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Liberty and moral ambivalence:

Postsocialist transitions, refugee hosting, and bodily comportment in the Republic of Guinea

ABSTRACT

Guinean hosts viewed Liberian refugees with the same ambivalence and fascination that many held for their own children, who were embracing the consumerist ethos of Guinea's postsocialist 1990s. Loma-speaking farmers' categories for evaluating historical change and refugee comportment grew out of metaphors of embodied agency and morality. These categories challenge some aspects of both Guinean elites' and contemporary anthropologists' understandings of the meaning of post-Cold War social change. [*subaltern historiography, embodiment, Guinea, West Africa, fast capitalism, postsocialism*]

On December 22, 2008, Guinean president Lansana Conté died, ending almost 25 years in office. Conté's rule had begun in a coup d'état following the death in office of Guinea's first postcolonial leader, Sékou Touré. Similarly, on the morning after Conté's death, a military junta took over, headed by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, a fiery and loquacious junior officer. Many Guineans welcomed the power grab by the junta, in part because the constitutionally mandated interim leader, president of the National Assembly Aboubacar Somparé, was widely disliked and mistrusted. Somparé was the symbol of a system that Guineans almost universally considered dysfunctional and morally repugnant. In Conakry on a research sabbatical during 2008 and 2009, I challenged many of my Guinean friends about the takeover, asking, "How can you support this coup, when the outgoing regime you hate so much began in exactly the same way?"

Their responses varied, but many came back to Camara's promises to reinject morality into the Guinean public sphere and the management of the state. In an interview he gave two days after seizing power, Camara said, "I could not, as a patriot, watch my country continue to get dragged down It would also have been irresponsible to leave the country in the hands of a government that was corrupt and moreover riven by internal quarrels." He described himself as "allergic to injustice," claiming, "I react spontaneously to combat it. Everyone who knows me knows that I always speak the truth, even if I have to suffer the consequences. I hate lies, hypocrisy, and ingratitude" (Seck 2009). Still, I pressed, talk was cheap, and this was the rhetoric of every junior-ranks coup, words betrayed by actions in the vast majority of such takeovers in Guinea and around the world. Many Guineans noted their own misgivings along these lines but also reminded me that Camara came from one of the small ethnic groups of Guinea's forest region, where I had lived on-and-off for 20 years and conducted my Ph.D. research. "You know that Dadis is a *Forestier*," one colleague said. "So, his 'yes' is yes, and his 'no' is no," she continued, quoting a positive stereotype that many *Forestiers* use to describe themselves and that was once considered accurate by other Guineans too.¹

In fact, Camara turned out to be increasingly erratic and unwilling to cede power, and he presided over an ugly one-year interregnum of economic pillage and violence that culminated in the massacre or rape of over 200 unarmed demonstrators trapped by security forces inside a football stadium. His behavior did much to shatter the positive stereotype of Forestier honesty and reliability, but it opens a window onto the subject of this article: the lived complexities of moral ambivalence I recorded a decade earlier in the forest region where Camara was raised.

To explain that ambivalence, I first give a broad overview of several of the significant and simultaneous changes that contributed to the rise of a distinctive form of fast capitalism in Guinea in the 1990s. *Fast capitalism* is a term used both by Michael Watts (1992) and Douglas Holmes (2000), with a debt to David Harvey (1991). It has an analytical advantage over the blanket term *neoliberalism*, often used by anthropologists, in that it focuses on the experience of the acceleration of change. Guinean farmers identified the changes of the 1990s as neither new nor liberal but as a return to an earlier, precolonial, political-economic configuration. What was most disturbing about this shift was its speed, unpredictability, and the sense that its momentum might result in major imbalances. Guineans in the 1990s had to learn on the fly how to manage new circuits shaping the flows of information, capital, consumer goods, and styles. The experience of such rapid change created confusion, frustration, and considerable anxiety. These worries are captured by the term *fast capitalism*.

In the second part of this article, I present the interrelated Loma concepts of *booyema* and *ziilei* to refract these changes. While the terms carry the broad connotations of “liberty” and “security,” respectively, both derive from conceptions of embodied morality, agency, and causality, with *booyema* meaning literally “by the agency of my arm or hand” and *ziilei* meaning “cool heart.” As Loma-speaking farmers use these terms to describe the differences between historical periods, they make it clear that increased scope for individual gain, identified as *booyema*, has often come at the expense of the *ziilei*, or security, of the majority. The two tendencies exist in an inverse relation, according to Loma speakers talking about historical change. Their ratios have oscillated over time, from the perilous but lucrative period of intervillage slave raiding in the late 19th century to the oppressive but peaceful colonial and socialist periods and then to the newly dangerous and unpredictable period of postsocialist change and regional war in the 1990s.

The third part of my discussion explores how anxieties and disagreements about the moral valences of different embodied enactments of liberty became crystallized in the figure of the Liberian refugee resident in Guinea. The Liberians were themselves victims of the untrammelled greed, ruthlessness, and *booyema* of Charles Taylor and the other warlords who fought the Liberian civil war. At the

time of this conflict, Guineans were debating the proper balance of *booyema* and *ziilei* in the context of the rapid changes taking place in their own country after the end of socialism. Refugees thus offered a convenient foil but were also catalysts in Guineans’ conversations about the morality of liberty, especially in matters of bodily comportment, dress, sexual and marital conduct, commercial practices, and even eating and defecating. The proper balance between entrepreneurial energy and security, whose contours had become frustratingly hard to define in Guinea, could be more easily discussed by focusing on the comportment of refugees. Debates about foreigners and about Guineans themselves were interlinked in complex ways.² The discussion of *booyema*, *ziilei*, and the figure of the refugee sheds light on the moral calculus Guineans used to evaluate both historical change and individual comportment and hints at their theories of how the two were interrelated. Refugee comportment became a prism for parallel debates about the positive and negative aspects of the socioeconomic changes that had accompanied the postsocialist era. These discussions surrounding moral ambivalence also help to explain why so many Guineans warmed to the 2008 junta, whose moralistic rhetoric channeled some aspects of the Sékou Touré-era socialist ethos, even if it sidestepped the politics of pan-Africanism and postcolonial nationalism.

By bringing together these seemingly unrelated strands, I contribute to the conversation about rapid social change in African countries that have been subjected to the package of legal, financial, and political policies most often glossed as “neoliberalism.”³ The material from Guinea suggests several general contributions to this conversation. Disaggregating the series of simultaneous changes going on alongside the political-economic reforms that began with structural adjustment allows us to see that ordinary people’s greatest attention and energy were focused not at the direct or even indirect effects of such political-economic shifts but, rather, at embodied comportments that have an autonomous history and trajectory of their own. The end of socialism marked the end of many hated restrictions on Guineans’ everyday lives, and the fantasy of full participation in a consumerist form of cosmopolitanism was powerful and seductive. At the same time, many Loma-speaking villagers quickly discerned the links between the powerful desire for things and the potentially violent forces of *booyema* used to get them. Attraction and critique are thus intertwined in the concepts of *booyema* and *ziilei* and accompany a considerable degree of anxiety that if the balance between “liberty” and “security” gets badly out of kilter, the result could be violent antisocial disruption.

