Trajectories of a Mask Performance: the Case of the Senegalese Kumps

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Studies on African art and its economic and aesthetic evaluation (Price 1989; Kasfir 1992; Steiner 1994), as well as theoretically informed studies on “commoditisation” (Appadurai 1986a), have focused on the social life of objects. The objects have been shown both to acquire the status of a commodity, becoming an exchangeable object, as well as to lose that status, becoming decommoditised and thereby losing their exchange value. Such studies have also demonstrated that the objects throughout their lives concomitantly acquire various meanings. This article, however, does not aim to describe the social life of objects but, by focusing on the Kumpo mask performance in Senegal, the divergent trajectories of a mask performance. Interestingly, while the masks used in the Kumpo performance never became commodities themselves, the performance did.

In order to understand the meaning of masks in their original cultural context it is essential to analyse mask performances, not masks as objects.¹

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¹ BEIR (1993) argues that to understand African art one has to study its meaning in its original context. This equally applies to the analysis of African masks. In this article the term mask will be used to denote the mask-in-action, when performed for an audience.
A mask performance articulates an unequal relation between mask-performers and audience, empowering the former over the latter. While Bellman's theory of secrecy (Bellman 1984) provides a general framework for understanding the role of secrecy in articulating unequal relations in performance, secrecy is not the only critical parameter in producing such relations. The modalities of this relationship also depend on the wider social context of performance. The aim of this article is to relate modes of performance to various contexts of capitalist encroachment. Mask-audience relationships express particular articulations between modes of performance and the social structure as determined by the global capitalist economy. These articulations also involve shifts in meaning attributed to the mask and his performance. This article aims to highlight the divergent trajectories of the Kumpo mask performance in Senegal. In short, I intend to show how both meaning of the mask and the modalities of masking depend on the context of performance as determined by, and determining the impact of the market economy.

The Kumpo mask is often performed in Senegal and Gambia in widely divergent settings. Its introduction into local communities in the 1930s was intricately bound up with the incorporation of local society into the global market economy. This article will show how the mask performers, due to their participation in the market economy, succeeded in transforming others into an audience, and how they subsequently used the mask to exert power over them. The mask performance was used to renegotiate relationships among the various categories of the community's population. The Kumpo performance has recently been adapted in order to respond to the changing demands and opportunities of the market economy. The mask is nowadays also performed for tourists, and the performers are financially remunerated. Their performance is regarded as an expression of the authentic "culture" of a local "tribe", reinforcing the myth of bounded, self-contained "cultures" that so much prevails among the tourists and mask performers alike. The commoditisation of the mask performance resulted in a radical transformation of the mask-audience relationship. It will be shown that in this particular performance context, the mask lost much of its power and authority over its audience. By means of the performance, the performers were, and still are able, to negotiate relations with the audience. However, the transformation of the performance has largely diminished its efficacy in manipulating the audience.

The article provides a brief description of a Kumpo performance before going on to theoretically analyse mask performances and to assess what such performances in general actually do, and how they do it. This is followed by an account of the divergent trajectories of the Kumpo performance. The performances analysed involve divergent audiences of young women, officials, and foreign tourists. It will be shown that the
Kumpo is attributed widely divergent meanings in the various contexts. Commoditization of the mask performance has resulted in a radical transformation of the mask-audience relationship.

Secrecy and power

In contrast with many other African masks, Kumpo does not wear a carved wooden face mask and may be classified among the leaf and fibre masks. The figure looks very much like a haystack, being made from the leaves of palm trees which extend from the head to cover the entire body, including the arms, legs, and feet. A pole projects upward from the head (figure 1). In Casamance, the southernmost region of Senegal, the Kumpo performance is usually held at the communal centre of a village ward. The time set for a Kumpo performance is announced by the mask itself. At dusk, the mask then comes out of a sacred grove and walks through the village to inform young men and women that their presence at the performance is required. The mask does not usually speak to the bystanders, his presence in the village being enough to indicate that a performance will be held that evening. At nightfall the young women gather and line

up at the centre of the ward. They then begin to sing and dance, using old spades for rhythmical accompaniment, and are later joined by the young men. After some time the Kumpo appears, stalking around and frightening the children. Three drummers then heat their drums at a campfire and start playing, encouraging the young men and women to dance (figure 2). Every now and then the Kumpo interferes and corrects the dancers. He speaks with a strange nasal voice and his words therefore require "translation" by a member of the audience. Not everybody is capable of understanding the mask and the translation is usually done by one of the young men present (cf. Girard 1965: 70). The Kumpo admonishes the youths to take the dance seriously, participating in the dance himself. He sticks his pole in the ground and whirls in circles around it displaying great speed and agility. The pattern of the Kumpo participating on and off in the dance continues well into the night. Towards the close of the performance the Kumpo speaks once again. One of the young men translates a message which is invariably an order or a warning of one sort or another. The Kumpo then returns to the sacred grove and the villagers go home.

