

The Sound of Home: Tuareg Women's Tendé Drumming in France and Belgium

by

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Abstract

This thesis combines anthropological and ethnomusicological theories and methods to analyze how tendé drumming evokes contested and contradictory notions of home and identity for Tuareg women. Using data obtained during fieldwork in France and Belgium, I investigate how the tendé's place-making capacities and its relationship to Tuareg women's normative social roles have been disrupted, leading to ongoing debates as to whether to replicate, adjust, or put aside tendé drumming in Europe in the face of these disruptions. In the context of radical change, it is possible to recognize the anxiety migrants face when they are forced to evaluate old ways of constructing Tuareg identity and decide if they are viable in a new place. I use the concept of imperfect translation to describe the fragmented way the practices and meanings embedded in the tendé drum are moved into a diaspora context.

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Introduction

It was around 12:30am in Paris when we were finally able to connect with Tuareg women an hour behind us, in Tamanrasset, Algeria where a small Tuareg community was preparing to play *tendé* drums for me, considered by many to be the “first instruments of the Tuareg.” Two women sat beside the drums, while others formed a circle around them, readying themselves to sing the chorus and clap along.

The coordination had been complicated, with calls to friends, and friends of friends. Poor access to cellphone service and computers made it difficult to ensure a decent connection. On top of all that, it was Ramadan. The performance could only happen after everyone had gotten a chance to eat once the sun had set. It wasn't exactly the season for impromptu musical gatherings.

Yet, despite the many logistical barriers, on the seventh day of my fieldwork I witnessed my first *tendé* performance over a WhatsApp livestream. More importantly, it was a performance specifically for me to witness, for which I continue to be deeply grateful. Through the fuzz of poor connectivity, myself and Aminata, my host during fieldwork and interlocutor, watched as a group of six or seven women dressed in their finest jewelry gathered around two *tendé* drums, a big one for the main rhythm and a smaller one as accompaniment¹. One woman sang the main line while the others joined in on the chorus in a call and response rhythm and a few men and some children were gathered around to watch and listen. The phone in Tamanrasset swooped around the room, from women clapping along to the *tendé*, to several men who were present,

¹ Some of my informants have been given pseudonyms. Those who are public figures, give interviews and have been quoted by name in other scholarly research, have not.

either singing in a low drone, or clapping along as well. The cellphone rested for quite some time on the tendé drum itself, a mortar with an animal skin (goat, horse or camel) tied taut over the top, and drenched in water to create the deep sonorous boom I have come to associate with tendé. It was a beautiful moment, the men and women on the screen obviously enjoying themselves, showing off their jewelry and clothes, and I went to bed almost two hours later exhausted but happy. I had seen a real tendé performance by Tamasheq women even though I was in France, where everyone kept asking me: why are you in France if you want to do research on tendé music? I would see other performances in the subsequent month and a half of my fieldwork, but what I understood by the end of my work in France and Belgium was this: If I wanted to hear tendé done properly, I had to go to the desert.

This notion that the tendé drum and therefore tendé music could only be “properly” heard in one particular environment was a theme that found its way into many of my conversations with Kel Tamasheq (or colloquially Tuareg) men and women living in France and Belgium². The Tuareg I spoke with were primarily from Mali and Niger and were adamant that the tendé sounded best ‘at home’, even if they had been living in Europe for over 20 years.

The proper place of the tendé equally pervaded my conversations with researchers, music producers and managers who circled and interacted with the Tuareg music community in western Europe, itself a small subset of the Tuareg diaspora in France and Belgium (with pockets in Italy, Switzerland and England). Aminata said it perfectly, herself a member of the Algerian diaspora, when she interrupted one of my interviews to explain “there are aspects of your identity that don’t move...even if electric guitar or rock are introduced, there are things that don’t move” (Aminata, personal communication 11 June 2017).

² Kel Tamasheq means “people who speak Tamasheq”. Language is one aspect of Tuareg culture that is shared across regions and spoken in Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya and Burkina Faso (Rasmussen, 2008).

My thesis will explore the tension and contradiction that the notion of “home” evokes for Tuareg women, and how tendé drumming is representative of larger concerns around Tuareg identity and its place in the world. I will demonstrate that tendé drumming is an ongoing practice of identity construction and that the meanings associated with the tendé drum are a result of this process. Though this process traditionally occurred in the idealized desert homeland, radical changes to Tuareg women’s lives such as increased sedentarisation, conflict and migration, have interrupted its conduct, leading to a debate as to whether to replicate, adjust, or put aside tendé drumming in the face of these disruptions.

The statement Aminata made above is one explanation for the situation in which Tuareg women, and likely other immigrants find themselves, upon migrating to a new place. If tendé drumming is a practice associated with a home that may no longer even exist, then moving it, as well as its associations with Tuareg women’s status, becomes problematic. For although Tuareg men have a stake in the how notions of home are socially constructed, this particular process is gendered. Tendé drumming and the process it enacts is deeply integrated with the role of women in Tuareg society and associates them intimately with the idea of “home”. Therefore, migration not only requires reflection on whether the desert still represents home, but a reflection on whether the status of Tuareg women and the way they construct their roles, selves and interactions with others, can be maintained in France and Belgium (Norris, 2008). I will explore how these women reflect and attempt to address these problems. The women I spoke with were hesitant to disassociate the tendé drum with life in the Sahel desert, yet they were struggling to find new ways of practicing their music in response to their new location and the new roles they had to enter. This ongoing process was complex and continuously debated, and will remain a large theme throughout my thesis. In trying to best understand how my informants were working

through these challenges, I recognized that the tendé's mobility was central to their debates. Could home, and the object that facilitated the meanings of home, be moved? I use the term "imperfect translation" to encapsulate this question and reflect the tension around the tendé's role in France and Belgium and to demonstrate that it is a question that is by no means answered. In doing so I follow Anna Tsing's line of inquiry and ask, "how are people, cultures, and things remade as they travel?" (Tsing, 2000 p. 347). Importantly, though many of the discussions around the tendé are among the Tuareg people themselves, "imperfect translation" also reflects the role that outside factors, like globalization, and outside actors, like non-Tuareg stakeholders in Tuareg music and identity, have in the practice of tendé drumming. The difficulties of bringing tendé drumming into the social, geographic and economic lexicon of the European music scene creates a fissure between cosmopolitan ideals of the world music genre in which they often find themselves, and the realities of their migration experience (White, 2012). My thesis is divided into four chapters each reflecting one of the facets of tension around the practice and meaning of tendé drumming as it existed in the Sahel and as it is being debated in France and Belgium. Chapter One addresses the gendered associations of women with "home" and tradition and men with the outside and modernity. I will reflect on existing research that perpetuates these associations and the ways in which women respond to these associations in their lives as migrants and refugees.

Chapter Two delves deeper into the meanings associated with the tendé drum, addressing the ways the tendé drum as an object is itself socially constructed to reflect larger realities about Tuareg life. I will then connect this with the problematic ways the tendé's very construction as an object is being contested and debated in the diaspora, and how this is emblematic of Tuareg

people trying to develop new meanings for the instrument, even by changing its material formulation.

Chapter Three explores the more subtle yet still important role the tendé drum and tendé songs play in everyday life in the idealized homeland of the Sahel desert. I will demonstrate how the practice of drumming is part of the process of constructing the social realities of Tuareg daily life. I will then examine how Tuareg men and women view their daily lives in France and Belgium, and my own observations of how the tendé drum is placed and played in these contexts.

Finally, Chapter Four will interrogate how the world music industry is involved in producing meanings of tendé drumming and Tuareg music more generally. I will examine how the pervasive discourse around world music that emphasizes universality, solidarity and mobility is problematized when faced with musicians who are intimately aware of the unique social meanings the tendé drum produces and are struggling to decide if and how it can engage in a globalized world. Finally, I articulate the contrast between the free flow of goods (the guitar, for example) and capital that have buoyed the world music industry, and the people who are involved with the industry, who at the same time are restricted in their movement thanks to obstructive immigration or travel visa procedures and labour laws.

To conclude I will suggest that though the object in question is unique to the Tuareg experience and practice of meaning-making, the debates that surround how to construct a new home and let go of an old way of conducting this process, are pervasive among those who face radical change and must respond to it.

Initially, I too was of the opinion that the best place to hear *tendé* music was to travel to either Mali, Niger, Algeria or Burkina Faso to speak with Tuareg women about the importance of *tendé* to their identity and how music-making was affected and was affecting their lives as refugees or displaced persons, fleeing northern Mali. Ultimately however, this proved a virtually impossible task. I could not get in touch with anyone attached to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps in Burkina Faso. Though I had contacts in the country from previous work with a Canadian non-government organization (NGO), they were not working in the camps, and were unsure of how best to approach town refugees who were dispersed throughout Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso. Other requests to NGOs working with refugees were left unanswered. Furthermore, I knew no one in Niger or Algeria and travelling in the region in 2017 was not without its dangers. Several refugee camps in Burkina were located near the Malian border, an area that was at best unstable and at worst the site of soldier and peacekeeper deaths. With these complications in mind, I decided to change tactics. There was little to no documentation or research about the Tuareg diaspora in Europe. However, through long days of scouring the internet I came across a Facebook page for *l'Organisation de la Diaspora des Tuaregs en Europe* (ODTE) as well as the website of an all-women's *tendé* group *Tendé Disswat*, based in France. I contacted the email on the site and hoped for a positive reply to my request to speak to them once I arrived in France. The reply I received was from Aminata, who not only took me into her home in central Paris but was excited about my topic. Not many people, she said, were interested in talking about *tendé*. Though she warned me there were not very many *tendé* musicians in Europe, I was undeterred. I left for France in June, intending to talk to Tuareg women about how music was used in their process of adapting to life in France.

Ultimately what I found was a small diaspora with an even smaller population of women, who are ambivalent and cautious about how the *tendé* would fare outside of its natural environment.

The Tuareg

The Tuareg are a historically nomadic people whose population now spans Mali, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya and Mauritania. Though once pastoralists, herding cattle, horses or camels the Tuareg have become increasingly sedentary due to a variety of factors, including French colonialism (1892-1962), climate change and frequent outbreaks of conflict in the region (Rasmussen, 2006). The Tuareg share a language, Tamasheq, and a few traditional instruments, including the *tendé* drum and a single-stringed instrument called the *imzad* though regional varieties of the instruments and rhythms do exist³.

Generally speaking, Tuareg society was once highly stratified based on descent and occupation. Such distinctions usually fall into three categories: nobles, smiths and former slaves (Rasmussen, 1994). Now however descent is rarely an indication of wealth. Nobles who once owned large herds of cattle are no longer able to work as pastoralists, whereas smiths and former slaves have been able to use their skills to better adapt to changing circumstances. The role of women in Tuareg society is changing as well. Traditionally, women may initiate divorce proceedings, inherit property and are able to exhibit their social power via song and poetry, in some circumstances affecting the reputation of a man who has behaved poorly (Rasmussen, 1994). However, as men are forced to travel farther and farther afield to find work, women fear that this will eventually result in “abandoning of Tuareg traditions” (Rasmussen, 2014 p. 278).

³ The *imzad* is a single-stringed instrument played with a bow, also the exclusive domain of women. The *imzad* is rarely played, though there have been large-scale efforts to revive the tradition (Sellal, 2017). It is also on UNESCO’s representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Furthermore, some Tuareg men have begun practicing polygyny a non-Tuareg custom that women vehemently disapprove of (Rasmussen, 2014).

The “Tuareg rebellion” as it is sometimes called, is a longstanding fight against marginalization in both Mali and Niger by their respective national governments (1985-1996 and 2007-2009). As a minority group in every country in which they reside, the Tuareg have often felt disenfranchised and in some cases deliberately impoverished. There has been very little interest on the part of the Malian government to encourage economic opportunity in the north, for example, and uranium mining in Niger has endangered Tuareg water supplies (Keenan, 2008). Recently the Tuareg, among others, have participated in smuggling (including moving refugees through the desert), tourism and economic migration to make a living (Lecocq, 2004; Kohl, 2010; Boas & Torheim, 2013). The most recent outbreak of conflict in 2012 led to large numbers of Tuareg and other ethnic groups fleeing the north of Mali and living as refugees in Mauritania, Niger, Algeria and Burkina Faso. In December 2013, there were a total of 460,000 Malian refugees and Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) according to the UNHCR (UNHCR Global Appeal 2013 Update)⁴.

The fight for independence is neither universally accepted among the Tuareg nor is it the sole cause of violence in the region. Islamic extremists have also found opportunity in Tuareg disenchantment with the Malian government to gain a foothold in the Sahel region. Though immigration to France and other Western countries has historically been rare, there are more Tuareg refugees seeking asylum abroad than ever before (Rasmussen, 2005). Though many are returning, northern Mali continues to be unstable leaving many to feel conflicted (including the

⁴ These figures do not include refugees in Mauritania, and include non-Tuareg refugees and IDPs.

Hausa, Songhai and Bambara) about returning even five years later (Michal, I, Nguyen T. T. & Diallo M., 2017).

The Tendé Drum

Music is an important part of Tuareg culture, incorporated in political, social and ceremonial events (Card, 1983). Women's music remains important to social life among Tuareg still living in the Sahel region of West Africa and is known as tendé music. The tendé is considered by many to be the "first instrument of the Tuareg" one that is the domain of women or put another way, the only instrument women can authentically play as true Tuareg women (Doubleday, 1999). The tendé is understood as an instrument for everyone, a social instrument and therefore accessible for women of different ages and social status⁵. Tendé drums are used with praise-song, dance-song, song of exorcism, or, in informal settings, improvised among young Tuareg, song about everyday life (Rasmussen 2014; Card, 1982; 1983; Belalimat, 2003). Songs accompanied by the tendé drums are called tendé songs. The first drum is large and provides the bass rhythm and the second is small and acts as accompaniment, usually with counterpoint rhythms. Tuareg across Mali, Niger and Algeria have different names for each of them, and there are slight variations to the instruments construction (for example, the "big tendé" in Niger is normally half a calabash floating in a small tub of water, which is smacked by a hand or a shoe, or anything else handy). Having the two drums is deemed crucial for the "authentic"

⁵ Though it is not the focus of my study, Caroline Card (1983) and Susan Rasmussen (1994) both note that the imzad is most often associated with 'noble' women. Card mentions that imzad music "embodies the cultural values and ideals of the once-dominant warrior aristocracy" (Card, 1983 p. 3). However, more recently such identifications do not necessarily coincide with greater economic prosperity and intermarriage has become more common. The tendé holds a tenuous position within the class structure, as good musicianship can lead to upward mobility, yet tendé music is also disapproved of on the basis of religion and class (Rasmussen, 1994). When I tried to broach the topic of class with my informants, they were cagey about it, likely because of its association with slavery. One told me that she had never heard of the term "status" before coming to France. It was therefore unclear what kinds of class affiliations my informants had, or may have still held onto.

playing of *tendé*. Furthermore, usually a chorus of a few women is required for the call and response style of *tendé* songs. If men participate, they will do so by singing (in a deep, guttural hum), clapping along or engaging in the activity the *tendé* music is accompanying (for example dancing). As one woman (usually one of the women beating the drums) sings the main melody, a group of three others at least, is responding, clapping their hands and ululating. This became an important fact for my research as it became clear that women who may have wanted to play *tendé* rarely ever had enough other women around to join them in “properly” playing. It is absolutely not a soloist’s genre.

In Mali, the *tendé* drum is made of a goatskin stretched over a mortar and then drenched in water to get a clear sonorous sound; in Niger, the little *tendé* is also made this way (Rasmussen, 1994). I distinguish between *tendé* song and the *tendé* drum here because women in the diaspora sometimes sing songs normally accompanied by the drum with other percussion instruments such as the *djembe*⁶. For the purpose of this thesis I will focus on the *tendé* drum as the primary object of my analysis, and the songs that it accompanies are secondary. I was told by my interlocutors that the most common themes in *tendé* music are the beauty of nature (the desert or camels), praise of a hero, or love. Nostalgia was also a common term men and women used when describing how they felt when hearing these songs; nostalgia in particular, for the setting in which they remember them being sung.

⁶ Adam Snow (2016) notes that the *djembe* has been travelling through Europe and the U.S. since at least 1959, thanks to the efforts of Guinea’s first president Sékou Touré who wanted to “showcase the rich heritage of Guinean drumming and dancing to the world” (Snow, 2016 p. 22). The *djembe* subsequently ignited the interest of the African diaspora, coinciding with the Pan-African movement. In the early 1990s, a *djembe* school was established in Belgium (Snow, 2016). The *djembe* is now made by Western percussion manufacturers, and according to Snow, a growing number of American universities are offering “form of West African drumming and dance through ensemble classes offered in music and/or dance departments” (Snow, 2016 p. 26).

At the beginning of each interview most people would describe to me the kinds of events where tendé was generally performed: baptisms, marriages and divorces. However, it became clear that this represented only one facet of tendé performance. Such formalized events seemed relatively infrequent, the music performed by older women with a longer history of playing the instrument. However, alongside these formal occasions were spontaneous gatherings among young people—gatherings during the “cold” season between different nomadic encampments—where jerry cans sometimes replaced the tendé drum, but the same rhythms were used as a medium “to express our everyday, express our feelings in a festive, joyous way” (Amoudou, personal communication 11 June 2017). Such musical practices have all but disappeared in the diaspora. Formalized, ceremonial events, have been replaced by concerts, by groups such as *Tartit*, Badi Lalla, (a 79-year-old Algerian tendé player), *Tendé Disswat*, or *Les Filles de Illighadad*, a relatively new female group from Niger. Some Tuareg bands like *Kel Assouf* include a woman musician who plays tendé rhythms on a different instrument. The only other time tendé seems to be played is during gatherings organized by l’ODTE, which happens once a year usually in the summer. Otherwise, people listen to recordings, watch YouTube videos, or listen to WhatsApp recordings. The relatively small diasporic population is so spread out, it is nearly impossible to gather enough women together to play in any setting, for any reason.

The Tuareg in Europe

There are virtually no sources documenting how many Tuareg are currently living in France or Belgium. When trying to look up figures, one is more likely to come across advertisements for the Volkswagen Touareg than population statistics⁷. France does not collect

⁷ In 2003 Volkswagen launched its first SUV and “borrowed” the name Touareg, without, of course, asking permission from the Sahelian peoples (Stone Fish, 2012). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTJCoNFIB_Q

statistics based on ethnicity or religion (Adrian, 2009). Nevertheless, at least one researcher has observed that the number of Tuareg attending the annual ODTE gathering has increased in the last ten years (Mittelette-Peraldi, 2013). They remain however, spread out, without a significant community hub in Europe. Though one could posit this has something to do with their identity as nomads, many Tuareg are now sedentary living in small towns, or cities like Bamako or Niamey. The challenge in finding statistics or research on Tuareg immigration to Europe does not end there. As a group that is spread across the Sahelian countries, the Tuareg are not necessarily accounted for in scholarship about Malian migrants in France. For example, Larchanché-Kim and Sargent write about the immigrant experience of Malians, “one of the most established immigrant communities in Paris” (Sargent & Larchanché-Kim, 2006). One presumes this does not include Tuaregs from Mali through hints in the discourse; for example, the authors mention that polygamy is considered a pervasive problem by French authorities, as were arranged marriages. However, the authors do not mention any differentiations of ethnicity within the category “Malian”.

The other scholarly focus in which the Tuareg do not quite fit is that of Muslims in France. There is a great deal of literature that examines French discourses on Muslim practices and immigrants in the country (Fassin, 2005; Adrian, 2009; 2011; May, 2016; Beaman, 2012; Giry, 2006; Koenig, 2005), many of which explores issues surrounding the veil and other visible signs of Muslim identity. However, Tuareg women rarely wear the veil and my informants did not mention going regularly to mosque. This is not to suggest that the Tuareg do not practice Islam. Rather, it seemed to me that they did so in ways that did not alarm the French polity in the same way that other methods did. In political science and legal scholarship on French society again, the focus of case studies were women (in articles on the veil) from the Maghreb, from the

Middle East, or their origins are not identified at all, invoking a troubling assumption that there is one common practice of Islam (Adrian, 2011; May, 2016). Thus, the Tuareg sit awkwardly between two bodies of research, just as they do between two constructed geographies: sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb.

African immigrants to France and Belgium are also subject to racist discourses from politicians and prominent community organizations. Concerns with the veil and Malian immigrants taking jobs are symptomatic of deeper concerns of belonging and potential “change in the nation’s colour” (Tanguieff, 1985 p. 70 cited in Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2000 p. 440). In his heyday, Jean-Marie Le Pen, former leader of the *Front National* (his daughter Marine Le Pen has since taken over the position), described France as an organism and immigrants an invading illness threatening to dirty and defile the French nation (Geschiere & Nymanjoh, 2000). Once again, the subjects of such fearmongering and scapegoating are generally larger racialized communities. The Tuareg have however, been the subject of articles condemning their perceived anti-black racism in Africa, because of the group’s history as slave-owners (Koné, 2012). In a recent article, Susan Rasmussen explores the racialized narratives of western media reports on the Tuareg, arguing that the media projects “outsiders’ concepts of skin tones onto the conflict in Mali, portraying it as one between “white” Tuareg versus “black” southerners (Rasmussen, 2017 p. 79). The Tuareg are portrayed as violent, living in the past, comparing them to ethnic groups in Afghanistan or Arab populations in the Maghreb (Rasmussen, 2017). Essentialist narratives that presume Tuareg isolation in Mali ignore or are ignorant of the long historical relationships the Tuareg have with other groups in the region. While the conflict in Mali is read as one with strict racial divisions, academic research as well as my own experiences diverge significantly from this assumption. My informants were not Tuareg because of a uniform skin tone, but

because of a shared cultural identity and history. However, it should be noted that Rasmussen's critical reading of various media products focused exclusively on Tuareg "over there" in Mali, rather than in Europe or North America. Though Rasmussen suggests descriptions that style the Tuareg as "light-skinned" are meant to be sympathetic, there is no indication whether this sympathetic gaze translates to Tuareg immigrants. The pervasive narrative that places the Tuareg as nomads in the desert is one that influences how the *tendé* and other cultural practices are translated into Europe.

Though as mentioned earlier Tuareg immigration to Europe has been quite rare, the immigration policies of France and Belgium are worth exploring briefly, for regardless of the lack of attention paid to them, Tuareg migrants and refugees would have passed through the same processes of immigration as any other claimant. Migration among the Tuareg has largely been for economic purposes, and has in the past led young men to search for work in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia as well as France (Richter, 2016; Rasmussen, 2005). It has become however, increasingly difficult to immigrate to France and many young men seeking to enter the country have been rejected or have spent years waiting for their chance at a visa (Richter, 2016; Mann, 2003; Zesseu, 2011; Sargent & Larchanché-Kim, 2006).