Following from this point, if we choose to read farmers’ concerns with propriety as a genuine disagreement with intellectuals’ models of cultural causality (and not as a misrecognition of their own situation), the Loma-language conceptions of *booyema* and *ziilei* allow us to see that this

disagreement has a history. Because Loma-speaking farmers' use of these terms in narrating history presents a dissident historiography of their nation, we are faced with a stark possibility. The contemporary academic understanding of the relations between political economy and cultural phenomena may be out of sync with that of Loma-speaking organic intellectuals (Feierman 1990). Moreover, it may be out of sync in the same ways and for the same reasons that Loma-speakers disagree with Guinean elites about the received nationalist historiography of their country.

A concatenation of factors driving change

The 1990s were years of rapid change in Guinea. The reasons for this rapidity were multiple, and it is worth teasing them apart for explanatory clarity, although they emerged simultaneously.⁴ One was a shift from a state-controlled socialist economy with an ethos of egalitarianism and a rather Spartan morality to a capitalist economy shaped partly by World Bank, IMF, and donor demands and a morally and politically laissez-faire state posture. A second was a shift from a relatively closed society with a strong sense of national unity and historical exceptionalism to one that was more open to outside cultural influences.

Under socialist president Sékou Touré (1958–84), Guinea had been sealed off from the rest of the world in a variety of ways. It was illegal to trade one's agricultural produce or livestock over the borders, even where those borders and neighboring market towns were far closer than Guinean markets.⁵ Roads leading toward Guinea's six neighbors turned near impassable some one hundred kilometers from the borders. The Guinean currency, the syli, was nonconvertible outside the country, and it was illegal either to carry syli outside or to have foreign currency inside Guinea. Politically, the country oscillated between a nonaligned stance (accepting aid projects from China, the USSR, Cuba, and Vietnam but also Germany and the United States) and rejectionist, several times expelling all whites except for a few missionaries personally known by Touré. Although Touré was ideologically a pillar of pan-Africanism, in practice, he expelled many of the West Africans living and doing business in the country (Diawara 1998), and he carried on decades-long grudge matches with neighboring Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal that several times almost led to war. The Guinean government also asserted its prerogative to seal its borders culturally. In the southeastern rainforest region where I conduct research (known as the Région Forestière), initiations into men's and women's societies were made illegal soon after independence. Individuals and cohorts of adolescents who went into neighboring Liberia or Sierra Leone to take care of their ritual business with extended kin were regularly met with beating and imprisonment by the Guinean police when they returned.

Not surprisingly, many Guineans broke these prohibitions, and even more "voted with their feet," so that, at the

time of Touré's death in office in 1984, the internal population of the country was four million, while two million other Guineans were registered as residents in the six neighboring countries (Bah et al. 1989). Yet the example of new initiates being arrested upon their return to the country is germane: The Guinean government worked hard to impose itself on all its citizens, all of the time, through a coherent if sometimes oppressive standard of proper national comportment. In schools, girls were examined by nurses at the beginning of each academic year to verify that they were still virgins. If not, they were publicly shamed and forced to reveal the names of their lovers. This practice, called "la visite," was justified as necessary to boost the number of girls who would advance through the educational system and was combined with affirmative action policies for the acceptance of female students into high school and university. The one-party state's youth wing, La Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine (JRDA), was tasked with policing morality, and women or girls wearing skirts deemed too short could be publicly punished, fined, or arrested (Straker 2009; cf. Ivaska 2011 for similar campaigns in socialist Tanzania). Long hair on men and extravagant hair designs for women were also punishable offenses.⁶ This sort of policing of personal comportment was one of the characteristic projects of a state that sought to impose its moral vision on its citizens. It became a central aspect of the lived reality of Guinean socialism.

After Touré's 1984 death, which ended 26 years of rule, Colonel Lansana Conté took power in a coup d'état. Conté, by his own reckoning, was neither an ideologue nor an intellectual.⁷ He was a practical man and promised to cede to Guineans a large share of the freedoms they had lost under the socialist government. This hands-off approach to governance was congruent with the prevailing mantras of neoliberal economists, and Conté was immediately visited by missions from the World Bank and the IMF, who convinced him that he should liberalize the economy and institute major structural changes in the way the state ran its affairs (Azarya and Chazan 1987; Campbell 1998; Campbell and Clapp 1995). In the years immediately after he took power, Conté closed nearly every small industrial plant in the country. Operations ranging from sawmills to fruit canning and juice operations had all been running at a loss and thus were placed in the debit column by the economists evaluating them in cost-benefit terms. To Guineans, they had been sources of personal and national pride, to say nothing of employment.

The pace of transformation accelerated sharply, partly thanks to Charles Taylor, whose Christmas Eve 1989 invasion of Liberia caused refugees to enter Guinea from early 1990 on in large numbers. Guinea had closely patrolled its borders for decades, but it was about to receive an influx of refugees that many Guineans experienced as a cultural onslaught. For the entirety of the 1990s, the

number of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees living in Guinea ranged from about 300 thousand to 600 thousand (McGovern 2002). I was living in the forest region of Guinea at the time (adjacent to both Liberia and Sierra Leone), and to my surprise, I found that Liberians who were of the same ethnic groups as their Guinean hosts were quite different in outlook, temperament, and style. National culture really did matter, it seemed.

In the eyes of many Guineans, Liberians were loud, brash, and “shameless.”⁸ Many Liberians considered Guineans to be conservative, timid, and not very hard working. Under Guinea’s socialist government, entrepreneurial initiative had brought only unwanted scrutiny from the state, along with the possibility that one could be accused of being an enemy of the revolution. Liberians, by contrast, partook of the vibrant culture of capitalism that characterized most of the rest of West Africa. Within months, Liberians who had arrived in Guinea with only the clothes they were wearing had established restaurants, bars, haircutting salons, and other small businesses as many Guineans looked on amazed, sometimes envious and other times appalled.⁹ This cultural rift around pathways to self-enrichment served as grist for continuous commentary by both Guineans and Liberians I knew about the characteristics of each group and the moral implications of its respective predilections.

Loma classification of historical periods

Periodization of the past, though essential in any effort to understand historical change, also exerts a subtle influence on the analysis itself, allowing and encouraging certain insights, obscuring others.

— Charles R. Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction*

The rapid changes in Guinean society and economy thus had multiple causes, and they presented Guineans with a menu of seemingly new choices that people often glossed in French as “la liberté” or “la démocratie.” However, as I did life history interviews with a range of Loma-speaking people in Macenta Préfecture, Guinea, in 1999 and 2000, I found that many descriptions of social, political, and economic change over the prior 120 years or so were more cyclical than linear. Moreover, a large percentage of them were organized around the terms *booyema* and *ziilei*, which can be rendered in European languages as “liberty” and “security” but which derive from metaphorical talk about the body, the person, and his or her morality and agency across time and in society. The values attached to historical periods in this cyclical model directly challenge the political narratives of most Guinean intellectuals as well as most Africanist scholars. Loma farmers suggested, first, that they had experienced the colonial period and the first 26 years of independence, under the socialist government, as largely “the

same.” Second, they claimed that the contemporary post-socialist period they were living through did not seem that novel but, rather, resembled the late precolonial period in many ways.