The case outlined above of the Kumpo mask performance cannot be extrapolated to provide generalisations covering all African mask performances. It does however contain features which do occur in other mask performances. Masks are usually performed in the context of a ritual, either in a serious or more playful manner. It has been firmly established in anthropological research that a mask performance involves an impersonation, the coming into being of a persona (Napier 1988: 232;

Fig. 2. Young men dancing with girls (photo Maarten Bavinck).
The transformation of a human being into a persona does not merely consist of disguising the performer, but involves the multiple activities that masks display. The mask comes to life by running around, speaking, or shouting, and often threatening the audience. A mask cannot exist without an audience, and without playing its part in the performance which establishes a complex series of interactions between itself and the audience (Tonkin 1979: 243; Kasfir 1988b: 2-3).

In some societies masks are regarded as reincarnated ancestors, in others as incarnations of forest spirits. However, not all masks are regarded as ancestors or spirits by their audiences (Tonkin 1979: 241). The identity of a mask may not be known by the audience or even by the performer himself. Even when the mask is regarded to be beyond human knowledge, the mask performer may well be recognised by members of the audience. Mask performers are nearly always male and their identity is kept a secret from women. According to Ottenberg, most women know much more about the masks and their performers than they are willing to admit. But even if women recognize their son or brother, the mask nevertheless instills fear. To confuse the matter even further there is often considerable uncertainty in the symbolic meanings of masks. The uncertainty of their identity delights both the performers and the audience (Ottenberg 1975: 211; cf. Napier 1988: 234).

The ambiguity of masking rests on a paradox. Masks are by their very nature ambiguous, and yet this ambiguity is frequently used to exert unambiguous coercive power. The mask is used by its performers to manipulate the behaviour of its audience, both during and after the performance. One difficulty clearly lies in trying to resolve the ambiguous

3. Writing about a fictitious mask performance, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe provides us with a dialogue between a mask and a man. The man, asked to identify the mask, replies: “How can a man know you who are beyond human knowledge?” (Achebe 1971: 250).

4. In a seminal essay, Tonkin (1979) argued that the explanation for the coercive power of masks lies in the fact that the audience generally believes that power resides in the mask. She argued that this can only be accounted for by the particular paradoxes involved in masking. Although the audience may attribute a particular meaning to the mask (the incarnation of an ancestor or bush spirit), its exercise of coercive power cannot be explained by this subordinate aspect since power is attributed to all masks regardless of the indigenous meaning given to them. Therefore, the different uses to which masks are put refer to a common principle about what masks do and why they are particularly capable of doing it: “Masking [is], acting through its own paradoxes, a richly concentrated means of articulating Power” (Tonkin 1979: 245-46). The ambiguity of the mask is exactly what gives it power. However, this explanation does not account for the fact that perception of the mask is differential, depending on the social
quality of masking so as to account for its unambiguous social effects. How should the inequality between performers and audience be explained? Secrecy does of course play a crucial role in this relationship. In his highly instructive study on Poro secret societies, Bellman (1984) defines secrecy as a form of communication. While membership of the Poro secret society is confined to men, the women are nevertheless just as familiar with its secrets. Bellman therefore argues that the contents of secrets are not as significant as is the doing of secrecy (ibid.: 17). Secrecy is a form of communication that allows certain categories of people to communicate hidden information while denying this right to others. Bellman therefore concludes: "The paradox of secrecy lies in the fact that secrecy is constituted by the very procedures whereby secrets are communicated" (ibid.: 144).

Masking embodies a similar paradox. In view of the fact that women are not supposed to know the identity of the mask performer and often constitute the audience, it might be argued that the performance involves only the male portion of the social structure. The very act of excluding the women, however, is itself an integral part of the performance, since the power of illusion and secrecy depend upon women playing the role of the non-initiated (Kasfir 1988b: 7). It does therefore follow that the mask performance, as proposed by Bellman, should be analysed as a form of secrecy that prohibits the audience from questioning the mask directly. However, the social context that allows these inequalities in the practice of secrecy to emerge also needs to be analysed. When examining the social dynamics of a mask performance, the following question therefore has to be asked: "Who has the right to present a mask and to turn others into an audience?" (Tonkin 1988: 246). The player-audience relationship is, according to Tonkin, an index of a socio-political relationship. Taking her argument one step further, I will argue that a mask performance, like any other ritual, does not reflect or legitimise social relationships but produces them. The right to present a mask and to turn others into an audience is itself subject to negotiation. The performance, in which rules of secrecy are imposed on the audience, serves very well the purpose of exerting coercive power. Once the performance has been accepted by all social contingents involved, it will then "mask" those hidden social relationships. The rules of secrecy prevent an open discussion of the objectives of the mask performers. Henceforth the audience is in the disadvantaged position of being unable to contest or question the player-audience relationship.
The spread of the *Kumpo* mask

The *Kumpo* mask is often performed in villages in the Casamance region in southern Senegal, such as the Jola village Diatok. A large number of the people born in this village temporarily or permanently reside in urban areas. The rural Jola population, before participating in the market economy, had almost exclusively relied on subsistence rice farming. The pacification of the region by the French colonial army after the 1880s made it safe to travel through the region, and many young men profited from the changed situation (Mark 1985: 93-115). Seasonal migration to the groundnut-cultivating areas in Gambia became a means of acquiring a cash income. Many of the young men also converted to Islam during their sojourn among the Mandinko population in Gambia. The pacification thus created conditions for an increasing production for the capitalist market and for the introduction of Islam into Jola society.

