

The Dynamics of Music - Making in Dagomba Society Transformation Processes in African music

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Abstract. The music-dance culture of *Dagbon*, in Northern Ghana, functions in symbioses with social, religious and traditional political structures of each Dagomba community, and is linked to the extended family clans. In this part of Africa, music, dance, sound, movement, and sentiment are strongly connected to each other, often through rituals and annual festivals. The dynamics of music making in Northern Ghana is currently characterized by a transformation- and hybridization process between traditional and popular urban music making. This leads to new intercultural dynamics and cultural identities between Hiplife, contemporary Highlife, a reggae revival, Bollywoodish and Nollywood's influences and in particular "The Sahelian Factor" in music making.

Keywords. The African idiom in music, the Sahelian Factor in music making, transformation processes, the Hiplife Zone.

1 Introduction

In this paper we focus on the dynamics of music making in the Dagomba society. We studied the various categories of traditional music and dance performance practices, the social organization and the cultural – political context of these performances in the rural and urban communities. The goal of the paper is to identify the different factors that contribute to this dynamics.

In the first part of this study we discuss the African idiom in music making, the different transformation and hybridization processes found in the area of traditional music making and the urbanized processes found in the urban popular informal self-regulated music industry in Tamale.

In the second part of this study, we postulate a theory on the Sahelian Factor in the music of Northern Ghana, and propose a theory on a non-linguistic - ethnological classification of music and dance in Sahelian Africa and the Northern Region of Ghana in particular. Finally, we discuss the phenomenon of the urban space in music and dance. 'Hiplife' is an urban popular music style found in Ghana and in Tamale. We examined the informal and self - regulated music markets in and around Tamale. The research is focused on the different social - and economic structures of the local urban popular music cultures found in and around Tamale.

2 Background

This project started as an archiving project, aimed at documenting an endangered and not well-documented traditional music and dance culture in *Dagbon*, in the Northern parts of Ghana. The fieldwork for this research was done with the financial support of the RMCA, The Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren Belgium and with the cooperation of the University of Ghana Legon, the Institute of African Studies.

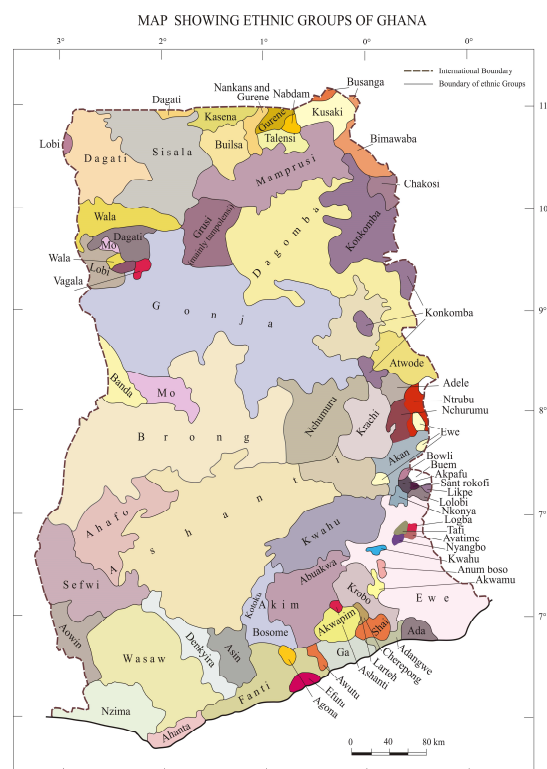
Dagbon refers to the traditional state of the Dagomba inside modern Ghana, or the area where the Dagomba people reside. *Dagbana* refers to a Dagomba citizen, Dagomba refers to citizens or the people. When talking about the Dagomba we mean the dominant ethnic group living in *Dagbon* with the administrative centre Tamale and Yendi as traditional cultural capital, the city from which the king, *Ya Na*, reigns over *Dagbon*. *Dagbani* refers to the language of the people and belongs to the Gur - language. In what follows, a distinction is made between the traditional idiom, and the urban idiom of music making. In *Dagbani* the word 'music' does not appear. Dagombas make a distinction between 1: song (*yila*), *yili* meaning to sing, 2: dance (*waa*), *wahi* meaning dancing, 3: (*baanga*) a general name for all traditional singers and musicians. 4: musical instruments or musicians who play that instrument; example the *lunga* which is a closed double skinned hourglass-shaped drum, but also refers to the musician who plays the *luna*, the tom-tom beater. In this paper when mentioned 'music making' we include all four elements: singing, dancing, playing and musicians.

3 Dagomba Society

In the heart of the Voltaian Basin lies *Dagbon*, the traditional State of the Dagomba in Modern Ghana. It is one of the *Mossi – Dagomba* states set up in the Volta Basin of Northern Ghana during the unification and the centralization of the area that took place in the 14th and the 15th century and got its centralized form under *Na Nyagsi*¹. It covers an area of 9.611 square miles. In width, it is 100 miles and in length 200 miles. It lies between 9° and 10° N latitudes and 0° and -1° W longitudes. The natural

¹ In some cases, a *yidana* or landlord of a compound who had plenty of followers, or was wealthy in cattle, was considered the chief or headman of a village. But the most sacred spot in the area was at *Yogo*, and its earth priest was the head of all the indigenous people. They were not centralized until *Na Nyagsi*, the great grandson of Kpogonumbo, made war against the earth priests of the land, killed almost all of the earth priests, and appointed his sons, brothers and nephew's as chief in their stead. The history tells us concerning the origin of these conquerors, whose descendants are the present rulers of the Dagomba people. Cardinal A., Tamakloe, E.F. Tales told in Togoland. London, Oxford University Press, 1970.

boundaries of *Dagbon* are the White Volta river in the West, the Oti river in the East, and the Nasia river in the North. In its length *Dagbon* runs from Kubalem, 8° 56' 53" Latitude and 0° 21' 41" longitudes near Nakpali at the Togo border to Zabzugu in the South East in the Zabzugu District. *Dagbon* lies in the West Sudan Savannah belt of Northern Ghana and has a population density of 35/km². The Dagomba are the most dominant ethnic group found in the area with a representation of 931.000, according to the population census 2012². Yendi is the traditional capital and Tamale the administrative Centre of the Northern Region.



Map 1. Map showing different ethnic groups of Ghana.

The vegetation of grasses is changing according to the seasons. *Dagbon* has in the rain season an environment from long savannah grasses, *Hyparrhenia sp.* and *Andropogon pseudapricus*. The main vegetation is classified as vast areas of grassland, interspersed with the guinea savannah woodland, characterized by drought-resistant trees. Among

² This data comes from the House of Statistics in Tamale, Ghana, pp 12.
http://liportal.giz.de/fileadmin/user_upload/oeffentlich/Ghana/Census_2012_final.pdf

these woody plants³ are the *kapok* tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), the *baobab* tree, and a huge variety of high and low shrubs such as *Guardenia equall* and different types of herbs. Traditionally, the Dagomba community subdivided respectively in, "Royals, Commoners and *Tindanas*". In the city of Tamale, however, we were following the latest urbanization and urban developments, and we could identify a new group of people that we call in this study "*urban class*," or urban townspeople.

The Royals are the Dagomba aristocracy, the chiefs and their offspring, the *Nabihi*. They are actually a kind of ambassadors, representatives of the Dagomba – aristocracy who rule in local villages to and urbanized towns according to their position to the Yendi Skin. When a chief dies and a new chief must be appointed, a competition⁴ emerges between the local chiefs for the vacant position. However, some of them prefer to live comfortable abroad or in the city of Tamale and let their village be ruled by a regent and the *Wulana* a sub chief.

The Commoners, *tarimba* or *Dagbanbabbba*, are really the local people, all the Dagomba who are not related to the Dagomba aristocracy and the *tindana bihi*.

The *tindana* and their offspring: they are the original inhabitants of the Northern territory. The custodians of the land. According to the Dagomba tradition the *Tindana* is the land priest who has control over the land and all things attached to the ground. He is responsible for the annual fertility rituals of the earth, the harvest, the rains and setbacks. He is also responsible for the mediation between the people and the local lesser gods. When someone dies, he is the mediator between the supernatural world and the physical world in which the deceased is to be buried. The offspring from the *tindana* are called *tindana bihi* (the children of the land).

The urban group, we understand a complex mix of townspeople coming from different cultural backgrounds and migrated ethnic minorities which can be found in the

³ Blench, R. 2012. Dagbani Plant Names. Cambridge.
<http://www.rogerblench.info/Ethnoscience/Plants/General/Dagbani%20plant%20names.pdf>.

⁴ The competition between the various traditional chiefs we mean an election that occur when there is a chief vacancy in a village or urban town that is higher in rank than their current position. The election involves giving a considerable amount of money, cows, grain, possibly even a car to the Paramount Chief in Yendi. Depending on your lineage and family clan you belong to, the elders and the *Ya Na* decides to whom they will give the new skin. The most important position and highest ranking in this competition between the *Dagbon* aristocracy of the chiefs, is the Yendi Skin. 'The Lions of *Dagbon*' are the chiefs of Mion, Tolon, Savelugu, Karaga, Kumbungu and Gusheigu, the big lion is in Yendi and holds the Yendi Skin and *Dagbon*.

city of Tamale. On the one hand we would like to attach the Dagomba – traders, public services of government workers, traders and storekeepers of Dagomba origin, who have actually adopted a hybrid and new identity and way of living, towards the previously feudal Dagomba tradition of the extended family unit. An urban identity that a Western and African-American lifestyle radiates. Some of this townspeople live in traditional homes within the city center, but we have also noticed that some people live in more Western-inspired house types that lie outside the city center.

On the other hand, we include the various newcomers, immigrants from different African cultures within the city which are most of the time active in trade within the city of Tamale. We could distinguish different subgroups, the merchants and the people of the commerce, but also the subaltern townspeople, beggars who have come from the countryside to gather in the city some money near markets mosques and bus stations. However in Tamale, we did not noticed slums, but there are several areas in the city of Tamale where there are sanitation problem.

A preliminary research was done during the summer, July – August 1999, which we made several field recordings in the different Regions, mainly in the Northern Region, the Upper West - and the Upper East Region of Ghana. We started with a musical survey research and recorded a huge amount of traditional music-dances among five musical cultures. Among the Ashanti, we recorded *Adowa* funeral music and dance, in the urban town Pankrono, and a collection of *Nnwomkoro* – songs and dances from the late *Maame Afua Abasa* in the village of Nnwomkoro near the city of Kumasi. For more information on these field materials concerning the music and dance recordings we made among the Ashanti people, please see the website of DEKKMMA - Project. <http://music.africamuseum.be/instruments/english/ghana/ashanti/ashanti.html>.