By far the most significant reason for Tuareg people to come to France is for work. Historically residents of former French colonies had a relatively easy time moving into France as labourers (Sargent & Larchanché, 2006). The 1970s and 1980s brought on both a devastating drought in the Sahel region causing a serious loss of livestock, and an economic downturn for the French economy (Mann, 2003; Lecocq 2010). These two phenomena caused both an increase in immigrants from North-West Africa to France and a tightening of immigration policies by the French government in an attempt to rectify French unemployment (Mann, 2003; Zesseu, 2011;

Sargent & Larchanché, 2006; Fassin, 2013). Since that time immigration has been intimately tangled with concerns of unemployment and the economy in French society resulting in a “seemingly endless succession of (changing) rules” indicative of French xenophobia and scapegoating immigrants as the cause of economic downturn (Sargent & Larchancé, 2006 p. 15). As recently as 2011, France introduced *la Loi relative à l’immigration, à l’intégration et à la nationalité*, which increased the maximum length of detention for illegal immigrants and limited access to legal aid (May, 2016). Furthermore, “new mechanisms were introduced to enable the State to assign people to places of residence and to also require them to wear an electronic bracelet” (May, 2016 p. 294).

Tuaregs hoping to go to Belgium face similar bureaucratic hurdles as well. Asylum seekers must get to Brussels to register an asylum application within eight days of arriving in the country (Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, 2016). Due to what has been termed the “migrant crisis” in Europe, Belgian authorities have begun using “unofficial deterrence tactics...involving ‘written communications discouraging potential applicants from entering the procedure’” (Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, 2016 p. 21).

In Belgium, immigration and integration policies are developed by specific provinces, due in part to the divide between the French and Flemish speaking regions of the country (Adam & Torrekens, 2015). According to Adam and Torrekens, the integration policies in Wallonia (the French-speaking part of Belgium) are similar in approach to those of France (Adam & Torrekens, 2015). In March 2014 for example, the French Community Parliament (the legislative assembly of the French community of Belgium) voted to ban “religious signs (mainly targeting the headscarf) for people working in their administration when they are in contact with the public” (Adam & Torrekens, 2015 sec. 5.3).

Immigration in Belgium, as in France, has been a contentious issue. It was also in the 1970s that Belgium stopped immigration of new workers, though foreign students, refugees and those reuniting with family were still able to immigrate (Martiniello, 2003). Since the early 2000s Belgium has readjusted its policy on labour migration due to its own labour shortages. These policies however, like many around the world, give preferential treatment to “highly skilled workers” (Martiniello, 2003 p. 225; May, 2016). By and large however, Belgium did not have a detailed immigration plan in place until the mid-2000s. With little colonial relationship to countries in Africa (with the exception of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda) and elsewhere, Belgium did not have labour agreements with former colonies as France had, and therefore did not have to draw up detailed plans for deterring formerly colonized peoples from entering their borders.

I have briefly outlined the immigration policies and practices of France and Belgium here for the purposes of context. I chose not to discuss the details of my informants’ immigration experiences during my fieldwork for several reasons. The first was that I was perhaps overly sensitive to the possibility of bringing up traumatic memories of the hardship of seeking refugee status or the long, as well as frustrating experience of applying for temporary residence. Secondly, the migration journeys and motivations of my informants were so diverse as to be unhelpful in generalizing about an over-arching, or ‘typical’ Tuareg migration story. In the end, I felt that to focus more on the legal and political aspects of Tuareg migration would shift the emphasis of my research from questions of Tuareg culture, identity, loss and imperfect translation to those that would place the politics of France and Belgium at the centre of my thesis. I leave the latter task to other researchers as it is no doubt an important avenue of study.

Theory: Cultural Mobility and the Ties of Objects

The concept of migration as imperfect translation is the product of a diverse body of theory that transcends the boundaries between ethnomusicology and anthropology. There is in fact a significant overlap of theoretical knowledge, the difference often being a question of orientation. From anthropology, I have engaged with ecological anthropology, mobility studies and Actor Network Theory (ANT); from ethnomusicology, cultural theory that includes the discourses of globalization, and feminist theories examining and critiquing relationships between music and power.

There has been ample scholarship in ethnomusicology that looks at the music of immigrants. Many researchers comment on the way in which familiar music is not only a comfort to recent immigrants, but also an avenue of adaptation and assimilation, as younger generations hybridize sounds of their “homeland” with sounds of the new host country (Baily, 2005; Kaya, 2002; Gunar Aydin 2016; Kiwan & Meinhof, 2011; Swedenburg, 2015; Gibert, 2011; Baily & Collyer, 2006). Indeed, when I began my fieldwork I had already read foundational literature from which I inherited assumptions about hybridity, adaptation and the inherent globalist nature of immigration and diasporic life.

Upon speaking with informants, I came to a more complicated understanding of how Tuareg immigrants think about these notions of the “newness” of certain kinds of mobility, cosmopolitanism and interconnection. Therefore, my approach to diasporic music-making critically examines these assumptions. The Tuareg diaspora, such as it is, does not fit the mold of what a diaspora community should look or sound like. The common image of the Tuareg as nomads roaming the Sahel desert remained an important marker of identity for the older generation living in France. Indeed, a Parisian Tuareg remarked that he hoped children born in

France would one day learn about their culture and perhaps even “see their parents in their natural environment”. As an emergent diaspora, the orientation remains very much towards Niger and Mali though it is possible to see a shift beginning. Perhaps this is because of its relative size and recent existence, but I hesitate to suggest it will develop into a “recognizable” kind of diaspora. Rather it served as a reminder to me that there is no one definition of diasporic existence of or experience. Anna Tsing’s critical stance on the language that surrounds and narrates much of our discourse on globalization has been particularly important to my own position (Tsing, 2000). She is hesitant to apply generalizations to idiosyncratic situations (immigration and diaspora formation key among these) and questions how globalist language reinforces the mobility of international corporations, but equally requires immovable “stopping points”, where “global flows are consumed, incorporated and resisted” (Tsing, 2000 p. 338).

Tuareg women’s mobility is deeply affected by such dichotomies, both across real and imagined borders. Tuareg women are far less likely to immigrate than their male counterparts, and as musicians, are limited by the scope of what qualifies as “true” *tendé* music. Their mobility is impeded by their association with “home” and practices that reinforce an idealized home. Therefore, my focus on mobility will also be informed by feminist literature of women and music (Rasmussen, 1991; 2000; 2004; 2014; Koskoff, 1987; 2014; Lengel, 2004; Abu-Lughod, 1986; Ciucci, 2012; Chakravarty Box, 2006; Bohlman, 2003). Broadly speaking, this involves taking into account the nuanced ways that women musicians exert their agency in debates around the purpose and place of their music-making. Susan Rasmussen has beautifully exemplified this during her long career working with Tuareg women in Niger, demonstrating that *tendé* drumming is an important tool of expression, discussion and power for women. Other feminist scholars have considered the term agency differently, reflecting that the Western interpretation of

agency does not necessarily sit well in other cultures, for example in Islamic ones (Ghabrial, 2016; Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mahmood, 2006). I will examine how Tuareg women work with and against the gendered expectations set before them in France and Belgium with these ideas in mind.

My focus on the *tendé* drum has led me to consider the mobility of objects, keeping in mind their relationship to a particular (gendered) group of people. As an object historically constructed with specific materials in a precise way, the *tendé* drum is not only important as a symbol of Tuareg femininity, but as a symbol of a nomadic desert life.

Both ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have dedicated a significant amount of time and energy to understanding human/non-human relationships. This has been done regarding animal-human relationships (Cameron, 2011; Despret, 2016; Harraway, 1992; Kohn, 2007; Callon, 1968; Lien & Law, 2011) as well as object-human relationships (De Laet & Mol, 2000; Ingold, 2000; Cruickshank, 2001; 2005; Latour, 1999). For the purposes of my own research I have focused on literature that examines the social lives of objects (e.g. instruments) and their interactions and relationships with people. In musicology, there is a line of study called “organology” or the study of instruments. While this body of work has colonialist roots and until recently been relegated to museum studies, thanks to the advent of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Actor Network Theory it has once again found relevance in contemporary research (Bates, 2012; Dawe, 2001; Gibson, 2006; Allan Roda, 2013; Jahnichen, 2013). This offers a rich foundation upon which to base my own inquiries of the *tendé* as a socialized instrument that is part of various webs of relations. Such relations however, are not limited to those between people and objects. Rather, ties to place, in this case the desert, also enter this web of connections as well. As I will elaborate, the methods of constructing, playing and moving

tendé drums are largely only possible in a nomadic setting. I consider scholarship on the relationships between people and places a complimentary body of literature, as part of the wider scope of ecological anthropological research. The idea of home is explored by Jackson (1995) and Basso (2003) in powerful ways, suggesting that in fact that “ground” upon which a culture has been formed, cannot be entirely separated from it (Povinelli, 1995; 2011; Ingold, 1993; Cruickshank, 2005). Ethnomusicologists such as Steven Feld (1990) and Murray Schafer (1977) have written about human relationships to their sonic environments and I consider this an additional perspective on cultural understandings of home more generally.

In the case of the tendé, I argue that its ties to the desert, the “home” of Tuareg culture and history, make it not only an important symbol of desert life (as an instrument perfectly suited to its environment), but so entwined in Tuareg associations with the desert and nostalgia for this past, that how to successfully translate the tendé to a new environment has become a hot topic of debate and disagreement. It is this complex web of relations, encompassing individuals, landscapes and cultural rituals, that complicates its mobility and translation. The embedded meanings and associations that the tendé drum has gathered in its relationship to Tuareg women in particular, are affected not only by the object itself, but by its placement in the desert and its role in the constructing the desert as home. To transpose it elsewhere requires reflecting on its role in new spaces. Nor is it only the object being moved. Moving an instrument means moving the sounds it makes, away from certain acoustic environments or performance spaces.

My analysis of the themes and relationships that surround the tendé will be informed by these theoretical viewpoints in order to show how women are symbolically tied to the tendé and its materiality in significant ways. Indeed, the tendé is used as much to define women’s role in Tuareg society as the tendé is defined by its female players. Whether or not women were from

cities like Bamako, or lived as nomads in their youth, the *tendé* remained a powerful symbol tying them to what they saw as traditional ways of life. The importance of the relationships that encircle the *tendé* and how these relationships are being negotiated alongside their migration, will be a central focus of my thesis.

Methodology

Aminata was not exaggerating about how few Tuareg women are in France. I soon realized that I would have to radically re-think my own assumptions about *tendé* in diaspora, especially when it is so rarely performed. This is not to say that *tendé* was non-existent or forgotten. Several of my informants mentioned that *ishumar* guitar music, a popular world music genre is based on *tendé* rhythms, though this was contested by others. The *ishumar* style became popular during the 1980s and 1990s as a form of resistance music against the Malian state and will be discussed in Chapter One. One guitarist in a popular band in Belgium mentioned that *tendé* rhythms would be excellent for electronic music. Many people I spoke to were happy that I was looking into *tendé* music, saying that few people have done research on it. However, the lack of regular gatherings or performances meant that I had to look for my data in other ways and ask slightly different questions. It was also difficult to spend significant amounts of time with any of my informants because of how spread out they all were. This equally hampered how often they themselves were able to gather. Of the people I visited, with whom I shared a meal, or spent several days, only one lived in Paris. In total I conducted 12 formal interviews that encompassed 25 people. These interviews tended to be arranged in advanced, were in person, and lasted between half an hour and two hours. In one case, I spent the day with a family doing interviews throughout the day and taking notes when I wasn't formally asking questions. I conducted

several interviews by phone, often meeting my informants in person later during my fieldwork. I sent questions via email to a French researcher, the founder of Sahel Sounds Chris Kirkley and some of the Tuareg community in Tamanrasset, Algeria. As mentioned earlier I also had the opportunity to watch a *tendé* performance in Tamanrasset via a WhatsApp video chat. I also watched videos, interviews and saw photos of *tendé* performances via media sources such as Facebook (and Facebook Live), YouTube and WhatsApp. I also spoke and interacted with a number of members of the Tuareg community during the ODTE gathering and during a meeting of the *Organisation Diaspora Tuareg en Belgique* (ODTB). Aminata had many different people coming in and out of her house, so I was able to meet and talk with some of her friends involved or part of the Tuareg community as well.

I was lucky enough to speak to many helpful and passionate musicians about their personal experiences with *tendé*, both past and present. This in itself allowed me not only to piece together an understanding of the many interlacing meanings and emotions associated with *tendé*, but also opened my eyes to the fact that I had stepped into my fieldwork at a remarkable time because I was witnessing the very beginnings of a diasporic community. My initial uncertainty about the existence of a Tuareg diaspora was laid to rest after witnessing the large number that attended the ODTE annual summer gathering, noting the active nature of the community online and speaking to Pierre Mittelette-Peraldi who has seen the growth of the community over the last five years (Mittelette-Peraldi, 2013).

The men and women I interviewed had all come to Europe at different times for different reasons. Some, like Mahassa, had come with a European partner, between 10 and 25 years ago, or as immigrants after the first Tuareg rebellion in Niger in the 1990s. Others had arrived only within the last two years or so, as refugees. Others still spent much of their time in Europe, either

with family or touring, but their primary residence was Mali or Niger. Though the ODTE has been in existence since the late 1990s, the Tuareg population was incredibly sparse and spread out. One of my informants guessed that there were between 200-250 attendees at the ODTE annual reunion. But it is undeniable that there has been an increase in Tuareg immigrants and refugees to Europe in the last five years and though people are still quite spread out, communities are beginning to cluster in places like Namur (in Belgium) and Paris.

As I had suspected, many people had a vested interest in knowing who I spoke to and how I understood this traditional music. However, several of these people were non-Tuaregs and they also had motives for ensuring that I spoke to the “right” people. I perceived their suggestions and directions as well-meaning and confining—both to myself and to the music/musicians playing *tendé*, and emblematic of a desire to preserve what they perceived to be an indigenous culture from exploitation as well as from any kind of change or transformation. This is not to say my Tuareg informants did not have their own agendas when speaking with me. Women in particular, brushed aside my assurances of anonymity, saying that it would be better if their names were in my work, a potential avenue for further publicity about their music and bands. I quickly learned that many women were struggling to find management and gigs, citing a variety of reasons for why this was the case, reflective of the curious role *tendé* plays in the lives of the diaspora community.

In living with Aminata and her husband Claude for the majority of my fieldwork, I was also forced to come to terms with her positionality in relation to the people I hoped to work with. As a veritable fount of information, it would not have been possible to do my research without Aminata. She was both an activist, having studied human rights in university, and a passionate

advocate for all things and peoples indigenous. Her first encounter with the Tuareg occurred when she advocated for water security in Niger in the wake of uranium prospecting.

As an outsider who nevertheless was considered an honorary Tuareg, Aminata was party to gossip and internal conflicts as well as the politics and challenges facing many musicians as they tried to break into the world music scene in Europe. Claude was a Frenchman through and through, a lover of cheese and wine who enjoyed telling me all there was to know about Burgundy, his childhood home. Now retired, he was Aminata's partner in her management business, happy to contribute what he could to her project.

Aminata (and Claude) represented an important stakeholder in the continued importance of Tuareg music. She was the manager of a Tuareg musician and had previously managed a *tendé* group. When I was in Paris, she picked up a third group, this one from Algeria, that played traditional Algerian instruments in a contemporary style, accompanied by guitar and drums. She had also been an organizer for the 2012 *Festival au desert*, a famous festival held near Timbuktu prior to the conflict.

Aminata's management was tied to her own cultural organization *Imarawen Culture et Partage* which was essentially a self-funded operation, to promote and valorize Tamasheq culture. Aminata had few clients due to a lack of external funding, but she was also highly selective about who she chose to represent. There was a very particular kind of artist that Aminata considered "authentic" or "true" to Tuareg indigenous culture. Much of my time in the field was spent pondering what Aminata considered authentic or a good example of Tuareg music and why. I came to believe that one reason Aminata was so adamant that the *tendé*'s function and sound remain unchanged was due to her own experience as a migrant in France. Aminata is Algerian and although she was married to a French man she has never tried to

become a full-fledged French citizen. When I lived with them, they were discussing ongoing renovations of a house they had in Algeria. Aminata went back fairly frequently to see family but also to spend time in Tamanrasset with Tuaregs living there. It seemed to me that her desire to preserve Tuareg women's music had as much to do with her own relationship to the idea of home as it did with her clients'. My time with Aminata meant I was party to a perspective on Tuareg music that was both loving and appreciative, and at times critical of certain artists who had, in her opinion, diverged too much from their musical origins. Aminata valorized "authentic" music-making and was deeply concerned with the idea of preservation. Through this concern, Aminata was able to obscure some of the power she had in determining just how *tendé* drumming would be translated in France and Belgium. What she was doing, she often insisted, was helping women keep something important intact. She argued that this "true" form of *tendé* drumming held something that other forms did not. Aminata was effectively interpreting the meanings of *tendé* drumming in her own way and had decided she preferred to ignore the open-ended nature of the *tendé*'s role in Tuareg society. Nevertheless, because of her connections to and knowledge about the world music industry in France, many of my informants were eager to have her manage them. Aminata and her husband's small studio apartment in central Paris was filled with instruments and souvenirs from their travels in the Sahel, including many leather items from Tuareg communities in Tamanrasset and two *tendé* drums stored for one of the women she managed. The skins were wrinkled and dried out but otherwise the drums appeared to be in good condition. When I met their owner, I offered to bring them to her when we met again at the ODTE weekend. She declined, saying they would be too heavy to carry on the train and trusted Aminata to keep them safe.

Being in Paris also gave me access to a wealth of resources that I would not have found anywhere else. *L'Institut du Monde Arabe* was a few metro stops away and offered not only a library archive of texts on North Africa and the Middle East, but a book store with a small section of Tuareg research. Aminata also had a full library of literature on the Tuareg, thanks to her mother, her friends and several researchers she had either worked with or learned about through her advocacy work. As the primary colonizer of the Sahel region, much of the early scholarship on the Tuareg was written by French academics. Despite this, I found only one graduate student from Paris doing research on the diaspora of Tuareg in Europe (Mittelette-Peraldi, 2013). Men searching for work will often move through Algeria Morocco or Tunisia before attempting to enter France, which is becoming increasingly difficult (Richter, 2016; Rasmussen, 2005). This explained why there were far fewer women living in the diaspora than men. I learned too from my informants that many Tuareg who have been displaced by the current conflict in Mali are reluctant to go far away, preferring to stay near the desert. Indeed, those who were in France insisted that the desert was still something that was still part of their lives.

I was incredibly lucky to meet the people I did and to spend time with Aminata and Claude. Through our long discussions and interviews, I have tried to piece together exactly what the *tendé* represents to the Tuareg living abroad and how it is enjoyed and performed by them. What appeared before me was not so much a tool, or even an object tied to its user. The instrument that I came to know was a key component to nomadic life and to the desert environment. Its place in the diaspora, however, is still in flux.

Contained traditions, boundless modernity

This chapter reflects on the dichotomy between “traditional” music and “modern” music in the context of the Tuareg diaspora. I intend to address the gendered associations that tie women to the home and to tradition while men are associated with the outside and modernity. While there have been a number of scholars who have remarked on the development of a Tuareg guitar style known as *ishumar*, few have studied contemporary *tendé* music and even fewer have studied it outside of ritual healing or trance ceremonies, with exception of Susan Rasmussen, who has looked at *tendé* drumming in a wide variety of contexts. (Rasmussen, 2006; 2008; Seddik Arkam, 2009). Even Rasmussen however, has not explored *tendé* playing among Tuareg immigrants. From the outset of my fieldwork, the word traditional was frequently attached to the *tendé* drum or other, rarer Tuareg instruments. This included the *imzad*, a single stringed-violin also exclusively played by women, and the *tehardent*, a kind of guitar that griots played. Modernity, define here as a western-centric ideal of secularization, capitalism, technological advancement and international mobility, was almost always discussed in relation to the guitar, which is mythologized as evidence of the Tuareg’s entry into the modern world (Deeb, 2011).

I was in Belgium when I met Mahassa. In her fifties, Mahassa has lived outside of Namur for around 25 years. She met her Belgian husband in Mali when he was working there with UNICEF. Mahassa did not grow up playing *tendé*, though she did grow up in northern Mali. Her mother and sisters played but she always preferred to dance. However, soon after she moved to Belgium she was asked to help form *Tartit*, now the best known traditional band among the Tuareg and Europeans. In the diaspora, she is considered one of the rare experts on *tendé* songs, playing and history. Even before I arrived in Europe, I had been told I needed to speak to her. Of

the women in Europe, she was regarded as the one who had the most reliable information on traditional music.

When the time finally came to sit and chat, it was in the early evening on a Sunday. Mahassa had just hosted about fifteen people for lunch to discuss the formation of a diaspora organization in Belgium. She was tired, having spent all morning preparing food, and all afternoon in an animated discussion. Sitting in her spacious living room, I was conscious of her time and was worried she would be too tired to speak for long. However, once we started, she quickly became impassioned. Tendé, she said, is the first instrument of the Tuareg. It is the base of Tuareg culture, reflecting the predominant place of women in it (Claudot & Hawad, 1984; Rasmussen, 2014). The terms traditional and modern delineated not only kinds of music, but also the musicians themselves. Women are keepers of traditions and men modernizers and experimenters; they got to play new instruments like the guitar. As Mahassa said, “the guitar is youthful. It’s a message for young people. Now it’s guitar, guitar, guitar... No, the guitar is really closing off the traditional I find” (Mahassa, personal communication 15 July 2017).

Modernity and the Guitar, Tradition and the Tendé

Even though my research focus was on tendé music, talking about the guitar was unavoidable. Not only were many of my informants men who played guitar, but it was also often cited by women as the reason fewer young people were interested in the tendé. As the story goes, “the guitar was literally carried into Tuareg society by the rebel fighters, often strapped onto their backs alongside their Kalashnikov rifles” (Rasmussen, 2006 p. 634) in the early 1980s. These were combatants who had joined Ghaddafi’s forces in Libya in the 1970s and were returning to fight for independence back home. Out of this movement came the band Tinariwen, probably the

most well-known Tuareg musicians in the world. These former rebels became known as *ishumar*, which is commonly understood to be based on the word *chômeur*, meaning unemployed and the word was soon associated with their musical style; rhythmic, up-tempo, calling for resistance and then later, for peace and reconciliation (Rasmussen, 2006). Many musicians who call themselves *ishumar* now have never experienced conflict, but the musical style is popular and has provoked much interest from Western media and researchers alike, who have participated in constructing a romantic and rebellious backstory for this new age of Tuareg musicians. According to Nadia Belalimat, a longtime researcher on *ishumar* music, in 2010 over fifteen Tuareg guitar bands were linked to world music production circuits (Belalimat, 2010). The guitar remains the main way Tuareg musicians can disseminate their messages of peace and Tuareg nationalism to foreign audiences. What peace might look like is often left ambiguous, and calls to end the conflict in the Sahel could be a demand for an independent Tuareg state as much as a demand for reconciliation between the Tuareg and the Malian state. Themes related to desert life and its hardships are also very common. Women's music meanwhile remains grounded in the "local" both in the minds of scholars and women themselves (Rasmussen, 2002). The dynamics of Tuareg women's relationships with the world music industry and the various narratives constructed in relation to their marketability, will be discussed in a later chapter.

