

**“THE ROAD IS BLOCKED”: SYMBOLISMS OF SOUND AND SILENCE IN GA
HOMOWO- A TESHIE PERSPECTIVE**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that except for references to works, which I have duly cited, this dissertation is my original research, and that it has neither in part nor in whole been previously presented for another degree elsewhere.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother (Mary Abam Adjeley Adjei) and my uncle (Thompson Nii Tawiah Kamoah) for their diverse contributions toward my education.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the symbolisms of sound and silence in a ritual code of silence in the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival as commemorated by the Ga people of Teshie. The dissertation further explores the ritual code's impact on the festival's traditional musical performance and how together, they renew the social-political and religious lives of the Teshie community. The Ga ritual code of silence, has been (and continues to be) described as 'ban on drumming and noise-making', and a period of quietude for Ga deities. From my ethnographic research findings, it is evident that the ritual code is not merely a ban on drumming and noise-making or a period of quietude for Ga deities. Rather, it is a frame within which the Ga society inspects itself based on Ga notion of sound, silence, and noise. In Teshie, for instance, traditional musical performances (called *Kpashimɔ*) that occur during the observance of the ritual code are perceived as constituting silence. In this research, I argue that a study of the symbolic meanings of sound and silence in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival can impact our understanding of how and why the ritual code of silence is the required frame needed for the inspection of the community during the celebration of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.

This dissertation employs the Trichotomy II of Peircean semiotics to analyse the religious ceremony (that institutes the ritual code of silence) and song texts of some *Kpashimɔ* songs. The intent is to interpret the ceremony from the community's perspective and to further demonstrate how the community inspects itself through traditional musical performances believed to constitute silence. Edward Cone's theory of silence as frame for music is the second theory this dissertation has adapted. It is aimed at demonstrating how the ritual code of silence uses traditional musical performances to frame the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE ISSUE

This dissertation explores the symbolisms of sound and silence in a ritual code of silence in the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival as commemorated by the Ga people of Teshie¹. The dissertation further explores the ritual code's impact on the festival's musical performance and how together, they renew the socio-political and religious lives of the Teshie community. According to Herbert Cole, a festival is the “social, political, and ritual apotheosis of community life in a year” (cited in Harding, 2002, p. 339). Festivals, by themselves, bring closure to one ritual year, with all its failings and successes, and usher in a new one (Nii-Dortey, 2012).

According to Victor Turner (1979), a society inspects itself by setting up “a frame within which images and symbols of what has been sectioned off can be scrutinized, assessed, and, if necessary, remodelled and rearranged” (p. 468). Turner further argues that this frame religiously separates the sacred from the secular i.e. “what is inside the frame is often called the “sacred,” what is outside, the “profane,” “secular,”” (ibid). I argue that, in the case of the Teshie community, the ritual code of silence (referred to as *Gbemlilaa*) is the required frame that together with the ritual that marks the lifting of the code (referred to as *Gbemlilaa gblemɔ*), borders the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Its emphasis on silence highlights the Ga notion of sound, silence, and noise and how together, they make it possible for the community to assess itself through *Kpashimɔ* musical performances during the festive season². Apart from being the religious ritual that frames the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival,

¹ The ritual code of silence is popularly described as ‘a ban on drumming and noise-making/funerary rites’.

² *Kpashimɔ* is the current term for a musical style called *Kpasɔɔkpa* that emerged from *Amlakuiakpa*- a ritual music of the *Lakpa* deity. *Kpasɔɔkpa* is a type of music that comments on the community and its members' behaviour through music. The style of performance, the stylistic stamping of the feet, is what is described as *Kpashimɔ*.

Gbemlilaa also serves as a tool for the renewal of the socio-political and religious lives of the Teshie community.

1.2 BACKGROUND

During the period between May and September every year, the six Ga towns of Accra (namely Ga Mashie, Osu, La, Teshie, Nungua, and Tema) individually celebrate the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. In commemorating the festival, a ritual code of silence generally described as ‘ban on drumming and noise-making’ is enforced on certain areas of the communities. This ritual code of silence is not peculiar to the Ga in that, silence has a significant place in world religions and societies through various events that are either sacred or secular (Kenny, 2011). In Ghana for instance, the ritual code of silence is also observed among some ethnic groups³.

While some Ga towns like Teshie, Nungua, and La refer to it as *Gbemlilaa* (literally, road blocking) others like Ga Mashie, Tema, and Osu refer to it as *Ɔmaadumɔ* (literally- Sowing of millet). According to A. Narh-Hargoe, a PhD candidate at University of Cape Coast, the Dangme communities of Gbugbla and Ningo (two of Ga closest neighbours) for instance refer to the ritual code of silence as *Tekɔmɔ* (literally- the picking of stone) and *Tsoshifɔmi* (literally, putting down the tree) (personal communication, November 15, 2016). These various names of the ritual code of silence, as stated above, are metaphorical. They highlight the ritual’s connection with the religious, socio-political, and historical lives of the communities that observe it.