Many histories of Africa posit, either explicitly or implicitly, a historical periodization of self-evidently distinct precolonial, colonial, and independent periods. In this section, I present material from conversations with Loma-speaking rice farmers who subscribed to a different conception of historicity. The Loma term for history is *wólówólógi* (lit. “the old old [things]”).¹⁰ In discussing the past, ordinary Loma speakers were still familiar with the historical narrative of the socialist period, which fostered a rhetoric of “one tribe, one resistance hero”¹¹ as well as a tripartite precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periodization. However, they evaluated the states that had claimed authority over them according to different criteria from those used in the nationalist historiography, often comparing different regimes on the basis of the degree of *booyema*, or individual liberty, that was available to actors at varying periods.

By their estimation, the colonial and socialist periods were quite similar, both periods suppressing *booyema* and assuring *ziilei* (security). Conversely, the (late) precolonial period was comparable to the state under General Lansana Conté, in that rampant, often violent, entrepreneurial activity occurred at the expense of individuals’ security during both eras.¹² Although the terms *booyema* and *ziilei* characterized people’s descriptions of the colonial and precolonial periods, they may not have been terms in use during those times. Given the near-absence of texts in Lomagui (Loma language) from before 1930, it is difficult to reconstruct the subaltern discourse of that earlier period. It is worth noting, however, that in no case were these terms offered as explicit explanatory or evaluative frames for understanding historical experience. Rather, they consistently occurred in accounts by men and women, younger and older farmers, as terms describing a situation or disposition at one point in a person’s life history.

At the same time that farmers consistently described this version of the lives they, their parents, and their children had lived, midlevel functionaries living among them gave a different version of Guinean history. These functionaries, including the Loma speakers among them, accepted the periodization of nationalist historiography, seeing three distinct periods characterized, respectively, by precolonial autonomy and harmony; colonial oppression and alienation; and heroic, if only partial, postcolonial recovery from colonization’s depredations.

In over 100 such interviews with men and women in Macenta Préfecture, as well as in many casual conversations, I discussed the different historical periods my interlocutors had lived through or heard about from their parents.¹³ At the end of most interviews, I asked the speaker to rank the four historical periods—precolonial, colonial,

socialist, and contemporary from best to worst. With almost no exceptions, people identified the contemporary Conté period (1984 to the time of the research) as the best and the socialist Touré period (1958–84) as the worst. Roughly half rated the precolonial period as better than the colonial period, and about half the other way around. These ratings are not very interesting in themselves and might have been influenced by any number of factors. Wary of outsiders and the state, Loma farmers generally praised the government in power, so it was not surprising that most of my interlocutors said the government of the day was the best.

What was interesting was how people explained their choices when I asked them the reasons for their rankings. These responses were interesting in themselves and because they were remarkably consistent. The Sékou Touré period, most people said, was a time of suffering primarily because the government had taken away their agricultural products through the system of *normes*¹⁴ and because it had banned the *forêt sacrée*¹⁵ and all activities pertaining to it. People had lost control over their own lives, their choices about which activities to pursue, when, and how. The Conté government was hailed largely as having reversed these two onerous policies as well as having built a road through the forest region along with new schools and health centers.

Evaluations of other periods were more mixed. The shift from precolonial independence to colonial conquest and occupation was most often described as an ambivalent transition, as was the shift from colonial governance to postcolonial independence. Having already worked in Guinea for some three years before starting my interviews, I had clear expectations of what people would tell me: Most Guineans are proud and intensely defiant of colonial and neocolonial domination. I expected their accounts to hew rather closely to the triumphal narratives promulgated by the state and reproduced in some histories of Guinea's independence (Schmidt 2005). If Guineans generally hated colonial rule, my experience during fieldwork had taught me that Loma speakers also resented domination by their own local leaders or senior family members within the lineage hierarchy. As Marshall Sahlins wrote tongue in cheek about the oxymoron of chiefs in egalitarian societies, "One word from him and everyone does as he pleases" (1968:21). So it was in the Guinean Loma-speaking villages I knew.

In this context, I expected the colonial period to be perceived as an unmitigated disaster and the independent period as a vast improvement. Not so. As one elder put it,

From my point of view, the colonial period was a time of suffering only. We had forced labor for the *chefs de cantons*, we had to build the Quinadou plantation complex, we had to build buildings. In the Sékou Touré time, we were excited at first. Sékou said, "Let's chase these whites out of here," and we agreed. But instead, the government took away everything we had.¹⁶

Like many other Loma farmers I spoke with, this man saw both the French and Sékou Touré as the architects of policies that stripped them of their "booyema."

Booyema and the history of individual striving

The concept of booyema is not easily translated. Loma people who speak French typically render it as "liberté," which almost translates to the English "liberty." The French places more emphasis on personal freedom to pursue one's own projects, what we might call "room to move" in English. In Lomagui, the term literally means "own-hand-on" (*boo-ye-ma*).¹⁷ The term is thus part of a wider complex of Loma notions about capacity, force, and the body that elucidate Loma speakers' conceptions of personhood and morality.

While Loma conceptions of the emotions tend to relate to terms about the heart (*zi*) or belly (*kôô*), notions of capacity refer to the hand or arm (*ze*). Those terms that indicate the use or potential use of force all invoke the hand. *Zemaba*, or "force," means literally "to put the hand on" (*ze-ma-ba*). *Zelevhebai* is most closely translated by "dominance" yet literally means "his hand is more than mine" (*ze-levhe-bai*).¹⁸ To return to the term *booyema*, the literal "own hand on" is an extended metaphor about independence and self-sufficiency. Its general connotation is "to rely on one's own hand or arm" or "to live by the strength of one's own arm." Although this would seem to point more to responsibility or capacity than to freedom, Loma conceptions of liberty have everything to do with this sort of self-sufficiency. In an argument, a Loma speaker often says to an adversary, "Are you the one who feeds me?" The question, as rhetorical in Lomagui as in English, means that the person who feeds himself is not beholden to anyone else. Thus, the capacity granted by the strength of one's arm is the measure of one's freedom from reliance on, or answerability to, anyone else.

This linguistic context underlines what is obvious to anyone who has lived in a Loma-speaking village. Freedom, in the Loma conception, is, first and foremost, freedom *to* and only secondarily freedom *from*.¹⁹ Although a large proportion of Loma agricultural work is and must be done collectively, Loma-speaking farmers hold tenaciously to the inalienable right to work for themselves. "Today," men and women sometimes told me, describing the present era in contrast to the socialist period, "If I want to stay in bed, I can. If I want to go out to work at my field early, I can do that too. If I work hard, the yield is mine. If I don't want to work, that's my business." It would be inconceivable for most Loma farmers to laze about in bed all day, except in cases of serious illness or extreme old age. But the point is more than rhetorical. Loma speakers (both men and women) regularly insist that their freedom to work hard or not, participate in collective projects or not, be acknowledged as a prerequisite to any further steps toward "productive"

activity. It is in the presence or absence of such recognition that Loma farmers have consistently interpreted their own interactions with the series of states that have claimed legitimate rule over their territory.