In addition to the music and dance of the Ashanti people we recorded on tape a selection of the xylophone music that accompany dances and a selection of songs repertoire among the Sissala people of Bandei. Polyphonic singing and xylophone music of the Lobi people of Bule in the Wa - district. Upward North we made recordings of traditional music and dance among the Kassena people of Paga Nani near the city of Navrongo, at that time a small urban town.

During the period 2003-2004 we recorded a huge collection of song repertoire, female male and dances, ritual music and children play games songs among the Mamprusi of Djanga and Gambaga, including research on the traditional music-dance culture among the Bimoba people in Nakpanduri. Special attention was made during this fieldtrip in recording the Frafra *kon* music, (a double string plucked lute). All the mentioned recordings, field notes and field materials are available at the audiovisual

archive of the RMCA – Tervuren, Belgium in the DEKKMMA – Project.
<http://music.africamuseum.be>

The bulk of the music-dance research was done in *Dagbon*, the traditional state of the Dagomba in contemporary Ghana. In June - August 2008 and June - August 2010 we conducted additional fieldwork in the city of Tamale on the phenomenon "*Hiplife*". *Hiplife* is a popular urban music genre (a local Afro pop) one finds all over West Africa. Influences of the *Juju* - music from Nigeria, and the Congolese *Rumba* - music⁵. Contemporary *Highlife* music is strongly influenced both textual and instrumentally by popular *hiplife* music and vice versa.

Among the instrumental interaction we mean the introduction of new electronic manipulated sounds like using samplers and amplitude - frequency modulation techniques and use them as effects in the recording and mixing of the vocals in the music. The music-dance culture, that we studied during the period 1999 – 2010, belongs to the cultural heritage of the *Dagbon* and is in symbioses with social, religious and traditional political structures of each *Dagbon* community, and is strictly controlled by an institution of traditional customs, sanctions and repercussions toward traditional music performances enforced by the Paramount chief, the *Ya Na*, and the various local chiefs, and a huge council of elders at the different local courts. *Dagbon* is a complex and well organized dynamic - mainly agricultural - traditional feudal society in economic expansion and is in a mode of transition towards urbanization, globalization and more individualism.



Photo 1. Akarima playing the *timpani* drums at the court in Yendi. Yendi March 2001.



Photo 2. *Lunsi* – drummers at the court in Yendi

⁵ Congolese Rumba music is a popular urban music style from Congo. One can best define the genre as a hybrid urban music with influences from both the Western as the frequent use of Western trumpet and electric guitar, but in which there are both indigenous Congolese and Ghanaian 'palm wine' influences are present. Among the Congolese influences such as the various rhythms, the lyrics sung as selected melodies. This music can be mainly characterized by the electric guitar music. *Rumba on the River. A history of the popular music of the two Congo's*, Gary Stewart. London, Verso, 2000.

The above picture shows an *Akarma* at the court in Yendi. *The Akarima, Akrama*, pl. *Akarmanima*. The talking drum (*Atumpan*) player at the court. The State drummer. The *Atumpan*, Akan word for talking drums, *timpana* is the name given to that type of paired drum in Dagbani. The *Akarima* takes his stand somewhere behind the chief or somewhere on the right hand side for he has to watch the movements of the chief carefully. The *timpani* drum is played in two different ways. When it play's alone, it serves as a talking drum. The drummer talks with it and plays in speech mode. He says something about the chief. He drums for a purpose. When he play's with the other drummers, he plays in drum mode and plays in a different style, for he has to play music for the dance. The *timpani* drummer may be uses as a talking drum and as a musical instrument. The *timpani* drum is played not only in Akan areas, but also in Ga- Adanbe, Ewe, Dagomba, Mamprusi, Gonja and Wa areas (Nketia, 1998: 4-7). In *Dagbon*, the institution of drummers, is called 'the *lunsi*' they are court historians, musicians, geographers, consultants, advisers to the chief, judges at the local courts, chronicles of the past and recorders of the presents.

“The Hiplife Zone”

The Hiplife Zone is an imaginary zone a liminal zone or third space where the local musician in the urban idiom of music making interact with each other and where the cultural transformation processes take place. In the study of cultural anthropology the concept of culture is used in a holistic view. We prefer, - for the study of transformational processes in *Dagbon* cultures - the definition of Geert Hofstede⁶: culture as a “collective mental programming”.

“It is the collective mental programming that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people apart from those of others”.

A society is individualistic from setup when mutual ties between individuals are unforced. Within this society, everyone is more or less on himself and for his / her immediate family. *Dagbon* society like we could observed is collectivist from setup. Dagombas are adopted from birth in extended family clans, where they are bound and tied for life in exchange for loyalty, social security and community respect.

Most Western-inspired countries score high on individualism, whereas most African countries like Ghana and Burkina Faso rank high in collectivism. On the one hand, when talking about cross-cultural transformation processes within the urban space - which is represented in the city of Tamale as the “Hiplife Zone” in *Dagbon*- , we speak about transformational processes towards a greater individualism of the musi-

⁶ Hofstede G, *Allemaal Andersdenkenden. Omgaan met cultuurverschillen*. Contact, Amsterdam, 2008, pp 18-20.

cians and the way they live, the way they promote their music by leaving the extended family unit of collectivism towards a more nucleus family unit, this more individual freedom and privacy.

On the other hand “The State” as an institution has almost no impact on the local informal music markets in *Dagbon*, because it is quite individualistic from setup and it is not professional organised. Artists are individuals, are producers, reproducing digital copies to vendors and are distributing their own work of art on the internet, in local shops, by local vendors, street vendors and local radio stations in a local informal market system in Tamale.

During the twelve years of research in the area we could notice a cultural change coming from the digitalisation revolution and the impact of globalization in the area. Cultural transformation process by institutionalizing copyright issues coming from the urban space, versus the public domain - the traditional idiom of music making in the area- , had an enormous impact on the music marketing and brought a cultural change from a more individualistic informal music market strategy in Tamale towards a more Western setup of music marketing.

MUSIGHA, the National Music Union, functions as a cultural platform and is the representative in the city where local musicians can collect their royalties. This Western model of collecting royalties and copyright issues, involving taxation - by putting taxation stickers of copyright on legal sold copies-, for the mechanical and digital reproduction of music was enforced by Ghanaian State and the National Commission on Culture but didn’t function well when it came to the informal music markets.

At the time we left *Dagbon* in 2010 this model towards cultural collectivism of the local informal free music marketing was already abandoned by most of the local musicians because they had the perception that culture, including traditional and urban music-dance in general belongs to the people and is in the public domain.

This cultural ambivalence between a model of free and uncontrolled informal music markets versus a collectivistic controlled institutionalised model of music industry was in September 2010 in Tamale totally collapsed while the informal music markets were doing well. This implies that the legal owner of music, urban or traditional are vested in the President⁷ as an institution had almost no control over the extreme piracy problem in the area. “The Ghanaian State” as an institution is the legal owner of all the registered songs and holds the legal copyrights. The music distribution institutions like Vodaphone, MTN and One Touch are the music providers who are distributing music on the phones and radio. The State has an enormous impact on the national music industry by censoring, the use of tribalism and claiming 100% ownership of

⁷ Republic of Ghana. Copyright Act, 2005 (Act 690). Act 4: Folklore protected 4.2: The rights of folklore are vested in the President on behalf of and in trust for the people of the Republic. Accra, 2005.

every legal publish folklore song. It collects taxes but has almost no impact and influence on the local informal music marketing in Tamale. Here we see a change of cultural transformation from an informal music marketing towards a more cultural collectivistic mechanical and digital reproduction of arts. That is while we prefer the definition of culture and cultural change from Hofstede because it matches very well with the contemporary situation of the different problems of digital reproduction of the African cultural industries and music industries in general.

The introduction of digital communication systems (e.g. music on mobile phones) and the use of electronical manipulated sounds effects during the digitalization processes in the production and reproduction of music has made music making in *Dagbon* part of the non-consumable digital music mountain of the global village and cyber space.



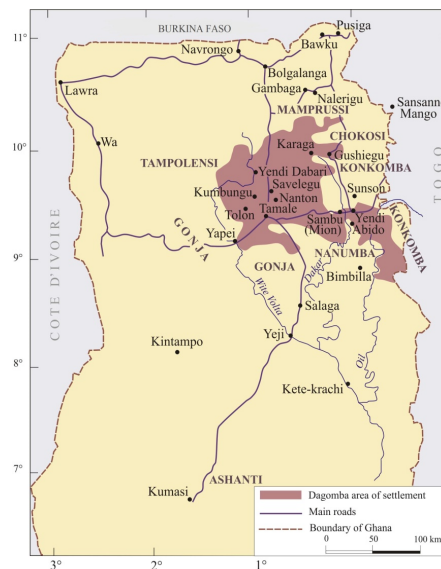
Photo 3. Mr. Dela from Musigha in his home studio. Tamale July 2010.



Photo 4. A radio presenter of Radio Savannah. Tamale August 2010.

During the fieldwork study in 2008 – 2010 our focus was on this contemporary urban popular self-regulated music industry and the informal music markets in Tamale, an African multicultural and cosmopolitan “hidden city”, and the Administrative Centre of the Northern Region of Ghana. Special attention was given to the local self-regulated and informal music markets, the mobile music vendors that are flourishing in the city center, the local music shops near the bus stations with mainly pirated copies of foreign music. This included, the airplay and the function of the local radio stations in and around Tamale, the function of the local music union, the subaltern position of some musicians in the Dagomba community, the organization of music education in the area, the recording, mechanical and digital reproduction of digital music, and the distribution of popular local music. The phenomenon of music ownership, the public domain versus copyright law and piracy, the opening of numerous music NGO’s, and the flood of music recording studios in and around Tamale were also given attention during the fieldwork. Transformational processes of music-dance into the digital domain of music making has not only its impact and influences on phenomena such as traditional music, the local urban popular music informal and self - regu-

lated markets, the various forms of cultural production and reproduction in the Northern Region and beyond, the different forms of cultural activities and live performances, but it has also a great impact on the traditional educational system, social behavior towards more individuals among the musicians and artists, the emergence of *Neo-Tribes* and subcultures, and the various forms of music commerce found in the local towns and the urban areas, including the self-regulated and informal markets of music found in the city of Tamale. The concept of *Neo-tribes and neo-tribalism* derives from the French philosopher M. Maffesoli. In "The time of the tribes", "The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society", he introduced the term *Neo-tribes*. The concept of *neo-tribalism* in the study of contemporary music-dance cultures in Dagbon is adopted to indicate, describe and distinguish the existence of subcultures and club cultures in Tamale. The phenomenon *Neo-tribes* has nothing to do with a particular ethnicity, nation or culture, but is only used through the paper to differentiate these contemporary music-dance club cultures.