Around 1930 the *Kumpo* mask was introduced to many Jola villages. The performance was probably organised once or twice a week in every village ward. The mask would come out at night and entertain all participants in the performance. The character of the performance has

5. There is considerable agreement among scholars about the origin of *Kumpo*. Girard (1965) relates two different versions with regard to the origin of the mask. The first version holds that *Kumpo* was introduced in northern Lower Casamance in 1930 and modelled after a Guinea Bissau original. The second version holds that *Kumpo* is part of the culture of the Banyun ethnic group, and spread among the Jola (Banyun and Jola villages being located next to each other in Casamance). Girard says that the two versions do not mutually exclude each other (*ibid.*: 43-44). According to him, *Kumpo* originated among the Banyun ethnic group, a point of view that he thinks is supported by the fact that *Kumpo* has a firmly established meaning in Banyun cosmology whereas among the Jola the mask remains a “mystery” (*ibid.*: 42, 46-60). Mark (1985 and 1992) gives much more empirical evidence. He also thinks that *Kumpo* originated among the Banyun (1985: 47-51; 1992: 29), a thesis which he carefully elaborates. However, Mark also writes: “In an historical context it is difficult as well as misleading to speak of the two groups [i.e. the Banyun and Jola] as if they have always been completely distinct and clearly differentiated entities” (Mark 1985: 50). I fully support his contention that the *Kumpo* mask can hardly be attributed to one particular ethnic group. The construction of ethnic boundaries is a perpetually shifting process that renders the attribution of cultural traits to any particular ethnic group an anachronistic enterprise (De Jong, 1995). Informants generally attribute the origin of the *Kumpo* mask to the Banyun ethnic group. However, many cultural traits are attributed to some ethnic group, which is nothing but an act of boundary-construction within the contemporary ethnic discourse. Such utterances are in line with the myth of bounded, self-contained tribes, each with a distinct culture. It is not useful to ask to which ethnic group a particular cultural trait should be attributed. This question only reinforces the conception of Africa as a continent of a-historical, distinct ethnic groups. In my thesis, I will show that other masks in Casamance transcend ethnic boundaries too. The *Kankurang* mask, widely held to have originated among the Mandinko, is also performed by members of many other ethnic groups.
probably remained unchanged throughout this century and must have been similar to the performance described above. Coming out of the sacred grove the mask inspired fear among the audience and reprimanded them for unruly or unsatisfactory behaviour. How can the sudden spread of the Kumpo mask performance to so many other Jola villages during the 1930s be explained? Answers to this question have been provided by several authors such as Jean Girard (1965), who suggested that the introduction of Kumpo into the Jola villages was a response to the Jola's conversion to Islam. In order to counter the individualising effect of Islam, he believed the mask performance had been introduced and directed by the elders to reinforce the collectivity of village society. However, since it is most unlikely that the lineage elders would promote the interests of village society as a whole, Girard's point of view must be questioned on the grounds of being too functionalist. Van der Klei has suggested that the mask was used by a specific category of the village population to promote their own particular interests. He supposes that the Kumpo was introduced by the lineage elders in order to control their sons who had started to participate in labour migration (thereby temporarily escaping paternal control) (Van der Klei 1989: 218). Although the spread of the Kumpo was without a doubt related to labour migration, I will argue below that it was not the elders, but the young men themselves who introduced the Kumpo to their villages.

Peter Mark (1985), in his comprehensive and detailed study on the history of Lower Casamance, claims that "[t]he key to understanding Kumpo's wide geographical range lies in the universal appeal of a figure that could combat the ever-present danger of witchcraft" (ibid.: 48). With the suppression of the poison ordeal by the French administration at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jola were forced to find other ways to combat witchcraft. However, although the Kumpo may have been used to identify witches, it was never to my knowledge used to pass sentence on them and can therefore not be seen as a substitute for the poison ordeal. This article suggests yet another explanation for the Kumpo's rapid spread during the years of increased labour migration.