Since 2010, *ishumar* rock music has continued to be popular and many groups have travelled all across Europe and North America. In 2016, Bombino, a guitarist from Niger, came to Ottawa, for Bluesfest, an annual music festival in July, featuring a wide variety of music genres. The summer I was in France conducting fieldwork, another guitarist, Faris Amine was in Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver, doing the summer festival circuit. Many others were touring Europe or parts of northern Africa. This year Tinariwen is touring in India.

The guitar, as one of my informants said, is a “borderless” instrument; easy to carry, available worldwide, and recognizable. It has been played strictly by Tuareg men up until recently. These men might have worked as migrant labourers, or left the desert to find work in Europe. Their mobility, like that of the guitar, is often categorized as “modern” and global in nature (Belalimat, 2010).

The excitement and discourse of modernity that surrounds the guitar is in large part encouraged and spread thanks to the scholarship on it (Amico, 2014; Belalimat, 2010; Lecocq, 2010; Montague, 2014; Rasmussen 2006; Schneider, 2014). As mentioned, many researchers have studied *ishumar* music describing it as new, urban and fundamentally growing out of and away from the traditional rhythms of *tendé* drumming (Genthon, 2012; Belalimat, 1996; Kohl, 2007). This trajectory of “evolving” musical styles has a striking similarity to discussions of cultural evolution. In “modernizing” their music, that being hybridizing, commercializing or universalizing their music, the Tuareg are being re-conceived as finally finding their place in “global” society. As one author mentioned, “soon this music will further distance itself from its ‘music-mother’ source to constitute a new genre by progressively defining its own foundations” (Genthon, 2012 p. 137). The “mother” source being termed traditional music is also women’s music, relegated outside the problematic discourse of evolving Tuareg sounds. This language relegates tradition bearing to women. It constructs them as symbols of the desert, an idealized homeland (with all the embedded political implications of the term) and as sites of cultural memory. Women are nostalgically attached to a particular time and place (Baron, 2005).

In her article “The Global Situation” (2000), Anna Tsing is deeply critical of modernization and compares it to discourses on globalization, to show how similar the two are in constructing certain views of what constitutes the global and the modern. For example, she

writes, “modernization projects create notions of time through which groups and activities can be situated in relation to stories of progress.” (Tsing, 2000 p. 329). Globalization appears to be the end-point of the progress-as-modern temporal structure. Thus, to become modern is to turn outward from one’s culture and engage with global networks and the circulation of cultures, people and information, and importantly, to avoid questioning who these networks privilege, or who benefits from the circulation and global commodification of that which is circulating (Tsing, 2000).

I mentioned an example of this earlier, when critiquing the idea that musicians can use their “transcultural capital” to their economic advantage in a migration setting (Kiwani & Meinhof, 2011 p. 4). Kiwani and Meinhof portray musician networks as highly idealized modes of cosmopolitanism. They do not question the implication that a migrating musician is a “professional” musician who moves (to southern or northern metropolitan cities) to better participate in a global economy and world music market (Kiwani & Meinhof 2011 p. 12). The Tuareg women that I spoke with would likely not be included in their study of musicians who migrate. Using the term “transcultural capital” reminds us of the capitalist structures that render unprofitable music-making invisible (Turino, 2008 p. 233).

The ishumar musicians are called “the first Tuareg generation to have been brought into modernity” (Belalimat, 1996 p. 5). Women are rarely included in works that examine the changing nature of Tuareg life, and it is largely taken for granted that it is primarily men who are having to deal with these changes on an economic and social scale (Rasmussen, 2002). They are the ones who migrate to cities, or roam across the desert “without a goal” (Amico, 2007 p. 17). Tuareg men’s movement is reformulated by scholars as listless and wandering, a life that is outside of “traditional” cultural space and time which delineates clear cycles of movement to

specific locations (Kohl, 2007; Genthon, 2012). Perhaps this kind of research is best exemplified by the title of Baz Lecocq's 2004 article: "Unemployed intellectuals of the Sahara" (Lecocq, 2004).

Women's instruments, women's roles in constructing Tuareg identity, are untouched and unanalyzed in this emphasis on the "modern" music of the Tuareg. In some works, women's roles are footnotes, the *tendé* a "wooden mortar" with not so much as a reference to its social importance (Genthon, 2012 p. 57). The terms traditional and modern delineated not only kinds of music, but also the musicians themselves.

The initial descriptions of the *tendé* by the Tuareg and scholars alike, also project the image of an instrument relegated to the past, which is likely connected to the perception of tradition being for the 'old' and modernity being for the young (Mahmood, 2001). In her analysis of Tuareg music in southern Algeria, Nadia Mécheri-Saada discusses *tendé* music as a style with an ancient root that was influenced in the 1930s by Malian and Nigerien *tendé* rhythms (Mécheri-Saada, 1994). Despite this "musical evolution of the genre" (Mécheri-Saada, 1994 p.181), she is doubtful that the *tendé* will remain relevant in an "urban, multi-ethnic setting" (p. 184). More likely, she concludes, *tendé* drumming will be used as a reference point for future generations (Mécheri-Saada, 1994). The argument seems to be that *tendé* music does not have the evolutionary capacities to move forth with the modern world, in part because of the *tendé* drums deep association with one place and one way of life. Mécheri-Saada's biological metaphors encapsulate the relationship between a musical practice and the identity (indeed the people) it comes to co-produce. It is then particularly ironic that *tendé* drumming is being described as unchanging when major disruptions in nomadic life are catalysts for scholarship on

Tuareg music. Tendé drumming has indeed responded to the changes in men's lives, which, predictably, affect Tuareg societies in the Sahel and beyond.

On the part of the Tuareg, the language of stasis was something I ran into at the beginning of our conversations. Later, as we discussed tendé music in more detail, my informants would complicate the narrative of what constituted the right kind of tendé music. The temporal distinction between certain modes of playing may well have been for my benefit, with my informants thinking that I would want to hear about ancient artifacts rather than living, dynamic musical practices. Emphasis was placed on the idea that certain aspects of the tendé drum had “stayed the same”, for example, Mahassa explained to me that “it’s the woman who created it and it is still women who play it”. Others, like Oumar mentioned that in Niger one could find “many ancient things, or more things that had stayed and are still part of the culture” (Oumar, personal communication 10 July 2017). Staying the same was also important to the tendé’s construction. “Nothing has been added” said Amal, the aunt of one of my other informants. “Even the instrument, there haven’t been any modern things that were added, and never have been, at least for the moment” (Amal, personal communication 29 June 2017).

The desire by Tuareg women to present tendé as stable and emblematic of an idealized desert home was a recognition that to change it means potential changes to women's status (F. Seddik-Arkam, personal communication June 11, 2017). Tendé performances were connected to important ceremonies and ritual events. Much like in Jane Sugarman's ethnography of Presparë weddings in North America, women's singing (and music-making in the Tuareg case) plays “a crucial role in constituting and maintaining” understandings of social order (Sugarman, 1997 p. 8). The sound of the tendé was not a disconnected entity. Rather, it was connected to situated

events and particular ways of being among the Tuareg and offered Tuareg women a clear role in their capacity as musicians.

It is also possible that having something stable to hold onto, even in one's mind, is important to women whose lives have changed radically due to migration, or whose homes have been utterly changed by conflict and displacement. Susan Rasmussen remarks that "Women's *tendé* songs, remarkably, have survived considerable turmoil and upheavals in Tuareg society over the past several decades..." (Rasmussen, 2014 p. 267). She goes on to say that this does not mean that these songs haven't changed. Rather, the very act of *tendé* performance and certain fundamental poetic "images and tropes" have been retained (Rasmussen, 2014 p. 269). Rasmussen does not mention the drums themselves, but based on my own fieldwork, it seems that the physical, and unchanged nature of the *tendé* drum is another important aspect of women's music that has been retained.

The traditional gendered division of labour between Tuareg men and women has led to an oversimplification of their perceived mobility. Women's lives are perceived as static, and in some scholarly literature are peripheral to men's mobile ones, remaining behind in the outskirts of towns, or in tents, though women do actively express their opinions on their rapidly changing lifestyles through music and through their own agential movement (Rasmussen, 2014; Genthon, 2012; Belalimat, 1996). Yet the distinction has already been made. As a Tuareg "ur-culture" the *tendé* and other traditional instruments become symbols of the past, dismissed as out of step with modern times.

Maintaining Tradition with Tendé

“The tendé is played exclusively by women”. More than anything else this was the first thing that women would tell me about the tendé and why it was important to them. Not only was the tendé often referred to as one of the first instruments of the Tuareg, it was crucial that I knew of the relationship between women and this instrument. Susan Rasmussen has spoken to the importance the music has for women, not only as an important part of healing and possession rituals, but as an outlet for concerns, frustrations, and admonishments against men that otherwise could not be voiced (Rasmussen, 1991; Abu-Lughod, 1986). As one of my informants told me, some women now sing about everyday life in refugee camps and the hardships this life entails. In the diaspora, the tendé is rarely played. It is most commonly heard at formal concert venues, or at an annual gathering organized by the ODTE.

When men and women in the diaspora spoke to me about tendé it was almost always in the context of “back home” and almost always described in its formalized context, at least initially. It took me a while to recognize that this was part of the diasporic discourse around the instrument itself and what qualifies as authentic representations of a musical practice, which may have been an attempt to appear legitimate as authentic Tuareg people in the eyes of academics and scholars. I came to realize as my interviews continued that singing tendé songs or playing tendé rhythms can also be informal mode of socialization among Tuareg women (Rasmussen, 2014). However, as I soon learned, these songs and rhythms are more or as likely to be played on jerry cans or old oil drums than on the formal tendé drum and men sometimes join in. It was only during important ceremonies, baptisms, weddings, divorce celebrations, that the actual drum itself would be brought out and played by the best musicians.

Who played the tendé drum was also a site of contradictions that were so implicit to many of my informants that it was only when explaining who did what that their descriptions became more ambiguous. While Susan Rasmussen argues that it is primarily younger women who play the tendé, she also acknowledges that “festivals...break down the rigid associations of authority with elders and resistance with youth” (Rasmussen, 2014 p. 272). The themes of tendé songs tend to be love, courtship, bravery etc., which also lends to its association with young people. Many of my female informants however, were mothers, or even grandmothers. When I asked Mahassa about this contradiction, she explained that “it’s mostly for the young...the older women who play the tendé play at big parties; there are 70 year olds who play...when there is a big event it’s the older women who play” (Mahassa, personal communication 15 July 2017).

Formal tendé performances would also often include traditional poetry, whereas informal gatherings would involve more improvisation. The men and women describing tendé performances to me were aware of these divisions back home, but understood my research to be on “authentic” tendé performance, rather than impromptu gatherings. This was also likely due to the fact that in the diaspora I would see no such informal gatherings. Most performances outside of Tuareg communities in Africa were formal, staged, and organized through official industry channels rather than in someone’s house. What I came to understand about this division between formal and informal was that my informants wished to emphasize the importance of the “traditional” ways of playing the tendé. Despite contexts such as refugee camps, exile, or even immigration, the physical instrument appeared to be of some significance to my informants, or at least it held significance for the purposes of explaining traditional musical practices to me, as an outsider and researcher. The assumption seemed to be that anyone who was doing research on tendé would want to hear it in its “purest”, most “authentic” form, that of being in the desert,

with the proper *tendé* drum and played by only women. It was equally presumed that a European audience would want to hear something authentic and traditional. More importantly, Disko the leader of Tartit, suggested that to play in front of international audiences was to participate in maintaining Tuareg traditions. To play for different audiences was to teach them, and to encourage them to take an interest in *tendé* music.

There were a number of requirements for authentic *tendé* playing. The *tendé* drums had to remain unchanged in their construction, and ideally, the songs and rhythms had to be closely associated with *tendé* played in the desert. A group called Les Filles de Illighadad was dismissed by many of my informants as inauthentic, because while they played the *tendé* in their sets, one of the women also played the guitar. In Europe however, Les Filles were far more accountable to their Western audience and fan-base than the few Tuareg present at their shows. They were also residents of Niger, despite their months-long touring schedule in Europe, and so were not tied up in the same musician-networks as my informants, though they had been discussed and debated at length within said networks.

Authenticity was discussed mostly in the context of performances for international or European non-Tuareg audiences. My informants felt it was important to offer European audiences the right impression of their music, regardless of whether *tendé* rhythms were played on whatever was available back home (Rasmussen, 2014). This seemed to me an attempt to translate the importance of *tendé*, perhaps in the hopes that upon recognizing its importance in this translated form, producers, studios and venues might open their spaces to Tuareg women musicians. I consider these highly formalized events as one mode of translation, as Tuareg women try to develop different methods to convey the value of *tendé* music even as it is being transformed to accommodate a European context (Basu & Coleman 2008).

Both Rasmussen and Straker have discussed the strategic use of culture in Tuareg performance in order to present a particular image of themselves and their needs, both to Western audiences and national authorities (Rasmussen, 2005; Straker, 2008). These performances allow musicians to provide a sense of what life is like “back home,” with particular emphasis on “selected elements of Tuareg culture” while “minimiz[ing] others to outside ‘Western’ audiences: namely, de-emphasis of Islamic leadership and social stratification and greater emphasis upon secularism and equality” (Rasmussen, 2005 p. 803). Rasmussen even uses the term translation to reflect the difficulties of trying to express local, emplaced notions of *tendé* music and the values and social organization it represents. Straker also noticed this performance of culture when Tartit performed at the 2003 Folklife Festival in Washington D.C., noting that the emphasis of the concert was on encouraging American tourists to visit Timbuktu and become a source of revenue for the Tuareg in Mali (Straker, 2008).

The process of negotiating and translating value, meanings and place-making through music has much longer-term consequences for the women participating in these processes and will inevitably generate a different understanding of Tuareg culture as it exists in Europe. Whether or not *tendé* concerts in the diaspora represent exactly how the *tendé* is played back home, they represent attempts by women to develop a place for themselves in the European context. Anxieties over the reformulation of their roles as musicians and Tuareg women in Europe are reflective of a sense of loss, nostalgia and uncertainty as to how best to transform *tendé* music to better suit their position as, ultimately, people living in Europe.

The importance of this social project was palpable, and it was clear the changes in social context caused a rift between Tuareg women’s music and the social life they (and other Tuareg) had constructed around it (DeNora, 2003). Perhaps the best example of this is a conversation I

had with Aisha, a woman who had moved to Rennes in the last few years from Mali. She had played in Mahassa's band Tendé Disswat and knew how to play the tendé well. I visited her and her family in Rennes for a day and we spoke about the tendé, what it was used for, how they listened to it in the diaspora and its importance to Tuareg culture. As the day wore on however, Aisha revealed to me that she had grown up in Bamako, not the desert, and had visited Timbuktu for the first time in 2005. She had never lived a nomadic life. This does not invalidate the valuable information Aisha provided, rather it speaks to the importance the tendé plays in constituting an image of nomadic life and home, as well as women's roles in that lifestyle. Furthermore, though she had lived in Bamako, Aisha had perhaps been close enough to the desert to avoid thinking about the troubling dissonances around the tendé's purpose in a different place. In Bamako the desert was still within reach. Even to Aisha, tendé drumming was the sound most associated with the idea of nomadism (DeNora, 2003). She knew the tendé, her family knew it, and identified its importance in similar terms as other women I spoke with.

A Woman's Instrument

Women are often understood as "bearers" of culture and tradition, as well as symbols of nationhood (Card, 1983; Baron, 2005; Doubleday, 2008). The term traditional is inherent to Tuareg women's music while at the same time limiting. As participants in traditional music-making, Tuareg women retain an important social status (Rasmussen, 2014), yet at home and in the diaspora this status ties them to a notion of home and idealized role that does not necessarily offer them power, respect, the ability to innovate tendé drumming styles or the chance to branch out and explore other instruments (Rasmussen, 2014; Doubleday 2008). This is not to say that women necessarily *feel* they are being relegated to the past, as the songs that accompany tendé

drumming often touch on contemporary themes and issues. Rather there is a sense of obligation to maintain some knowledge of *tendé* in the diaspora, in order to have some significant cultural role in this new place. *Tendé* is considered intimately tied to Tuareg identity and for many of my informants, to childhood. Different men I spoke to for example, told me it was “the heart,” it was “the mother,” there is “no other community that plays it like we do.”

In her book *Egypt as a Woman*, Beth Baron is preoccupied with the notion that women are often used as powerful allegories for nations, yet in practice do not necessarily have the same access to political or social institutions as men (Baron, 2005). Indeed, nationalists in Egypt frequently used the image of the family and the mother to encourage women to inhabit “the role of biologically and culturally reproducing the nation” (Baron, 2005 p. 5). One should not overlook the fact that since 2012 the Tuareg in northern Mali at least have been engaged in a separatist movement which has not only impacted many women (some of whom have come to Europe as refugees) but has relied on their maintenance of Tuareg culture to validate their claim to the Sahel. The fact that many Tuareg consider the use of *tendé* unique to them is already a statement of national pride. Just as it is part of a process that constructs an idealized desert home, *tendé* drumming is part of the ongoing construction of an idealized Tuareg nation.

The power and agency that Tuareg women enact while playing the *tendé* is also largely present in the private sphere, the home, or in the case of the Tuareg, the tent, though I want to emphasize that we should not assume Tuareg agency looks like the liberatory western notions of it (Claudot & Hawad, 1984; Lengel, 2004; Abu-Lughod, 1986; Mahmood, 2001). Women sing and play with each other, noting their disapproval with certain male practices via improvised song, and this may or may not shame men into adjusting their behaviour (Rasmussen, 2014). *Tendé* drumming itself is an important aspect of gendered agency and gender is an important part

of the symbolism that links women with the *tendé*. Consider that the *tendé* drum is traditionally also used as a mortar for softening meat or millet for meal time, giving it a close association to the tent (Claudot & Hawad 1984). According to some of my informants, girls learn to play by watching their mothers or other groups of women engaging in *tendé* gatherings. Susan Rasmussen and Faiza Seddik Arkam also note that the *tendé* is associated with spirit possession which is against Islam making it a taboo practice for Tuareg men to engage in, who often emphasize their Islamic adherence and association with *marabouts* as opposed to *griots*, as a means of maintaining social status in the community. For example, Rasmussen writes “the few men who resort to women’s exorcism rites, and do the Koranic verses normal for men’s spirit cures, are subject to ridicule” (Rasmussen, 1994 p. 76; Seddik Arkam 2014; Ciucci, 2012).

Veronica Doubleday’s extensive overview of the gendered relationships to instruments in the Middle East offers some additional telling insights. Instruments Doubleday argues “are frequently endowed with personhood” (Doubleday, 2008 p. 4), becoming “enmeshed in a texture of social relationships” (Gell p. 16-17 in Doubleday 2008 p. 4) that can be contested or valorized. From this perspective, it is possible to re-imagine *ishumar* guitar music’s borrowing of *tendé* rhythms as less an evolution of *tendé* music and more as a power play to appropriate a formerly exclusive feminine musical practice (Doubleday 2008; Ciucci, 2012). Moments of upheaval or radical social disruption are ideal settings for these material relationships to change, or indeed for them to be translated into men’s music in new settings and contexts.

In our conversation, Mahassa would often say that *tendé* is the base of Tuareg culture, as if to try and make me understand why it had to be performed in the diaspora. “People take the guitar now and then they’ll say, ‘oh *tendé*, we know it we’re born into it’, you understand?” (personal communication 15 July 2017). Such statements reflect in a way both the ubiquity of the

instrument in everyday life at the same time tying it directly to women's fertility and roles as bearers of children and tradition (Baron, 2005; Doubleday, 2008). She and others struggled to articulate this inherent importance and I struggled to grasp its significance. Tendé appeared to be "traditional" because it was so tied to an idea of rootedness, making its translation to Europe (even describing it in French), difficult. The language of childhood, of earth, mother or even being "born" into something, surrounds tendé with an atmosphere of nostalgia, while at the same time denoting an important, almost fundamental, marker of identity and place (Jackson, 1995). Tendé had always been "there", would continue to be "there", but perhaps not once it had travelled to Europe. I asked Mahassa if she was concerned about tendé music disappearing. She said quite simply that it never would "chez nous" or back home, "but if we don't play it here, yes".

These powerful associations between women, place and tradition are no doubt in play when women migrate. In attempting to translate their role in French or Belgian society, narratives of globalization in which they are not considered "standard migrants" can equally weigh on Tuareg women's decisions and actions. Consider Disko, a Tuareg woman from Mali, who has spent time in Timbuktu in a refugee camp and in Bamako the capital. Disko has also travelled and visited Europe many times since starting her own band Tartit in 1995. When I met her, she was in France for a month to see family. Her cousin had just had a child in the last year, to the delight of many, including Aminata. We spoke at a noisy coffee shop and she told me she could never imagine allowing herself to play different or new kinds of music, unless there was another band that could represent traditional Tuareg music. Performing tendé music has become a mode of preservation for Disko, a narrative which is conditional on the premise of "global networks" offering their support and consuming tendé music (Tsing, 2000; White, 2012). I will

explore how this link between preservation and international audiences has been constructed in a later chapter, yet I want to emphasize that projects of globalization are an important factor in the construction of the modern/traditional dichotomy in which Tuareg women find themselves. As Anna Tsing writes, the “local” is often considered the place where the global circulates to and influences (Tsing, 2000). As an origin point, it remains conceptually outside the global “flow” of objects and cultural activity. This rhetoric is pervasive in global projects of promoters of world music. It is premised on the notion that music is a kind of universal language that needs no translation. As Bob White writes, “world music, at this vantage point, risks sacrificing difference on the altar of the universal” (White, 2012 p. 193). The global projects embedded in world music production and consumption, as well as the works of many scholars of Tuareg music, do not question how *ishumar* music has been constructed as “modern” or universal. Nor indeed the possible reasons why women’s music has been left out of these social projects. The excitement that surrounds Tuareg guitar music can be pinpointed as emerging from tactics used to market non-Western artists: Hybridity as authenticity; marrying Tuareg rhythms with a “western” instrument; encouraging consumers to buy the music of “rebels” or activists as a performance of solidarity; and of course the promotion of an artist(s) as being from elsewhere (White, 2012; Taylor 2007).