Map 2: Map of Northern Ghana showing the geographical scope of the research area.

Traditional music making in *Dagbon*, covers many social and cultural layers. It is found in the different local villages but is also found in various forms at the court of the *Ya Na* in Yendi, and at the different palaces of the local chiefs in the towns. Intensive ethnographical research has been conducted on the function and location of traditional music making in contemporary *Dagbon*, including a study on the morphological and functional classification of their traditional musical instruments, the history behind

traditional music and dance, the traditional performance practices, the choreography of the various dances, and the location and timing of traditional performances.

The Yendi Skin Affair

“The Yendi Skin Affair“ is the name and reference given to the ongoing inter - cultural chieftaincy problem in *Dagbon* among the Dagomba aristocrats - the *Andani* – and the *Aburu Yili*-, regarding the legitimacy of the traditional throne or Yendi Skin in Yendi. This is an on-going phenomenon, an old feudal problem which is deeply rooted in all the different layers of the Dagomba population and was transferred from the traditional dominant Dagomba culture to the contemporary dynamic mixed culture sphere in Northern Region of Ghana. It is the result of the ongoing chieftaincy crisis, the intercultural conflict and interfamily clashes between two royal clans of the Dagomba aristocracy, that constitutes and enforces their static, old-fashioned and out-moded feudal traditional customs and way of life on the contemporary way of life in *Dagbon*.

The Aburu - and Andani clans

In postcolonial *Dagbon*, chieftaincy titles, particularly those involving high offices, are mainly given to wealthy, educated and politically – influential persons who can use their contacts with government officials, local and international NGO's donors and foreign embassies (Tonah, 2012, pp5). The Dagomba aristocracy are divided into two major royal family clans, namely the "*Aburu*" - and "*Andani*" , they constitute one family, but live under intense tensions for the legitimacy of the throne. Since 1850 at the hands of two princes, e.g. chief Yakubu, and chief Abdulai Andani II they live in tension which resulted in a number of clan disputes, known as the "Yendi Clash" in *Dagbon*. These clashes are historically rooted and have a deep impact on the political and social - cultural life in today's Tamale and *Dagbon* in general.

The ongoing intercultural family conflict, is the direct product of an accumulation of hatred among the two gates towards each other towards power, and it is the result of a polygamous lifestyle of those royals in combination with the traditional practice and social structure of the extended family units that has coast and led *Dagbon* into a state of crisis. The two royal family clans have very strong ties with the current political discourse in Northern Ghana. The *Aburu* clan is largely associated with the political party NPP "National Patriotic Party." The *Andani* clan is in turn associated with the political party NDC "National Democratic Congress" in which a small minority of mostly skilled workers often become associated with the CPP, "Convention Peoples Party", the political party of former President Kwame Nkrumah. These two family - clans are living in tension and conflict about the legitimacy on the throne in Yendi. Both clans demand the right, which regularly occur during and after parliamentary

elections, new conflicts and old feuds are resurrected with the result that within the *Aburu* - clan division has developed.

The impact of the “Yendi Skin Affair” on the music of the Dagomba

The Yendi Skin Affaires”, is the name given to the clash and conflict of the *Aburu* - and the *Andani* family around the Paramount chieftaincy problems in *Dagbon*. The impact of the Yendi Skin Affair in Savelugu, and other major towns like Karaga, Tampion and Gusheigu, during the period 2002 – 2006 was very negative, not only on the social and cultural level, but also on the moral, educational and economic level, and was like a solid wall of intercultural tensions for the overall development of the *Dagbon* area and the musical and cultural development in particular. The Yendi Skin Affair is used in “the Hiplife Zone” by the local urban musicians in Tamale as proverbs in their lyrics of popular contemporary Highlife music, Reggae music, and Hiplife songs and questions the moral values behind this outmoded and traditional aristocratic customs. During the many years of field research we recorded several stories and narratives showing the many problems and cultural implications of the Yendi Skin Affair related to the music-dance performances in the traditional- and urban idiom of music making in *Dagbon*. The limited transportation facilities in *Dagbon*, rally’s from the army in Tamale and Yendi, people attacking homes from other family clans, internal tension in the extended families on both sides of the clans, had an enormous impact on the cultural - social educational and musical life in *Dagbon*.



Photo 5. *Sampagi naa* and his sons during the manufacturing of *lunga* drums. Tampion, spring 2003.

The main cultural activities stopped and drumming became in the whole *Dagbon* area a taboo. This involved various taboos and sanctions for the local inhabitants such as penalty towards music making, singing of clan related song repertoire, the use of political inspired song repertoire, taboo towards traditional drumming and performing song repertoire related to speech mode drumming. The taboo on music making in the traditional idiom of music making had also a serious impact on the unemployment of local musicians, music education and cultural impoverishment and derailment of the Dagomba youth.

Through the approval of some important chiefs such as Karaga *Lana* and Tampion *Lana* Alhassan, we were able to continue this research work under certain conditions, such as no whistling, limited singing and no drumming. We moved the research focus from the traditional idiom of music making, the villages and the local towns, to the city of Tamale, “The Hiplife Zone”, the urban space in *Dagbon* and the local secondary schools. It was during this long period of complete musical silence in *Dagbon*, that the Tampion *Lana*, chief of the village of Tampion, and a direct brother of the late *Ya Na*, grounded me a certain working space in Tampion - Gumani, a quarter in his town, a temporally permission to continuing the research at the old hospital ground in Tampion – Gumani.

Gumani is a very special and sacred quarter in Tampion located on the other side of the Nanton – Karaga road behind the marketplace. The area has a size of 0.35 km² and bears various sacred religious functions. It is the land where the *Baga* and the *Tindana* live, and where the shrines of the local gods are located. The locals gods of Tampion are *Zinnyeibo*, a female and male god. Other lesser gods are *Deino*, *Taribabu* and *Wanyon*. The shrine of the female god *Zinnyeibo* is located in Gumani in *Tindana yili fong*. The shrine of the male god *Zinnyeibo* is located some 10 minutes’ walk in the bush near Gumani. In Gumani there is also a totem animal. There is a taboo towards killing and eating alligators in Tampion because it is considered to have special spiritual qualities. Out of ethnographic research we can state that the land of Gumani is a sacred place that has many functions. The land of Gumani is considered different than the land in Tampion village. There are other tolerance values towards cultural practices in Gumani, such as dancing and singing. Cultural activities over there have a sacred religious undertone and the performance of it has a larger tolerance value within the traditional community. It was in Tampion Gumani, on the old hospital ground that we could continue, under certain strict conditions by the Tampion *lana*, the research project on traditional music-dance in *Dagbon*. The old hospital ground was during that time considered by the Dagomba community in Tampion as a working space and foreign ground, and I was a *silimiiga*, a white man. I was permitted access to the old hospital ground as a working space. There is also an area called *Gumani* in Tamale but that is a suburb of Tamale.

With the help of the Tampion *lana* eldest son, Mr. Alhassan we were able to conduct an enormous amount of field data on ethnographical material in Tampion. Most of the ethnographical data used in this research paper was conducted during this period in Tampion, Tamale, Tali and Savelugu. Tampion is an urbanized village 27 Km North East of Tamale in the Savelugu/Nanton District (Coordinates: 9.584925, - 0.679151).



Photo 6. Air photo of Tampion and Gumani showing different location. Google Maps.

- 1: *Na yili fong*: The palace of the Tampion *lana* Alhassan.
- 2 : Gumani: A quarter in Tampion were the *baga* and the *tindana* live.
- 3: Tampion market area.
- 4: *Tindana yili fong*: The quarter if the *tindana* (land priest)
- 5: Old hospital ground.
- 6: *Baga yili fong*: The quarter of the *Baga* (soothsayer).
- 7: Local bus stops and small shops.
- 8: Handy crafts, carpenters, small shops.
- 9: The JSS school ground.
- 10: Water dam.

When we arrived in *Dagbon*, in January 2003, we found *Dagbon* in a state of a cultural and musical hibernation. The above picture is showing a map with different locations in Tampion. It shows segmentations of the spots were we conducted ethnological fieldwork in Tampion-Gumani. The research continued with the help of several local traditional musicians. We invited informants and performers of traditional music-dance types to the old hospital ground and the local school ground and we made transcriptions of oral narratives and the oral history of these traditional perfor-

mances. Senior High Schools in *Dagbon*. With the help of Fusieni Tia, an elder, traditional drummer (*lunsi*) from lineage and a pioneer on the urban popular music in Tamale, we could complete the research on the ethno-organology and music of the *aligaita* in Karaga. The *aligaita* is an adopted straight blown double reed hobo from Hausa Land and found at the court in Karaga. The instrument is identified with the identity of Karaga *lana*. In Tamale, Tolon and Tali, we were able to continue the research on hochetus flute style of the *yuwa*, a straight blown notched flute with two finger holes, the *jinjelin* music, an one string musical bow with calabash resonator, and on the *moglo* music, a three string plucked lute with trough resonator and the *tindana* music-dance of Tolon *Djakbo*, the local god of the *tindana* in Tali.



Photo 7. Junior High School in Tampion 2004.



Photo 8. A classroom in Tampion during a music identity survey. Wednesday 18 February 2004.

During this critical period of tension 2003 – 2005 that we made an attempt to establish a new approach of research in functional organology, with the focus on *ethno botanical musicology*.



Photo 9. A selection of a tree trunk ready for processing into a *timpana* drum. *Ceiba pentandra* (*Bombacaceae*).



Photo 10. Wood sculptor busy carving out the core of the *timpana*-drum, Tampion 2004.

With the expertise of Emeritus Professor Lain of the University of Ghana Legon, Department of Botany, and Dr. Ibrahim Idana from University of Development Studies, Tamale UDS we were able to investigate an acoustical study on the woody plants

used in building Dagomba musical instruments. Intensive microscopic analysis and microscopic cell measurements and timbre analyses were done on the relationship between the parameters of wood and the different parameters of sound. We made a first attempt on a functional ethno-botanical classification model of the woody plants used in building musical instruments in *Dagbon*. This ethno-botanical field research was done in the savannah areas around Savelugu, Tolon, and Tampion.