Labour migration and social control

As a play the Kumpo mask performance certainly provided its audience with entertainment, and any explanation for its spread should take this into account. Along with the traditional wrestling matches the performance provided an amusing pastime which came into fashion during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{6} The fashionable mask performance however, served not simply

\textsuperscript{6} Jones (1988) observed that fashion is very likely to have played an important role in the appearance and disappearance of Nigerian mask performances.
to entertain the youth, but also to play a distinct role in social control. Unmarried men and women were not allowed to mock the Kumpo or transgress the rules he made. Girls were not to forget to sweep the family yard as negligence would always be detected by the omniscient Kumpo. Quarrels between young men or young women also warranted his intervention. There was no subject in which the Kumpo could not involve himself. In the course of his performance the Kumpo reprimanded anyone who had displayed unruly behaviour. If the mask itself did not correct antisocial behaviour then a person's faults were mentioned in the songs that the audience sang during the performance.\(^7\) In addition the Kumpo imposed a penalty (alamani) several times a year, which was always collectively imposed and usually consisted of a goat or a pig. The penalty had to be presented to the Kumpo, after which a two or three day feast was held consisting of endless dancing, singing and eating (cf. Girard 1965: 80).

The obvious question to be addressed here is: who directed the performance? The organisation of the mask performance was in the hands of the Kumpo society, a secret society whose members belonged in one ward to the age group of initiated but unmarried young men (cf. ibid.: 77-80; Mark 1985: 46). These young men were familiar with the Kumpo’s secret. They knew that one of them was dressed with the mask, how he was dressed, and where this took place, normally in a sacred grove of the ward. For the young women, who were excluded from Kumpo’s secret, the mask remained a mystery.\(^8\)

The Kumpo society itself held its meetings in this sacred grove where matters were discussed pertaining to the Kumpo performance. Up to the present, the sacred groves are the most important Jola sanctuaries. Before Islamization, a shrine (bukin) was located in each grove, and was looked after by an elder. The grove bukin was attributed with the power to inflict disease and death. The young men’s initiation was held in the village’s central, most important sacred grove. As it was only the lineage elders who were allowed to care for the shrines, the elders’ authority was vested in the shrines (Van der Klei 1989: 147-86). In addition to the central sacred grove, other groves and shrines of secondary importance existed alongside. The Kumpo society held its meetings in such a grove of secondary importance. This grove was also believed to be the dwelling

7. Girard (1965: 80-81) and Mark (1985: 45-46) also attribute an important role in social control to the Kumpo.
8. Cf. Weil (1988), writing about the Sengko Mask among the Mandinko in Gambia: “To the extent that the sengko does represent an authority, the perceptions of it and responses to it appear to both reflect the social status of the observer and, moreover, to reinforce the dominant or submissive behavior that is appropriate to his position in the stratification system.” Likewise, the perception of Kumpo reflects the social status of its observers, i.e. their gender and age.
place of the *Kumpo*. It is very likely that this grove was designated by the *Kumpo* society. This suggests that the young men were able to create their own sacred grove which did not derive its sacredness from a shrine but simply from *Kumpo*’s secret. Nor was its management a matter for the lineage elders, but only for the young men of the *Kumpo* society. In view of the fact that a sacred grove was an important symbol of the elders’ authority, one wonders how the young men were allowed to establish a sacred grove of their own.

The pacification of the Casamance region led to an increase in production for the market economy, which mainly relied on the seasonal labour migration of young men to the areas of groundnut cultivation. Young unmarried men were thus able to earn a cash income, and as the first converts to Islam they expressed their independence at home by rejecting their ancestral religion (Mark 1985: 112). In their villages this change led to alternative sources of authority, namely cash and Islam (cf. Snyder 1978: 241-242). The young men nevertheless remained dependent on their elders for other reasons such as the initiation, inheritance of rice paddies, and to receive a wife. However, some of the first Muslims bypassed the initiation altogether (Mark 1985: 113). The young converts were able to renegotiate their relationship with the elders. The foundation of a sacred grove testifies to their increased independence vis-à-vis the elders. To express their newly found independence, the young men had recourse to a well-established source of authority: the sacred grove. In addition, the prevailing sense of secrecy with regard to everything related to the grove, was elaborated to incorporate the *Kumpo* mask. Since the mask was believed to originate in the sacred grove, those not initiated in its secret were not allowed to talk about the *Kumpo* and had to conform to his commands.

The changed status of the young men was not confined to renegotiation of their relationship with the elders, but was equally expressed in a transformation of their relationship with young women. Their attendance at the mask performance was compulsory from the moment they reached marriageable age up to the day they were married (cf. Girard 1965: 51). The young women were subject to the mask’s surveillance and rules. The practice of secrecy prevented open discussion of the mask and his commands were accepted by the young women even when unfavourable to them. Young men transformed pre-existing notions of secrecy with regard to the sacred grove. This enabled them to turn young women into the audience of their mask performance. By means of the mask performance, and drawing on a slightly transformed idiom of secrecy, the category of young men established new power differentials triggered by new possibilities of the market economy.
Controlling the migration of women

The introduction of the Kumpo performance in Jola villages attested to the changing social relationships between gender and age categories in the village communities. From the 1950s onwards however, despite the introduction of new masks in the performance (figure 3 and 4), Kumpo began to lose ground to other forms of entertainment that had made their way into village life. Why did the young men abandon the play that formerly had proven such an effective device in disciplining young women? The answer to this question is related to the changing migration pattern of the young men. From the 1950s on young men started to migrate to the cities in the region or to the national capital Dakar. The migration which formerly used to be focused on the production of ground-nuts in rural areas, was now directed towards the urban economy that was far less dependent on seasonal supply and demand. Most of the migrants no longer returned to their villages on a regular basis (cf. Snyder 1978: 241). Consequently a lack of participants in the mask performance led to its abandonment.