Because the observance of the ritual code of silence marks a period of communion between Ga communities and their deities and ancestors, issues of conflicts and violence

³ It is, for instance, practiced among the *Oguaa (Fetu Afahye)* and *Akuapem (Odwira)* people of Ghana’s Central region and Eastern region respectively. A. Awedobah and S. Ntewusu, professors at University of Ghana, stated that the Nawuri of Ghana’s Northern region also observe a similar ritual during their Guinea corn festival (personal conversation, October 28, 2016).

were hardly associated with it in the past. In recent times however, the Ga ritual code of silence is perceived as a ritual that stimulates conflicts. In the past, the ritual code of silence only affected the immediate physical ritual space. Also, scouts of Ga religious adherents sent to ensure the observance of the ritual code of silence were told where to go and where not to go. Presently, Ga communities have extended the observance of the ritual code of silence to their entire geographical area. They have additionally accorded the ritual an unusual level of strict observance. The scouts also overstep their designated boundaries and this has resulted in several violent clashes and conflicts between Pentecostal churches who do not adhere to the Ga traditional religious beliefs and the scouts.

In his article “Ethnicity, Religion, And Conflict in Ghana: The Roots of Ga Nativism”, Richard Asante (2012) argues that the ritual code of silence has become an avenue the Ga people use to express a deeply rooted feeling of marginalization in their own land (p. 85). The belief is that, the Ga have nurtured deep-seated grudges against non-Ga who seem to have overpopulated the Ga region (ibid). Though this may be valid, what Asante might be missing is that, some of the churches involved in these conflicts are Ga-led and their memberships consist of Ga as well. Like the scouts of Ga traditional religious adherents, some non-Ga indigenes have also taken advantage of the situation to settle scores with so-called ‘noisy’ churches and individuals. These non-Ga do this, mainly, to extort money from the churches and individuals. According to A. Tsetse, an assistant lecturer of music at the Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon, what aids this act of festive pillaging by non-Ga is their long stay and constant interactions with Ga indigenes in Accra.

Nevertheless, what some non-Ga, journalists, and media houses have not fully realised is that intra- and inter- family conflicts also do arise during the observance of the Ga ritual code of silence. Often, the Ga ritual code of silence and the rituals associated with it only serve as the immediate cause of the conflicts. There are always underlying simmering

chieftaincy disputes (throughout the whole year) that often serve as the remote causes of such conflicts.

Like Asante, Marleen De Witte also attributes the conflicts between Ga traditional religious adherents and Pentecostal churches to a spiritual struggle over the unseen as well as “affective powers” that are felt to be present in Accra (De Witte, 2008, p. 690). Although these arguments are relevant, it will be deceptive to attribute the whole essence of the ritual code of silence to a “feeling of marginalization”, “nurtured grievances”, or “spiritual struggle” over the unseen. These assertions reduce the significance of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, a festival that is precisely a “reactualization” of Ga history and customs (sic.) (Eliade, 1959, p. 69-70).

The ritual code of silence is, on the other hand, postulated to serve as a period of quietude, of meditation, and communion with Ga autochthonic deities when they descend, from the Adjangortey Mountain where they live, to town (Field, 1961; Laryea, 2004; Nii-Dortey, 2012; Sackey, 2001; Van Djick, 2001). This period of silence thus, makes it possible for the Ga to communicate with their deities without any hindrance or disturbance. Also, the quietude enables the living to hear prophecies from the deities and act upon them (Laryea, 2004).

Although the Ga ritual code of silence is, in principle, associated with a period of quietude for the deities and ritual experts, in practice it features conflicts between Ga and non-Ga in Accra. This has a deep impact on my object of research: the symbolisms of the code and the associated musical performances. This is because the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence, also, keys the various activities, including musical performances, that must occur in the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.

1.3 ETYMOLOGY

In referring to the ritual performed to enforce the code of silence, the people of Teshie say *Gbemlilaa*, literally ‘road blocking.’ But to warn or notify fellow Ga and non-Ga of the stringent customary demands of the sacred period, the Ga say *Ala gbemli* literally “the road is blocked”. The phrase *Ala gbemli* serves as a reminder of the ritual code of silence hence, its do’s and don’ts like a ban on funerary rites, a ban on summons to a deity, and exchange of goodwill messages.