Disko, Mahassa and Aminata were all extremely ambivalent about using instruments other than the *tendé* drum to accompany *tendé* songs, or the subtle expectation to advance or “evolve” modes of playing. Rather than adjusting the instrument to their current reality, they spoke about changing the minds and attitudes of their audiences, attempting to accurately translate their musical lives and objects. Mahassa told me about several concerts where she had performed for children in a Parisian neighbourhood. “They are curious, they ask questions, more

than older people and I adore that” (personal communication, 15 July 2017). Mahassa felt that if French children could appreciate *tendé*, perhaps they would continue to do so, or influence their parents. Disko also recounted a story to me from when *Tartit* began, to illustrate the importance of performing outside Tuareg communities in the north:

It was through our group that people [in Bamako] started to know even just traditional music. Because they grew up in Bamako, they’d always heard Bambara music, but with *Tartit* they started liking it and talked more about it...so if we see images, we see concerts and watch the *tendé*, I am sure it will lift something in their hearts (Disko, personal communication 18 July 2017).

Even Aminata, as a passionate advocate and stakeholder in *tendé* music, has tried to contribute to its performance in Europe, by managing at least one band that was an all-female *tendé* group, and supporting women’s efforts to perform their music. It was Aminata who organized Mahassa’s elementary school concerts. Though they were adamant that the *tendé* drum should remain the same, the motivations for playing and the style of performance were changing. Even though these women said they wanted to maintain their musical practices in the diaspora, a number of other factors made this difficult. The small number of women in the diaspora hampered *tendé* gatherings. There appeared to be few public spaces in which Tuaregs could spontaneously gather and play *tendé*. Even the temporality of desert seasons affected when people generally played the *tendé*. Such modes of socialization were not only about the *tendé* drum, but they were also about an entire environment in which the *tendé* had a particular purpose, as did other rituals and rites of passage. It was incredibly unlikely that a *tendé* group

would be asked to perform at a baptism or wedding in France given the many hurdles in place and so my informants were finding different ways of place-making in their adjusted social circumstances.

Nevertheless, public concerts did certainly create small gatherings of Tuareg, maintaining a semblance of socialization the *tendé* once encouraged. This raises important questions about the emphasis on “authentic” representations of *tendé* music in the diaspora. My informants have equated authentic *tendé* performance with the enduring use of an unaltered *tendé* drum, even though it is used in very different performance contexts in Europe and Africa (Stokes, 1997). I am not interested in questioning or categorizing the ways in which the *tendé* was played in the diaspora. What became evident to me in these discussions of authenticity, tradition and preservation was that my informants were concerned with their place not only in France or Belgium, but also in the Tuareg culture as it existed in this and other places. These questions were perhaps more salient in the diaspora, where the desert seemed farther away than ever before, but conflict and climate change had already altered “traditional” life in the Sahel. The practice of *tendé* drumming was already being changed before it had been brought to Europe. In a European context, it was even more likely that the *tendé*’s role could be radically reformulated.

The role of Tuareg women was in a process of translation, transposed as it was to an entirely new setting. They are having to grapple with their association with tradition and “home” in a place where these roles cannot be easily re-created. Back home there were clearer roles and spaces for women and their music, though they too were being changed due to conflict, sedentarism and economic hardship (Rasmussen, 2008). As they moved farther from the ground of their culture, there was a sense of detachment, a sense of something missing. In France and

Belgium, the dynamics of music-making and the practicality of traditional music were being constantly put into question.

The Nature of the Tendé Drum

Just as it was important for me to see a tendé performance in the drum's desert home, it was important for me to see and understand how the tendé drum was constructed. Usually after an informant explained to me that the tendé was a woman's instrument, they would then explain what it was made of. Traditional tendés are made by tying an animal skin (camel or goat) over a mortar that is used for crushing millet. A string is tied tightly around the skin to keep it taut. Once tied tightly, the skin is doused in water to give it more flexibility and provide a deeper sonority. In the morning, it would be dismantled, for practical everyday use as a mortar once more.

In this chapter I will explore the human/non-human relationship between the tendé and Tuareg women (and to some extent men) and the importance of the desert landscape as "home" of the Tuareg. I will delve deeper into the meanings associated with the tendé drum itself and explore how it is co-produced as a symbol of the desert and how its social importance and meaning as a practice "at home" is being contested and debated in the diaspora.

It seemed to me that in speaking to me, my informants often presented the Tuareg, the tendé and the desert as interlaced; one could not be without the others, though sometimes they struggled to articulate exactly what the concrete importance of this triffecta was. The tendé's very pragmatism, as an instrument and as a cooking utensil represented something far more important than mere convenience. As I spoke with more people, I realized that calling the tendé the "base" of Tuareg culture, referring to it as "the mother" or "the earth" emphasized not only the importance of women's relationship to the tendé, but the tendé drum itself to the desert,

understood to be the origin place of the Tuareg. Indeed, I was coming to realize that traditional as much as it meant “old” or original, spoke to the deep ties the Tuareg maintained with the idea of the desert, and the tendé’s place in it, as an active material object that reacted to, and changed with the desert (Ingold, 2010).

Women are closely associated with the home and domestic labour, in which the tendé’s component parts play a role (Rasmussen, 1986). Furthermore, many of the events for which the tendé was used circulated around domestic things: weddings baptisms, even divorces. Similarly, the ritual aspects of the tendé are also highly gendered, as are other kinds of drums in the Middle East and North Africa (Doubleday, 1999). They are considered particularly mystical instruments and considered anti-Islamic by some marabouts in North Africa (Rasmussen, 1986)⁸. The tendé drum was played in possession rituals which were used only for women’s problems, usually late a night and far away from mosques (Rasmussen, 1986). Every Tuareg I spoke to described the tendé in this way or in some close variation. The tendé was generally played at night, after it was no longer necessary for cooking. Disko described needing two or three women to pull the cord around the skin to tighten it to the mortar. “Then you put a piece of cotton over the skin to keep some of the water on the drum... it’s an instrument that is played all night, every night, back then!” (Disko, personal communication 18 July 2017).

Initially I did not take notice of the repetitive way my informants detailed the form and function of the tendé and its composite parts. However, two instances caused me to sit up and take notice of how everyone was talking about the tendé and clearly felt it was important:

⁸ I used the term “marabouts” due to its frequent use in Susan Rasmussen’s work, in which she usually discusses marabouts and their association with Islam in contrast with secular exorcism practices. For example, Rasmussen writes that “Gestures appropriate to festivals, exorcism, sociability, tale-telling and forms of decorative art contrast with the motions of prayer...while standard prayer (ex Sufi trance) is characterized by rigidly constricted bodily gestures. Marabouts wear voluminous but sparsely decorated cloth” (Rasmussen, 1994 p. 93).

Amoudou had recently moved to Belgium. He had previously been a refugee and much of his family still lived in a camp in Mauritania. He works as a sound engineer and an occasional guitarist for different Tuareg bands. His parents were *forgerons*, or blacksmiths who made and sold tendé drums. His father was a griot who played the *tehardent*, a wooden string instrument, and his mother played the tendé. Amoudou had a wealth of knowledge about songs and ceremonial purposes for tendé, but it was at the end of our first interview that he said something that struck me. I had asked him whether he thought the tendé was important to Tuareg identity. He replied:

Well, effectively I think you can tell, based on everything that I've said, that it is essentially tied to identity because already there is no other community that I know of that plays this instrument the way we do. Because we use it for cooking but also as an instrument it's this double use that is rarely found in other communities. And then like you remarked, if you listen to guitar...the rhythms are based on the tendé. So, its really a very strong presence, an omni-presence in everything that is musical that comes from the Tuareg, and that fact is that we can't disassociate the tendé from the Tuareg identity (Amoudou, personal communication 11 June 2017).

Not long after this conversation I went to Rennes to visit Aisha, her husband Moussa and their children as well as some relatives who were visiting. As I was leaving, Moussa accompanied me to the train station on his way to have drinks with some university classmates. The centre of Rennes was under construction and I asked him if he liked the city and the current updates to its infrastructure. He replied that he preferred the older parts of town, which appeared

to him more “natural” than the newer buildings or renovated city centre. I thought about this answer; that there could be a natural way for a city to look or be, struck me as quite poignant. I suppose I also had these notions of how Europe looked “naturally,” coming from Canada. Indeed, many tourist spaces in Europe do preserve this recognizable façade of medieval or at least pre-20th century appearance and construction. This was also the first time I had heard one of my informants speak so plainly about what was “natural” and what was not. It made me wonder whether Moussa considered himself to naturally belong to a place like France, and what he considered the natural appearance of the desert.

In my conversations with men and women, the *tendé* was both representative and in some ways constitutive of the Tuareg relationship to the desert. Taken together, both Amoudou and Moussa were acknowledging that places generate their own fields of meaning in relation to the people living there (Basso, 1996). The “omni-presence” of the *tendé* that Amoudou spoke about is indicative of the way *tendé* music expresses the Tuareg relationship to the desert. I was not able to recognize this until Moussa made his off-hand comment about the “natural” architecture of Europe. It seemed to me that Moussa was trying to express what Keith Basso had similarly argued, that certain objects or practices “are continually woven into the fabric of social life, anchoring it to features of the landscape and blanketing it with layers of significance” (Basso, 1996 p. 57). The *tendé* is anchored in features of the desert in much the same way a gothic church is anchored in the landscape of Europe and my informants recognized this, and grappled with it, understanding that to translate the *tendé* to Europe, meant translating the meanings of the desert, not only into a different language, but into a new landscape.

People built the *tendé* out of the materials available in the desert, and the *tendé* drum in turn was part of the place-making of the desert. What came as a revelation to me was the

limitations the tendé had because of its ties to the desert and how the loss of this instrument in the diaspora represented in some ways the loss of the desert. The tendé drum was part of the sense of place established in the desert, rooting “individuals in the social and cultural soils from which they have sprung together, holding them there in the grip of shared identity, a localized version of selfhood” (Basso, 1996 p. 85).

This was beautifully illustrated to me when I asked Disko whether she thought her nieces and nephews would know the tendé even though they lived in France. She replied that they would only know it if they heard about it from their parents and tried to explain why they should know it:

I only know that you have to understand that the tendé is a very important instrument. It has a very strong tonality in the desert when it's played you can hear it on dark nights even if you are five or six kilometres away, the sound of the tendé...it attracts you, and it tells you “here, this is the desert, this is life”; it's something very important for Tuareg people...when you hear the tendé it gives you joy...when I am away from my people I get very nostalgic when I sing...it reminds me of there, there, there nothing but there (Disko, personal communication 18 July 2017).

Placing the Tendé Drum, Placing the Tuareg

Living in a city that is relatively diverse, I am familiar with friends or colleagues of mine speaking of “home” in a variety of ways. Putting aside the particular politics of “home” for immigrants to Canada (who often have to face the now clichéd question “where are you from”, a question with its own boundary-making results), diaspora communities often hold to the idea of

“back home” whether that be real or imagined, in the case of second- or third-generation citizens. When Michael Jackson, the well-known anthropologist, spoke about the era of “up rootedness” in his 1995 book *At Home in the World*, the purpose of understanding the concept of home was to question globalization enthusiasts eager to transcend the apparent human propensity for staying in one place. Now however, current immigration politics appear to be embracing the very notion of people belonging to one place, and using the rhetoric of intractable cultural differences as a justification for refusing entry to immigrants into European or North American countries (May, 2016; Fassin, 2005; Adrian, 2009). A new era of primordialism is upon us, one that has twisted the notion of “home” into a political tool. It is in this climate that I am writing about a group of people who both contest and celebrate the desert as their true home and so I write with caution, knowing full well that as immigrants to Europe, and as Muslims, the Tuareg diaspora faces an increasingly hostile environment. Yet Jackson’s concluding remarks may well be useful in clarifying how the Tuareg talk about home, for while they do comment that the desert is the natural place for them, I think this also reflects what Jackson calls “not a place that is given, but an experience” (Jackson, 1995 p. 155). Among the Aborigines of Central Australia, home connotes “a sense of existential control and connectedness” (p. 154). In this sense, home is a plane of knowledge, an orienting lode-star, or set of practices, ideals and conventions that have been passed down and set upon a certain geography. I would hazard to suggest that it therefore does not need to *remain* in one geography, merely that a certain idealized “place” as well as certain objects, will always be understood as the nurse-log of cultural knowledge and history, regardless of where its offshoots have sprung. It is not uncommon for anthropologists or proponents of refugee studies to feed into a notion that certain people belong to certain places, by subscribing to the view that societies are stable, static and whole (Malkki, 1995).

As I began exploring my topic I was confronted by several assertions in other scholarly work that one must first “go to the place of origin” before being able to properly understand a diaspora or immigrant community (Rasmussen 2005 p. 310). Anthropology (and organology as well) has historically sought to categorize place knowledge, people and things, as a way to better understand them, oftentimes in order to justify racist colonial policies and attitudes towards non-western cultures. This of course denies the fact that interconnections, immigration and cross-cultural interaction has been going on for hundreds of years, (Tsing, 2000) not least in the Sahel, once part of a key trade route (Ducène, 2013). “Tendé is the bush,” as one researcher informed me, authorizing it irreparably as only possible in a single place. I would rather argue that what is at play in these situations is the challenge of translation of culture. If, as Camus states “sense of place is not just something that people know and feel, it is something people do” (Camus, 1995 p. 88 in Basso 1996 p.83), then surely it is inevitable that the Tuareg in Europe are already becoming part of the European landscape (Ingold, 1993). As nomads, the Tuareg are perhaps more aware than others that home is a series of experiences that occur in a particular place. Indeed, due to conflict, drought and a history of nomadism they know this better than most. The tendé drum is part of those place-making experiences that construct a home. Thus, *how* Tuareg practices are translated, what constraints or allowances are made for that translation, is what I ask here. Places will shape and be shaped by us. Tuareg women have their own ways of performing connectedness to place and arguably a particular philosophy through which to navigate the world (Claudot-Hawad, 2007). Thus, the tendé drum is not so much immobile as it is an object that does not exist in Europe because it stretches the notion of ‘home’ from a static place to a kind of touchstone, a familiar—in some cases cosmological—non-placed place, one that can be reached and formed via music, sound, ritual and continuous, repetitive relating to

landscapes (Basso, 1996). Efforts by Tuareg women to find a place for the tendé drum in their new home is rather a rebuttal to the idea that societies cannot change. They will change. How they are changed and who will determine that is what is at stake.

The Desert and its First Instruments

Let's return to the construction of the tendé drum. In Mali, it is a wooden mortar, with an animal skin overtop. Elsewhere, in parts of Niger for example, the big tendé is half a calabash floating in a tub of water. The little tendé meanwhile is also a mortar covered with a dried animal skin. In Niger, women will tie two long pieces of wood on either side of the mortar, so two women could sit on the wood while they sang and steadied the drum while it was being played. At one point, when I was speaking with the three female members of Les Filles de Illighadad, I watched as they tied two long sticks to their small tendé. Two of the women pulled on either side, while trying to keep the pieces of wood in place. The cord was a dull blue, and tied near the top of the drum, its widest part. The wood looked worn, as did the drum, the top of which was stained from repeated douses of water.

Many of my informants were from Mali and insisted on explaining these differences as based primarily on the region in which one resides. This would be evidence either of simple variation, or due to influence by other ethnic groups. Rhythms were different and it was tricky to perform with women from different regions. Nevertheless, everyone insisted that it was all still “tendé”, but the difference remained important. Both Malians and Nigeriens that I spoke to insisted that their way of playing or constructing tendé drums was closest to the original way it was done. Mahassa insisted for example, that “if you are talking about purity you wouldn't be playing the calabash, the really pure, the Kel Tamasheq, it is tendé. But in each zone, like I said,

it's different.” (Mahassa, personal communication 15 July 2017). In fact, in Tamasheq, the Tuareg language, there are different names that Tuareg from northern Mali use for the *tendé*⁹. It is in a sense an all-encompassing term, in much the same way the Tuareg identity encompasses a huge swathe of land, lifestyles and politics.

No matter the regional variations, the *tendé* is an object made for a specific place and time, to facilitate a particular kind of performance, which judging from my discussions with informants and reading other work on the subject, was fairly consistent across the Sahel. This included the oft-recited events like marriages, divorces, baptisms, but also healing rituals and improvised evening *tendés* which gathered people together from different camps. The *tendé* is habituated to the desert and to the life of nomads (Gibson, 2006). We can say then that the *tendé* was born out of how the Tuareg relate to the desert and the materials available in a desert environment. Equally important is the way that the construction of the drum also shapes the music one can make with it, while the desert landscape in which it is being played will also impact the themes that are addressed by the music (Bates, 2012). Nature is a significant theme of *tendé* songs, describing the beauty of nature, of trees, or camels (though now camels have been replaced as a mode of transportation by Toyotas). Analyses of drumming patterns note two rhythms, a “dance” rhythm and a “camel” rhythm, which can involve syncopated rhythms between the big and little drums (Genthon, 2012). *Tendé* rhythms are also used in improvisational games which are as likely to be performed on jerrycans as on the drum itself (Mecheri-Sadaa, 1994). Finally, the *tendé* is not ever played alone. One needs minimum five people and everyone is encouraged to participate. Two women play the drums and at least three

⁹ I was told the generic name for the *tendé* drum was *tachidialt*. The big *tendé* is called *Aghal Abba* and the little *Takabart*. When Aminata and I sent the question to a Tuareg community in Algeria, they wrote back that they called the big and little *tendé* drums *abloukenzi* and *gani* respectively.

others chant, sing and clap along. Participation in tendé music does not require any particular expertise. Tendé drumming is a communal practice that has as much to do with socializing as it does with making music. Sometimes a chorus of men is also part of a performance. It is a far more participatory kind of musical practice than the Tuareg guitar playing, which in contrast, can be played alone, and is rarely part of group music-making (Turino, 2008). Its communal style makes the tendé more difficult to market as world music, which tends to represent a “global” culture in which music is performed to allow audiences to interpret a collective message of unity, rather than participate in it.

Taken by itself, the construction of the drum, how its played and performed, do not necessarily tell us anything particularly important. Practitioners of early organology (the study of instruments) in musicology defended it as a way to “explain culture and society” (Bates, 2012 p. 368). Yet in taking the tendé out of its context, we can glean little information from it. It is only when one puts this information back into the context of the desert, of the people playing the instrument that it begins to develop a meaning, as “intertwined in a myriad forms of social relations” (Bates, 2012 p. 372). Even without playing the tendé in front of me, my informants were able to underscore how their use or memories of the tendé blended with their memories and narratives of the desert landscape and indeed with the patterns of Tuareg nomadic life. The tendé was shaped by the organization of Tuareg society, and in turn, participated in the construction of Tuareg identity (DeNora, 2003). As Tia DeNora notes in her book *Music in Everyday Life*, looking simply at the “music itself” or the instrument itself for that matter, tells us little about the emotions and memories attached to these objects (DeNora, 2003). It is the use and playing of the music in a social (and geographic) context that allows us to glimpse the enduring power and affective abilities of a particular instrument or sound. As my informants explained to me, the

tendé drum and its functionality play a fascinating role in how women conceive of themselves and the desert, even in a diasporic context.

“Among the Tuareg, we always sing love songs,” Mahassa told me during our interview (personal communication 15 July 2017). Tendé songs are about one’s immediate surroundings and social relations. “You sing for animals, for your mother, your friend...for your camel.” In rural camps or villages, girls play the tendé (or jerrycans or oil drums) to pass the time. The tendé is an important social instrument, it brings people together; it is played when the day’s work is done. When one considers the component parts of the instrument in a social context, they also begin to have meaning. To have an instrument that has two purposes is especially important for a nomadic people, when pragmatism and minimalism are paramount for ease of movement. Every woman I spoke to drew attention to the animal skin which was tied over the mortar, a symbol of pastoralism which is extremely rare now among the Tuareg, but Mahassa mentioned something else. The string that tied the skin over the mortar used to be made from horsehair, another connection between the Tuareg and their herds. Though as I mentioned earlier few women were excited to tell me about the use of jerrycans and oil drums as substitutes for the tendé, it is worth noting that they are just as pragmatic today as perhaps the mortar was in the 1960s or 1970s.

How young women learned the rhythms of tendé was also tied to this idea about what was “natural” for a Tuareg to do in a given context. It was not something that was learned formally. Rather, girls watched their mothers or sisters play and imitated them in order to learn. One learned from relatives, from having heard the sounds habitually. By being engulfed in the sounds of tendé, they were able to recognize and eventually repeat rhythms and this was explained as being a “natural” way to learn to play. One did not require formal lessons to become

a renowned player. This was often considered one the ways the tendé was very different from the imzad, another traditional women's instrument that, however, was rarely played anymore even in the Sahel. The imzad, a kind of single stringed violin, needed to be learned in a formalized setting and is considered an instrument for noble women, while the tendé is played by anyone and children and men may participate in the chorus of singers accompanying the tendé player (Mecheri-Sadaa, 1994). There are a few women considered particularly good tendé drummers and singers. Badi Lalla, a 79-year-old Algerian woman who has played tendé and sang tendé songs alongside Tinariwen, or Disko, whose voice and band has toured worldwide. Disko even had a specific tendé teacher, but this was hardly the norm when she was growing up. Unlike the guitar, the tendé is far less likely to be "professionalized" and few women are interested in playing it for the purposes of becoming a working musician.

My informants spoke with such passion about the social meaning of the tendé and its role in traditional Tuareg life that I could get a clear sense of its affective power over them. Many were away from family, from mothers and sisters who might have played tendé or at least the rhythms and sang tendé songs. However, more often than not when I asked my informants to describe why they felt nostalgia for tendé music, they describe the natural landscape in which it was played. "You have to go to the desert," said Mahassa, "there you will find the real sounds of the tendé." She went on:

Because over there, there are no microphones. It's just the sounds of nature. Real sounds. In town, they use mics so in fact the tendé loses its sound. In the desert, you'll find the best tendé sounds. There, even if you are two kilometres away you'll hear it at night...especially when it's a woman who plays well at night because there is the echo, when there is wind, we say it's

the echo that brings the sounds and when you are in the camps you hear the sounds (Mahassa, personal communication 15 July 2017).

Tendé music not only was best played in the desert, but it transported you there. Like Disko said, when she explained that she thinks of the desert when she sings, Mahassa explained her favourite part of performing in Europe was when “you see the audience and there are people with their eyes closed like they’ve gone somewhere...that gives me pleasure too. Because they’ll say after the concert ‘that was incredible. It was like we were in the desert’. They close their eyes and they’re gone. They’re imagining it.”. Listening to the sounds of the tendé, it seemed, reflected the context in which it was being played. “Whenever I listen to the tendé...all the instruments from my childhood, yes, I always have nostalgia, to find myself back in that environment,” said Moussa (personal communication 29 June, 2017). Amal, who had recently come to France as a refugee, agreed. It reminded her of a good period in her life when she lived in a nomadic camp. For many, tendé *was* the sound of the desert.