Towards the end of the 1960s less and less young men returned to the village to help with the rice cultivation. The elders approved of this
development as they thought their sons would make a better living by holding down jobs in the urban economy (and consequently would be better able to sustain their parents). The labour force of young men was used far less in rice cultivation. Van der Klei convincingly showed that this development was detrimental to “young farmers”, the category of young men living in the village, who had founded their households without having children old enough to contribute to household production. Since the labour force of migrants had formerly been used in rice cultivation, their absence confronted the young farmers with a labour shortage. Lineage elders faced the same problem but were still capable of hiring work groups with the money provided by their sons working in the urban economy (Van der Klei 1989: 43-84). The young farmers began to protest against the labour migration of young men. In 1969, this resulted in open disagreement between the young farmers and the lineage elders in the village of Diatok. The young farmers forced the young men residing in the cities to return to the village in defiance of the express wishes of the elders to the contrary. Initially, their initiative was successful, but eventually the conflict was concluded in favour of the elders. Nevertheless, the young farmers’ protest had been voiced and henceforth any future labour migration involving the young men was subject to negotiation between the elders and young farmers (ibid.: 219-242).9

9. This section is based on Van der Klei (1989).
In 1974 Diatok held its young men’s initiation, a decision prompted by the young farmers. All the villagers returned to the village from the cities for two weeks. The young farmers used the occasion to found a village association of young men and women that merged the associations of all the village wards. As young women increasingly participated in the labour migration, so the association set itself the target of regulating the migration of both the young men and the young women. Its committee (Assemblée générale) decided that young women were to return to the village every year by the fifteenth of July (the start of the rainy season) in order to assist in the planting of the rice seedlings. In the event of a young woman returning late, a fine was to be imposed (7,500 West African francs). If a woman failed to turn up at all, then the fine was doubled. The labour migration of young men was not regulated to the same extent as returning home could result in them losing their jobs. The association purposely sought to regulate the labour migration and organised several new events to make life in the village more pleasant during the rainy season, such as a soccer competition and dance nights in the village dance hall.10 The young farmers of two wards of Diatok also decided to revitalise the Kumpo performance. In addition to the association regulating the labour migration, the Kumpo also helped by ensuring that young women arrived in time for the planting of the rice seedlings. If after the rainy season the village association permitted the girls to leave for Dakar, then girls living in one of the Kumpo-ruled wards also required the mask’s permission, which could be withheld.

Whose interests were served by this the mask’s new role? Firstly, young farmers profited by the young women working on the village rice fields. The Kumpo not only saw to their return but also admonished the girls to unite themselves into workgroups and carry out their duties. Secondly, the young unmarried men also had their interests promoted by the Kumpo. Their aim was to discipline the girls and ensure what they termed their éducation traditionnelle. By the 1980s the young men’s migration proved less and less fruitful. The general decline in economic growth led to increased unemployment and some of the young men who had spent several years in the towns eventually returned to their villages and settled down as farmers. The young female migrants on the other hand were not so much concerned about their job careers, but about the selection of their future spouse. They left the village with the intention of earning an income that would allow them to purchase clothing and cosmetics, and to make themselves attractive partners for wealthy men.

10. Cf. Snyder’s (1978) account of legal innovation by a youth association in a Banjal-Jola village. The village-wide association of unmarried men of marriageable age took many initiatives comparable to the activities of the Diatok association. Snyder focuses on their initiative to form a ranger patrol in order to prevent cattle damaging crops. The innovation failed due to a lack of support by the village elders.
The girls primarily sought marriage with a civil servant, certainly not with a farmer which would entail a life of hard labour in the village. The young men jealously watching their female peers seeking out better opportunities, fell back on the *Kumpo* performance in the hope of controlling the girls’ behaviour. The most obvious collective strategy was to force them to return to the village. The *Kumpo* obliged them to take up labour in the fields and to keep up the skills which would eventually enable them to make good wives in an agrarian household. In collaboration with the village association, the *Kumpo* therefore entreated the girls to return to the village during the rainy season, and imposed fines when someone failed to obey. Since fines were always collectively imposed, *Kumpo* reinforced social control among the young female migrants by making them responsible for each others transgressions.

This new policy of the *Kumpo* performance has been pursued up until the present day. In addition to disciplining the girls, the *Kumpo* also regularly imposes penalties and organises feasts. This enables young men to keep close contact with the girls. The importance of these occasions is probably on the increase since young men find it increasingly difficult to get a job in the city whereas the girls can more easily find employment as maids. As more young men prefer to stay in the village the regulation of the girls’ labour migration is the only way to assure that they make contact with potential wives from their generation.