Some scholars have translated the word *Gbemlilaa* as “the closing of the road”, “road closure or closure of road” or “road closing” (Ammah, 2016 in M. Kilson (Ed.); Field, 1961; Nii-Dortey, 2012). Though these scholars rightly represent *gbɛ* as road, a critical analysis of the verb *Ala* or *La*, will not translate as ‘to close or close’. In her Ga dictionary, Kropp Dakubu interprets *la* or *ala* as “hook”, “put around”, “lock”, “block”. To interpret *ala* or *la* as “close”, somehow deviates from the fundamental understanding of the word since the Ga term for close is *ɲá* and not *la*.

The term *Gbɛ* in Ga language, is translated as “road”. Its usage in ritual contexts however, has nothing to do with a physical road according to some Ga interlocutors⁴. *Gbɛ*, as used in *Gbemlilaa* stemmed from the Ga word *Hegbɛ* literally ‘authority, right, or privileged’. The original word (*Gbemlilaa*) or phrase (*Ala gbemli*) is therefore *Hegbɛ mlilaa* literally ‘blocking of authority’ or *Ala hegbe mli* literally ‘the authority is blocked’ respectively. The Ga term *ala* and its attachment to *gbɛ* neither means ‘the closing of the road/ road closure’ nor ‘the locking of the road’⁵. The appropriate term is ‘block’ and it sufficiently explains what the Ga intend to communicate within the context of their festive ritual. In this regard,

⁴ Some of the exponents of this perspective include Rev E.O. Tettey (a Ga historian and author of some Ga books on Ga naming ceremony, etc.). He is, currently, retired from active service as a Reverend minister of the Presbyterian church of Ghana.) Alfred Markwei is an indigene of Teshie and a Ga language specialist.

⁵ Field and Nii-Dortey’s interpretation of the phrase *Ala gbemli*.

the road blocking ritual does not in any way refer to the blocking of a physical road. But like E. A. Ammah argues, *Gbemlilaa* means a ban on one's or a people's freedom to do certain things (Ammah, 2016).

But why do the Ga annually place a ban on their freedom to do certain things, during the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival meant to hoot at hunger? According to E. O. Tettey,

When the Ga migrated to their present setting, they came with food. They ate what they came with until they realised the food was getting finished. That was the period they decided to plant what was left, so they could have more during the harvest season. So, the elders who led them to their present place, took the decision to have the rest of the food planted. However, it did not rain when they planted and everyone suffered from famine. Lives were, in the process of waiting for the grains to grow, lost. That period, therefore, became a period of lamenting as people got frightened that they would soon die. Another decision taken by the elders was that, no one should harvest the millet that was, by then, growing in the fields. Rather, everyone should wait for it to get dried and matured before harvesting it. Going contrary to this decision meant doing the very things that have been banned or forbidden. The grains were strictly monitored such that anyone who brought some to the town was punished⁶. Death was rampant during the famine period and to avoid frightening people, funeral rites were not performed when someone died. Because it was believed that the sound of weeping might scare a weak or an old person, people also refrained from weeping⁷. Quietly burying their deceased therefore kept people from knowing the death toll. The issue of death was not even talked about at the time due to the hunger. Activities that make or attract noise were, also prohibited due to the belief that the noise from such actions -for instance- disturb a sick person who was close to his or her grave. Moreover, the hunger situation also prevented people from making noise because sorrow, worrying, and fear was what characterized the period at the time. Everyone thus, mainly thought of how to survive till the hunger was over.

The Ga, therefore, see the period of the hunger which they now hoot at, as an accursed period. Anyone who dies during this period is said to have died on the day no one must die (*Egbo gbi ni agbooo*). Such people are, hence, not mourned. It is also in this silence that those who died are given the

⁶ What the Ga planted during the hunger was millet not corn. However, corn is what is now widely used by all the Ga polities. Henderson-Quartey (2002) confirms this in his book "*The Ga of Ghana: History and Culture of a West African People*" in which he posited that "..... the Ga have *Kpekpei* (ground millet, now corn)" (p. 61).

⁷ To the Ga at the time, crying or weeping could quicken the death of the weak or old person.

Hɔmɔwɔ ritual food (*Kpokpoi*) prepared from corn. The reason being that, since they died before the grains could mature, they must be the first to eat the ritual food, before the living could eat it. (Interview with E.O. Tettey, on August 18, 2016)

The above narrative outlines the basis for the emergence of the Ga ritual code of silence as well as the strict observance accorded it at the time.

It is however unknown why, in present times, the Ga demand that the remembrance and re-enactment of this history be strictly adhered to by both Ga and non-Ga.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have guided this dissertation.

- What is *Gbemlilaa* and how does it impact the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances it occasions during the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival?
- How do the Ga conceptualise sound, silence and noise and how do such conceptualizations reflect in their *Kpashimɔ* musical performances?
- Is it possible to celebrate the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival without enforcing the code of silence?
- To what extent does the *Kpashimɔ* musical performance contribute to the renewal of the Teshie community?