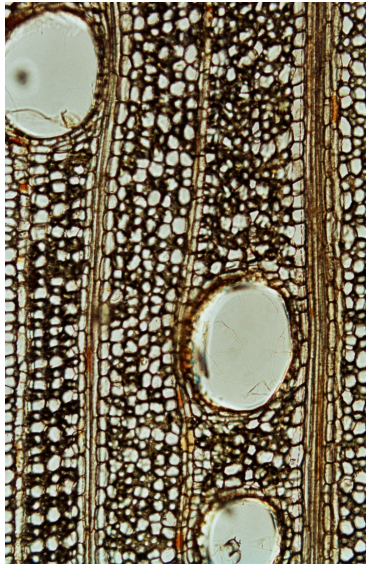


Photo 11. Transversal section of *Ceiba pentandra* (Bombacaceae)



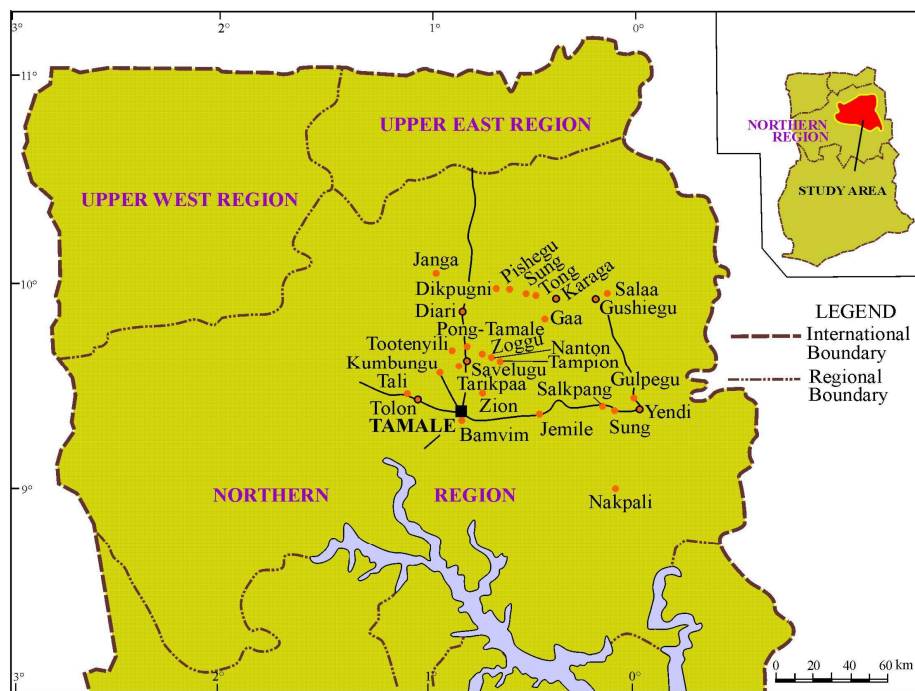
Photo 12. Longitudinal section of *Ceiba pentandra* (Bombacaceae)

TABLE 1. WOOD ANATOMICAL PARAMETERS WHO HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE ACOUSTICAL SOUND.

- Tissue is wide cell lumen libriform fibers.
- Parenchyma: plenty diffuse parenchyma through the fibers.
- Apotrachial tangential bands scaliform, storied structure.
- Wood rays are strong variable in size, from 1 – 7 cells large and big.
- Heterogeneous structure crystalliferous cells and brown core substance.
- Tile cells and border cells.
- Vessels: scanty vessels with variable size, solitaire and radial linked, single perforation, marked that the vessels are crooked on the tangential plane.
- Medium solitary vessel density.
- Medium size solitary vessels.
- Medium thick –walled ground fibres / thick - walled fibres.
- Libriform fibres with fibre tracheid's.
- Para tracheal / aliform and banded parenchyma: The wood rays are storied.
- Numerous and fine structured.
- Uniseriate rays, with homogenous structure.
- Even vessel elements.

4 Scope of the Study

The focus and scope of this music-dance research was both on the traditional idiom of music making and the urban idiom of music making in *Dagbon*. These idioms of music making interact with each other in the “Hiplife Zone”, an imaginary zone where transformations processes take place from bought idiom. The traditional space, here represented of traditional way of music making was mainly found in the villages and the urban towns. The Urban space, is here represented in the city of Tamale and the urbanized towns.



Source: Survey Dep. of Ghana- ACCRA

Map 3: Map of Northern Ghana showing the geographical scope the research area.

To study the traditional music-dance from the Dagomba we conduct ethnographic fieldwork, and field recordings of these traditional music-dance in the villages. This field work was done in the period January 2001 and February 2002. The scope of the study changed during the research project, due to the impact of the Yendi Skin Affair. The first scope was focused on the traditional music-dance activities of the Dagomba people at the court in Yendi and at the local palaces in the villages. That was before the Yendi clash happened in March 2002.

The second scope developed during the aftermath of the Yendi Skin, the period we indicate as: “The period of musical hibernation in *Dagbon*”. It was mainly on the ethnographical fieldwork in Tampion and Savelugu and in the city of Tamale. We did also a comparative field research on the traditional music-dance idiom among the Mamprusi and the Bimoba of Northern Ghana. There was a slight paradigm shift from making field recordings to the study of the woody plants in building Dagomba musical instruments.

The third scope of the research developed during the period 2008 – 2010. We shifted the location of research from Savelugu to Tamale and conducted a survey research with students and adolescents of the Senior Secondary School in and around the city of Tamale and Yendi on “music identities and identities in music” and sales of music in the local informal music industry and the arising of copyright and piracy in the public domain. The digital and mechanical reproduction of musical arts in Tamale as the economical Centre of the Northern Region of Ghana.

5 Statement of the problem

The literature at the beginning of the project in 1999 showed that most of the existing research studies done by musicologists and cultural anthropologists on music-dance were mainly done on the topic of traditional drumming in *Dagbon*. (Locke, 1990), (Chernoff, 1978, 1987, 1997:91), (Oppong, 1961: 38-51). With the exception of the excellent comprehensive study of Djédjé Jacqueline Cogdell (Djedje, 1978, 1980, 1998, 2008) on the Dagomba and the Hausa one string fiddle, the *gonje*, little research was done on transformational processes on the traditional and urban music idioms in *Dagbon*. The same is true for study and research done by scholars on the traditional dance styles of the Dagomba. The work of Professor Opoku on the 'Festivals of Ghana' (Opoku, 1970: 57 - 62) describes the Damba Festival an annual festivals of the Dagomba. The study by John Collins 'Music Makers of West Africa', (Collins 1985: 33-37) deals with the Dagomba *simpa* - music dance groups in Yendi (a youth dance of the Dagomba) and the influences of Hausa and Western music cultures on the popular music genre of the youth in Yendi, the traditional capital of the Dagomba. The work "Growing up in Dagbon" by Christine Oppong (Oppong, 1973) on the continuity and discontinuity in Dagomba traditional community is a cultural anthropological discourse and focuses on the different traditional culture spaces found in a village, the several structures and areas found in a traditional Dagomba village or town. If we compared the scholarly work done by musicological research into traditional music and dance in other parts of Ghana such as, Kwabena Nketia and Ampene among the Akan people, and Jones and Kofi Agawu among the Ewe of Southern Ghana, it is obvious that the traditional music and dance culture and

the urban musical cultures of the Dagomba of Northern Ghana is hardly studied by scholars.

“ Perhaps nowhere in West Africa has there ever been so powerful and peaceful an empire as that of the Dagomba. To a very large extent the great kingdom: has been overlooked by European writers (and scholars)” (Cardinall 1927: 109).

Jaqueline Djedje, also asserts that the Dagomba culture has been somewhat neglected in terms of documentary literature within Ghanaian society and that more research into the area is needed to draw a conclusive documentary work (DjeDje, 1973).

This study allowed me to investigate transformational processes of the traditional African Idiom of music making into the urban idiom of music making found in *Dagbon* with a focus on the impact of the digitization of music on the local informal music industry in Tamale. We saw how several problems occurred around copyright and piracy on music-dance that was in the public domain. Here we propose some pragmatic answers to this ongoing problem.

The dynamics of music making in *Dagbon* is the central focus of this research. Hybridization processes in African music can be found in the continuity and change between the idiom of traditional and the idiom of popular music cultures and in the intercultural dynamics and cultural identities. It is this rich mix of internal and external, old and new, secular and sacred, male and female that will contribute to the new creative artistic circuits. The cultural creative transformation processes and transitions of traditional music and dance into popular art form can be defined as “*cultural hybridity*”. Transformation processes from the traditional ‘*African Idiom*’ into the urban popular music idiom. *Hybrid identity, Pop identity, Neo tribes*. The hybrid identity is located within a liminal space of transition which is on the one hand bound on traditional African customs with the tolerance values of this traditional culture and the Afro – American and Western influent identities. The tolerance of the dominant culture and the demarche of the globalization lays at the basis of this new hybrid identity as an in-betweenness of two liminal zones the traditional Africa idiom and the urban contemporary idiom of music making. This liminal zone we call the “*Hiplife Zone*”.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study was to map, document, catalogue, archive and describe a part of the endangered traditional music and dance culture of the Dagomba people for further preservation. After all the documentation and archiving was limited to the traditional music and dance culture of Dagomba and compared with the con-

temporary music culture and traditional music and dance culture of the Dagomba and of the surrounding neighboring cultures. The aim was to document a part of the cultural heritage of Ghana and archive it for future generation. The musical life in the Sudan Savannah Belt is largely associated with rituals and it was not easy to find the authentic ritual dances within certain cult groups. Some of the rare traditional dances were here for the first time recorded on tape.

6 The dynamics of music making in Dagomba Society

Defining the African Idiom in music making

With the African idiom in music making on *Dagbon* musical culture, we mean the homogenous recognizable characteristics and forms which we could observe and record on tape at the local courts, and in the various villages, the cult music and dances of the *tindanas* and the urban popular music found in the city of Tamale. These musical phenomena were always presence during the music-dance performances and are repeatability returning, - in variation forms-, during performances and the field recordings. The various African indigenous characteristics and musical features that we could record and identify are the stylistic basis of a musical organization and culture in its supporting tradition. “The African Idiom” in music making in *Dagbon* is based on model of musical organization and is a common ground of how musicians and performers deal with musical parameters that are reflected in the music of *Dagbon* and which are also present in the music and dance of other surrounding musical cultures in the Northern Region of Ghana.