Even Aminata was adamant that the best recordings were ones that were done *en plein air* with little equipment, when you could hear the sounds of the desert or the crackle of the fire in the background. The need for “authenticity” in recordings meant showing the listener that Tuareg music has a place, as do the Tuareg. Recordings and performances elsewhere lacked that essential presence of the desert. In this way, Aminata was signalling the difficulty even she had in translating tendé to urban spaces or “mic-ed” modes of music-making, something I will return to in Chapter Four.

This interaction between the tendé and the desert landscape appears at first very similar to Murray Schafer’s notion of soundscapes (Schafer, 1997). Soundscapes, sometimes described as

geographies of sound, are meant to explore the sounds in our environment. If I live in the downtown core of a city, then my own soundscape will include the rumbling of cars passing by my bedroom window, or the yelps and guffaws of students standing across the street waiting to get into a club. Schafer's theorization of soundscapes has its limits, as he uses the term to extoll the virtues of "natural" sound against sound pollution, a subjective term at best. To his credit, Schafer does recognize that the sounds with which we interact daily are subject to and participate in changing soundscapes (Schafer, 1997). Recognizing the important relation between sound and space is a crucial factor in understanding the discourses that surround the *tendé* and its perceived immobility from the desert. The material aspects of the *tendé* are a function of the desert environment and indeed the sounds associated with the *tendé* have been shaped by the desert. Such an argument leads to the conclusion that all environments are co-produced in some ways by their relationship to ambient sounds. The shortcoming of analyzing the *tendé* exclusively in relation to the desert is the loss of a listener, the musician, and indeed the temporal, affective aspect of its sounds (Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa, and Porcello, 2010). As I have mentioned earlier, the *tendé* drum participates in a process of constructing a notion of home. As the original ground of this place-making, some of my informants felt that to move the *tendé* from the desert suggested a complete break from it, while others were hopeful that playing the *tendé* in Europe might bring some part of the desert there. Others still contradicted themselves, and appeared to still be deliberating how best to retain some of the *tendé*'s meanings and purpose to Europe. In this way, the *tendé* drum represented the contradictory experience of migration itself, and indeed I was told that some used drumming as a way of expressing one's life as a migrant or refugee. The meanings that envelope the *tendé* are produced as much by its audience as by the world in which *they* reside, resulting in what I have tried to emphasize is an interaction of translation,

when it is heard by an audience in Europe. It is at this juncture where time becomes critical in order to understand the ways *tendé* is produced as a meaningful instrument.

For the Tuareg the desert represents a former way of life and so the *tendé* also embodies temporal importance as well. As an instrument, it is framed by nostalgia; it is an instrument of the past and rekindles memories of childhood, mothers and previous lives, for many in the diaspora. The dichotomy created between the guitar as “modern” and the *tendé* as “traditional” has also impacted the temporality of the *tendé*. It has been translated as old, as having a canon of songs and modes of playing that are fundamentally different from innovative practices or improvisation, at least in the diaspora (Jähnichen, 2013). This brings into light the concern with authenticity that so many women in the diaspora expressed to me. Not only is the *tendé* translated in Europe as being an instrument that is rooted in the desert, but it is also an instrument that embodies the idea of tradition, both temporally and materially, much to the frustration of the women in the present who wish to use and perform it.

The *tendé*’s temporal nature speaks to its historical location in the minds of the Tuareg. It also speaks to how often it is heard in the diaspora, the ways in which it is heard, and how regularly it is part of their everyday lives (Samuels, Meintjes et. al., 2010). It was clear from my own experience searching for live *tendé* music when I was in the field, that the *tendé* is much less a part of the diasporic soundscape than it was in Sahelian countries. Much of the *tendé* that I heard was via YouTube videos, live streams and recordings on WhatsApp, and this was impacting the meanings associated with the *tendé* for listeners in Europe. Some people would make their own recordings when they were back in Niger or Mali or Algeria and keep them to listen to when they came back to Europe. Others would play rhythms and sing traditional songs for me on the *djembe* or whatever else they had around. My own interactions with *tendé* music

were therefore filtered through a variety of media and presentations, not to mention my Western ears, tuned to different sounds. I was engaging in translation as well, trying to reconcile these multiple ways of listening and playing *tendé* music with what my informants were telling me about it.

Tendé was a rarity, or a treat, to be heard during formalized occasions and perhaps because there was little opportunity to translate it, solidify its relationship with the European landscape, it was often important that the sounds be those “of the desert”. The *tendé* had become for many the sound of nostalgia, the sound of a life and community few would ever return to, or indeed a home that once revisited appeared wholly unfamiliar and radically changed.

The Freedom to Move

How does the *tendé* and its players move through time and space? I have made the assertion that the *tendé*’s mobility or translation is constrained because of its constructed relationship with the desert and with the past. But clearly it does *move*, for I saw the instrument with my own eyes in France outside of Aminata’s studio apartment, and I saw it at a concert outside of Lyon. There are certainly examples of the *tendé* being translated into a diasporic context, but I suggest that the way its been translated and by whom means that there is far less space afforded to its playing. This has less to do with how the Tuareg perceive mobility than it does with how cultural understandings of mobility and *tendé* drumming come into conflict with European translations of these same themes and objects.

I was listening to an interview with Tartit on YouTube. In explaining their purpose, Disko proclaimed: “We are saving Tuareg culture...being Tuareg is all about freedom” (Disko on Maxwell, 2013). Others would say similar things to me. Faris, a Tuareg musician in Italy told

me the *tendé* represented “the ancient Tamasheq world, really free” (F. Amine personal communication 15 June 2017). When I was in Rennes, Moussa explained to me that these days, people sang about the fact that “they were obliged to camp in one place. They don’t have freedom like they did before, to go to a place, to leave, to move from towns...here in France there are too many laws and rules, their liberty is stopped” (personal communication 29 June 2017).

Movement in the Sahel is imagined as freer. Borders were less patrolled, one was not obliged to register with a town or county when stopping somewhere, my informants told me they had access to cars or other modes of transportation that lent them a mobility that they could not afford in Europe. The inability to move wherever one wanted was felt most by the men I spoke with. In Niger or Mali, it was often men who left their families in search of work. Aisha explained that they were “obliged to move for their work” and the inability to move in Europe to the same degree was considered a hindrance. But it was not simply the freedom to move itself that affected my informants. It was the ability to travel in certain ways as well.

Several musicians described how difficult it was to move the *tendé* around and how cumbersome it was when performing on Western stages. They were not practical to travel with, they were heavy and required too much set up. The need for water was also an impediment, as one had to bring water bottles or jugs of water onto the stage, a hazard with so much other equipment. Traditional music as previously mentioned, also requires a great deal of people, nine to ten, said Disko, and to move such a large group of people requires a great deal of coordination and organization. Furthermore, bringing additional musicians from Mali or Niger for performances was hindered by political factors such as increased screening and security checks for people coming from areas where Islamic terrorism has become an unfortunate motif (Lecocq,

2013). Such justifications neatly obscure the xenophobia prevalent in discourses around immigration or asylum claims from the Sahel. The irony of the situation—that France recognizes the security concerns of Sahelians and provides enormous amounts of military support and aid while simultaneously denying entry into France to Malian or Nigerien musicians—should not be lost here (Fassin, 2005).

The *tendé* drums are thus effectively hampered by constraints on mobility, that are quite specific to western modes of movement and musical staging. This perceived immobility is a consequence of a European landscape that is unwilling to make space for the *tendé* drum in established modes and arenas of music-making.

The *tendé*'s construction and its pragmatism has all but disappeared when moved to a European context. This has led some artists to try and adapt other instruments to provide the sound of the *tendé*. Anana, the guitarist of the band Kel Assouf told me, “its just the sound of the *tendé* that is important”, speaking to, in a sense, the fact that the *tendé*'s sound is the only parts of the instrument it is possible to translate into Europe; sound is after all, mobile, and easier to integrate into commodified performances and digital products (Anana, personal communication 17 July 2017). For others however, the limited mobility of the *tendé* meant that they were cut off from performing. Disko lamented the fact that Tartit was rarely asked to tour in Europe these days. Others were ambivalent about their lack of freedom to play where they wanted, or lack of access to performance spaces because of the nature of their musical instruments. The *tendé* did not “fit” into the lexicon of European music-making in a way that women wanted it to.

Ultimately the mobility afforded to the Tuareg in Europe was translated to have a different purpose than mobility in the Sahel. Similarly, one of the purposes of the *tendé* drums, to gather disparate people, could not be replicated in a densely populated, urban setting. The important

cultural meanings that are embedded in the *tendé* are associated with not only the materials of the instrument but how the instrument as a whole moves people and in turn can be moved with people. The literal materiality of the *tendé* cannot be neatly divided from the social meanings and practices that form its social materiality. Just as it is rare for a woman to make it to Europe, their instruments are confined to the desert as well.

In her research on traditional Turkish music in Berlin, Pinar Guran Aydin notes the importance of music to diasporic groups as “one of the two components (the other being food) most often preserved in all diasporas” (Guran Aydin, 2016). Yet she also mentions that music in the diaspora can sometimes be frozen in a cage of “authenticity” which leads to diasporic sounds to be “older” than those back home. I would suggest that *tendé* music will change in concert as women adapt to life in Europe. This will inevitably shift the meanings and purpose of *tendé* drumming as a musical practice. Guran Aydin and others seem to want it both ways: that music can be understood “*as history, as culture, as society*” (Shannon, 2012, emphasis in original), which makes it, and the cultural importance it bears, particularly moveable. At the same time, women recognize that music in the diaspora is no longer the same as it is at its origin point, either because of its re-interpretation or rather imperfect translation to a new place (Guran Aydin, 2016). The Tuareg appear to walk a similar line, balancing their own ability to adapt, with an uncertainty that the *tendé* will ever be or should ever be perfectly adapted to Europe. Moussa explained this to me in a straightforward manner:

Personally, I think in general...it's always good to adapt from whatever society even if we have traditional origins, or we are a traditional society. When we are in an open world we can encounter all the world, we adapt, and us in our culture, we'll adapt to everything...What I

mean is we can easily adapt to everything even to the music, except the tendé instrument is hard to make new...when we play it in a concert its difficult to mic[rophone]...but it's hard... (personal communication 29 June 2017).

Though they knew they could and in many cases, have already, adapted to their lives in Europe, what music they made would not necessarily belong to the world of the desert, nor would it include the “true” sounds of tendé drums.

I am reminded of a familiar trope; that Tuareg women were considered the freest in Africa (Rasmussen, 1991). This was considered especially unique given their religious affiliations with Islam. Many women however have lost a great deal of autonomy over the last 20-30 years and its possible that some of my informants' connection to the tendé are due to this loss (Rasmussen, 1991). Men have begun marrying multiple women, others leave for years at a time, a phenomenon that has grown in the span of a generation (Rasmussen, 2014), leaving women to maintain some semblance of normality in their lives despite economic uncertainty and conflict. Their freedom was determined to mean freedom from direct control by their husbands, freedom to get a divorce or to reject a suitor (Rasmussen, 2002). Women I spoke to would tell me much the same, explaining to me with a sense of pride how the tendé was often used to celebrate divorces. What we understand as freedom however, is not necessarily the same freedom that Tuareg women seek. Furthermore, women's resistance to forms of power have had to change in response to changing power dynamics and systems of oppression. Lila Abu-Lughod points out that how communities, or women, resist certain restrictions on their freedom, indicates their own even implicit recognition that their world and the power dynamics emplaced in it, require persistent adaptation (Abu-Lughod, 1990).

In the diaspora then, translating the *tendé* in Europe is another form of resistance indicative of the complex relations of power in Europe that surround discourses of integration and cultural assimilation (Abu-Lughod, 1990). Translation is arguably also an attempt to reconcile notions of what “home” is; and whether one will be subsumed by another. The romance with which Tuareg women’s freedom to own property, to divorce, correlated with notions of home that privilege the ability to become completely autonomous from forces of power (Jackson, 1995). Adaptation, however, is not the same thing as overthrowing systems of power. It is the act of picking and choosing where to insert resistance against European assumptions about music’s place purpose and sound, making claims to certain imperfect translations, while recognizing that such acts of resistance are in and of themselves processes of home-making, as the Tuaregs embed themselves into continuous negotiations of power in different places (Abu-Lughod, 1990).

In this chapter, I demonstrated the ways in which the *tendé*’s social and material construction reflect larger realities about Tuareg notions of home and the desert. The *tendé* is enmeshed in meaning, memory, community, place and relationships. Call them networks, call it a web of meaning, call it a human/non-human interaction. The *tendé* was constructed “of what is given” and therefore indelibly tied to a place, and participated in creating experiences of that place. For my informants, those experiences largely lie in the past, or in their own imaginations having heard recordings, watched videos or heard stories. With such a young diaspora in Europe, those meanings and relationships have not yet untangled themselves or become renewed and changed on European soil. This is why so many of my informants were insistent on telling me where to hear the best *tendé*, why Aminata was skeptical of newer instruments that “sounded” just like the *tendé*, and why I was told *tendé* is the bush. Just as women’s roles were being

remade in the diaspora, so too, sometimes literally, was the tendé being remade, translated, its material structure and the affective power it holds, no longer well suited to its environment.

Everyday World(s) of the Tendé

This chapter explores how Tuareg women interact with and think about the tendé drum in their everyday lives in the diaspora and in the construction of an idealized homeland in the Sahel desert. It will examine the ways in which the tendé is used as a sonic marker of events, emotions and social gatherings. The stories my informants would tell me were almost always in reference to “back home”, where day-to-day interactions with tendé music and/or drumming were more common. Attempting to translate the tendé into their everyday lives in France was a challenge in the face of French and Tuareg perceptions of its existence elsewhere. What I intend to demonstrate in this chapter is *how* women are slowly re-producing the tendé and what is being lost in this process, asking the question how does music of the everyday change when it moves? (Tsing, 2000).

While the lack of desert landscape was reason enough for many to deem tendé performance in the diaspora inauthentic, without the tendé there was also a gap in the social lives of the women I spoke to. I was thinking of this as I walked through the Quai Branly in Paris one morning in June. The Quai Branly is an ethnological museum. Indigenous objects are displayed from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. It was not at all surprising to me that many objects were taken from former French colonies. I was there to see their exhibit “L’Afrique des Routes” an exploration of migration and trade routes on the continent. I was interested to read and find information on trade routes in the Sahel and I thought it might be useful for my research. Unfortunately, the exhibit proved disappointing for my purposes, as it was primarily focused on pre-colonial trade and migration routes. But what did intrigue me was the lobby of the museum. The main building was circular, encompassing a large glass cylinder that dominated the space.

Inside were hundreds and hundreds of instruments, ranging from long stringed wooden ones to drums, to rain sticks. They all looked pretty old. They were also all inaccessible and I wondered whether they had been used for their original purpose since arriving in France. They were to look at, to ponder at. Looking closely as I slowly walked up the spiral stairs that circled the display case, I thought I saw a big and little tendé. I paused and thought of how the tendé was perceived in the diaspora, both by the Tuareg themselves and Europeans, though I doubted any of my informants had been here. In the museum, the tendé drum was an artifact.

Scholars have noted that migrant objects do “acquire other kinds of value” once in the diaspora because of their association with ‘back home’ (Basu & Coleman, 2008 p. 316; Toila-Kelly, 2004). Because this tendé was in a museum however, the values that it acquires have less to do with the Tuareg creating a sense of home through its use or display in their domestic spaces, than they do with European translations and determination of the instrument’s importance. In such a setting, it is not an object that participates in world-making, but one of study and isolation, without an appropriate context in Europe outside the museum space. In this interpretation, the tendé is less an object of everyday life than one of exotic rarity, something emblematic of another place, of indigeneity, rather than of people living in France.

This notion of certain objects or events being outside everyday space and time, reminded me of Michael Jackson’s *At Home in the World* which I read before and after my fieldwork. I found my attention was drawn by new things during the second reading, no doubt due to the perspectives I had developed during my two months in Europe. For the Aborigines with whom Jackson worked, musical and ritual performance was something both sacred and on occasion presented to white tourists, either for remuneration or the opportunity to travel and perform in North America and Europe. Jackson recounts one event, where a group of Americans was

coming to the small town where he was working, to see a performance in order to assess whether or not to invite an aboriginal group to the states. When they arrived, Jackson's friends and informants dutifully performed what was normally an important ritual related to the Dreaming¹⁰. However, performed for and viewed by outsiders, the dance and song were reduced to stereotyped examples of "culture", which "was by definition, premodern and 'traditional'—something one held onto for sentimental reasons," at least to the American onlookers (Jackson, 1995 p. 72). Similarly, Elizabeth Povinelli describes a land claim in Northern Territory Australia that emphasized cultural notions of labour, including tending to Dreaming sites and maintaining relationships with the environment (Povinelli, 1995). However, the land commissioner was not interested in upending his own understandings of political economy that "were long ago transmuted into neutral, natural, and objective fact" (Povinelli, 1995 p. 505). Rather he was concerned with how "traditional" the beliefs of the land claimants were, and whether they were sufficiently traditional to warrant land rights (Povinelli, 1995).

Presenting and interpreting cultural rituals and objects as static or no longer relevant in the modern world misses the crucial ways that they participate in constructing people and places (DeNora, 2003). Though the 'natural-ness' of the *tendé* was explained to me as a given, this did not mean that the *tendé*'s meanings or agency was fixed. There was no suggestion that something natural was unchanging. Rather it was ubiquitous in everyday life and this fact made it natural; a part of Tuareg life and identity.

¹⁰ Jackson defines the Dreaming as "the idea of the unconscious—that 'landscape of the shadow' which...figures as a region of space encompassing the unknown and inscrutable," (Jackson, 1995 p. 26). Povinelli (1995) describes the Dreaming as "the given condition of the human and natural world established in the ancestral past...all matter is conceived as the congealed labour of ancestral Dreaming beings (Povinelli, 1995 p. 509). The Dreaming represents the place from which everything emerges, where spirits and ancestors reside. In this way, it has some interesting parallels to the Tuareg notion of *essuf* discussed below.

The emotional lives of women for example, seemed to play out through *tendé* rituals or performances. Healing rituals, in which the *tendé* is the main accompanying instrument, are usually reserved for helping women work through marital or familial conflicts (Rasmussen, 1986; Seddik Arkam, 2014). Similarly, when women are possessed by the spirits of *Kel essuf*. *Kel essuf* are spirits of *djinns* and exist in *essuf*, “wild” areas outside the tent. Spirits who exist in *essuf* can threaten the lives of children and rituals using the *tendé* are performed to banish spirits back to *essuf*. Feeling lonely, sad, or being far away from one’s family are moments when a person is most susceptible to spirit possession (Rasmussen, 2008). This is often described as feeling isolated and lonely, due to difficult life circumstances (Rasmussen, 2008). My informants also frequently mentioned to me that the *tendé* is played when a woman is divorced and when I was in Rennes, I asked Amal and Moussa to elaborate for me. Amal explained that the *tendé* is something played when one is happy. Moussa elaborated further:

Divorce, for the person who is experiencing it, she is suffering inside, but the instrument [*tendé*] can be a bit of both; it offers solidarity with the women who play and it can help make them happy. It’s a bit of psychological healing for women who have just gotten out of a marriage (personal communication 29 June 2017).

Divorce is not an altogether common, everyday occurrence, but playing the *tendé* as a way to divulge one’s sentiment did seem to be common practice. My informants told me that the *tendé* was always used as a way to lift one’s spirits. Amoudou explained that the themes of *tendé* songs were often meant to evoke the everyday lives of the players:

It's a context a bit everyday, and a context a bit occasional. Really, we have the *tendé* at every moment and all the time...there are themes that evoke the everyday [life] of people, I mean to say, the difficulties that they live, the everyday they live and how they imagine what their everyday will be in the future, so it brings really all the themes linked to the life of nomads (Amoudou, personal communication 11 June 2017).

All of these examples have in common various translations and negotiations between different cultures and conflictual notions of authenticity and preservation. For my informants, the *tendé* is in the process of being translated as a formal, demonstrative example of their “traditional culture” that is sufficiently recognizable to warrant the interest of Western consumers or performance-goers. This is not evident of one “side” of a dichotomous argument winning over another. Rather it reflects the many different narratives that serve a myriad of actors both within the Tuareg diaspora and French cultural gatekeepers, which is by no means homogenous.

Performances for Western audiences offer up an indicator of culture that can be evaluated for authenticity by all sides; for example, authenticity of rights over territory in the desert, or an authentic request to help preserve Tuareg culture (Povinelli, 1995; Rasmussen, 2005). Importantly, this understanding of Tuareg culture reflects an interest in performative acts that position the Tuareg community as someplace else and someplace that is immune to change. Any expressions of culture are encouraged to be outwardly demonstrative, rather than inwardly focused practices of sentiment and community (Butler, 1997).

Tendé in the European Present

Before I had left for France it had been my intention to see how Tuareg women went about their everyday lives in the diaspora. This proved virtually impossible, as there was rarely more than one family in the same town never mind the same neighbourhood. When I did get a brief view of their regular lives, the *tendé* drum was rarely a part of it. I probably spent the most time with Aisha and her aunt in Rennes and we discussed her daily routine in more detail than I did with others. I realized later that this was often because women I spoke with no longer associated the *tendé* with the everyday and so wouldn't address this changed aspect of their lives. Others like Mahassa who has been living in Belgium for 25 years, understandably spoke about the *tendé* only in the context of performances (hopefully) in the future, or of her memories of it in the past.

Recent scholarship on music in migrant, refugee and diasporic communities has emphasized with excitement that in fact such groups are often cultural “innovators”, especially when it comes to music (Baily & Collyer, 2006). The “present moment” in such literature is often associated with change and other exciting terms like innovation and adaptation. Indeed, there is a large body of literature that describes just such “present moments”, of diasporas innovating their music (Turkish rap, Rai music, to name a few), usually with an emphasis on the youth involved in such transformations (Baily, 2005; Reyes Schramm, 1986; Kaya, 2002; Guðmundsson & Thoroddsen 2016). However, because I came across the Tuareg diaspora at this particular moment in time and spoke with different people at various stages of their migration story, I was able to observe the tensions and negotiations that are involved in ‘translating’ a particular musical practice. I have already addressed the narrative of the emergence of the *ishumar* guitar. I have doubts about describing it in evolutionary terms, as emerging from *tendé*

rhythms. From what I observed or gleaned from interviews as well, *tendé* music is co-producing social scenarios online for example via YouTube or WhatsApp, for example (DeNora, 2003). The *tendé*'s place-making capabilities are "enmeshed in relations of power and counter-power" (Merriman, Sheller, Hannam, Adey, & Bissell, 2014 p. 50) inherent in migration to European nations. Though my informants had doubts as to the mobility of the *tendé*, these days its music has nevertheless found ways to translate to a new geography, though in fragmented and partial ways (Basu & Coleman, 2008; Malkki, 2007). I was shown videos or listened to audio recordings of music from 'back home' and on Facebook, shows by Tuareg bands are frequently live-streamed.