Not surprisingly, since the *Kumpo’s* rules reflect the interests of young men and young farmers, the *Kumpo* society that revitalized the mask performance comprised members of both categories. Whereas the *Kumpo* society had formerly been directed by initiated unmarried man, from 1974 onwards it was directed by the young farmers (young men with their own households). The lineage elders are still excluded from the *Kumpo* society, even those who formerly as young men had been full-time members. Interestingly, while young men and young farmers never revealed to me that the *Kumpo* and other masks were actually created and directed by them, the lineage elders did not keep this a secret. Those who had their interests promoted by the *Kumpo* maintained the secret, while those whose interests were not at stake were on the whole indifferent about it. Young women however, were not allowed to express doubts about the nature of the mask, or even to suggest that *Kumpo* served the interests of young men. In one incident women were fined twice for whispering that *Kumpo* had unjustly imposed a penalty unfavourable to the young women.

A tourist attraction: commoditisation

Tourists intent on a holiday in the Gambian sun are upon arrival at the airport very likely to be welcomed by a *Kumpo*. Today it is not uncommon for tour operators to hire a local dance troupe to perform a *Kumpo* at the
very moment that tourists step down off the aircraft. The performance is accompanied by dancing and singing, and the young men and women performing are dressed in "authentic" raffia skirts. In this way tourists are introduced to the local "culture". Occasionally, other mask performances are also performed, and it is interesting that some of them are not rooted in local traditions. Since the tourists in general have no idea of the local cultural repertoire, the dance troupes can easily include performances and dances from other regions or countries. The performances anyway are likely to be thought of by the tourists, as "typically African".

Most tourists, from Scandinavia, Britain or the Netherlands, normally spend two or three weeks lounging on the beach. Some indulge in the sexual services offered by their Gambian hosts while others may make tours around the region. Tours offered by travel agencies last from a couple of hours to up to 8 days. The latter option includes a visit to Casamance's regional capital Ziguinchor. The hotel where the tourists stay overnight puts on a folklore show performed by one of the local dance troupes (troupe théâtrale). The show lasts for one hour, and is usually staged next to the hotel swimming pool. The show consists of four or five plays each comprising music, choreographic dance, and singing. Each play is usually inspired by a dance, feast, or ritual from the local cultural repertoire. The Kumpo performance is presented as a part of this show. The dance troupe is paid a small sum of 18,000 devalued West African francs.

The masks used in the Kumpo mask performance are made specifically for that purpose by local artisans. These masks cannot be bought at the local market nor at tourist art shops. Whereas the individual masks used in the Kumpo performance have not yet been commoditised, the performance itself has. The mask performance is bought and sold at the local tourist entertainment market. Fierce competition among the different dance troupes may have triggered the initiative. Appadurai (1986b: 23-27) and Kopytoff (1986: 73) claim that in every society objects or traditions exist—in particular sacra—that are not allowed to function as commodities. Sometimes, these things nevertheless enter the commodity phase, a turn in their social life that Appadurai has termed a "diversion". Diversions always carry a risky and morally ambiguous aura (Appadurai 1986b: 27). This may be the reason why the dance troupe that performs the Kumpo performance for tourists consists predominantly of Mandinko, an ethnic group of which the members do not reckon the Kumpo to be part of their cultural heritage.

11. Steiner argues that the African art trader’s status as an outsider is almost a necessary precondition for participating in the African art trade: "Outsiders in inter-ethnic commerce have the advantage of being able to leave an area quickly if they are caught in illicit or sacrilegious activities. Furthermore, they have the advantage of not being enmeshed in the moral and religious fabric of the local community with whom they trade" (Steiner 1994: 88).
The commoditisation of the masks used in the *Kumpo* performance would inevitably be tantamount to a public scandal since this would amount to sacrilege, the disclosure of the mask’s secret. However, it has been possible to commoditise the performance without disclosing the secret of the mask. The *Kumpo* is performed on hotel premises, out of sight of the town’s local inhabitants. Disclosure of the mask’s secret would moreover make its performance far less interesting for the tourist audience. After all, the tourists too delight in the mystery of the mask. The performance does nevertheless result in a partial “secularisation” of the *Kumpo*. In the village context the mask emerges from the sacred grove, while in the hotel setting it comes out of the swimming pool changing room.

