



Fig. 1: Small celebration (about 150 participants) on the occasion of a name-giving; Bamako 1994 (R. Polak).

stones, and puddles, with the heavy dancing that will mainly take place directly in front of them in mind; and they make sure that they have an unrestricted view of the fairground before taking their seats. The singers sit down just beside the drummers. The organizers, too, usually sit together in one corner, often close to the professionals. Guests make up for the other three-quarters or so of the circle. Whereas professionals, organizers, and guests occupy chairs to the extent that they are available, the seniors among them at least, the majority of attracted passersby, children, and youths will have to stand behind them. Thus the situation is clearly differentiated even before interaction has fully developed: Three subgroups (professionals, organizers, and guests) each occupy a certain segment within the circle of seated participants, while spectators fill the line and crowd behind. Most attendants are easy to recognize as

belonging to one of the subgroups thanks to the combination of spatial positions as just described, and by their equipment, dress, and bearing: The drummers have their drums with them and appear either in everyday work clothes or in individualistic, extravagant performance dress. The griots, who make up the majority of the singers, wear splendid dress, show grace and difference in posture and style, and often loudly praise arriving guests. The organizers wear specific headbands (*denbajanlanw*) in distinctive colors, and other symbolic items (Fig. 2). The guests wear the most representative dress they currently have available. Sometimes two or more guests appear wearing the same clothing, expressing special respect for the present (or a past) occasion by having agreed upon investing considerable money in a common uniform. Many spectators wear everyday clothing.