While capacity is figured in terms of the hand, many emotions in Lomagui are expressed as different dispositions of the heart. *Ziielei* is one term meaning “happiness” or “calmness.”²⁰ Literally, it means “heart-cool” (*zii-lei*).²¹ The term also means “contentment,” “peace,” or “security.” It is this range of connotation that hints at the intersections of Loma notions of individual and collective freedoms and their shifting balance over time. Given a long history of insecurity and intervillage warfare (see Holsoe 1977; McGovern 2011, 2012), freedom from is, above all, freedom from physical harm. The term helps us to see that in Loma accounts of history, *ziielei* and *booyema* stand as two variables in a zero-sum equation. The relative absence of individually profitable *booyema* helps to ensure *ziielei* for most of the society, while exaggerated *booyema* could be (and is) enormously profitable for a few but comes at the expense of the *ziielei* of the majority.

As Rosalind Shaw (1997, 2002) has described for Sierra Leone, the power that was the source of protection for one group was the source of death and destruction for its weaker neighbors. Today there are many village sites in the Loma forest region that are no longer inhabited. Sometimes, villagers moved during the colonial period or during the Touré years to be closer to a road or a market town. More often, elders tell the story of villages attacked and razed to the ground. Of women taken as captive wives and men either killed or taken as captives and sold away from their home regions, beyond the limits where their geographical and linguistic knowledge might help them to escape (cf. Ferme 2001:40–48).

Consequently, there is in the Loma-speaking area, as in the Temne-speaking area where Shaw has worked, a counterdiscourse to the celebration of strong military leaders. It is the narrative of illegitimate enrichment. The story of chiefs and war chiefs whose good fortune and wealth were built on others’ death and suffering. As Shaw reminds us, “We sometimes forget that many of the processes which constitute forms of ‘modernity’ are, in perhaps most regions of the world, several centuries old” (1997:857). Consequently, the linking of wealth, witchcraft, and “modernity” found in many parts of Africa is both a sophisticated critique of the creation of surplus value, often through the objectification of human bodies and work (Ashforth 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999a, 1999b, 2000) and a commentary on the moral economy of *booyema*, or liberty, versus the security of *ziielei*. This leads us back to the historiographic questions I raise above.

Periodization as critique

Much Africanist historiography accepts a tripartite periodization of national histories—precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial. Around 2000, Loma-speaking farmers talked about four periods: late precolonial, colonial, Sékou Touré’s socialist state, and Lansana Conté’s *laissez-faire* state.²²

When I asked them to explicate their descriptions of the past, the term *booyema* emerged again and again. No matter where they began, people often ended up with the following characterizations: In the late precolonial period, people’s lives were dominated by intervillage slave raiding. There was a lot of *booyema*, allowing the audacious and skilled to become powerful and rich. For most people, the result was extreme insecurity, or lack of *ziielei*. Rice farms had to be planted close to the village, otherwise those who tended them could be abducted in the bush. Villages needed strong *siyigiti* (rampart walls) to protect them against attack. Many people were killed or taken as captives.

In the colonial period, the French came and took away Loma speakers’ political autonomy. Forced labor and political overlordship revoked people’s *booyema* and turned them into vassals. At the same time, the end of the raiding wars gave people greater personal security, or *ziielei*.

During the Touré period, the state revoked even more of people’s *booyema*, as it outlawed ritual practices, pillaged agricultural products, and forced people to perform theatrical and other manifestations for visiting state dignitaries. However, there was even more *ziielei* than in the colonial period. There was virtually no crime, and no regional wars spilled into the country.

Finally, in the Conté period, people regained their *booyema*. They could work or not work. What they earned was theirs; those with ambition and vision might become rich and powerful. Yet, just as in late precolonial times, people had watched their *ziielei* slip away. Theft, murder, even rape, previously almost unheard of, had touched many people’s lives. Each person sought her or his own benefit, without consideration of others. The police sought only to enrich themselves, so thieves paid them off and went free. Anyone could get away with murder, people said, so long as that person had the money to pay his or her way out of jail.²³

One woman described this phenomenon by comparing the restrictions of the Touré period to those imposed by parents. “It’s like when your parents are very strict, and keep you always locked inside the house. Then one day your father goes away and you say, ‘yes, I’m going out; I’m going to stay out as long as I want and do anything!’ It was like that in Guinea after Sékou died” (K. H., March 20, 2000). It is significant that all the interviews I discuss took place before the regional war intruded into Guinea in September

2000. These commentaries were made in the context of the ten years of fighting that had taken place just over the border and had filled Guinean villages with refugees. Yet they focused on Guinean internal politics and security. The war that later destabilized Guinea (in 2000–01) only underlined my interlocutors' analysis.

That regional war was complex in the details of its shifting alliances but quite simple in its structure. It had an internal logic that most elders in Guinea's forest region recognized: It was the logic of warlord politics. Several authors (Ellis 1999; Reno 1999; Richards 1996) have emphasized that it was the product of a relatively simple equation: weak states that had lost their legitimacy; strong warlords who relied on mystical arts of war; and international actors who waited, vulturelike, both to fuel the fighting with fresh weapons, ammunition, and drugs and to reap the spoils of pillage, in the form of hardwood, diamonds, and rubber. Just as in the 19th century, this equation heralded the return to exaggerated *booyema* and the disappearance of *ziilei*.

Refugees as avatars of a dangerous modernity

So far I have argued for a complex reading of history and causality from the point of view of people who were repeatedly on the short end of the historical stick over the past 150 years. They were people who were always-already liberal, inasmuch as they deeply valued their ability to work where, when, and how they pleased, accepting a degree of economic and social precarity in return for what they defined as "liberty." Moreover, their lived experience of actually existing socialism was not that of a Scandinavian welfare state but of a strong and moralistic state that was willing to punish and even kill its own citizens to impose its view of proper social relations, a view that often cast some of those citizens in the role of backward counterexamples for the rest of the population.

By the same token, their sense of what defined "precarity" was significantly more pointed than the one most people entertain. It included the relatively recent memories of late precolonial slave raiding,²⁴ with its killings, abductions, and rapes. It also included colonial forced labor, during which men were regularly worked to death and women were preyed on sexually by colonial officers and their African protégés. In the experiences of the refugees they met and hosted in the 1990s, they saw the mayhem caused by untrammelled *booyema* in the present, with many killed, raped, and mutilated and many others turned into chattel to serve as porters, child soldiers, and "bush wives" (Coulter 2009). Their appreciation of *ziilei* was thus one in which the stakes were high indeed.

Refugees as catalysts of debate and critique

But what of those refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone? How were they seen, and where did they fit into Guineans'

own attempts to evaluate the broad transformations that were going on in their society? The arrival of refugees was one of several factors that impelled cultural and economic transformations in Guinea in the 1990s. Liberian refugees, unlike many Sierra Leonean refugees, mostly self-settled in Guinean villages and towns rather than in separate refugee camps (McGovern 1998). They arrived with different music, different foods, different ways of dressing, and different attitudes toward everything from commerce to sexuality. For Guineans, they were both emblematic of and active agents in the important shifts in the moral sphere of Guinean life. In this regard, they became flashpoints for Guinean discussions of the morality of choice. All of the problems of agency, accountability, causality, and morality that I have glossed as the morality of liberty, and that are captured in the interplay between the Loma terms *booyema* and *ziilei*, were embodied at the interpersonal level by refugees. They were specifically made visible in forms of bodily hexis that carried with them significations linking postures, practices, and comportments to moral statuses.²⁵ Styles of dress, sexual preferences, and relations between spouses or lovers, food and defecation, and even forms of commerce all opened out into moral exegesis.