**Folklorisation of the *Kumpo* in local cultural festivals**

The commoditisation of the *Kumpo* performance may be categorised as a form of folklore, a category of cultural expression which often is considered to be unauthentic, or, in Appadurai’s terms: a diversion. However, in the last decade a process of folklorisation has been witnessed in Jola villages that is not triggered by commoditisation and which is therefore not comparable to the kind of diversion Appadurai refers to. Some village communities organise cultural festivals during which all sorts of traditional dances and plays are performed. In this context the dances are no longer enacted in a way to make the audience participate but rather deliberately turn the audience into passive onlookers (Mark 1994). The audience witnesses their traditions being performed as “culture”. The *Kumpo* mask was recently performed in this way at a cultural festival in Ziguinchor organised by the village association of Tendouk. A programme consisting of a rain-dance, initiation dances, and the *Kumpo* performance was put on to entertain the youth, their male and female elders and invited officials. As usual during these performances a couple of young men recorded the songs and dances with video cameras and cassette recorders. This produced the somewhat strange scene of old men watching *Kumpo* performance (though not very attentively) which they would normally consider a “childish” amusement for younger age groups. While salvage

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12. Mark (1994) analyses the meaning of the player-audience relationship in the context of a *Semaine culturelle* organised in Thionk-Essyl and Mlomp, both Jola villages in Casamance. He demonstrates that the plays are identified by the audience as either belonging to their cultural tradition or to the cultural tradition of ethnic others. The *Semaine culturelle* thus contributes to the articulation of cultural identity. In passing, he shows that the intention to turn spectators into a passive audience did not always succeed. Despite the spatial organisation of the performances that aimed to create a distinction between players and audience, some members of the audience, identifying some of these plays as belonging to their cultural tradition, started to participate in the dance (Mark 1994).
paradigm anthropology might make short thrift of the matter, relegating the performance to the realm of “unauthentic” culture. the performers and their audience clearly considered the Kumpo performance an authentic expression of local culture.

Such performances may also serve a political goal. High-ranking civil servants and politicians are usually invited to attend the festivities. Although not compelled to do so these visitors are requested to make a financial contribution to the festival’s association. When for instance the Senegalese Minister of Agriculture Robert Sagna visited the village of Diatok in December 1994, he was treated to the performance of several dances including a Kumpo mask performance. The show was intended to establish a reciprocal relation with the politician that might benefit the village community. The Minister for his part was seeking to enlarge his electoral support. The villagers’ political foresight was proven right when the Minister donated 1,000,000 francs to the village association to be used for the village sewing workshop. The Kumpo performance is clearly used by the village community to cement relations with high-ranking officials in the hope of receiving financial or other benefits.

The Kumpo mask acquires a new meaning when it is performed for tourists. The performers themselves have specific knowledge of the mask which is not particularly mythical but which is encoded in a set of standards of behaviour to be observed vis-à-vis the mask. Before the start of the play, the tourists are also informed about the mask. A commentator explains to the tourists the meaning which the Kumpo has in local society. Usually the Kumpo is said to be a “demon” which is part of the “tradition” of the Banyun “tribe”. This reflects the preconceived notion that tourists have of Africa as made up of distinct tribes, each with a distinct culture of its own. Ironically the members of the dance troupe do not belong to the ethnic group to which the Kumpo is attributed. The performance is commoditised as a reified form of culture, typical of a reified ethnic group. However, the fact that Kumpo is performed in a hotel testifies to the multifarious contemporary trajectories of the mask, a fact that is lost on the audience.

The meaning that the Kumpo performance acquires for tourists does not adequately reflect the mask’s actual use in the regulation of labour migration. It does nevertheless largely coincide with the meaning that it is given in local cultural festivals, in which the audience conceives of the performance as a “tradition” that may not necessarily be particular to “our tribe” but which is certainly conceived of as being “ours”. It also indicates

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13. Personal communication Kirsten Langeveld.
14. Robert Sagna has been a long-term member of the Parti socialiste. In the Senegalese political system, the Parti socialiste dominates political life. This political party is divided into different factions (tendances) which necessitates all active members of the party, also those in higher offices, to have a personal electorate.
a heightened awareness of their distinct identity, in as much as the Jola population has started to conceive of its customs in terms of “tradition” and “culture”. This way of conceptualising local practices is a result of the cultural transformation brought about by Islamisation, colonisation, the introduction of capitalist relations of production, and the subsequent distancing towards local practices. However, this distancing towards local practices merely is a necessary prerequisite for their conceptualisation as “culture”. The attitude towards local practices also involves the partial appropriation of the Western tradition-modernity paradigm and the subsequent categorisation of local practices as “tradition”. In Casamance, “tradition” is referred to by various terms today: coutume (introduced by the French colonial administration), thiossane (a Wolof term meaning “tradition”: the term is used by the Senegalese government in promoting the preservation of local culture), and occasionally the French tradition or culture. Nowadays the Kumpo performance is referred to using these terms which all denote the same substance: reified culture. “Tradition” is defined rather broadly and encompasses the cultural festivals and performances for tourists and officials (cf. Errington & Gewertz 1996: 116).

Reified culture can be attributed different meanings. When performed in the context of local cultural festivals with an audience of villagers, the Kumpo mask performance becomes an expression of local “authentic” culture. The performers are thus involved in the process of articulating a cultural identity (cf. Mark 1994). In the case of the Kumpo performance organised for the Minister of Agriculture Robert Sagna, the performers deliberately tried to create a sense of shared identity with the state official, himself a Jola. The performance was used to create identity in order to gain access to State resources. When performed for tourists the Kumpo mask is also used to symbolise a local cultural tradition, not however to create identity, but to create difference. In the context of a hotel performance the Kumpo acquires meaning as the “authentic” culture of the Other. In fact the performers are deliberately “othering” themselves. Though the performers’ identity may not be so seriously at stake as in cultural festivals, meaning is generated in interaction with the tourists at a level of make-believe. The mask is then used by its performers to gain access to the resources of the global tourist industry.