The model that we extract from the analysis of our field data in Northern Ghana does not make use of ethnical group’s tribalism and ethnicity, but refers to pre-colonial and postcolonial music/dance cultures in this area. In this approach, we no longer adopt the prevailing idea that ethno-linguistic anthropological classification of languages in the Northern parts of Ghana can be applied to the music and dance classifications and culture.

What we now recognizes as the African idiom in music making is essentially an aggregate of mutually related traditions which can be distinguished in certain particulars from the music of other geographical and cultural areas in the Sudan Savannah Belt of Africa. Some common features shared by the different musical traditions of African people have been broadly defined by musical scholars as Merriam, Nketia, Waterman, Chernoff, Agawu and others. Alan Merriam distinguishes four types of phenomena that are important to him in defining the African idiom in music. The functionality of African music in *Dagbon* communities is based a dynamic musical cultures and the aesthetic conceptualization of traditional African music and the structure of African rhythms. The African Idiom in Music, is an excellent article by Alan P. Merriam that discusses a common ground for African musical characteristics in Sub –

Saharan Africa. Merriam, A.P., The African Idiom in Music, in The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 75, No. 296, 1962, pp. 120 – 130.

According to Merriam:

- The first component in African music is the accompaniment of song with handclapping. Handclapping as an important accompanying musical instrument during songs and dances.
- The second component is the presence and the use of variety of drums in almost every African musical culture.
- The third component is the use and wide range of musical instruments, including the varied forms of membranophones, idiophones, chordophones and aerophones, is striking when compared with almost any musical cultures in the world.
- Fourth component is the use of musical instruments in the form of orchestral groups performance, as solo instrumental performance, and as accompaniment to song.

Out of our own research results⁸ we can state and add the following musical components to the African Idiom of music making. In the first component we can add the use of body percussion as an musical instrument during songs and dances.

- Fifth component: The lyrical use of proverbs in the song texts as a musical intercultural phenomenon.
- Sixth component: The use of tone language/ drum language in their instrumental and vocal music. Such as flute music.
- Seventh component is the strong hybrid character of traditional African music in its roots.
- Eight component: the use of call and responds techniques and the musical form and in the songs in particularly.

This study deals with the phenomenon cultural transformation processes and acculturation processes, in the traditional- and urban idiom of music making in *Dagbon*, and so far out of the data we can state that in that part of Africa the music-dance culture is highly hybrid in its origin.

The traditional idiom of music making at the courts in *Dagbon* belongs to the upper-class of the Dagomba aristocracy, and is represented by the *Ya Na* and his traditional

⁸ Defining the African Idiom in the traditional music-dance of *Dagbon*. Phyfferoen, D., Unpublished taxonomy of the traditional and urban music and dance in *Dagbon*, 2015.

court from several local chiefs and elders. In these cases, the historian singers can draw their materials from an wide range of the Dagomba oral historical song repertoire.

TABLE 2. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FOUND AT THE COURT IN YENDI 2001-2002.

Title of the court musician	Court musicians	Name of the instruments in <i>Dagbani</i>	Description of the instrument type
<i>Akarima</i>	<i>Akarima</i>	<i>Timpani</i>	Open goblet – shaped drums played in pairs.
		<i>Dawule</i>	Double bell.
<i>Namo Na</i>	<i>Lunsi</i>	<i>Lunga</i>	Closed double skinned hour-glass – shaped pressure drums.
		<i>Gungon</i>	Closed cylindrical -shaped drums with snare.
		<i>Chagla</i>	Small metal rattle attached to the upper hand.
<i>Yanba Na</i>	<i>Gonje</i>	<i>Gonje</i>	One – stringed fiddle with calabash resonator.
		<i>Gagle, (Tsibla)</i>	Gourd rattles. Small gourd.
<i>Kambon Naa</i>	<i>Kambonsi (waa)</i>	<i>Dala</i>	Open single skinned cylindrical shaped drums.
		<i>Dawule</i> <i>Dawule bla</i>	Double bell. Single bell.
<i>Beindeli lana</i>		<i>Binuli or binigu</i>	Gourd drums.
<i>Kikaa</i>	<i>Kikaa</i>	<i>Kikaa</i>	Transversal blown horn from wood with a thumb hole.
<i>Aligaita</i>	<i>Aligaita</i>	<i>Aligaita</i>	Double reed oboe with three finger holes.
<i>Baanga yu</i>	<i>Baanga</i>	<i>Baanga</i>	A general name for traditional singers.
<i>Yuu lana</i>	<i>Yuwa</i>	<i>Yuwa</i>	Notched flute with three finger holes.
<i>Kate lana</i>	<i>Kate, (kate waa)</i>	<i>Kate</i>	Obliquely blown stalk flute with one or two finger holes.
<i>Lungyini</i>	<i>Lungyini</i>	<i>Lungyini</i>	Whistle.
<i>Siyalim lana</i>	<i>Siyalim</i>	<i>Siyalim</i>	Hive rattle.

Functional classification of the court musicians and their musical instruments found at the court in Yendi during the period 2001 January – 2002 February.

According to the traditional Dagomba cultural customs, and its tolerance values towards the authenticity and the accuracy of musical performances, court performances of traditional oral culture at the Yendi court is strictly control by the elders inspired by their customs coming from the traditional conservative African idiom of music making. But, on the other hand, some of these traditional music performances, com-

ing from the different local villages , - that were performed during several field recording sessions -, are not so old as we inspected to be. Some of these so called 'traditional music' were invented on the spot, were, during some of these recording occasions, performed on demand of the local chiefs, and invented by the local singers/musicians on the recording spot. These songs are quite young. The African idiom of song structure is present, and is coming from the traditional area. The lyrical use of Dagomba proverbs is also present. But these proverbs are used in various creative forms. New local proverbs were created and added to the traditional repertoire, directly inspired and coming from the contemporary African idiom, the urban space, the hybrid electronically inspired Postcolonial/Postmodern African Idiom. Phenomena like song texts are quite dynamic and open for many malleable interpretations and influences and interactions borrowed from contemporary music styles. They are coming from the urban space, like Highlife music, and the Hiplife - Zone.

Defining the urban space: The Hiplife Zone in *Dagbon*

Tamale represents the urban space in contemporary *Dagbon* where the innovative creative and artistic minds of the young Dagomba musicians is present. It is the dominant cultural Centre, the inspiration- and the working ground for many young talented artists in the creation, the production, the mechanical and digital reproduction and distribution of new and old contemporary music styles and several theater and dance projects in the area. Tamale is a medium-sized West African cosmopolitan multicultural city located in the heart of the Savannah Belt in modern Ghana. According to the Bureau of Statistics in Tamale: The Tamale metropolitan Assembly is located at the Centre of the Northern Region. It lies between latitude 9.29° and 9.34° North and longitudes 00.36° and 00.57°. The city is located about 600 km from Accra and covers an area of 750 km². Historically, Tamale is a conglomerate of small villages which they call "*fong*" or suburbs in town. It is at the moment one of the largest and fastest growing and expanding conglomerate in Northern Ghana. Built on solid rock, makes it especially in the hot season the temperature in the city always warmer than the surrounding villages. It is the administrative and commercial Centre of the Northern Region in Ghana. As a commercial place, it functions as an economic driving force in the area for different „modern economic institutions“, described as the *haute finance*, and represented by several commercial banks. The theoretical framework of reciprocity, redistribution of goods and free trade is well described by Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformations* (Polanyi, 1944). The several banks around the Central Bank Area are forming a cultural clash (in contradiction) with the "traditional economic institutions" e.g. the informal markets, the self-regulated - and uncontrolled markets, small scale sales and trade as a form of redistribution of goods

Tamale is also the central gateway for international - and national transport systems to Burkina Faso, Togo, Nigeria and Niger, and the different major towns and villages in

the Northern Region. As a “Administrative Centre”, it is the hometown of the University of Developments Studies (UDS) and contains several institutions of learning, including „The Teaching Training College“, The Institute of Ghanaian Languages and The Institute of Cultural Studies.

The city has a combination of traditional and modern architecture and way of life styles. There is a traditional renaissance of “*the modern production and reproduction of the tradition*” and modernization and aspirations to modernity and modern life styles. The many businesses and economic activities of the formal markets includes commercial banks, telecommunication providers, small and medium sized shops, restaurants, commercial radio stations, transportation, internet cafes. The informal market consists of a huge variety of several stalls and street vendors in and around the central market place and the several bus stations as its main providers for distribution. Tamale has a mixed population of approximately 361000 people⁹.

Besides the dominant Dagomba ethnic group, there are several communities from migrated people in the city from within and outside Ghana. From the Southern parts of Ghana there is an Akan community with mainly settlements of Ashanti - and Bono people. Among other migrated people are settlements of Ewe-, Basari- and Kasena-people. From outside Ghana there are settlements from the Hausa people of Nigeria, the Mossi from Burkina Faso, the Zambarma of Niger and a community of Togolese people.

All these emigrated cultures have settled in a specific area in town, each with a traditional chief and a council of elders. The area occupied by the Hausa people is called by the Hausa name “*Zongo*” and is considered as one of the first foreigner settlements in Tamale. They are highly involved in the different economic activities of the city. Chef Zanjina (1648 - 1677) as Prince travelled to Hausa land to study the Koran and introduced Islam in *Dagbon*. After his return to *Dagbon*, he brought several aspects of the Hausa - court culture with them. He established the Hausa-musicians of the court in an area just outside the town in Yendi. These sites were crucibles of different African cultures. This area in town carry the name “*Zongo*”, which means neighbourhood.

Transformational processes in *Dagbon*

Our interest goes to the different forms of temporality in the lived music cultures in *Dagbon*, the reflection of the cultural past in the present lived musical cultures. Phenomenon as ‘*traditional and modernity*’ in urban popular music are investigated from a creative artistic point of view where the musicians and their performers occupy a central role and position. These cultural transformational processes of traditional

⁹ Tamale population census 2007, according to the GeoNames geographical database.

music-dance into popular urban art forms are here defined as “*cultural hybridity*”. So far we could extract three types of cultural transformation processes in *Dagbon*. In presenting our model, we will introduce three concepts of cultural transformation processes.

Local transformation processes in music

Local transformation processes are cultural transformations which take place in one musical culture. It is a mono cultural transformation from musical - and cultural components coming from the own traditional idiom of music making and transformed into a more contemporary urban idiom of music making. We could distinguish two types of local transformation processes in the music of *Dagbon*. With local transformational processes it is useful and important to see which changing processes occur from the traditional idiom of music making to urban idiom, but it is also interesting to see which musical components shows a certain continuity.