In January 2013, I met an old friend in N'Zerekore, the capital of the forest region. Julianna, as I call her here, had arrived in N'Zerekore in 1990 as a refugee from Liberia. She was university educated and was working in a Liberian government ministry as a secretary when the war broke out. She came originally from a village in Nimba County, directly on the Guinean border, and fled into Guinea during the first year of fighting. Twenty-three years later, she owned a hotel and several other small businesses in Guinea and had never gone back to Liberia. I asked her about those early years in Guinea, and she began by saying,

We were spoon-fed in Liberia. We didn't know hardship. In fact, we were used to Guineans coming to Liberia during the Sékou Touré times looking for help. They were traumatized. When we wanted to make fun of one another, for instance, if someone did something awkward or dressed badly, we would say, "You look like a Guinea Man, oh!" We looked down on them and laughed about their strange ways. If a Guinea man bought a new car in Liberia, he would scratch it, dent it, make it look old before he crossed over [into Guinea] so they would not take it away from him. So it was surprising when those people who had come to us for help suddenly became our hosts.²⁶

The Guineans were more hospitable [than Ivorians]. But we did some things that seemed strange to them Girls wore clothing above the knee, and they would get arrested. Guinean men left their families for Liberian women. Our ways of cooking were different.

Guinean men tasted our food and they thought it was tastier. We would play with our men. Sometimes we put the food into their mouths. We would take baths with them. When we had a lover, we would buy him new, white underwear. We didn't like the red, blue underwear they were wearing. The Guinean men went crazy for playful love. Guinean women, they thought that you had to be strong. They thought if you had children for the man, he would come to love you. We had a different way.²⁷

While Julianna emphasized the differences between a playful and an adversarial model of relations between men and women, Guineans often describe Liberians through the lens of a set of embodied comportments. Each of these commentaries is morally evaluative and often accompanied by a rueful acknowledgment that younger generations and the world in general seem to be following a "Liberian" path rather than a "Guinean" one. Some key areas of evaluation are dress, sexual relations, excrement, and commerce.

Dress. One of the aspects of Liberian comportment Guineans commented on most was dress. Men wore shorts for activities other than sport and agricultural labor. Women wore trousers and shorts as everyday attire. Guineans often criticized the Liberian style as being both sloppy and disrespectful. Although the majority of Guineans in the region that received the refugees were not Muslim, Guinea as a country is 85–90 percent Muslim, and, within national culture, notions of respectability were largely based on Muslim West African norms, which included the necessity of covering the legs (especially the thighs) and of wearing clothes that were relatively loose. I have described how young Guineans were given the task of policing their compatriots' dress during the years of the revolution. Liberian refugees in Guinean towns especially were characterized as dressing in an unacceptable manner, and, at the same time, Guinean youths with no personal experience of the revolutionary years began to dress more and more in the "Liberian" style of jeans, T-shirts, and, for young women, tighter and sometimes shorter skirts or trousers. Although these sartorial shifts among Guineans had at least as much to do with the opening of the economy and society, commentary on them was often aimed at the polluting influence of foreigners. Comments on refugees and the discomfort of Guinean adults with the styles and practices of their adolescent children were thus interlinked in complex ways.

One Guinean friend explained to me the "problems" caused by the new sexier dress worn by Conakry women, its signification and sources. He put the "blame" squarely on refugee women. As he put it, neither Sierra Leoneans nor Liberians have a notion of differentiating evening from daytime wear. In fact, he distinguished several different

categories of dress, including *tenue du travail*, what one would wear to the office; *vêtements de nuit*, which, for women, legitimately includes sexy items like miniskirts and skin-tight nylon dresses; around-the-house wear; and *habits d'invitation*, like the majestic Grand Boubou outfits Guineans wear on major holidays. There is also Friday wear, the rough equivalent for Guinean Muslims of U.S. Christians' "Sunday best" clothes.

In his view, refugee women lacked a sense of these distinctions and, he implied, a respect for their hosts' culture that would have led them to refrain from wearing sexy clothes "n'importe où et n'importe comment" (anywhere and anyhow). For him, wearing trousers was really not acceptable for a woman, and he talked about "not letting any sister of mine go out of the house dressed that way." He said that people consider women who wear tight or short dresses to be of loose morals, although he gave an extended example of how looks could mislead. His cousin's girlfriend wore only trousers, shorts, and short skirts yet was exceptionally chaste and *correcte*. So, he admitted, looks could be deceiving. I asked him what he thought her reasons were for dressing as she did, and he said it was probably a desire to be modern, to be chic and sophisticated.²⁸ In this area, as in others, Guineans recognized that refugees were "in sync" with global styles and practices, and they consequently understood the pull these styles could exert on Guinean youth. They nevertheless remained critical of them. Liberians, my friend and other Guineans suggested, took the liberties of modern dress codes to extremes, in effect, abusing them.

Sexuality and gender relations. This was another area in which Liberians were judged to be not only morally suspect but also an actively polluting influence in Guinean society. Guinean men and women agreed that Liberian refugee women were more solicitous of their husbands than Guinean women were. "The Liberians are better at making their husbands happy," one male friend told me. "They always bring you hot water to bathe every morning, and cook plenty of rice and sauce for you in the evening." My female Guinean research colleague complained that this was an unfair way of seeking advantage in the competition for men's favor and their money. "They do all kinds of things for their husbands—they heat water for them, they'll do all kinds of things sexually that Guinean women won't do." Liberian women were willing to have sex on all fours, something no Guinean woman would accept. "They even do anal sex," she claimed.²⁹

Her objection was less moralistic than that of some other Guineans. For her, the Liberian women were breaking the unwritten rules of gender solidarity. Even if she could understand that such "services" might be the only way Liberian women could gain an advantage over local women and thus survive in village settings, she resented their sexual and domestic entrepreneurialism in the same

way that striking union members would resent strikebreaking scabs. This version squares with the vision of playful, nonantagonistic love described by Julianna, the long-term Liberian resident of Guinea.

A male acquaintance explicitly linked these new gender relations to political-economic shifts and “democracy,” which at that time was often used as an umbrella term for describing all of the concurrent changes going on. He forwarded the thesis that “Guinea has been spoiled by these loose-moraled Liberian women.” He went on to detail the lengths to which male civil servants “had to” go to steal money so they could seduce and keep happy the irresistibly dressed, coiffed, and perfumed Liberian women. Worse yet, after ten years of observing the example of a free market of love (which he metaphorized as “la démocratie”), Guinean women had taken up the same comportment. What were the poor men to do?³⁰

Excrement. Ato Kwame Onoma has also conducted research in the forest region of Guinea as well as in Sierra Leone and Liberia, collecting both former (Liberian and Sierra Leonean) refugees’ and (Guinean) hosts’ recollections of the 1990s and of relations between the two groups.³¹ He has turned up a discourse entirely in line with many of those I am describing here, though I have never heard it myself during my fieldwork. It involves a kind of symbolic, or perhaps even a moral, economy of excrement. In the villages of Guinea’s forest region, where most people do not have latrines, refugees were accused both of defecating in the wrong places in the bush and of defecating “matter out of place,” as a result of their putatively unnatural diet of bulgur wheat, hated by both refugees and their hosts but distributed as food rations to the refugees. As Onoma writes,

Refugees were generally blamed when feces was discovered in places that were not supposed to be used as places of convenience If they saw a refugee shitting somewhere they did not always wait to reproach her. They tried to stop her while she was in the act. “When you went to the bush to shit if they saw you they gave you no peace. They began to scream at you “Get up, get up. Don’t shit there. That place is not for shitting.” If the deed had already been done then the unlucky refugee might be forced to remove it while enduring a few slaps.