The mask performance is an expression of “authentic” culture across the political landscape of Senegal and across the world-wide production of images of “authenticity” (cf. Appadurai 1990). A dance troupe from Dakar consisting of migrants from Casamance has toured around the world performing Casamance dances which included the Kumpo mask performance. The troupe has had various audiences. In France the troupe was

15. Occasionally the term folklore is used, though mainly by the educated elite. By using this term they distance themselves from the cultural expression at hand which they do not want to be identified with.
intended to promote tourism in Senegal. It has also been invited to participate in cultural festivals internationally including a carnival in Paris and Japan, and was even scheduled to perform at a festival in Washington with an audience of predominantly Afro-Americans. The mask creates identity and difference on a global stage.

Mask performances can be subject to multifarious trajectories. The *Kumpo* mask was introduced to Jola villages by young men, thus enabling them to articulate a change in their status within the local social structure, brought about by their participation in capitalist relations of production. At a later stage the *Kumpo* helped regulate the labour migration of young women, that is to say the participation of young women in the capitalist economy. From its inception the *Kumpo* performance was intricately linked to the dynamics of the market economy. Recently, the mask performance began to serve other objectives such as the expression of “authenticity”, for both tourist audiences as well as for locals in cultural festivals. All of these performance contexts are contemporaneous. The *Kumpo* simultaneously functions as a disciplining device and an expression of “authentic” culture (cf. Clifford 1988: 250). Paradoxically, some trajectories of the *Kumpo* performance have developed due to the appropriation of a tradition-modernity paradigm which always denied tradition a future. Some performances, in their transformation of local traditions, testify to the life, not the death of “tradition”. However, the performances are embedded in systems of increasingly unequal relations, of young men marginalised by capitalist relations of production trying to regulate the labour migration of young women, of local communities striving for access to the resources of a volatile state, and of dance troupes trying hard to access the prizes of a very competitive and equally volatile global tourist market. The mask is used in various ways to manage the impact of capitalism.

While it is not being argued here that all traditions will be subject to commoditisation, the fact that some local dances are transformed into plays for tourists, and thus commoditised, has the effect of transforming all local traditions into a cultural repertoire, and thereby paves the way for further commoditisation. Some of the local traditions, such as the *Kankurang* mask performance are not yet commoditised, since the power attributed to this particular mask and the cultural values contained in its performance, prevent the local dance troupes from doing so.16 The commoditisation of the *Kumpo* performance need not be the future of other

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16. I will extensively deal with this aspect of the *Kankurang* mask performance in my forthcoming thesis.
mask performances. Trajectories show varying degrees of continuity and change.

The performance of a mask as an expression of “authentic” culture for an audience of villagers, tourists, or officials, highlights a crucial change in a local tradition. We noted earlier that the act of masking enables certain groups to exert coercive power on condition that the audience subjects itself to the capricious behaviour of the mask. This is certainly not the case when the mask is performed for foreign tourists or a Minister. The official watches the mask while comfortably seated under a canopy, and conversing with his hosts. Likewise, the tourists are seated in front of a stage on which the mask dances while the tourists themselves sip cocktails. The tourists are even allowed to video the performance without being reprimanded or disturbed by the mask. The relationship between the mask and his audience has been substantially transformed in an attempt to remodel the performance in a way to lend it a new instrumentality. Similar changes have been observed by Van Binsbergen (1994) and Errington & Gewertz (1996).

Tonkin (1988) argued that the player-audience relationship is an indication of a socio-political relationship. This is a useful observation to employ in analysing performances in villages. The young men for instance were able to make the young women their audience, but not the elders. In the village context, one is either absent at the performance or, if present, turned into a member of the audience and subjected to the mask’s authority. Examining the performance for tourists and officials, it turns out that the social relationship between players and audience is very different from the one within the village context. The change in the performances for an audience of tourists and officials consists of the transformation of the mask-audience relationship. Tourists and officials are allowed to attend the mask performance without being subjected to his authority.

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This article examines the divergent trajectories of the Kumpo mask performance in Casamance (Senegal). Several modes of performance are related to various historical contexts of capitalist encroachment. It is shown that the mask-audience relationship expresses particular articulations between modes of performance and the social structure as determined by the global capitalist economy. The performances analysed involve divergent audiences of young women, officials, and foreign tourists. The Kumpo performance has very diverse meanings in the various contexts, all of them contemporaneous. The mask is used in various ways to manage the impact of the market economy. Commoditisation of the mask performance has resulted in a radical transformation of the mask-audience relationship.

Keywords: Casamance, capitalism, globalisation, mask, performance/Casamance, capitalisme, globalisation, masque, représentation.