The first type of local transformations are elements coming from the traditional idiom of music making who are transformed and continue to exist once they are transformed into the contemporary urban idiom of music making. This type of transformation is the most used by the scaled musicians in the *Dagbon* tradition, who are usually linked by lineage to a musical clan like the *Namo Na* and the *Yamba Na*, are an traditional musical instrument like the *Jinjelin* our *Moglo*, who decided to produce contemporary music for the youth outside their traditional obligations as a member of the court musicians.

Among these transformations are the lyrical use of traditional Dagomba proverbs in the contemporary lyrics of the Hiplife songs. The use of proverbs is an old traditional custom of music making and derives from the traditional idiom, transformed into the new hybrid idiom of music making. The use of savannah syncopated rhythms in their music, the phraseology and construction musical phrases, the use of modal harmonies, the construction traditional melodies. The use of traditional musical instruments such as the *jinjelin*, a musical bow, the *gonje* or one string fiddle, the *lunga*, a closed double skinned hourglass - shaped pressure drums, the *dawule* our double bell, are elements that continue to exist in the new idiom of music making and derives directly of the traditional idiom transformed into the urban idiom of music making. These transformations are here described as the third space or the common ground where the musicians are bound to by the customs and the expectations of the people to sell their music.

Simdi Nyaanga
The aftermath of love

Fusieni Tin

The musical score is for the song 'Simdi Nyaanga' by Fusieni Tin. It features four staves: Lead vocals, Backing vocals, Jinjelin, and Cowbell. The lead vocals part includes lyrics: 'A - ba sim-di nyaan - ga. A-ba sim-di nyaan - ga. Mi-ba ye sim-di nyaan - ga. A-ba sim-di nyaan - ga -'. The score is divided into six numbered sections (1-6) with brackets indicating specific rhythmic patterns. Section 1 is in the lead vocals, while sections 2, 4, and 6 are in the jinjelin accompaniment. Section 3 is in the cowbell part.

Three photographs are included below the score. The first shows a group of people in traditional attire dancing in an outdoor setting. The second shows a group of musicians sitting and playing instruments. The third shows a person in traditional attire dancing in an outdoor setting.

Photo 13. *Jinjelin* transcription of the song *Simdi Nyaanga*, Tali 2004.

Section 1 and 5 are showing the Savannah syncopated rhythms in the lead vocals. Section 2, 4 and 6 shows the syncopated rhythms in the *jinjelin* accompaniment. Section 3 shows the syncopated rhythms in the played timeline of the *dawule*, a single bell.

Regional transformation processes in music

Under regional cultural transformation processes in *Dagbon*, we understand transformation processes from cultural elements coming from other African musical cultures. Among regional cultural transformations we bring the following criteria under: transformations of cultural elements such as the use of polyrhythm, syncopated rhythms, modal structures, text phraseology, call and responds, textures and musical forms, the use of regional musical instruments and timbres, musical stylistic features such as the use of timeline patters in dance movements, the use of choreography coming from the traditional idiom of music making. These are elements coming from other African cultures and which in some way are mixed and transformed with elements coming from the own music - and dance culture, in our case, the music and dance of *Dagbon*. Among regional transformations we could distinguish two types of transformations.

The first type of cultural elements borrowed from other traditional cultures and mixed with elements from the own culture. Among these transformations are the *kata and kika* music and dance of Ashanti land and the *Aligaita* music of Hausa land . Other regional transformations are in the area of different African dances like the *Takai* dance, which is a sword dance and originates from Mande Land but also exist in a form of variation among the Koulango in Ivorycoast. The *Kambosi* dance, *Simpa* dance.

The second type of regional transformations are taken place in the urban space, the so called “Hiplife Zone” and are urban cultural transformation. These are cultural elements coming from other African contemporary musical cultures and mixed with cultural elements coming from the own musical culture. Among these cultural transformations are influences of highlife music off the Akan, Hiplife music from the southern parts of Ghana and influences of *Juju* music of Nigeria, Nigerian film music Nollywood, Rumba - and Soukous music of Congo and Palmwine inspired guitar music from the Akan.

Global transformation processes in music

Global transformation processes in music are components coming from foreign musical cultures which are not indigenous to the African continent. Among these musical cultural are transformation coming from the Afro – American space, influences as Jazz, hip-hop, Jamaican reggae and rap music, Bollywoodish influences and film music, Western inspired harmonization’s choral and gospel music.

Global transformational processes that we could observe in city of Tamale, was the strong presence of Indian music-dance and especially Bollywoodish film music. In Tamale, there are several artists coming from the local theatre "*Simli Drama Group*", and the local film industry who landed in the informal music industry. Among these artistes is worthy to mention the central figure of Ahmed Adam and Adisha Shaakira but Subash. Ahmed Adam is the central figure of the Simli Drama Group a local theatre company in recent years with the introduction of DVD and VCD also does low budget local film productions. The local theatre productions were later transformed into local films, which are more attractive for his public, Ahmet Adam decided to provide certain passages of these films with music he composed and recorded. In many cases, he told me the plot of the film is directly taken from a Bollywood story that he had transformed into an everyday Dagomba context and *Dagbon* environment. The story is usually an Indian story which takes place in the city of Tamale and the surrounding local villages.

Most people knew the Indian version of television and with the introduction of the Dagomba version in the local Dagbani – language they are now able to better understand the whole plot. During the period 2001 - 2010 there was a predilection for this Bollywoodish film genre in Tamale. Adam Ahmed composed the music for his films which was also inspired by Indian music remixed with Gospel and church music and contemporary High Life Music from the southern parts of Ghana and elements borrowed from his own Dagomba traditional music and dance culture. Later he decided to make several separate soundtracks that resulted in different local hits. The song *Daliri* on the Shaakira Album Vol. II was recorded in Kumasi in the Jehovah *Nissi* Digital Recordings Studios by Kojo Sarpong and released, promoted and distributed

by I.K. Records, Tamale a local photo and music store in 2004 and hit like a bomb. During the period 2004, more than 60.000 copies of this album were sold in the informal music markets in and around Tamale. This emergence of a local hit like *Daliri* was in fact a new phenomenon and the introduction of a hit in the area. This economic and cultural urban transformation of a Western economical phenomenon coming from a formal music industry “The urban idiom” transformed into the local informal music industry of Tamale “the Hiplife Zone”.

Cultural hybridism

A cultural transformation process implies a change in cultural production and expressive forms of art, including music and dance, of a group of people. A culture can thereby be defined as a system of symbols, beliefs, concept of time, feelings, language, values, norms, labour and rules; in short it is a way of organising live of a particular group of people. Inside a culture, the formation of an individual is mostly done during the early childhood years by the parents and family, and later on by the neighbourhood, the street, friends, the youth association, job and labour, the residential community where a person grows up. Accordingly, growing¹⁰ up in the *Dagbon* society, a rural space, with traditional institutions and an agricultural way of living, will be rather different than growing up in a cosmopolitan urbanised space like the city of Accra, or New York. Nevertheless, individuals who are culturally formed in this society can still function and flourish in a society whose cultural environment is rapidly changing. Individuals are adaptive to other individuals that have been culturally formed in different ways, perhaps in another culture, or in a transformed culture. Therefore, an urban place that evolved from the traditional rural place would be a place where individuals have to adapt their traditional cultural codes and habits to the new cultural codes and habits. The different cultural idioms and modes of transition, transformation processes from the “African Idiom” to a more Afro-American and Western inspired idiom were investigated. We looked at the various cultural spheres and networks of the dominant Dagomba culture and the interaction between traditional established circuits and new artistic creative circuits in Tamale.

Dagbon is a good example of a place that is in full expansion and involved in a large transition of cultural transformation. The basic transformation is that from an earlier agrarian society where the extended families unit was used as the basis model, to an Afro American - Western urbanized nucleus society model. The different cultural transformation processes that are currently going on are related to globalization, urbanization, and digitalization of information. This creates new expansions, challenges

¹⁰ Oppong, Ch., Growing up in Dagbon. Ghana Publishing Corporation, Accra – Tema, Ghana 2013.

and dynamics within these “New Hidden Cities”¹¹, like Tamale in the Northern Region, or Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The younger generations of citizens prefer a Western society nucleus model over the traditional African model of the extended family unit; or better stated: the new model is a reflection of the Western family nucleus model, in practice there are all kinds of variation within the nucleus. In these new environments, an individual’s behaviour will be partly determined by the cultural conditioning that took place in his youth. However, human beings have abilities to deviate from this and respond in ways that are new, creative, destructive or unexpected. The essence here is that culture is a dynamic learned system that is in a constant state of resonance and flux.

On the one hand we also looked at the phenomenon like liminal space/subaltern position of some of the musicians and the performers within the dominant cultural sphere of the Dagomba community and the consciousness this hybrid identity has among its performers and audience. This new urban music scene is not standing alone but is influenced by various interactions of the surrounding traditional and modern music cultures. We observed carefully how these transformation processes took place and how they established a new urban music scene linked with a “*pop identity*”. This new “*hybrid identity*” is linked with the different music styles found in the city, and can be considered as subcultures and could be described as “*Neo tribes*”. which is in a mode of transition, a liminal space and can be described as an emerging identity. This hybrid identity is located within a liminal space of transition which is on the one hand bound on traditional Dagomba customs within the tolerance values of this traditional Dagomba culture and Afro-American Western influents identity. The tolerance of the dominant Dagomba culture and the demarche of the globalization discourse lies at the basis of this new hybrid identity as an in-betweenness of two liminal zones, the traditional - and the postmodern identity.

On the other hand we looked at transformation processes and transitions of traditional music and dance cultures and its influences on the urban music scene within the urban popular music scene in Tamale. The demarche of cultural hybridism and its globalization discourse in Tamale is linked to the young dynamic music business and its artists. It is interesting to note that the dichotomies like “*traditional and modernity*” and “*continuity and change*” in this part of Africa has its own creative interpretation. The reasons for the title of the research “The dynamics of music making in Dagomba society” we have chosen, might imply a certain ambiguity and contradiction carrying within. The definition of folk music and traditional music by the International Folk Music Council seems here most useful:

¹¹ “Hidden Cities” is a symbolic term borrowed from the urban pop cultures to identify the demarche of urban transformation processes in this part of Africa.

“Music of the common people that is not learned from printed music but is transmitted from person to person due listening”.

Traditional music has also three other distinctive factors:

Continuity: Many versions over a long period of time which connects the present with the past.