The locals developed a rather sophisticated discourse on fecal matters that focused on issues including soil fertility and cultural survival, food quality and what one might call after-shitting rituals. Refugee fecal matter was portrayed as the ultimate threat to the survival of these cultures that are in many ways defined by rice-growing . . . The Guineans used to say “The refugees are shitting undigested bulgur and it is going to destroy our bushes and make the soil infertile. We are in big trouble. We won’t be able to make rice farms anymore!” They had explanations for the supposedly high toxicity of refugee fecal matter. . . . Some of the youth would strut

in front of refugees saying “Bulgur does not digest. They shit it everywhere the same way they eat it, destroying our bushes.” . . . They took some time to poke fun at the destitution of the refugees. “When the refugees shit it is pale because they eat their food with no ingredients.” “The fecal matter of the refugees is white because they eat palm kernel oil. Ours is red because we eat palm oil.” [2013:121–122]

Onoma notes, “The local discourse on fecal matters shows the level of imagination that locals deployed to slander and tease the refugees” (2013:122). Yet this discourse is not limited to refugee–host relations in this part of West Africa. The digestive process is often given moral valence, with ideas about transparency and morality captured by Eric Gable in the Manjaco (Guinea Bissau) proverb “Eat palm oil, shit red” (1995:251). In other words, given that the seat of the emotions and also of the hidden sentiments of resentment, envy, and aggression is in the internal organs, the transparency implied by the notion of “what goes in should come out” signifies good will, honesty, and responsibility. The aberrant feces of the refugees were held against them, even while Guineans acknowledged the source in their impoverished diet.

Commerce. In some ways, the most striking difference between Guineans and Liberians, and one that I noticed immediately in early 1990, had to do with commercial activity. Liberians who had just arrived with little more than what they were wearing were suddenly involved in all kinds of business ventures. People opened restaurants and hotels, haircutting salons, and shops. These changes were, like all the others, multicausal. N’Zerekore, the regional capital where I was living and working as a math teacher from 1989 to 1991, went from being a sleepy town of 50,000 with only a dozen European residents and not many more African expatriates to a town of over 100,000, filled with refugees, international NGOs, and the nerve center of a major humanitarian intervention. Guineans came from all over the country to take up jobs, and European and African expatriates also arrived in droves. The market for toilet paper, for chocolate, for cold beer, and for restaurant food blossomed overnight and continued to grow for most of the 1990s.

Given this growth, one must consider why so much of this market was cornered by refugees and not Guineans. Moreover, the large majority of the small businesses in N’Zerekore sprouted before there were programmatic efforts to give refugees small loans. At first, Guineans looked on with disbelief and a fair amount of distaste. Until 1984, the state promised all Guineans who graduated from high school or university jobs for life. Guineans intuited that participation in the private and informal sectors was ultimately inimical to the continuation of that system.

Over time, many Guineans became increasingly entrepreneurial themselves. Though expressed in a different

idiom, surviving the austere socialist years had required many different forms of entrepreneurial activity, from the informal economy of favors that lubricated the unwieldy bureaucratic machine to the work of smuggling agricultural and other goods over borders to realize a profit. Other forms of economic activity were judged as unambiguously immoral and unacceptable. These included prostitution and dealing in drugs. Both activities were perceived by many Guineans as having been introduced by refugees in the 1990s, even though part of adults' alarm stemmed from the alacrity with which some of their children adopted these same illicit commercial practices.

"Mon trésor" and "C'est l'an 2000"

Guinean women in particular expressed a range of anxieties about their daughters' behavior. Some parents complained that young people hardly married any more. Girls came home pregnant and not sure who the father was, or, when they identified the father, he denied responsibility, naming the girl's other lovers. One mother recounted that when a young woman in her neighborhood was discovered engaging in transactional sex, the elder women forbade her from continuing to do so any more. She responded, pointing between her legs, "C'est mon trésor [This is my treasure] ... You can't tell me what to do with it."³² Several mothers described insisting that their children be home by a given hour or not loiter outdoors when films were being shown in the town, and being met with the statement: "C'est l'an 2000!" [This is the year 2000!], an all-purpose claim that young people had thrown off the yoke of parental oversight. Here, the use of a phrase in French inserted into a conversation otherwise taking place in Lomagui was a further act of teenage defiance, children distancing themselves from parents who either had not attended school or had been instructed in the national-language primary school curriculum of the socialist period.³³

Africanist anthropologists have often approached the ambivalences and destructiveness of fast capitalism with an implicitly epidemiological model of understanding, as if consumer desire infected those who came into contact with it, like a microbe. Such a model takes Euro-American folk theories about the ways that advertising and marketing work on consumers' imaginations (Horkheimer and Adorno 2001), making them desire against their wills, and combines it with a reassuring insistence on the purity of the imaginative lives of the people with whom we do research.

Many of the adults I spoke with, and particularly the adult women, took a different view. They defined their children, and especially their daughters, as agents whose strong desires and fantasies could wreak havoc in their communities and needed to be domesticated. As Chris Coulter (2009) notes, there is a continuity between these kinds of gendered anxieties and long-standing ontological understandings

of gender in the region that came to include southeastern Guinea and Sierra Leone. In this region, women are not conceived of as being born nurturers but, rather, as having natural inclinations to antisocial aggression. That conception of innate aggression is part of why the concept of "girl soldiers" was not so surprising to many West Africans who lived through the Liberian and Sierra Leonean wars and is also part of the stated *raison d'être* of the women's Sande and Bundu societies, whose socialization is meant to bring such antisocial forces under control.

In the version of this dynamic made possible by Guinea's socioeconomic transformations in the 1990s, the desire to have things drove some young people to renounce the austere ethos of the socialist period. Under conditions of heightened booyema, young people saw things and wanted them. As undercapitalized entrepreneurs, they used alternate forms of capital—strength, beauty, willingness to take on risk—to leverage their dreams into realities (cf. Cole 2004, 2010; Monga 2000; Nyamnjoh 2005). In this regard, the work of social ambition enacted by girls who casually or occasionally capitalized on their sexuality was an affront to the gerontocratic patriarchy that underlay the "domestic mode of production" in exactly the same ways and according to the same logic that fueled the generational rebellion represented by young men turning against their elders and becoming rebel fighters in the bush.

