culture through theatre. This group has represented Guinea to Senegal's International Festival in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Whether the new trend will sustain itself and to what extent it may uplift stand-up comedy remains to be seen. In the interim, the increasing availability of Guinean comedy on YouTube can be a blessing and a curse for comedians like the ones studied in this article. On one hand, it could progressively de-marginalize them by putting their works on the same global stage with those of 'mainstream artists'. On the other hand, the power of the World Wide Web could only amplify the detrimental consequences of the lack of intellectual property rights protection that their works have endured. It is a fact that Guinean artists have long suffered from piracy and bootlegging, both in Guinea and abroad.

Conclusion

The fundamental aim of this article has been to explore ways in which stand-up comedy further enables popular culture to defy political censorship, advance freedom of expression, and contribute to the democratization of political culture in Guinea within the general context of contemporary Africa. The article has demonstrated that because of the somewhat peculiar nature of Guinea's political history and political culture, stand-up comedy *per se* has long been the domain of marginalized artists whereas their mainstream counterparts had to contend with stage-plays to accommodate state fiats and/or become competitive. Moreover, the article has shed light on an intriguing paradox that characterizes Guinean stand-up comedy. That is, 'freelance comedians' or 'underground troubadours' enjoyed more freedom of creativity and expression than their mainstream counterparts did, especially during the first decades of Guinea's independence. Although cultural policy and political culture have changed since the introduction of political and media pluralism, along with the liberalization of artistic expression, this paradox is still detectable. Hence, 'freelance comedians' have been able to daringly challenge some of the most entrenched flaws of their society, as well as create their own fan clubs and networks of informal sponsors and benefactors. The three comedians studied here fully epitomize the pattern and, thus, can be safely characterized as mavericks of Guinean comedy. This is a crucial point because being a maverick is a state of mind, a choice, and a commitment to a cause that may not be popular. Sturges (2010: 279-293) says it best: "Comedy begins with personal reflections on the oddities and anomalies of life in which any individual indulges, but it takes on a broader, and even universal, significance when a writer, performer or visual artist structures that reflection into a comic form. Dismissing comedy as just a laughing matter misses this point."

By using humor openly to confront public issues and taboos buried in their societal heritage Gèètö, Tyoptyop, and L'Homme take Guineans' long-standing plight against political censorship and for the advancement of freedom of expression to a level that has generally been underappreciated. The comedians show a great deal of discursive competence by incorporating tools such as proverbs, riddles, and ricocheted criticism, which enables them to exercise free speech without opening themselves up to the wrath of state censors. On a higher level of appreciation, these comedians' ability to garner fan clubs through the different channels discussed here attests to the unique power of humor to inspire individuals of all age groups and socio-economic backgrounds to scrutinize their own historical and cultural heritage.

Lastly, the works of the 'freelance comedians' studied in this article are not the result of weeks and months of playwriting, script editing, and in-studio musical composition and arrangement that culminated in meticulous on-stage choreography. Instead, they are a compilation of stories created from everyday life experiences that the performers fictionalize in the typical ways of West African oral tradition and morphed into a bona fide corpus of oral literature. These unique attributes make the messages that transpire from the comedy of Gèètö, Tyoptyop, and L'Homme closer to the hearts, souls, and minds of ordinary folks who, because of the persistence of low literacy rate, seek and find in stand-up comedy uplifting entertainment and a source of inspiration.

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