The world that is evoked or co-produced by *tendé* drumming then, has come over to Europe in fragments, and maintains a connection with 'home' via communication technologies (Basu & Coleman, 2008; Sun-Lim, Bork-Hüffer & Yeoh, 2016). Victoria Bernal goes as far as to argue that social media and the internet are in the process of changing the very idea of a nation, an already fluid term for the Tuareg, whose nation is not encompassed by specific borders *per se* (Bernal, 2014). These technologies allow Tuaregs all across the Sahel, as well as the world, to communicate and remain connected to Tuareg culture and politics.

Mahassa often joked about the large WhatsApp group chat she is part of, calling it "Radio Bamako", because of the near constant information passed along via that chat. Yet another group chat is primarily just for musicians to discuss possible gigs and issues or concerns about prospective concerts. For example, a *tendé* concert was supposed to occur at the end of July featuring Mahassa and Disko as well as Badi Lalla, the very well known *tendé* musician from Algeria. As the concert got closer, women in the WhatsApp group expressed their reservations as to whether the concert would actually happen, and they used the texting platform to spread the

word that the organizer had made false promises, ensuring that other women would think twice before working with him again. Witnessing these interactions and experiencing them myself, it was clear that vast networks of interaction were at play, ones that produced a vast amount of audio, video and textual information in which music was implicated and identities are developed and changed (Urry, 2003). Furthermore, WhatsApp represented a space where my informants could discuss the music industry, their music-making and other personal or social concerns in relative privacy. It enables them to circulate stories and question existing narratives about the industry in which they find themselves (Bernal, 2014).

My informants frequently sent me audio WhatsApp messages, videos of us together, or of them in Africa. In turn, I would send photos and audio messages back. Urry (2003) argues that such connections are integral to understanding social spaces engendered by mobility. He writes that “there are always multiple forms of actual and imagined presence that carry across and into various kinds of social space” (p. 156). The digital networks of *tendé* musicians are additional webs of meaning in which the *tendé* is implicated and affect how the *tendé* is translated in the physical world. Despite Mahassa’s insistence that the *tendé* appear “authentic” in staged performances, when we discussed this together with Amoudou, he was fairly resigned to the fact that this was a challenge in Europe; “It requires a lot of logistics, you need water which is less practical you have to be fast, but you lose a lot of authenticity [doing that] that is for sure,” (Amoudou personal communication, 15 July 2017). Public performance was no longer the ideal way to hear authentic *tendé* music in Europe. Rather, the internet now provided a venue for “authentic” *tendé* music without ever having to translate the object to a European context. Even my own education in Tuareg music began with online and digital encounters.

Framing the Tendé in the Diaspora

Arriving in France I was met by Aminata and her husband at the airport. Cheerful and talkative, Aminata gave me a brief biography, of her life in Algeria and then France, and how she entered the world of music management. As we slowly made our way from Charles de Gaulle to the 15th arrondissement, my host was quick to pass several CDs back to me, of various Tuareg artists. We listened to one of them in the car; Aminata and Claude tapped the dash and wheel along to the beat. I would hear a lot of different sounds in their house, but it seemed they were determined that my education on Tuareg music should begin right away.

It was certainly an understandable instinct. In her excellent book *Music in the Everyday*, Tia DeNora writes that “musical materials provide parameters that are used to frame dimensions of experience” (DeNora, 2003 p. 27). I had been encouraged by my supervisors and by my informants in turn to listen to recordings and watch videos of tendé in order to get a ‘true’ understanding of the music. I’ll be honest, there were times when I felt I was not doing enough listening to tendé music. Instead, in moments of homesickness, or missing my partner, I would wander the neighbourhood listening to familiar sounds, rhythms, and lyrics. I would often repeat the same ones and they would provide me with a comfort that even now I could not easily explain. They were familiar sounds. They reminded me of my home and the people I was missing. They provided me with a temporary refuge from an otherwise unfamiliar place and awkward encounters with many new people.

Though I first heard Tuareg music upon arriving to France, the soundscapes I encountered during my fieldwork were vast and varied. Aminata’s studio in central Paris was forever filled with the sound of the news. Often, she and Claude would fall asleep to it, and I would try to, quietly as possible, turn it off when I thought they were asleep. On car rides, we

would listen to Gil Scott-Heron, a favourite of Aminata's, or sometimes Ibrahim Maalouf, a French-Lebanese trumpet player. There would be Tuareg artists mixed in, but they were hardly staples of their everyday world of music.

In Rennes, I heard the sounds of children's television programming mixed in with incredibly loud construction and *tendé* rhythms tapped out on a *djembe* Aisha had lying around in the house. In Lyon, I heard a community choir singing outside my hostel, with drums and triangles and the voices of onlookers at nearby cafés. Outside of Lyon where I went to go see Les Filles de Illighadad, I heard giggling between sound checks as the clearly exhausted young women tried to make their own entertainment before rushing off to do a photoshoot back in town. In Belgium, when I was staying with Amoudou and his fiancé, they put on a Tuareg CD when I first arrived as well. After that however, I was far more likely to hear Tuareg sounds via Amoudou's phone, from videos posted on Facebook. And then of course, there was Paris. The sights and sounds of that city in particular are enough to overwhelm even the most well-traveled person. Eventually, the sounds of the metro, the piano studio next door, the bustle of the streets, the block party bands, it began to seem normal. Of course, as soon as it did, I was off again, and it would take me a day to get used to it upon my return.

Music is emotional, it has an impact on our everyday lives which we tend to underestimate. When I was with my informants and we were talking about music, I wondered whether *tendé* had ever been a part of their everyday, or if, even when they lived in Mali or Niger, it already had a historical, mythic importance, rather than an importance to their daily routines and social interactions. In many ways, the *tendé* was imagined in specific ways "back home" just as it was in the diaspora.

Certainly, in Rasmussen's extensive work on Tuareg women in Niger, the *tendé* largely appeared as a tool involved in healing rituals. Certain problems women face were typically considered unsuitable for marabouts to deal with, for example, and therefore resolved through a healing ritual performed with *tendé* drums (Rasmussen, 1994). Women experiencing conflict, uncertainty or marital problems are encouraged to play the *tendé* with other women, to improvise lyrics on these topics as a mode of self-expression. Much like the women in Lila Abu-Lughod's work *Veiled Sentiments* (1986), performing one's grievances in poetry or song is a socially acceptable way to voice them and does in the case of the Tuareg, lead to change (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Rasmussen, 2014).

In the diaspora however, while women spoke passionately about *tendé* music, it was no longer presented as a natural idiom for expression. Rather the sentiments attached to it were nostalgic in nature, of missing connections and community. Furthermore, these feelings were more often than not related to listening to *tendé*, as well as to playing it. Mahassa for example, tried to explain her experience when she played the *tendé*. There was, she said, "emotion that releases something when I play." Not only that, she said, but to hear the syncopated rhythms of both the big and little *tendé* was to "also feel your body release something, you have goosebumps and the more you play, the more you get them, it's as if you haven't yet entered a trance, but nevertheless, you feel there is something, different, a different energy" (Mahassa, personal communication July 15, 2017). *Tendé* held affective qualities which led Mahassa to feel as if something was being dislodged from her body. It reminded me of Moussa's comment that *tendé* was meant to bring joy to its listeners and to its players. When I spoke to Mahassa though, opportunities to play were rare and it was hard to find women in the diaspora who could play and play it well. Moments of release, as described above, were thus occasional at best, or were

experienced in other ways. Mahassa felt that it was more important that a European audience get a sense of such moments. I mentioned previously her joy in seeing audience members listening with their eyes closed, their transportation to the desert obvious by their swaying and smiling to the music. In a sense, though Mahassa enjoys playing in a formalized concert setting as do others I spoke with, the role of the performer has changed. The communal nature of the *tendé* as described by Susan Rasmussen and others between singers, players and bystanders, has been replaced by clear and bounded roles. Those on stage are literally separated from those listening.

There was another crucial difference. When concerts occurred in Europe or North America, they were rarely targeted to diaspora members. Rather they were explicitly marketed to Westerners and non-Tuareg audience members. A targeted strategy such as this at once plays with existing discourses on who the Tuareg are, and refer to them in strategic moments within the performance. Performance is a space of agency and spontaneity. Such moments allow musicians to disrupt certain narratives while offering new ones. Performance is an opportunity to subvert existing assumptions about who they are and where they belong (Said, 1978).

Rasmussen recounts an appearance by the group Tartit at the University of Washington, Seattle (2003). Tartit performed songs that in general they concluded would be more palatable to Western ears. “Songs that are recorded for international distribution and performed internationally tend[ed] to emphasize peace, development issues, and de-emphasize praises of rebel fighter heroes” (Rasmussen, 2005 p. 815). These tactical choices Tartit and the group’s manager had made when considering who their music was meant for. Disko, the founding member of Tartit told me that she even wrote her music down because “Europeans asked me to write them” (personal communication 18 July 2017). There was an understanding that the need to outline, describe and annotate her music was something only necessary for a western

audience. In some respects, tendé music in the diaspora was part of creating a narrative about the Tuareg and their political situation in West Africa. While tendé music was described to me frequently as being “closed” to outsiders, its orientation had changed during this performance. It was more “open” to outsiders and serving a particular cause; awareness of the conflict in Mali, for example. Nevertheless, as Rasmussen recounts, there were moments when members of the group made hand gestures—non-verbal social commentary on the song themes—that went unexplained and this she argues, provided “another important ‘voice’ in this representation of culture and memory” (Rasmussen, 2005 p. 816) and this further made clear that this performance was a site where “self-directed cultural memory meets more normative ‘other-directed’ renditions of this process,” (Rasmussen, 2005 p. 816). Scholars have noted that aspects of tendé music can be political in nature, especially in improvisation. Tartit was singing about literacy, poverty and a universal refugee experience alongside love songs and social critiques that were largely in reference to specifically Tuareg issues in order to inform western audiences and perhaps encourage them to participate in solving these problems either through donations, volunteering or tourism, though this was not explicit. The performance wove strands of recognizable, globalized events, with deeper historical and localized memories to which the audience did not immediately have access.

Tendé and the Everyday Lives of Immigrants

I was reluctant to ask Tuareg women questions about their immigration experiences. As my university ethics board warned me, discussing the bureaucracy as well as the journey of immigration can be traumatizing. If any of my informants were refugees, this could be especially difficult for them. When I thought about this before I left for fieldwork, I wondered if it would be

relatively simple to separate music and migration. Of course it was not simple at all. I soon recognized how entangled the two domains were. Even if I steered clear of direct questions about documentation, or applications, or the journey itself, *tendé* was an instrument that had been left behind. Talking about it meant remembering a place that was left behind as well.

It was Aisha's family with whom I discussed immigration the most. When I went to visit her and her husband Moussa, it was summer holidays. Her four children were home, her sister and her son, a cousin, Ibrahim, and her aunt Amal, were all staying with them in an apartment with four bedrooms, a large living room and a terribly small kitchen. There was construction going on throughout the building, disrupting our conversations, the vibrations so strong I could see them in the walls. Moussa and Aisha's sister both attended the University of Rennes. Most of the family spoke Bambara, Tamasheq and French. Only Amal could not speak French. Aisha's second oldest son was in a wheelchair and went to a facility most days for children with severe developmental disabilities. It was the biggest family I would meet during my time in Europe. Both Moussa and Aisha had worked with Aminata before, playing with *Tendé Disswat*, or working for festivals, or helping other bands in need of a spare guitarist or vocalist. Three of Aisha's children had just come over from a Mauritanian refugee camp earlier in the year.

We started off in much the same way I had with other interviewees, discussing favourite songs and the *tendé*'s purpose in Tuareg culture. Aisha and Moussa however, had a number of instruments scattered around their living room. Amal brought a *djembé* over when we began talking. The *djembé* is another drum from West Africa, but taller and more recognizable in Europe and North America than the *tendé*. Amal played the *djembé* to illustrate certain drum rhythms or to accompany a song she enjoyed. Aisha would sing along sometimes and each

rendition would usually end in giggles, either of embarrassment or pleasure, depending on how well the song was executed.

From the beginning of my fieldwork I had been perpetually curious about the differences between “modern” and so-called “traditional” *tendé*. In general, Aisha and her family were ambivalent about the modernization of *tendé* music. Modernity in their eyes was something happening in Europe; groups that had migrated, or who performed in Europe were the ones trying to modernize the *tendé*. Many Tuareg in France, Aisha said, only listened to traditional *tendé* music, “we have it all the time on YouTube, on our phones...”. Moussa chimed in saying that while modernity had brought internet plans, in France “people just record it [*tendé*], listen to it and it disappears little by little...” (Moussa, personal communication 29 June 2017). People may be listening to *tendé* in Europe, but that didn’t mean they were playing it, or that the instrument itself had become part of immigrant life.

Did listening to YouTube videos or recordings on WhatsApp help them feel connected to their homeland, I asked? Yes, it helped, said Ibrahim, “it helped in the sense that it diffuses our culture, it permits us to disseminate our culture and for us, it helps in the sense that today we live in France, we are completely uprooted and listening to *tendé* it reminds us...it gives us a vacation”. *Tendé* was deeply implicated in stories of migration because it was so tied with the world that Tuareg immigrants had left. As Aisha’s cousin elaborated:

The Tuaregs are always associated with the word nomad, so the Tuareg will never be sedentary. For those who live in the villages or camps, for them life will always remain in the camps...We always have the landscape, even here, we always have the sound of the *tendé* (Ibrahim, personal communication 29 June 2017).

I initially found the claims that Aisha's family were making complicated and confusing. They insisted that there was an "openness" to people living outside of the desert that meant certain aspects of Tuareg culture were more available to outsiders, while for those still living in camps, the desert was a more closed space, and the people themselves were more "closed". In some ways it seemed Ibrahim was making a connection between nomadism and the ephemeral experience of a globalized condition. I was told for example, that Tuareg tea comes from northern Mali but that it could be found in Paris or Rennes relatively easily. However, in Mali itself, my informants had the impression that villagers would insist that the only place to find real Tuareg tea was in the desert. It seemed that Aisha and her family had a complicated relationship with the idea of authenticity as immigrants who considered themselves "open". Being in the diaspora meant that aspects of their culture were "open" as well, were available for consumption by anyone via YouTube or WhatsApp. At the same time, there was an insistence on the purity of certain sounds, on the need for preservation while at the same time opening these sounds up to non-Tuareg audiences. The openness of Tuareg culture seemed contingent on being part of a globalized world, part of the flow of cultural knowledge (Tsing, 2000). It equally reminded me of ethnicity theories like those of Fredrik Barth and Ronald Cohen. Barth theorized that there existed boundaries which enclosed the "cultural stuff", for example food, clothing, music etc. (Barth, 1969 p. 6). Building on Barth, Cohen suggested that ethnicity is "a series of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness" (Cohen, 1978 p. 387). The process of grouping certain characteristics to define varying levels of inclusivity or exclusivity forms boundaries, though Cohen notes that these change in relation to each other and to different situations (Cohen, 1978).

Liisa Malkki's book *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, demonstrates very effectively how ethnic boundaries can become impenetrable, as signifiers of identity become deeply entrenched when a threat to that identity is perceived (Malkki, 1995). In my conversations with women, it was clear that they perceived their culture as disappearing or in need of preservation, either because of globalization, conflict or migration. Yet being "closed-off" was considered a bad thing and this was likely in part because the Tuareg felt that in order to live successfully in Europe they needed to re-think the nature of cultural exclusivity.

Openness implies a welcoming of others, a desire not only to showcase culture but to share it. Whether this is the intention of those among the Tuareg who use the term, "being open" is certainly a globalist project that may not work in the exact way the Tuareg expect or hope it will (Tsing, 2000). Let us not forget either, that there is a gendered implication in using words like open and closed in the context of Tuareg life. Tradition is "closed off." It is exclusive, culturally specific and occasionally ritualistic. Women are not expected to perform professionally, and as Moussa said in an earlier phone conversation, "most women who play, play for passion...it's not a job...this music is part of their lives" (personal communication 11 June 2017). Music that is part of a person's everyday life is specific, related to particular social scenarios, perceived by its listeners or players as commonplace (DeNora, 2003). Recognizing these instances may be the job of an anthropologist, but it is unlikely to garner attention from cultural "outsiders" passing by (White, 2012). To make *tendé* music "open" then, may be an attempt at translating its meanings and importance to fit a European frame of understanding, or to make *tendé* more open to world music collaborations, interpretations and commercialization. The myriad of stakeholders and concerns that women encounter in their music-making in the

diaspora mean weighing the pros and cons of musical openness. An ambiguous musical message could lead to audiences making assumptions about women's music and guiding the perceptions future audiences may have of said music. Similarly, pressure to collaborate with others may lead to a side-lining of women's music or a continued relegation to the background of Tuareg music. Finally, as Thomas Turino aptly points out, Tuareg women must also decide how to translate their music into a performance as opposed to a social practice, in which the audience plays a significant role (Turino, 2008). These decisions are not made in a vacuum, existing alongside a desire to retain access to spaces of legitimized music-making in Europe. In the same breath one of my male informants recognized that Tuareg music had to be adapted for international audiences, yet "if you play [the instruments] differently then it might deceive the audience" with regards to the music's authenticity (Ali, personal communication 24 June 2017).

John Baily discusses this phenomenon of "inward-directed and outward-directed" musical performances by diasporas. Citing a study done with voluntary and involuntary Chinese immigrants to the U.S., Baily explains that:

Early, voluntary, migrants had suffered all sorts of discriminatory practices and had become a very encapsulated community...their music was enjoyed among themselves. The later, involuntary, migrants suffered little discrimination, and were eager to reach out to the wider (anti-communist) United States society...They sought by public performances to gain a wider and deeper understanding from the larger society, and used Chinese music to flag their identity to others (Baily 2005 p. 217).

Though the Tuareg diaspora is still quite small, many came after conflict either in Niger or Mali. As many of my informants explained to me, few Tuaregs would leave the desert voluntarily. Those who live in exile tend to stay close, in neighbouring countries. Famously, Tinariwen the best-known Tuareg band, met in Libya and Algeria and often sing about war and the need for peace in Mali (Rasmussen, 2006). Indeed, the majority of groups, while they sometimes sing on traditional themes, tend also to incorporate contemporary issues. They perform in part to be heard and understood by their new host communities, to bring “awareness” as I often heard, or “consciousness-raising” (Rasmussen, 2008 p.619), about Tuareg issues and culture.

I would hesitate to make as clear cut a distinction as Baily does, when it comes to voluntary or involuntary immigrants. This complicated back and forth seemed to be a negotiation between being open and closed. Acts of compromise appeared to me to represent the daily lives of Aisha’s family, as they explored and adapted their identity, and the role of traditional music in a new geography with a culture of its own. Tendé drumming in the diaspora was becoming the background to a whole new host of feelings and social situations. In this sense, I began to understand why for example, women rarely spoke to me about the tendency to play tendé rhythms on jerrycans or oil drums. Perhaps this was not the kind of performance they wanted to show me, an outsider, as a flagship for their identity.

When Aisha and her cousin laugh about the tendé music providing them with a vacation, they are framing the tendé anew in order to better describe it to me, someone who could not easily grasp its significance without these metaphors. Living in France required adaptation, and an “opening” of one’s culture in order to be understood. However, such adaptations are very different than say adapting to a refugee camp (Malkki, 1995) Moussa and Aisha were living in

Bamako when they applied to come to France as refugees. Moussa was a student at the University of Mali and feared for his safety when riots broke out in the capital shortly after the 2012 coup. Moussa arrived in France in September 2014, Aisha two months later. Aisha's three children from a previous marriage were taken to Mauritania with their father to a refugee camp and had only arrived in France the summer of 2016. Rennes was not only a safe place to go back to school, it was a place where Moussa and Aisha could maintain connections to family, to friends and people in the music business.

Listening to *tendé* music in their apartment in France is as much part of this adaptation as improving one's French, or applying for jobs. If it is symbolic to nostalgia, remembrance or tradition, as described by many of my informants, then it is so because of the way it is heard in their lives as immigrants, not as everyday sounds, but as deliberate sounds, listened to most often in private, when one is missing one's home, or in public, as an example of heritage.

We continued to talk, Aisha, Amal and I about Aisha's first time playing the *tendé* drum which was in fact, in France. "I played on a water can before you know, but my first time touching the *tendé* was with *Tendé Disswat*. I never had the chance to touch it before. It was different. Very different. It was too good," (personal communication 29 June 2017).

Amal continued to beat rhythms on the *djembe* as we spoke, at one point copying the sounds from Aisha's phone as she showed me a performance *Tendé Disswat* had done since its creation. "When I came back," said Aisha, "I felt a solitude. I really felt alone after coming back from that." She explained that in a foreign country she didn't feel at ease "if there weren't people around. I can't stay alone." Normally her four children would be "for everyone, for all the neighbourhoods and all the camps...back home your mother would help take care of them, your sisters, your brothers, it's like that back home." (Aisha, personal communication 29 June 2017).

She preferred it when cousins were visiting, though it was rare, as some lived in Anjou, 700 kilometres from Rennes. Others lived still farther away, in Bamako.

Aisha was not sure if she would ever return to Mali. “I don’t think the problems of Mali will ever end, because it is a problem that returns every 10 years,” she explained. “I can’t return with the children. Maybe go for a little vacation, but we will not go back that’s for sure” (personal communication 29 June 2017). The desire for security, for regular schooling and stability had ultimately made Aisha’s decision for her. At one point her oldest daughter came into the living room. We were listening to a song by Tartit, Disko’s group. I asked her if she knew the songs and she shook her head no. “You know these songs well, come sing!” said Aisha. Moussa shook his head. “she’s starting to lose it...”

Near the end of July, I was in Normandy, at what was effectively a campsite on the outskirts of a small town for the ODTE annual reunion. It was the first time I had seen so many Tuareg women, or Tuareg in general, in one place. I guessed there were between 100 and 150 people staying for two-three nights, many in tents, others in two small bunkhouses. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were prepared by volunteers, all traditional Tuareg dishes, served in a long cafeteria style building. Mahassa was there along with several of her friends and many small children, along with a few teenagers. There were young people, families, a few people selling jewelry or leather goods, and some non-Tuareg folks, including Pierre Mittelette-Peraldi a researcher from France, who was studying the Tuareg diaspora as a political entity. Others were there simply because they found the culture fascinating or had heard Tuareg music and were enchanted by it, wanting to learn more.