It was the same wars waged by these young people that sent refugees fleeing into Guinea throughout the decade of the 1990s. One gloss on the discussions of refugee comportment and morality sketched above might be that Guineans treated refugees as scapegoats and objects of abuse as they themselves struggled to manage the shifts of the new neoliberal dispensation. This view is partly accurate, and the Guinean government did orchestrate attacks on refugees as part of an effort to distract the population away from its own unsavory activities.³⁴ However, I think one must also emphasize the ways that refugees crystallized a set of conundrums already facing Guineans at that time. To paraphrase Claude Lévi-Strauss, refugees were "good to think" through the problems of booyema and ziiɛlei. Guinean Loma speakers had regained the free disposition of their own bodies and energies, something that the hated colonial and socialist governments had revoked. Yet the perception of refugees' excesses reminded them of the dangers of unbridled booyema and raised the question of how one should dispose of these newly liberated potentialities.

Here we see that even if the socialist period had been rejected in certain respects by Loma-speaking farmers, it remained a significant source of their thinking about acceptable forms of sociality. Sékou Touré had claimed enormous range in the parts of people's lives the socialist state should oversee—it aimed to control the ways people dressed, ate, drank, married, and educated their children. It arrogated responsibilities to its representatives to surveil citizens'

hairstyles, hemlines, economic transactions, and even the virginity of female students. The socialist state owned every centimeter of Guinean soil but allowed those citizens who were putting the soil “to good use” to acquire temporary de facto ownership of portions of that land. In many respects, it applied a comparable logic of temporary and provisional *mise en valeur* ownership to the bodies of its citizens. The public lynchings of petty criminals, shaming and imprisonment of prostitutes, and torture and killing of accused traitors to the state were all examples of the lengths to which representatives of the state were willing to go to impose the socialist moral order on their compatriots.

Liberian refugees arrived at the same time that the Guinean government was starting to allow printed media to operate that were not owned by the state, that satellite television was beginning to bring in programming other than the state’s single station (which no Guinean took seriously as a source of anything but the government’s praise of itself), and that markets began to display goods from neighboring countries, China, and Europe.

Why focus on the fact that Liberians wore shorts, on their supposed willingness to engage in transgressive but exciting sexual practices, or on the color of their feces? I argue that these bodily indexes of a certain moral posture toward the world drew attention not as the atavistic workings of xenophobia or misogynistic shame but as forms of commentary on shorts and sex and hair extensions, all of which stood as indexes of potentially dangerous new forms of freedom. That it was particularly middle-aged women who articulated ambivalence about their daughters’ self-objectification indicated to me that there is much to be gained by looking through the same lens at changing forms of gender, sexuality, and conjugality and the making and managing of insurgency warfare or refugee flight. This point concurs with much of the recent work on gender and warfare in Africa (e.g., Coulter 2009; Utas 2005).

Historical periodization and moral evaluation

When people talk about contemporary sexuality and crime, they consistently come back to the negative side of liberty. Often, they say, the young are *no longer afraid*: of the state, of their parents, of the whip (this was what two women said yesterday).

—Field notes, June 28, 2000

The periodization of history and the moral evaluation of refugees’ behavior in postsocialist Guinea raise a number of questions of interest to anthropologists working elsewhere. First, what does it mean to have been an African socialist nation? Is it theoretically significant that places like Guinea, Ethiopia, and Tanzania were African when comparing them to other socialist states? Or that they were socialist in comparison to other African states?³⁵ Guinea in the 1990s

was a hybrid that resulted from the postsocialist introduction of laissez-faire policies into a society exhausted but also shaped by strong and intrusive governance.

Perhaps more significant still is the question of what constitutes the moral calculus people in particular societies apply to evaluate others’ acts. Both the explication of booyema and ziiεlei and Guineans’ talk about refugees give us the materials for understanding one such calculus. The zero-sum equation implied by the interaction of booyema and ziiεlei suggests several findings. First, while a great deal of scholarly attention has been focused on the period of structural adjustment and neoliberal reforms, we might do well to place these shifts within a longer historical framework. The history of Africa’s relations with the world system from the late 15th century has been one of inequality and dispossession quite well captured by the Loma term *booyema*. Loma speakers’ use of the term, moreover, made explicit comparisons between the period of 19th-century intervillage slave raiding and the fast capitalism of the 1990s.

Giving booyema and ziiεlei all the attention I argue they deserve also implies an epistemological shift. In this article, I have made a case that anthropologists might profitably look to our fieldwork materials both for empirical material and for the categories that most profitably organize its analysis. Difference in categories is one of degree, not kind. Loma speakers, like other West Africans, have been part of the capitalist modern world for as long as Europeans have, and in viewing them as cocreators of that world (even if subaltern and economically marginalized ones), I see nothing to suggest “ontological” differences between poor Guinean farmers and anyone else. Neither is this a plea to return to an older intellectualist tradition that sometimes fetishized concepts like *hau* or *mangu* but, rather, to treat poor people’s categories of understanding the world as the products of organic intellectual conversation and evaluation that they are. We are not obliged to accept these categories at face value, and, in this case, none of my interlocutors offered booyema and ziiεlei as a grid for understanding historical change; I constructed that grid after poring over my transcriptions for months. However, terms like *booyema* and *ziiεlei* have another advantage, inasmuch as they throw both academics’ and Guinean intellectuals’ categories of understanding into relief. That contrast suggests that the vocabulary of European and North American-based Africanist scholars and that of African intellectuals and civil servants based in capital cities and in towns overlap considerably.

To the extent that this shared language is oppositional to the powerful institutions of business, politics, and the development industry, we may allow ourselves to forget that it still remains foreign to the vast majority of poor rural people. This is not a matter of poor people lacking the education to understand the reality of their

situation. Many Guinean farmers are perfectly versed in the Marxist and pan-Africanist narrative articulated by the state during the 26-year socialist period. They simply choose to reject much of this narrative, which typically construed them as backward and in need of some form of remaking.³⁶ At the same time, they reserved the right to also reject the capitalist dreamworld of untrammelled choice offered as an alternative.

The forms of intellectual collusion that take place between anthropologists and intellectuals in the places where we work may operate primarily as an effective means of managing our own anxieties (Kulick 2006) and giving voice to our critiques of our home societies, wherever they may be (Marcus and Fischer 1986). This moment in our analytical dialectic can be enlightening, but it can also occlude lines of approach that would be equally or more apt to the ideas and experiences we aim to understand. The distinction between *booyema* and *ziɛlei* that figures in Loma farmers' accounts of historical change rubs uncomfortably against both conservative and radical historiographies created by elites precisely because of the ways it quietly implicates us (i.e., all elites) as the authors of consistent if ever-changing forms of suffering for those living on the margins of the global capitalist system.

Part of Guinean Loma speakers' discomfort with their children and with refugees in the late 1990s stemmed from their acute sense that both were groups of people whose desires had outstripped their means. This was a zone they knew well from the past, a zone where the scale tipped toward the greed-fueled violence of *booyema*, where some benefited at the expense of the lives and the security of others. Guineans were acutely aware of the systemic aspects of the international political economy that facilitated the self-enrichment of warlords such as Charles Taylor. At the same time, they remained focused most of the time on correcting and policing the bodily comportments, sexuality, and commercial ventures of their children and the strangers they hosted, even while they were fascinated by many of the novelties these entrepreneurial actors introduced. In this insistence, sometimes articulated through a language of socialist nostalgia, sometimes through religious zeal, and sometimes through simple "tough love" parenting, Loma speakers attempted to shape the situations around them.