Variation: To change the melody or the words, deliberately or forgetfulness as a result of the creative impulse of the individual or group.

Selection: The question of whether or not the song is included in the circle which goes around. The selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.

The term “traditional culture” means for us a hybrid dynamic culture characterized by a sequence of a constant flow of small transformational processes, continuity and change within a tolerance value of that culture and a continuous transformation of tradition values, and maintained by the current generation who accepted it as a cultural standard within the current cultural dynamics of that musical culture. Despite the fact that musical traditions are influenced by other musical traditions, we could notice that the various Ghanaian music cultures are exposed to a continuous flow of various small cultural changing processes. These cultural changing processes are the result of contact and exchange with neighboring musical cultures, the economic exchange of goods and the exchange of social and moral values. All these musical cultures had the above mentioned three phenomena in common: continuity, variation, and the selection and recognition of the songs in the community. These changing processes within a dynamic culture like the Dagomba of Northern – Ghana can be associated with strict standards, norms and values, and are accepted as standard habits within the liminal zone of cultural hybridism. From this point of view, a traditional music - and dance culture is an immaterial cultural heritage of the local people, who transfers their historical records by means of a medium that we could describe as: " the oral tradition", and not by a written record or document. It makes them exposed to constant little changes and small variations, and personal interpretations of the different experts of historical reproduction of oral performing arts within the traditional cultural sphere, which in the long term can cause some serious problems like the disappearing of the authenticity of the song text and lyrical use of Dagomba proverbs. This could damage the credibility and the historical, educational and moral messages of the historical songs.

The personal musical taste and the technical and aesthetic quality of the performer may and could affect the interpretation and transmission of the context of this oral tradition. The tolerance boundaries allowed by the elders towards the traditional performer of the oral tradition, varies from people to people. A very interesting area of

research is, when these tolerance boundaries of the oral cultural sphere are linked to specific internal reflections and attitudes towards taboos and prejudices. Documentation of such an oral tradition through active participated fieldwork in the area remains of course limited to a snapshot in time. It is a short segmentation in the time of that particular dynamic musical culture, which is as complete as possible with the aid of the local informants and was described and recorded for further comparative analysis. When the adaptation of the oral tradition and the process of reproduction lays within the tolerance value of changes, we can speak of a tradition musical culture. When the reproduction of the oral tradition falls outside the tolerance values of that musical culture, one can speak of an innovative culture or, new interpretations and adaptations of new cultural elements and we could describe that culture as the phenomenon of cultural hybridism.

In *Dagbon* there are within the Dagomba – traditional council of musical culture two societies, one led by the hand of the *Naamo Na*, the chief of the *lunsi* or traditional drummers, and by the hand of the *Yamba Na*, the chief of *gonje*, the traditional fiddlers. Each group of these traditional court musicians is responsible for the recording of the traditional music repertoire, its reproduction and the further technical and aesthetical education of it.

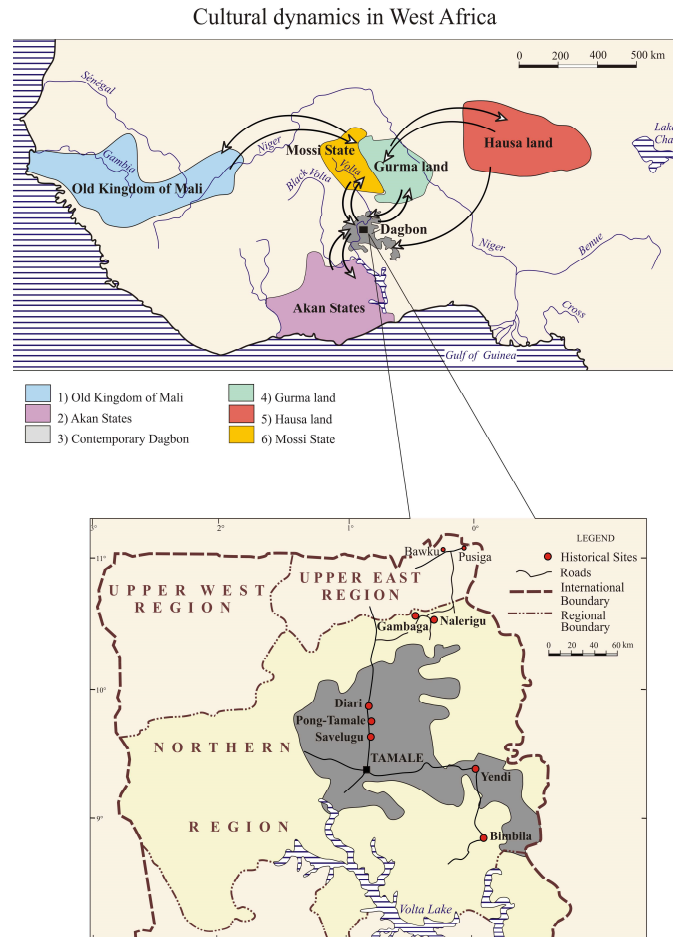
These traditional performing groups and traditional way of education is strictly controlled by a council of elders at the traditional palace and court in Yendi. Extracting the data and metadata from a constantly changing oral culture is tendentious and determined for its time of recording. It is a segmentation taken from that traditional oral culture that is incomplete in the life cycle of such an agricultural society. Since most of traditional music cultures in Ghana where we carried out field research know a cyclic time and acknowledge that bound to annual festivals which they associated with rites de passage and annual ceremonies that can be described as traditional music and dance cultures in the true sense of the word.

The research results has shown that these dynamic cultures of Northern - Ghana are constantly in interaction, culturally and economically, including elements borrowed from the Akan of Southern and Central Ghana, the Hausa people of Nigeria and the Mossi people of Burkina Faso. This leads to hybridization and creolisation processes and the adaptation of a particular new cultural phenomenon and the exchange of religious facets, transmitted to the traditional context as it is the case of the Dagomba and Mamprusi. On the one side of the cultural space, lays the different cultures spheres that are changing rather slowly through time. These gradual small changes are taking place within a certain pattern, a cultural pattern, imposed by the tradition elders and strictly maintained and controlled by a traditional council of religious and

cultural taboos and enforced with sanctions within the traditional Dagomba culture sphere.

Among the Dagomba, we can find several elements borrowed from the 'African Traditional Religion' and practiced in the Islam. Moreover, the creation of the "Zongo's" in the suburbs, the urbanized villages and the local towns created an adaptation of Islamic elements, and brought as a result of years of cultural and economic interactions and exchange a phenomenon in existing that we can find in almost every Ghanaian city as "Zongo", a palace for foreigners, which has a direct relation with the trade and economic activities with the Hausa - culture of Nigeria. Chief Zanjina (1648 - 1677) as Prince travelled to Hausa land to study the Koran and introduced Islam in *Dagbon*. After his return to *Dagbon*, he brought several aspects of the Hausa - court culture with him including musical instruments such as the *lunga*, the hour-glass shaped double skinned closed drums and the *gonje* a one string fiddle and the *aligaita*, a double reed oboe.

The term "tradition" is a well and complex phenomenon within the contextual study of musical cultures in Africa, especially in a dynamic culture as the Dagomba music and dance culture, which is in interaction with several surrounding neighboring musical cultures.



Map 4. Map showing the study area and the various cultural dynamics in Northern Ghana.

Hybridity of the music - dance in *Dagbon*

The Northern Region of Ghana and *Dagbon* in particular contains a wealth of both traditional - and urban music cultures. These different musical forms of expression, take place in *spaces* that are territorially bound and controlled by the elders and local chiefs, but not totally follows the classification of the African ethnology and linguistic anthropology but follows an indigenous music related classification of cultural and acoustical phenomena such as movement, rhythmical components, timbre, roughness of the sound and the dynamics of music – making. According to the research time we have spent in *Dagbon*, we could observe that the dynamic processes involved of doing extensive comparative field research in the area, that at that moment, the lived traditional music and dance culture in *Dagbon* is very dynamic and is a very good

example of how a traditional music culture in its origin is hybrid. This traditional music culture is not pure, but mixed with several cultural elements borrowed from other surrounding musical cultures found in the area such as the Mamprusi, Nanumba, Frafra, Wala and Gonja music. Akan inspired music such as Ashanti court music coming from the *Ashantehene*, the traditional king of the Ashanti people at the court in Kumasi and other parts of Southern Ghana. Even cultural influences, just like the *gonje* music repertoire, inspired and carefully copied and orally preserved by historian court musicians, coming from Hausa land and Gurma land.

On the one hand, some of these so called traditional music and dances, performed at the different Dagomba courts are quite authentic and precisely traceable to the different periods of the reign of passed Dagomba kings and other Kings of Dagbon, (Stanlyland, 1975), and could be directly derived from an extensive oral historical song repertoire, which is borrowed from their traditional African idiom.

Out of this research comes that the highly hybrid character of the traditional music and dance culture found among the Dagomba people, and the urban popular music cultures in the Dagbon area, are not separable from each other, but form a symbiosis. They complement one another, as it were, not only in socio - cultural terms, but especially on moral and facing the dynamics of the local village politics from each Dagomba community. Tamale is and represents the urban space in contemporary *Dagbon*. It is, at the moment, the place where the innovative creative and artistic minds of the young Dagomba musicians is. It forms by itself the dominant cultural Centre and the inspiration ground, and the working ground of many young talented artists for the creation, the production, the mechanical and digital reproduction and distribution of new and old contemporary music styles and several dance projects in the area. In this study we propose a research model that is not ethnically tied to a linguistic - and tribal classification of the music and dance found in the Northern Region of Ghana. The ethno-linguistic model and framework in classifying languages and ethnicities in Africa, derives from both linguistic anthropology and the ethnology. That paradigm is used by the ethnomusicology as self-evident and applied by most of the musicologists in Africa.

We approach the ethno - linguistic model, which is referenced as 'The Tervuren model' when it comes to Bantu languages, as a "mental colonial paradigm". The ethno - linguistic model offers little place for nuances. The model takes neither the people, the musicians and its various music genres and dance into account. Therefore, we questioning its dominant position, because of its colonial undertone. We propose a model that is not tied up to an ethnological model of the linguistic anthropology. That would reduce the study of the traditional music and dancing in the area. Instead, we provide a musicological model that is not ethnically related and that starts from the

auditory material derived from field work, the music and dance itself, the tone complex and the performances of this music and dance occupies a central place. Here we strongly favor a model that is based as a cultural paradigm, 'cultural resonance' linked to the musical resonance (timbre and sound) of music - making, linked to the performance practice, the lived music produced by a music culture. The dynamic processes that occur between the musicians, listeners and participants - the performance practice - are as important as the phenomenon of music itself in that part of the Africa.