There were many scheduled activities during the day, including seminars on Tuareg poetry and the current political situation on the continent. I had spoken with the head of the

ODTE, a man named Oumar who lives in Lyon. He told me that the focus is still very much on Africa. “I always say we have to think about ourselves here, organizing ourselves here, find a suitable situation and then after that help people there [Africa]...” (Oumar, personal communication July 10, 2017). Nevertheless, he said, people who have built their lives in Europe are as likely to return to Mali once they feel it is safe.

This disparity between the mandate of ODTE and its actual focus was the reason that I found myself at a meeting outside of Namur, Belgium at Mahassa’s home. A group of Tuaregs living in Belgium had come together to create their own organization; one that was explicitly focused on the lives of those living in Europe. Over ample amounts of meat, stew and other dishes, fifteen people sat around discussing the struggles of recent immigrants, cultural exposure and exchange, as well as the need for stronger bonds between members of the diaspora. One woman who came barely spoke any French, was timid but desperate for some kind of guidance and friendship. After almost three hours of meeting, Mahassa was made temporary head of the *Organization Diaspora Tuareg en Belgique* and I joked that then she could promote tendé music as part of her mandate. “We will do it, because now I’m the president,” she laughed.

When I saw Mahassa in Normandy she greeted me warmly, but her attention was elsewhere with the five or so women staying in the same bunkhouse. These women were not interested in seminars, they wanted to catch up, share news, gossip and dress up in gorgeous outfits for the dancing in the evening. Despite the prevalence of WhatsApp as a form of rapid and constant communication, it was clear that in-person gatherings were the preferred, though much rarer method of socializing. As they put on makeup, gossiped about who was getting divorced and who was getting back together, helping each other with their headscarves, one woman mentioned buying property in Mali. “Don’t bother,” said Mahassa. “The children born

here will never go back there” (personal communication 22 July 2017). I had met a couple of teenagers earlier in the day and asked them if they had ever heard of tendé music. They shook their heads, much like Aisha’s daughter. It’s possible they were shy, uninterested in talking to an awkward stranger. But I was reminded of Mahassa’s words as they walked away, that young people in Europe were not interested in tendé music. It was a holdover from another way of life one that few children running around the forested grounds had ever encountered.

The music did not start until close to 11:00pm. I was exhausted and feeling ill, wondering if I should try to go back to Paris that night. I was not in the mood for dancing, but the energy of the room soon filled me as well. Anana, the leader of the Belgian group Kel Assouf, was on guitar, Mahassa was sitting in front of a djembe—not a tendé—singing and beating out a now familiar tendé rhythm. Soon she was standing; dancing and clapping to the music as someone else took her place at the djembé. Dozens of people were on the dance floor, clapping along as well. This was one of the few times I felt like I was in the midst of a community. People were singing along, laughing, watching the dancers, engaging in cheerful conversation. Though the drum itself was absent, the atmosphere evoked by tendé music was clearly present. People were joyful in the presence of good music and good company. The dancing was still going on by the time I left. It will be another year before such a gathering happens again.

Tendé and World Music

In this chapter I will interrogate how the world music industry is involved in producing meanings of tendé drumming and Tuareg music more generally. My focus will be largely on the small-scale producers and managers who act as gatekeepers and mediators between the artists and the commercial music world in which they participate. Though not all the artists I spoke to or about in this section live in the diaspora, playing in Europe and North America invites diaspora community members to observe and interact with them during performances. I intend to use a framework developed by Susan Rasmussen, who coins the term “temporary diaspora” (2005). When bands tour across the West they exist in a “temporary diaspora” who, like permanent diaspora members, must adjust their message, their style of playing and their expectations of what a tendé performance should be, in order to conform to the expectations of their audience, managers and media outlets (Rasmussen, 2005). This is not to suggest that this conformity is only imposed. Rather it is a back and forth as both band members and their marketers determine what they think people want, while also trying to maintain a semblance of “authenticity” so as not to appear to be pandering (Taylor, 2007 p. 143).

Feyzin is a small, very quiet suburb about 45 minutes outside of Lyon. It was hosting the “*Festival Moderne Tropicque*,” a free, outdoor event at an old fort. The festival was child-friendly for most of the afternoon, with food trucks serving Indian curries, Normandy crepes and, of course, cold beers. There was a small bicycle pushing an ice-filled trailer, to make snow-cones for passing children and sweaty adults. At around 7pm, in the sweltering heat of July, I saw a live tendé performance for the first and only time during my fieldwork.

Les Filles de Illighadad is the newest Tuareg band on the world music scene. Composed of three young women and one man, the brother of one of the other members, the group played both Nigerien *tendé* and guitar. Most compelling of all, it was a woman who was playing the guitar. Les Filles is marketed as an unheard revolution in Tuareg music. A woman was subverting gender roles by playing guitar and subsequently, “transporting rural nomadic song into the 21st century,” according to the production notes on their bandcamp website¹¹.

As they got up on stage, a crowd of maybe forty or fifty people had arrived, many with children. The stage itself was small and slim; three of the band members in fact sang in front of it, divided from the crowd by a carpet, which was taped to the stage and draped out about a foot or two in front of it. On the raised platform sat the fourth performer, who had in front of her a plastic box filled with water, half a calabash bobbing atop it. She would hit the calabash alternatively with a mallet and a shoe. This, I had been told by my Malian informants, was the Nigerien version of “le grand *tendé*”. Off to one side of the stage was the little *tendé*, with two long sticks strapped on either side of it, so two people could sit on either side of it.

The three women on stage, Fatou, Talamnou and Alamnou were wearing shimmering blue dresses, elaborately patterned, along with large ornate silver necklaces. The final band member Oumar wore a recognizably Tuareg style head scarf and a long grey tunic. For the first half of their set Fatou played guitar and for the second, she brought out the little *tendé*, relinquishing her ground-breaking status temporarily to introduce the mostly white audience to the traditional sounds of the *tendé*.

The guitar is a recognizably western instrument and makes it easier to market Tuareg music to western audiences. Arguably one of the great achievements of the world music industry

¹¹ <https://lesfillesdeillighadad.bandcamp.com/music>

has been the ability to integrate western sounds and familiarity into the music of “others”. However, the tendé drum represents a marketing conundrum of music producers. The tendé drum is “less Western in sound” (C. Kirkley, personal communication July 25, 2017) and less palatable to Western audiences, making its translation to Europe harder to justify for producers seeking to make money while showcasing artists from around the world. Tendé rhythms were emblematic of the otherness of the music, representing an essential kind of difference from Western sounds (Agawu, 2003). If live performances are some of the only places where tendé musicians can play their music, then the enthusiasm of producers (who were often also the ones who recorded the musicians), labels and Western audiences constitute a series of power dynamics with which musicians must engage in order to actually play tendé music. This chapter examines the history of World Music’s relationship with Tuareg sounds, the narratives that are constructed to describe tendé music, the role of managers as gatekeepers and finally how certain groups based in and out of Europe are transforming the tendé into a hybrid instrument, an adaptation suited to its new locations.

Co-Producing “Desert Blues”

There are many narratives that go into the production of “Tuareg music”. The term “desert blues”, used to describe Tinariwen now has gone on to define almost every new Tuareg group, including Les Filles de Illighadad¹². These designations are co-produced, in the sense that they are developed by many different actors, Tuareg ones included. In the 1970s and 1980s,

¹² The term desert blues was coined to describe the music of Ali Farka Touré, a legendary guitar player from Timbuktu. It was only once he had a Western audience that the term desert blues was applied to his music, though he disputed that his music was blues, rather genres like the blues were influenced originally by African sounds (*The Times (London, England)* March 8, 2006). The moniker stuck however, and continues to be used to describe many guitarists from Mali and the Sahel region generally.

commercial discourses romanticised the Tuareg rebels. Tinariwen's music is described by one scholar as a "cult of the rebellion of all youth in exile" (Belalimat, 2010). Tuareg musicians were "fighting for peace" and this designation helped sell albums to folks in the West who wanted to show solidarity through their purchasing power (Rasmussen, 2017; White, 2012).

Tuareg music is often discussed with conflict and turmoil as the backdrop. This is largely due to the quasi-mythic story of Tinariwen, the most popular Tuareg music group. Tinariwen, the legend goes, was formed by a group of Malian Tuareg refugees based in southern Algeria. With the creation of the Festival of the Desert outside Timbuktu in 2001, Tinariwen soon gained an international following, their music marketed as "rebel" music and proponents of the "original" blues, a problematic moniker created arguably to make the group seem more relatable to Western audiences. Tinariwen were ishumar guitar players, former rebels in the fight for independence from Mali (Rasmussen, 2017; Belalimat, 2010; Boas & Torheim, 2013). Tinariwen means "deserts" and the desert has played an important role in their song lyrics and in their overall marketing strategy. The Tuareg have long been associated with nobility and exoticism, as well as intense cruelty, raiding and, ironically enough, as owners of slaves (McDougall, 2007)¹³. No doubt this has much to do with French ire at how difficult it was to "claim" the Sahara during the scramble for Africa. Since the Iraq war, there has been increasing speculation and representations of the Sahara/Sahel as a hotbed for terrorists, as many Saharans are indeed Muslim, and this impression has only deepened after the Malian coup in 2012, resulting in a resurgence of violence in northern Mali (Lecocq, 2013; Rasmussen, 2017).

¹³ Tuareg nobles did own slaves, however, as Susan Rasmussen explains, "slaves were absorbed into precolonial Tuareg society" (Rasmussem 2017 p. 83). Nobles also had to pay male slaves' bridewealth to their spouse's families and in some cases "slaves could even change owners in cases of mistreatment" (Rasmussen, 2017 p. 83). Thus, slavery in Tuareg society like elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa was vastly different than chattel slavery of the Atlantic slave trade (Meier and Kopytoff, 1977).

However, Tuareg musicians seem to have developed a reputation as American-friendly “rebels” who fight against injustice, poverty and war, which is nevertheless, a double-edged sword, as such impressions can change unexpectedly (Abu-Lughod, 1990). It is as if Tuareg musicians come from a different desert entirely, although theirs is still often described like a wasteland where little can survive, especially now, with increasing attention on “desertification” and climate change (Belalimat, 2010; Petrocelli, Newport & Hamro-Drotz, 2013; Benjaminsen, Berge & Dugan, 2014). The “blue men” from the Sahara have managed to maintain an air of exoticism and mystery and have been marketed as closely linked to the hippie movement, with terms like “tuareggae,” and “psychedelic desert stoners” attached to their band names (Wyman, 2010; kelassouf.com, 2016). These monikers are in some ways reflective of earlier positive stereotypes of the Tuareg as proud nomads, shrewd rebels, resisting attempts to tame them. Recall as well in an earlier chapter that the Tuareg are frequently typified as being the “white” race in Mali, in opposition to the “black” majority (Rasmussen, 2017).

When I spoke to musicians they rarely invoked or discussed their Muslim identity and very few women I met wore the veil. The desert remains a distinct geographic origin point for the Tuareg, perhaps the most famous “desert-people” in the Sahel, and they are deliberately absent from discourses about the Maghreb, for example. This difference is as much encouraged by the Tuareg, as it is a relic once again of the relationship the French had with North Africa as opposed to the Sahel region.

The “Sahara” meanwhile offers concert-goers and other world music stakeholders a way to recognize Tuareg musicians as distant, pure musical examples of a little-known world (van Klyton, 2016). Furthermore, the moniker of “desert blues” is perhaps a perfect example of Timothy Taylor’s argument that World Music producers are increasingly demanding that

musicians “from far away” incorporate “recognizable” (read western) sounds into their music (Taylor, 2007). What this gives producers and advertisers is a viable alternative to familiar rock sounds, offering audiences a hybridized, dichotomous musical experience. These albums are generally described as “tradition meets modernity” or “ancient sounds” “meeting 21st century technology” (Taylor, 2007). Marrying one’s traditional sounds with Western sounds (which could be electronic sounds, guitar, samples, etc.) is considered a form of evolution in a group’s sound, not unlike the troubling connotations associated with the “evolution” of *tendé* music into *ishumar* guitar playing. Remember too that modernity and musical evolution was incredibly gendered and it was men who were innovating with western sounds. This is evident when one notes that as a guitar player, Fatou is seen as obfuscating gender roles, and therefore modernizing (or indeed masculinizing) *tendé* drumming. Ultimately this fits in nicely with the long-standing notion that the “Other” be they musicians or not, require a helping hand from Western modernity, technology and professionalism, in order to become themselves more modern and more evolved. This strategy along with an increased push for peace in northern Mali by various Tuareg groups (which I will discuss more in a moment), has allowed many musicians to side-step the otherwise negative connotations that west has developed about nomads and Muslims in the Sahara.

Tuareg Women and World Music

In the project of co-producing the Desert Blues, women are notably absent, though they are certainly promoted using a similar framework. The narratives that circulate around the *tendé* in the West also have a historicity. We have already examined how the *tendé* is discussed among academics in Chapter One. In music media discourses, academic narratives are in many ways re-

emphasized with additional touches of exotifying language. Tendé is described as “trance-inducing”, “hypnotic”, “simple”, “magical”, “free” a traditional music form now meeting 21st century modernity which means leaving the desert, using professional recording equipment and incorporating Western sound or collaborating with Western producers (White, 2012; Taylor, 2007; Noveck, 2012). Les Filles de Illighadad’s first album was “recorded in the open-air studio of the desert” (Sahel Sounds, 2016), a sign of its authenticity and its purity. It should not go unnoticed that many of the words used to describe tendé music are also related to a hippie-like inclination to seek out mind-altering experiences, or to be carried away by music from their current lives. The peace and love narrative of the 1960s in some way ushered in the era of global music collaboration that brings people together (Feld, 2000). A classic example from this era is the relationship between the Beatles and Ravi Shankar (Patke, 2015). Out of “celebratory narratives” of cross-cultural collaboration and emphasis on universals comes a clever marketing strategy. World music is marketed in a such a way that naturalizes globalization, downplays the power dynamics of the music industry, and presumes an easy marriage between ‘local’ sounds and hegemonic ‘pop’ sounds that are implicitly understood to be normal and easily recognizable as Western pop music (Feld, 2000). What this leads to, as Feld deftly argues, are simultaneous yet opposing necessities: an emphasis on diverse sounds that nonetheless hold elements of so-called music universals i.e. Western sounds such as familiar guitar riffs, recognizable instruments and familiar song structures (Feld, 2000). Les Filles de Illighadad for example, use guitars alongside their tendé drums which makes them marketable for two reasons; they are grafting a Western instrument onto their otherwise exotic musical practices, and they are transcending a gender divide, as Tuareg women rarely play guitar, making them universal feminist symbols, breaking gender barriers for themselves and other Tuareg women.

As I mentioned earlier, Tuareg women are frequently cited as “the freest women in Africa”, a key distinguishing mark between these women, and more obviously-coded “Muslim” women from other parts of North Africa¹⁴. Laura Lengel has written extensively about Arab women locked in a series of contradictory narratives; as sexualized, feminised or even nationalised by French and Arab men (Lengel, 2000). Tuareg women however, remain enmeshed in the category of “traditional” which has along with it a number of troubling connotations. One reviewer for example described how the music of Les Filles de Illighadad was clearly about letting loose and howling into the night (Baker Fish, 2016). The *tendé* is described as “ancient and timeless” on the group’s bandcamp website (Kirkley, 2014) and elsewhere their latest album is described as strange because of the impression that one is being “plunged into a thousand-year tradition that sounds modern between the fingers of the guitarist” (Renaud, 12 January 2018). Such descriptions imply that rather than being desirable as women, Tuareg women are desirable artefacts of an ancient tradition, closer to nature than to “modern” womanhood. For example, one reviewer described the 79-year-old Badi Lalla, a famous *tendé* player from Algeria, as a kind of conduit through which “the desert itself speaks” (Amazigh 24, 26 May 2017). In emphasizing the “ancient” or traditional nature of *tendé* drumming, reviewers, producers and labels are taking advantage of and simplifying otherwise complex partial truths the Tuareg recount about themselves and their histories (Rasmussen, 2017). Though there was a generally agreed upon central narrative of the essence of the *tendé* and what kinds of songs were sung, there were

¹⁴ This puts Tuareg women in an odd place for several reasons. Because they do not often wear the veil, many of the heated public debates in France do not affect them in the same way they would immigrant women from North Africa or the Middle East (Adrian, 2009). At the same time, my informants were reluctant to be categorized as ‘African’. In one instance, an informant asked me to clarify if I meant “black Africans” when I asked if she knew any people in her neighbourhood from Africa. The dichotomy created in the media and public debate in Europe further positions more visible Muslim women as “unfree” in relation to Tuareg women, reflecting a very Western notion of autonomy and the idea of freedom (Mahmood, 2001).

disagreements about details, such as whether or not *ishumar* guitar music truly grew from *tendé* rhythms, and many including *Les Filles*, write contemporary songs in addition to performing older ones. Others disputed whether *tendé* was exclusively played by women, and of course there was little desire to discuss the use of jerry cans as substitutes for the *tendé*, though several did mention this off-hand. Truly, as one of my informants said with a smirk on his lips, it is hard to be the spokesperson of the Tuareg. Thus, essentializing the many uses, stories and practices around the *tendé* ensures its immobility—codified as an ancient desert instrument. As for those who play it? In the world music discourse Tuareg women are represented as nature themselves, their drum's ancient rhythm weaving its way across space and time.

Not one of 'Les Filles' speaks French. Chris Kirkley, the founder of Sahel Sounds, represents several artists from the Sahel region and is based in Portland. His interest in producing and recording albums stems from his initial project of "sharing field recordings" via a blog (sahelsounds.com) and developed into a label when a Portland record store displayed interest in his recordings (Baker Fish, 30 June 2015). Kirkley met Fatou Seidi Ghali in Illighadad on one of his visits to Niger. According to one article, Kirkley first took interest in Fatou when he saw a viral photo of her playing guitar on social media (Hird, 13 July 2017). Upon meeting her, Kirkley promptly recorded her playing and since then has produced a 2016 album which includes Fatou on the guitar and two other girls from Illighadad accompanying her, organized tours, marketed them and been quoted in several articles about the group (Hird, 13 July 2017). On the band's Facebook page, Kirkley describes their music as "rural music. It's village music." And goes on to describe Illighadad, noting that the camels, walking through rainy season mud, "have something almost prehistoric about them in this context" asserting both the romanticism and

exoticism associated with a life away from the city, and one filled with strange creatures and unfamiliar landscapes (“Les Filles de Illighadad”, n.d.).

When I spoke to Les Filles in the hot afternoon before their sound check, everything had to be translated by their brother, with quips added in by their manager, who was sitting nearby. As their website mentions, they are from “a secluded commune in central Niger, far off in the scrubland deserts at the edge of the Sahara,” and I was surprised at how young they were, the oldest twenty-four and the youngest eighteen. In our interview, the answers they gave me were quite similar to other responses I had from women. Yes, Fatou played the guitar but her brother said, “they prefer to mix guitar with the *tendé* because that is tradition”. They agreed that back home they played in a much “freer” and improvised way than during concerts, where there was a set number of songs that were pre-written or memorized. They wanted to show the world their culture and traditions, though Fatou mentioned she would probably soon give music up, in adherence to her practice of Islam. Fatou wore a headscarf when we were chatting and all the girls cover their hair during performances. During the sound check they were laughing and chatting, seeming a little bored with the process; they had been touring for the last month and would be returning to Niger only briefly before starting another one. What I remember most about their performance was how serious they appeared and how quickly that glee and energy had disappeared from their faces. Possibly they were nervous, or deeply concentrating on their music. They were serious and because they could not communicate with the audience, they were quiet between songs. Their manager, standing in the audience, walked around trying to catch their eyes, encouraging them to smile.

Fatou’s decision to play guitar is marketed as “groundbreaking” and *tendé* and guitar are portrayed as two opposing musical practices that were strictly gendered. By playing guitar Fatou

is not only breaking barriers for women, but “reclaiming the music of tendé,”. Presenting Fatou’s guitar playing in this way makes marketable a feminist statement Fatou’s musical choices. That Fatou has made this radical move in a place with “no electricity, or water” is described as all the more impressive. The patronizing narrative set here takes advantage of the current zeitgeist in the West for commodified feminism, a desire that is well in line with Western feminist notions of the oppressed African woman (Ghabrial, 2016). This new conception of Tuareg women’s music works well for Les Filles, but is by no means well-suited to other tendé groups. As the desire of “authentic” examples of pure, traditional, and disappearing music ebbs, replaced by a desire for some measure of hybridity, it has become much harder for groups like *Tartit* or even the one-time group *Tendé Disswat* to garner interest from World Music producers or labels.

The Gatekeepers

Tartit, Disko’s group, got their start in 1995 when a Belgian woman approached Disko in Mali asking whether she would be able to gather a group of women to tour Belgium. They subsequently toured North America and were also part of the first Festival of the Desert. Nowadays, Disko told me, it was very hard for the band to get gigs. Not only did they require a large number of people to perform, it was also increasingly difficult to obtain visas for everyone if they were travelling from Mali. Tartit did not have representation either, so no one was looking for shows or booking festivals. Disko was in France for a month, visiting family and friends. She had not yet seen my host Aminata and asked me more than once to tell Aminata she wanted her as a manager. Aminata was a friend, well-known to the Tuareg music community and seen as someone who could help you out if you really needed a show.

Aminata did manage a few Tuareg artists, most notably Mahassa and the musician Faris Amine. Though she is certainly what I consider a gatekeeper, both for me and for musicians looking to break into North American and European markets, she was hardly a production studio. Her office was in the studio apartment she shared with her husband and with me over the summer. She liaised with her clients, festival organizers, and album producers all by herself in what I witnessed to be a very hectic and stressful enterprise. Aminata also had a deep and abiding preference for what she called “music that moved her” meaning recorded in the desert, or unembellished *tendé* drumming infused with the joy and communal atmosphere that she had witnessed a number of times on visits to southern Algeria (Aminata, personal communication June 8, 2017). She did not like Les Filles de Illighadad for exactly the reason they appeared to be doing so well. They were trying too hard, conforming to Western expectations and focused too little on the *tendé*. As someone who was closer to numerous Malian musicians, she was also quietly skeptical about Les Filles’ use of the calabash as their bass instrument as opposed to the big *tendé*, used by Mahassa and Disko. When I was with her, Aminata took on a new client, this time a band from Algeria, Bania, which seemed to perfectly combine *Diwane* rhythms with an on-stage energy that made Aminata excited about their sound¹⁵. What appeared perhaps to be the most important factor to her was that any group or artist she represented had a clear, strong view of what they wanted to do. That any changes they made to a traditional sound was done in their own way, uninfluenced by outside pressures, as much as possible.