Notes

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1. Odile Goerg (2011) has recently given an incisive historical analysis of the notion of Guinea's four "natural" regions and the

ecological, political, and cultural characteristics that are attached to them. This form of stereotyped knowledge had roots in the colonial production of knowledge about Guinea but has been actively reproduced by the postcolonial Guinean education system and in public discourse.

2. Liisa Malkki (1995a, 1995b) discusses the many ways refugees are transformed into almost empty signs to be filled with the intentions and instrumentality of others.

3. Among the reforms insisted on by international financial institutions were the closing of most of Guinea's small manufacturing plants (e.g., for canning fruits, making fruit juice, making plywood), radical downsizing of the civil service, and the abandonment of the long-standing socialist-era promise that all high school and university graduates would have jobs for life. Utilities, including water and electricity, were privatized during this period. Guinea was under considerable pressure to let the value of its currency float in relation to other world currencies and to open its banking system to foreign banks. Although separate from these reforms, the introduction of multiparty elections and of a private (written) press came a few years after the economic reforms of the mid-1980s to the early 1990s.

4. Because of this simultaneity, they sometimes affected one another synergistically, sometimes at cross-purposes.

5. The state set artificially low prices for all agricultural goods, so farmers could earn far more by selling their produce across the border. Because the economic policies (enforced by a cadre of economic police) set prices near or below producers' costs and prevented most people most of the time from exfiltrating their goods over the borders, many Guinean farmers simply ceased producing crops for sale and concentrated on subsistence.

6. This was true in schools even as late as 1989–91 (five to seven years after the end of the socialist period).

7. Conté described himself in implicit contrast to Sékou Touré, "I am not a man for dialogue. I am a soldier. I receive orders; I execute them. Or I give orders, and others execute them" (*Le Lynx* 2001).

8. This critique may also have applied to some Guineans who had been resident for many years in Liberia, but, for the most part, Loma, Kissi, and Kpelle people who migrated from Guinea to Liberia either did so for a short period or engaged in a years-long dance of back-and-forth trips across the border.

9. Partly because of economic liberalization and partly because of the example set by Liberians, many Guineans gradually became more involved in private commerce themselves.

10. See also Kratz 1993 on tradition and the objectification of the past.

11. According to this formula, each ethnic group had a representative figure who fought the onset of French colonial control. This figure was frequently portrayed in Guinean theater and dance performances and was taught to schoolchildren across the country. For Loma speakers, this figure was N'Zebela Togba Pivi.

12. This analysis directly parallels, and in many respects is the source of, the two ideal types of sociopolitical action that I have put forward elsewhere: "Gerontocratic Hierarchy" and "Entrepreneurial Capture" (McGovern 2011).

13. Most of those I formally interviewed ranged in age from 40 to 90. My conversations with younger people were usually unstructured.

14. Normes were the in-kind taxes extracted in the form of rice, coffee beans, cooking oil, and other agricultural produce.

15. The *forêt sacré* was the "sacred forest" in which initiations into the men's and women's societies took place as well as a term that indexed all of the activities that took place there.

16. The Quinadou plantation and adjoining production facility was the main source of quinine pills in the French West African

colonies and continued producing quinine during the socialist period. After the complex, like other state-owned enterprises, was closed shortly after the end of socialism, Guinean entrepreneurs made several unsuccessful attempts to restart its operations. The plantation is located in the beautiful Ziama mountains, and one house at its edge was offered to Kwame Nkrumah when he was deposed as Ghana's president and welcomed to Guinea as its honorary copresident.

17. The Loma term for hand or arm, *ze* changes to *ye* when preceded by a strongly accented word. On initial consonant change, see Bangoura 1978.

18. I thank my colleague Jacques Onivogui for helping me understand these interlinked terms.

19. The distinction is similar to Isaiah Berlin's between positive and negative liberty, as developed in his 1958 lecture "Two Concepts of Liberty" (Berlin 1969). While the actor's point of view among Loma-speaking farmers emphasizes the importance of positive liberty (freedom to), it is also dependent on a modicum of negative liberty, for instance, from the demands of the intrusive colonial or socialist state.

20. Another is *kôdzunεεve*, literally, "sweetness in the belly."

21. The opposite of *ziε lei* is *ziigbadie*, literally "hot heartedness" but close to the sense of the English *hotheadedness*.

22. Loma speakers do not have a tradition of professional historian-praise singers, like the *jeliw* in neighboring Maninka and Bamana societies, and precolonial history tends to be shallow.

23. These narratives are as strong in small provincial towns as they are in Conakry, where events like the antigang trials of 1995 brought some of the cooperation between the security forces and bandits to light. The rash of murder-robberies of rich Conakry merchants in 2000-01 evoked the same set of criticisms. Such critiques of the state's inability, or lack of interest in, protecting its own citizens are even more pronounced in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Throughout the war in Sierra Leone, members of the national army operated as "sobels," or soldiers by day and rebels by night. At the international level, systematic charges were leveled at ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) forces, and especially their dominant Nigerian component, of purposely prolonging the war to enrich themselves (Jetley 2000).

24. The last of these raids in the Loma-speaking area of what became Guinea took place in 1906.

25. There is a vast Africanist literature on personhood and morality (Bird and Kendall 1980; Fortes 1959; Jackson and Karp 1990; Kratz 1994) and one on strangers in African societies (Shack and Skinner 1979). As do the chapters in Jackson and Karp 1990, this essay brings the two together.

26. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the economic police were charged with enforcing state-mandated prices in the markets but also with spotting anyone whose personal possessions might indicate that he or she had amassed illicit wealth. Two of the signs Guineans consistently identify as drawing the economic police's attention were corrugated zinc roofing in place of thatch and, as Julianna makes clear, any kind of motorized vehicle.

27. J. G., N'Zerekore, January 17, 2013.

28. Conakry, January 17, 2001.

29. Field notes, Pelema, May 15, 2000. These interviews were conducted in 2000 in a midsized town that I call "Pelema" in my published ethnography (McGovern 2013). Almost all of the respondents were between 25 and 90 years old, with slightly more women represented than men. About 90 percent of the interviewees made their livings primarily as farmers. At the time I began these semistructured life history interviews, I had been conducting

participant-observer-oriented fieldwork for about 18 months. All interviews were in Lomagui.

30. Field notes, March 19, 2000.

31. My sincere thanks to Kwame for discussing his book when it was still a work in progress and for allowing me to reproduce several passages from what was then still a manuscript.

32. Interview, Pelema, July 10, 2000.

33. These intergenerational arguments over the proper role and deployment of female sexuality resemble those described by Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) in the West Egyptian desert in the 1980s.

34. At the time of the 2000 antirefugee attacks, the government was putting political opponent and present-day president Alpha Condé on trial for allegedly trying to destabilize the country (McGovern 2002).

35. This issue has been discussed most systematically in Askew and Pitcher 2006, but the discussion has only begun and merits long-term debate and exchange.

36. The forms of what James C. Scott (1999) would call "authoritarian high modernism" deployed by the colonial, socialist, and postsocialist states against Guinean farmers and their agricultural practices are elegantly documented by in Fairhead and Leach 1996.

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