The theoretical framework, with its postcolonial line of approach has been established gradually in the course of the study. The design of the theoretical geographic - acoustic framework was a gradually process that only at the end of the study has been established in its true shape, due to the response of several colleagues in the field. To create our own workable research vision on music research in Sub - Saharan Africa, was quite a complex and slow process of thinking and consulting with international colleagues and asked from me many years of devotion to the study. The method used in analyzing the audiovisual recording and the transcription of lyrics was a challenge and was a gradual process.

Africa is a vast geographical continent, which houses a great diversity on musical cultures. Northern Ghana which lies in Sub - Saharan Africa is part of this dynamic continent and knows a variety of forms of cultural expression such as the traditional music and dance found in *Dagbon*. Several of these expressive forms of music and dance in *Dagbon*, are part of intercultural dynamics and issues concerning chieftaincy conflict, the impact of the socio - economic space and context in which the artists are in, and certainly the political winds blows often has a great impact on the phenomenon of music and its artists which obviously are linked by extended families clans and therefore also linked to political groupings and parties.

Therefore music features as an expressive art and communication tool during periods of tension and conflict. Chieftaincy, ethnicity, tribalism and religion are often the reason for intercultural conflict in *Dagbon*. Therefore drumming and the lyrical use of proverbs became a taboo in the whole *Dagbon* area. *Dagbon* is part of a continent that is in full expansion and involved in a large transition, going from an earlier agrarian society - where the extended families unit was used as a basis model - moving towards an Afro American - Western urbanized nucleus society model. The different urbanization processes linked to the globalization create new expansions, challenges and dynamics within this 'New Hidden Cities' like *Tamale* for the Northern Region and *Bolgatanga* of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Here the younger generation prefers a previous Western society nucleus model over the traditional African model with respect to the extended family unit.

This Western model of society is a reflection of the Western family nucleus model with all kinds of variation within the nucleus. The contemporary African family model in *Dagbon*, and in particular *Tamale*, has left to a large extent the traditional

African idiom of the extended family units, and has given space and route to the Western nucleus model of living. The younger educated generation, with a profession and a job, prefers to reside in the urban areas like Tamale, where they enjoy greater freedom and privacy, above the social security of the traditional extended family unit in *Dagbon*. Nevertheless, when they migrate into the city, they remain to a large extent connected with the extended family clans this by, the hands of different forms of multimedia communication and the introduction of the various mobile communication means.

Nevertheless, we could observe that these transformation processes from the traditional culture still remains well anchored within their own traditional African idiom. The music they listen too, the food they eat, the way they dress. In specific cases, these social processes of change in the family structure can cause tensions, and today's younger generation tends to use the nucleus model more than the traditional model.

This model creates in contemporary society more freedom, but can also provide different social cultural and economic tensions within the different generations. These rapid change that African cultures are currently undergoing is in second gear. For this reasons, it is strongly recommended that in the study of such rapid changing societies the researcher dares to question the current research methods in his field. In some cases, such as collecting and transcribing interviews, writing out lyrics, suffice and comply the traditional methods and techniques from the anthropology.

In other cases are the traditional methods and techniques of conduct research in music not sufficient and even strongly discouraged. In fact some of the standard methods and techniques used by ethnologists and linguists, cannot be copied and applied for musical cultures studies according to the ethnology and the linguistically anthropology for this music studies in Northern Ghana. Classifying the different musical cultures that we studied in Northern Ghana using the linguistic model could result in a threat to the study stuck in a mental colonial past. creating a incorrect and simplistic thesis could be posted on this relatively homogenous music region that we describe as an acoustical phenomenon: "The Sahelian factor in the music and dance of Northern Ghana". Daring to question and where necessary to create and apply new research methods and techniques here is strongly recommended. This must be examined and done in dialogue with the African colleagues in place to monitor to reality of these new methods. Methods and techniques that have strong relevance to the music to investigate phenomenon. Music as a cultural phenomenon is a rapidly changing human form of expression.

Out of the research we can state that the music and dance found in *Dagbon* is a hybrid expressive art form, and is highly influenced by the various surrounding musical cultures found in the Northern Region of Ghana and beyond. These different cultural elements borrowed from the African Idiom of music making, such as music instruments as the *timpana* , a pair of royal talking drums and the *kate* a straight blown

ducked flute made of a *Sorghum*¹² stalk and has one finger hole coming from the Ashanti land, the *gonje*, a one string fiddle coming from Gurma land and Hausa land, the *lunga*, a closed double skinned talking drums and the *aligaiti*, a double reed oboe coming from Hausa land, with their musical repertoire of songs and dances are not only transformed into traditional forms of musical hybridism, but are also transformed and mixed with various cultural elements borrowed from the surrounding rich musical cultures of the Northern Region and beyond, into a contemporary urban popular idiom of music production and reproduction in *Dagbon* and in particularly the reproduction and sampled digital Hiplife music of the youth and dynamic urbanized local popular informal self – regulated music market of Tamale.

Defining The Sahelian factor in the music and dance in Northern Ghana

The meaning of “The Sahelian Factor in Northern Ghana” is two folded. First of all we use this term to make a distinction between the Southern urban popular music styles of the Akan and the Ewe community in Ghana and the Northern popular music. Secondly we use the term Sahelian factor to link the Northern parts of Ghana beyond Ghanaian boundaries to other Sahelian and Savannah – belt music traditions music cultures from Mali, Gambia, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Niger and the urban music cultures in this part of Africa.

7 African art music

In Africa today, there is a significant number of composers, trained in universities and conservatories, both at home and abroad, writing works which are conceived along the lines of European music but which often employ a considerable degree of African musical element. One of these composers is Kwabena Nketia, a Ghanaian composer who helped creating a traditional Ghanaian Art Music repertoire through a fusion and transformation of European, Afro - American and African elements. Although a considerable amount of research had been carried out on traditional African Music, contemporary music idiom in Africa has received little attention by scholars. In recent times scholars began to accept the fact that, while the preservations and documentation of traditional forms are a valuable research project, new modern musical phenomena are also worthy of research and attention, such as African Art Music. The appearance of African hybrid musical idioms in Ghana should not be seen as a new phenomenon as change had entered through internal processes to the influence of foreign culture have always affected and influenced Ghanaian music. Music is an imported aspect of a people’s culture and since culture is dynamic, it can be assumed

¹² The millet stalk that is used in making the *kate* flute comes from the plant: *Sorghum vulgare*.

that Ghanaian traditional music as we know it today is different from what it was hundred years ago. One of the most important external influences on Ghanaian traditional music came as a result of the contact between Islamic culture in the 18th century and Ghanaian culture:

The impact of Islamic and Arabic culture had a far reaching influence on the music of the Savannah belt of West Africa. This had led to the rise of an Islamic ruling caste and the formation of the Islamic states. Such states were formed by leaders who had embraced Islam and who felt committed to wage holy war in order to subjugate the indigenous population under the political rule of Islam. The potentates of such states adopted among other things some Arabic musical instruments, particularly aerophones and drums, and features vocal techniques, identified with Islamic cantillation, such as ornamentation¹³.

Muslims began arriving in Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti in modern Ghana, in the 18th century. These Muslims came from further north, from the land of the Gonja, Mamprussi, Dagomba and from centers in the upper and middle Niger Region and even from North Africa. Some of these states, became tributaries of the Ashanti as a result of Ashanti expansion northwards during the reign of Opoku Ware (1717 – 1750) the *Asantehene*. The Muslims who travelled south from these states and settled in Kumasi came to impose their own commercial - political and cultural interests and those of their states.

8 Conclusion

The Northern Region of Ghana and *Dagbon* in particular contains a wealth of both traditional - and urban music cultures. These different musical forms of expression, take place in a spaces that territorially bound and controlled by the elders and local chiefs, but not totally follows the classification of the African ethnology and linguistic anthropology but follows an indigenous music related classification of cultural and acoustical phenomena such as movement, rhythmical components, timbre, roughness of the sound and the dynamics of music – making. According to the research time we have spent in *Dagbon*, we could observe that the dynamic processes involved of making music, are changing and transforming from the traditional African idiom of music making into more western inspired idioms of music making. The lived traditional music and dance culture in *Dagbon* is very dynamic and is a very good example of how a traditional music culture is in its origin a hybrid musical culture. This tradi-

¹³ Kwabena Nketia, *The Music of Africa*, pp. 9 – 10, London; 1979.

tional music culture is not pure, but mixed with several cultural elements borrowed from other surrounding musical cultures found in the area such as the Mamprusi, Nanumba, Frafra, Wala and Gonja music. Akan inspired music such as Ashanti court music coming from the *Ashantehene* court in Kumasi and other parts of Southern Ghana. Even cultural influences, just like the *gonje* music repertoire, inspired and carefully copied and orally preserved by historian court musicians, coming from Hausa land and Gurma land. We have taken a holistic approach in documenting the performance culture of *Dagbon*. Instead of focusing on one tradition (e.g. fiddling or drumming), we have attempted to document almost the entirely traditional music and dance culture. In so doing, we provided useful material for comparative analysis. With this field materials, we are able to discern some of the features that may be unique to *Dagbon*: what is common and what is different in the performance culture, what types of instruments and movements are used in specific contexts. We have documented many of the performance traditions in *Dagbon*. Although some of the traditions have had been discussed or presented in other publications, we provided both visual and audio materials, which other researchers have not done. We conducted music and dance research throughout *Dagbon*, in the major administrative and urban areas as well as in small towns and villages. We have collected material in both eastern and western *Dagbon*. This forms an excellent cross-section of the music and dance culture found in *Dagbon*. We documented both the secular, the spiritual, the indigenous religions (i.e. the musical practices of the earth priests) and contemporary urban popular music and dance of the Dagomba. We made an effort to include both female and male traditions, which again speaks to the holistic approach that we adopted. We collected the song texts with translations, which is important to the younger generations. We collected materials on groups that have had close interactions with the Dagomba for example, the Mamprusi, the Akan, the Efutu, Frafra and the Bimoba people. While history is important in *Dagbon*, there are different versions of history. We include a history of the traditional music and dance culture. We made an attempt to rethink and redefine the African idiom of music making in *Dagbon* and looked after a suitable definition for the Sahelian Factor in the music and dance of the Northern parts of Ghana. We made an attempt to define the African idiom in the music and dance found in *Dagbon* and made an emphasis on the creation of African Art Music.

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