I could easily understand why Tuareg musicians wanted Aminata to represent them. She was thorough, dedicated and had a good reputation. She was a friend and familiar face with a

¹⁵ Diwane is a musical genre associated with black slaves who were brought to colonial Algeria.

long list of connections in the business. Though this happened largely by accident, it was clear she was a competent manager, genuinely interested in helping artists.

There are a number of labels that represent World Music or specifically West African bands and artists. Glitterbeat, Sahel Sounds, Clermont Music, Igloomondo, World Circuit, to name a few¹⁶. As Tuareg music has gained popularity around the world, producers have increasingly become akin to explorers out to discover the next big thing to bring back to Western audiences. With the emphasis on hybrid sounds, labels and producers also search for groups they determine to straddle the traditional-modern binary that, ironically, too often traps artists in much the same way that “authenticity” does. Ultimately it hinders an artist’s ability to set their own terms when it comes to their motivation, their development as a musician and their flexibility to try different, or even older styles (Taylor, 2007). As Timothy Taylor writes, “a hybrid cultural form of this third space frequently finds itself in an all-too-familiar opposition as the subordinate part of a dominant-subordinate binary” (Taylor, 2007 p. 145).

Because of the global popularity of Tuareg rock, many Tuareg youths in Mali and Niger see music as a viable alternative to other more clandestine forms of labour (Belalimat, 2010). Amoudou, who is a sound engineer and occasional guitarist living in Namurs, Belgium often works with the Caravan of Peace, a group of Malian musicians touring North West Africa and Europe advocating for an end to the Malian conflict. Amoudou told me that he was often asked by young musicians if he could represent them. Despite his insistence that he was not in management, many persisted, seeing him as a friend, or at least another Tuareg, on the inside of

¹⁶ <http://glitterbeat.com/>
<http://sahelsounds.com/>
<https://www.clermontmusic.com>
<http://www.igloorecords.be/IglooMondo/>
<http://www.worldcircuit.co.uk/>

the business. Breaking into the European world music scene is no easy task and the *tendé* is an unfamiliar sound whose advocates have not yet found the perfect formula to make it a long-lasting fixture on the world music circuit, and therefore accessing migration paths to Europe and elsewhere.

Not to say that people aren't trying. The creator of Sahel Sounds is the one who "discovered" Les Filles de Illighadad. Chris Kirkley admitted that his initial interest in Fatou was her skills at guitar. However, when he got to Illighadad:

They immediately wanted to perform *tendé*, and I realized this was a big part of their musical expression. Personally, I am very entranced by *tendé*, but have been unable to pursue and research it as my enterprise is funded by commercial avenues, and *tendé* is a harder sell than guitar music, and I am funded through commercial recordings (C. Kirkley, personal communication July 25, 2017).

Kirkley's solution was to slip in the *tendé* sounds, putting them literally on the B-side of a vinyl record. "It was a way to casually introduce fans and listeners to this 'more difficult' music." Much like the *tendé* drums themselves, Kirkley explained that there were few venues in which *tendé* sounds would fit, in a Western context. "Tuareg guitar translates easily into a rock club." *Tendé* meanwhile, "is older and less 'Western' in sound. It is VERY repetitive and contingent on lyrical content." (C. Kirkley, personal communication 25 July 2017). He was less interested in the idea of authenticity than in bringing to light what he called "nomad" sounds, which he described as cultural artefacts. I interpret these comments in much the same way I do those that consider *tendé* drumming a more "closed" kind of music. It is difficult to adapt to a

Western setting not least because Western audiences hear nothing of themselves in the rhythms, harmonies and melodies.

Thomas Turino explores the ways in which perceived “closed-off” music is translated to reflect a multiplicity of identities and expectations when he discusses Shona drumming in Zimbabwe. As he describes it, the dandanda drummer plays slightly ahead of and behind the pulse of the music, creating “a rhythmic tension that provides power and energy for singing and dancing” (Turino, 2008 p. 133). The drummer also pays close attention to the dancers, adjusting to their movements and complementing them, the dancers doing the same in relation to the drum (Turino, 2008). However, after independence, formal, professionalized dance troupes began performing “national” dances which were purposely restructured for the stage; meaning they included more rigid rhythmic patterns and notations in order to develop “official” versions of the dances and accompanying songs (Turino, 2008 p. 153). This, Turino points out, was the kind of performance that “simply made sense given the cosmopolitan audiences [the official dance troupes] had in mind”. As a social group, the Zimbabwean middle class, heavily influenced by colonial prejudices about the right way to make music, were considered modern and had “more power and resources at its disposal to influence public representations and habits of other groups” (Turino, 2008 p. 153). The subtle imposition of Western tonality and rhythm is something that Kofi Agawu rails against in his writings on representing African music. “Of the legacies of colonialism,” Agawu writes, “the consequences of an uncritical acceptance of a limited form of functional harmony have yet to be recognized, let alone be resisted actively” (Agawu, 2005). This of course also has to do with those who decide what to record and what to stage, which Turino makes clear.

For Chris Kirkley and *Les Filles de Illighadad*, the way to please cosmopolitan audiences that expect some kind of recognizable sound, is to place the tendé as a perpetual side-show to the guitar, and of course to stage it, removing its improvisational quality in order to solidify and then normalize certain rhythms. That along with the fact that Fatou as a guitarist is marketed as unusual and unique, makes the tendé seem at once exotic and a pre-cursor to guitar music. Many producers, Chris Kirkley included, have developed a well-rehearsed and simplified version of tendé's role in Tuareg society, as rural, ancient, simple and exclusively feminine, in contrast to the guitar. In an almost Bourdieu-like presentation, women's music is insular and closed-off, and remains near the tent while men's music is open and free, far-flung and now played by men and women. The rigid dichotomy is further validated by the decision to frame the drum as an artefact, rather than a music that is still alive.

Other groups are trying to adapt the tendé in order to make it more viable as an instrument in the West. I met Anana and Toulou on a cold and rainy morning in Brussels. They had just played a concert in the Netherlands the night before and it took a few dozen knocks on the door before either of them woke up to invite me in. Anana is the front-runner of the band Kel Assouf, a Belgium-based Tuareg rock band, self-styled as "stoner rock". Toulou was the latest addition to the band and according to Anana "represents that matriarchal side of Tuareg culture," in the group¹⁷.

In Kel Assouf, Toulou plays a drum. But it does not look like the tendé. "The logistics [of a traditional tendé] are very difficult. In fact, it's really only the sound of the tendé that's important. The instrument that Toulou plays, it has the same sounds as the tendé, the same principles. It's just...it's more modern." (Anana, personal communication 17 July 2017).

¹⁷ <http://kelassouf.com/> others include who are subject to this kind of marketing are <http://www.bombinomusic.com/>, <http://tinariwen.com/>,

Anana explained that because the traditional tendé is so difficult to travel with, they have replicated its sounds and sonority in a new instrument, one that perhaps will be the new template for tendé drummers in Europe. This also solved the problem that they saw about the number of women needed to properly play the two drums. There are very few Tuareg women in Belgium, Toulou explained. With this new adapted drum Toulou can play alone. With this flexibility in mind, there is nowhere the tendé cannot go; if you consider its sounds the most important aspect. “This is not what you’re supposed to say,” said Anana at one point, “what we do in Kel Assouf is try to integrate traditional music with more modern styles, so we are also promoting this instrument that we want to be seen. Because when you hear the rhythms of the tendé, they are very different, you have ones that could be used in techno, you know it’s really interesting you can sometimes hear tendé rhythms in other kinds of music” (personal communication 17 July 2017).

Tendé rhythms, he went on to explain, are entirely different from other common sounds in Africa, even within Niger, where he and Toulou are from. It seemed they were eager to promote the instrument if only so that other musicians could incorporate some Tuareg tradition into their own music. That being said, the lack of interest in the instrument itself struck me as very interesting because it diverged so much from what others had told me. I wondered if this was what tendé drums would become in the diaspora; a series of annotated and clearly defined set of rhythms that could be played on anything and travel anywhere. It is likely too that Anana and Toulou see this decision as a canny way to retain sounds familiar to them while still flourishing on the international stage. The Tuareg are hardly monolithic and I encountered many varying opinions on how to bring tendé to Europe. Kel Assouf has proven very popular and as people who work in the business of music, they are no doubt aware of the importance of

remaining relevant to their largely Europe-based audiences Finally, this inclination may be due to regional differences and concerns about preservation, which are more potent for Malian Tuareg, as a result of the current conflict and the well-publicized, much-condemned ban on music that swept northern Mali in 2012-2013 (Morgan, 2013). Indeed, even if there are more Nigerien Tuareg in Europe (though this is largely speculation on the part of Aminata and others; France does not take ethnicity-based immigration statistics), the people I met were largely from Mali. Regional differences are evident and I believe are one of the main motivations for concerns around the survival of the *tendé*, on the part of the West and on the part of some Tuareg themselves.

The Many Sides of Heritage and Preservation

Clermont Music is an independent record label that represents several Saharan artists. They did at one point represent Tartit and the group is described on their website as “nomads by tradition, the pressures of politics, modernization and climate change threaten their very existence” (Clermont Music, n.d.). The label itself is described as “supporting indigenous cultures fast disappearing in the face of globalization, political turmoil and climate change.” (Clermont Music, n.d.)¹⁸.

The politics of preservation are an important factor in the commercial production of *tendé* music. As discussed in Chapter One, Tuareg women are positioned as culture-bearers making it tricky to change the way *tendé* is understood or even played, though this has happened in subtle ways. Formalized *tendé* drumming, with the “traditional” drums, has remained an important marker of identity and of women’s role in Tuareg society. It is clear that various themes in

¹⁸ <https://www.clermontmusic.com/tartit/>.

women's improvisational lyrics have indeed changed, showing a relation to their everyday lives. However, the fact that it is unquestionably understood as a "traditional" music, this designation is flattened and adopted as motivation to bring these sounds to the West, lest their culture disappears (recall that I was certain I spotted a *tendé* drum at the Quai Branly; the preservation does not refer to sound). This is not an uncommon motivation for a variety of enterprises that are involved with indigenous groups. There are important examples in music as in other areas. Gisa Jahnichen in her work on Alak music in Laos developed the Archives of Traditional music in Laos, which, interestingly enough, was not funded through the Lao government but through the Ministry for Development Assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany (Jahnichen, 2013). Daniel Noveck, in his work on Raramuri violin music in Mexico, notes that Americans view the music "as a threatened culture requiring discovery, understanding and rescue, using a perceptual frame that marginalizes the Raramuri even as it is meant to help them" (Noveck, 2012 p. 94). The implied benevolence results in an interaction that necessitates a dichotomy between the self and the Other. To be sure the musicians use this presumption sometimes to their advantage, performing their indigeneity when useful to them. Noveck describes this succinctly when he writes "modernity and its traditional Other are not given categories but interdependent values defined at particular sites" (Noveck, 2012 p. 94).

Steven Feld also provides an excellent case study of the exploratory recordist, in his essay "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music", which details the complicated and confusing use of a recording sample by musicians who were not remunerated and were in fact mis-credited (Feld, 2000). The relationship to these samples, as to many discovered musicians from Africa, Asia or South America, are ultimately "about power and privilege to contact, to know, to take away and to use" (Feld, 2000 p. 166).

It should be remembered that the desire to “preserve” is felt in many areas of research (it is in fact a corner stone of ethnomusicology’s genealogy as a discipline (Rice 2014)) and commercial enterprise. The desire to purchase, use, store, music is endemic in music scholarship. For indigenous peoples, who have been subject to this kind of fetishization in a variety of ways, scholarly and commercial emphasis is too often on their culture’s (and music’s) inevitable disappearance¹⁹. In his book *Representing African Music*, Kofi Agawu argues that research by African scholars is often “directed outward, extraverted” rather than inward for consumption by those on the continent. He reminds the reader to pay attention to what “orders of authority” scholars of African music appeal (Agawu, 2003 p. xii). He further notes that the discourse of “cross-culturalism” reifies “the age-old hierarchized transactions in which Euro-America retains its hegemonic status” (Agawu, 2003 p. 154). This also speaks to the difficulty again of cultural and indeed linguistic translations being made or invented by those who wish to bring aspects of African music into a western lexicon. To change a word, or to define a musical practice using western academic understandings of tradition, almost inevitably means losing much of the complexity inherent in such discussions on music (Agawu, 2003).

Such preservationist narratives are controversial for the very fact that they rarely solve the problem of why these cultural objects of sounds “require” preservation in the first place. In both examples above, there is also a very clear dichotomy between who is doing the work of preservation and who/what is being preserved and to what ends. As Agawu aptly states “by

¹⁹ Indigeneity in many parts of Africa is highly contested. One need only to look at the colonial history of Rwanda to be cautious about notions of autochthony; who has always belonged and who does not. Indeed, Susan Rasmussen warns that the Hamitic myth constructed in Rwanda has some unsettling parallels with current media discourses about the Tuareg in Mali (Rasmussen, 2017). Narratives of autochthony are also powerful nation building tools and indeed have been utilized both by Tuareg activists and black Malian nationalists creating an us-them dichotomy (Lecocq, 2010). Discourses of autochthony and allochthony (the Other) are intimately tied to place, and as Geschiere and Nyamnjoh note, autochthony is often used “as a self-evident basis for political and economic claims” (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2000 p. 433).

constructing phenomena, objects, or peoples as ‘different’, one stakes a claim to power over them” (Agawu, 2003 p. 156).

Tinariwen and Tartit both got their start when they were discovered by Western musicians or activists. However, both groups have used their international platforms to touch on issues they consider important for their music and the Tuareg people. Tartit, while being marketed as a traditional group playing traditional music, frequently extols the virtues of democracy, literacy and the rights of girls in their songs (Music Time in Africa, 2013). Disko writes many of the songs herself. Another one of her strong messages however is to maintain music in the face of the conflict in Mali that began in 2012. Many of my informants lamented the fact that life in the desert was much harder to maintain due to the conflict and many had family members in refugee camps. I understood this to mean that the level of uncertainty and conflict made it difficult to survive economically, as tourists rarely came to Timbuktu and herding was dangerous or impossible once people had fled and abandoned their livestock.

As an instrument of joy, Amoudou explained to me the *tendé* drum was not often played in protest. “It’s not an instrument to demand something,” rather it was used when people felt joyful, or to help bring joy to its listeners. People were less likely to gather together in order to play the *tendé* either, said Amoudou. The concern about its disappearance was uneven, some confident that it would never die, as it was too important in Tuareg everyday life. Others like Disko were convinced that if she and others stopped performing it would soon be lost forever. The fear of losing an integral musical form no doubt is related to nostalgia for the loss of the desert and lifestyle within it. Indeed, another motivation for performing abroad is to promote the desert as a site of tourism, to perhaps gain a tourist industry in light of the difficulties of maintaining livestock (Straker, 2008). In an interview, Disko explained the importance of

economic freedom and how many young Tuareg were leaving for Arab countries to find work. This as many scholars have noted, is quickly changing the dynamics within Tuareg societies especially in Mali and Niger (Rasmussen, 2014).

Though heritage and culture are buzzwords that garner financial support to music events in the diaspora, there is no guarantee an audience will recognize the urgency of such messages of preservation (Gibert, 2011). Almost all Tuareg groups sing in Tamasheq and if their members speak neither French nor English, they are left to hope that their concerns are heard in some other way. Certainly, marketing tools can contribute to the understanding that the Tuareg is a “disappearing culture” but this does little to explain the intricacies of the musicians’ agendas. However, as Gisa Jahnichen points out, the effort to bring traditional instruments to the global stage ultimately transforms the instrument and the music into something more general that ignores “the meaning of musical instruments,” and “their specific function” (Jahnichen, 2013 p. 136). Performances on the basis of preservation then, rather than being static examples of ancient tradition, or entreaties to western audiences to consume Tuareg music to maintain its existence, in fact gloss over the meaning of the *tendé* and participate in developing new meanings for it, with which musicians and audience members must reconcile.

To believe as a producer that in recording traditional Tuareg music, one is “saving” it denies the complex socio-political dynamics at play right now in northern Mali specifically and the Sahel more generally. For Disko playing internationally means inviting more people to have a stake in her music’s existence, and she insists she will not stop, will not transform her *tendé* drumming until someone else joins her in valorizing traditional music. As for the Tuareg diaspora, their relationship to commercial Tuareg music is one of pride and frustration, many of

them divided in their preferences of bands. The Sahel however, remains a salient point of contact with traditional Tuareg sounds.

When we were chatting over coffee, Toulou reminisced about hearing the *tendé* all the time when she was a child. “People play it to pass the time, they sing they dance...” (personal communication 17 July 2017). She remarked that being on stage with Kel Assouf, she felt all her stress disappearing. “You look out at the audience and everyone is happy to be there. It’s trance, it’s joy also.” Toulou has lived in Paris since 2003 and Anana has lived in Belgium for over 10 years. They have embraced the commercialization of their music and as far as I can tell are prepared to be lifelong musicians in Europe, embodying the pervasive world music discourses that have led them to engage with a global music community. Though no hard and fast formula has been found to keep Tuareg music in the spotlight, bands like Kel Assouf and Les Filles de Illighadad are changing the landscape of the genre, possibly making it harder to pigeonhole their sounds as simply “traditional/modern” or “desert blues.”

Conclusion

After their sound check, Les Filles de Illghadad showed me how to put together the little *tendé*. I helped pull the rope tight around the animal skin and two long pieces of wood, and after that Fatou tapped out a few simple rhythms, pouring some water from her plastic bottle on it and tried to teach me a few songs. As I mumbled through the Tamasheq lyrics, I was reminded of something Disko had said, about making the *tendé* more modern in its construction. “We could do it,” she said, “but we don’t want it...It’s more beautiful this way since we can assemble it, disassemble it, then assemble it again...” (Disko, personal communication 18 July 2017). This motion of making the instrument and then unmaking it appeared to me a larger metaphor for the *tendé*’s importance to Tuareg life. Just as it is an object in its own right, once disassembled, its component parts fit into other roles and purposes, until the drum is needed again.

The *tendé* drum is imbued with cultural meanings that have been brought into question and imperfectly translated into a European context. Even its materiality is questioned in a space where to assemble and disassemble an instrument is less beautiful as it is a hassle. Indeed, there are few spaces in which one is actually able to reassemble it. *Tendé* drumming’s ability to create a social world, to create iconic “Tuareg” or “nomad” sounds for the Tuareg themselves is put into question in a small diaspora where many women are spread out across the European continent.

The conclusions I have drawn from my ethnographic fieldwork, reinforced by contemporary scholarship, lead me to argue that *tendé* drumming plays an important role in Tuareg constructions of home, social roles, and gendered expectations (Turino, 2008). Just like the tent, as a symbol of a communal nomadic life, the *tendé* affectively evokes the desert and the joyful aspects of such an existence (Claudot-Hawad, 2006). Upon migrating however, what the

tendé means to a new life in Europe is opened to questioning and to opportunities for re-interpretation and re-production of the instrument's role in Tuareg women's lives. Women struggle to find willing interpreters of their music and the meanings associated with it and the debates around the tendé's place in Europe are evidence that its materiality is already being re-constructed and translated. As Basu and Coleman write "translation...is born of necessity but is itself creative" (Basu & Coleman, 2008 p. 328). I have been witness to the creative attempts of different women to insert the tendé into the lexicon of European music-making. The success of these attempts was largely dependent on one's point of view and were often contested within the community. There was no one clear way to carry over the affective and social importance of the tendé.

In the diaspora, one can recognize the tendé limitations as an ideal medium "by and through which flows" affective ties with the desert and the symbolic meanings the Tuareg associate with the desert environment (Basu & Coleman 2008 p. 325; Norris 2008). The women I spoke with struggled to find or even create a space for the tendé, in a context where community formation was difficult and where there already exist particular understandings of Tuareg music, which exclude the tendé as an untranslatable and 'too-exotic' facet of Tuareg culture. The process of "emplacement"—of finding a sense of belonging as a diasporic community in Europe—is bound up with desires to maintain a connection with home in addition to finding suitable ways of translating the materials of 'home' to a different geography (Lems, 2016). This reflects wider concerns among diasporas whose members likely undergo similar processes of translation as they try to construct new social ties with their new homes.

Playing the tendé both at home and in the diaspora is a method of place-making, and certainly a way of finding a place for the tendé. However, because there is such a small Tuareg

diaspora, public *tendé* performances tend to have a diverse audience, many of whom are European. Successfully staging *tendé* has been a challenge for many because of its participatory nature, and because the very act of staging *tendé* as a concert is an act of re-contextualization in and of itself (Turino, 2008). While many of my informants expressed a feeling of joy, a state of trance or a feeling of returning to the desert when they performed in the West, such emotions are key to their identity and the meanings they already understand embodied by the drums. Attempts to perform “traditional” *tendé* music have been met by subtle adjustments, or outright changes to the instrument’s construction.

While we are rightly concerned with the adaptations people make when they move, cultural objects should be equally considered when contemplating the many factors of diasporic identity formation when we consider migration in scholarly discourse. Anna Tsing asks, “how are people, cultures, and things remade as they travel?” (Tsing, 2000 p. 347), and this is a question that should be revisited as the Tuareg diaspora grows larger and community hubs emerge. Furthermore, we must not forget that the translation of materials is gendered. The number of Tuareg women I met in the diaspora was indication enough that they themselves were less able to move, not only the objects that they use in their day to day lives. Without the drum to hold them, the meanings that *tendé* once embodied may be re-claimed by other materials or develop into abstract notions about the Tuareg way of life. When I attended the ODTE weekend I met Souleymane, one of the organizers who explained that *tendé* was in fact a philosophy and the music was perfectly irrelevant. What mattered was how *tendé* represented a mode of being and *that* could indeed easily travel from one place to another. I tried to speak to him more about this, but he was too tired from planning and facilitating the event. I wondered how Tuareg women would feel about his suggestion that the music of *tendé* drums was not important. The

tendé is an object that represents complex narratives that cannot be easily compressed into simple statements, though the impulse is increasingly present as the instrument becomes entangled in the marketing and performance structures of world music. The meanings around it are perpetually in flux, as women at home and abroad adapt to their ever-changing world and try to find their place in it. Susan Rasmussen writes that “before theorizing about migration, anthropologists need to more carefully examine home and travel spaces from local perspectives, those activities taking place in them, and how participants in these processes re-define these spaces and activities, sometimes inverting outsiders' facile classifications of them,” (Rasmussen, 2002 p. 304). In foregrounding the experiences and actions of Tuareg women musicians in the diaspora and in processes of migration, I hope I have shed light on the role tendé drums play in the identities of these women, and the tendé's part in constructing the Tuareg notion of home, in the desert and the diaspora.

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