1.5 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this dissertation is to explore and document the symbolic meanings of sound and silence in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. It further examines the extent to which the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances help the community to fully inspect itself within the frame the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence provides.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The dissertation employs two theories, Alexander Peirce's theory of semiotics and Edward Cone's theory of silence as frame for music, to analyse the research.

According to Meyer Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, "Members of an African society feel their unity and perceive their common interests in symbols and it is their attachment to these symbols that gives their society cohesion and persistence" (Fortes and Pritchard, 2015, p. 17). Vital parts of these symbolic representations are however, not easily deciphered (by 'outsiders') since they come "in the form of myths, fictions, dogmas, ritual, sacred places, and persons" (ibid). It is reasons such as the above that call for the need to apply Peircean semiotics and Cone's theory in analysing the research.

1.6.1 Peircean Semiotics

Charles Sanders Peirce, a major proponent of semiotics, advanced a theory based on symbolism and phenomenology by providing three basic ontological categories namely Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness "for understanding and analysing musical" as well as other budding artistic experiences (Turino, 2014, p. 185). In Peircean thinking, Firstness is an entity that is in-and-of itself; the direct relationship between two entities without the mediation of a Third is classified as Secondness. When a Third mediates this same relationship between a First and a Second to achieve a desired result above that of First and Second, then there is Thirdness (ibid, p.190).

Pierce further divided these fundamental sign concepts into three namely: Trichotomy I, II, and III. Trichotomy I is the sign itself. As a relative First, it is made up of three sign-types namely qualisign, legisign, sinsign. Trichotomy II deals with the relationship between sign and object. It is made of three sign-types namely icon, index, and symbol. Trichotomy

III deals with the way the relationship between sign-object is interpreted and how that relationship creates an effect (ibid, p. 192).

A sign, in Peircean thinking, functions as an icon when the connection between the sign and its object is based on resemblance between the two. An index, on the other hand, is established when a perceiver connects a sign and object through co-occurrence (ibid). While icons and indices are established through sign-object connection, symbols are not established based on sign-object relationship. According to Turino, a sign can only function as a symbol when firstly, it is connected to its object through linguistic definition, secondly, its people agree about that definition, and thirdly, they are general signs for general objects (ibid, pp. 197-198).

In this dissertation, I employ Trichotomy II of Peircean Semiotics to analyse, firstly, the complete *Gbemlilaa* ritual in Chapter 4 and, secondly, the musical texts of selected *Kpashimɔ* songs in Chapter 5. My reason for choosing Trichotomy II is, firstly, because the Trichotomy mainly involves actual relations between sign-object and, secondly, because of its link with musical performances and religious rituals. Charles Peirce, himself, did not formulate his theory thinking about music exclusively. I must say that Thomas Turino deserves a commendation. Turino's interpretation and application of Peirce's theory to music (in general) is very relevant to my work and that of music scholars. He applied Peirce's theory to music, making it a possibility for music scholars to also do same. For instance, by his interpretation and application, he argues that an index (by its qualities) is more applicable to music.

1.6.2 Edward Cone's Theory of Silence as Musical Frame

Edward Cone, a music composer and theorist, in his book, "*Musical Analysis and Musical Performance*", theorised on silence as frame for music. His theory was motivated by

Jacques Derrida and Immanuel Kant's theories on aesthetics. According to Cone, "music stands in great need of a frame to separate it from its environment" and that frame is silence (cited in Littlefield, 1996, p.4). He goes on to categorize this frame he calls silence into two, namely: the beginning and ending silence.

The beginning silence, he states, is that period where "*nothing* should be happening" (sic) (ibid). In other words, the beginning silence precedes the main event. Cones description of the beginning silence further suggests that all activities that precede the main event are silence- the beginning silence. The ending silence is that which shields us from the surprise of "our return to ordinary time" (ibid, p. 5).

Littlefield, in his article "The Silence of the Frames", suggests that framing silences are not limited to only beginnings and endings. They, additionally, "occur, at least potentially, within the music itself" (ibid). These internal silences, as he calls them, "tend to be heard as interruptions of continuity, and indeed, almost reverse the accepted hierarchy in the opposition sound/silence" (ibid). The beginning and ending silences, on the other hand, "prepare, delimit, or point to what follows" (ibid).

Cone arrived at his theory by studying writings on art-works by Kant and Derrida. He, together with Littlefield, must be commended for interpreting a theory on art-works and applying it to classical music (by composers like Debussy, Beethoven, and Sibelius) which lasts for some minutes.

Like Cone and Littlefield, I adapt this theory of silence as frame (for music) to demonstrate how a religious ritual (the Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ritual) completely frames the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event using traditional musical performances believed to constitute silence (as would be seen in Chapter 4). The intent is to illustrate how the Teshie community inspects itself through its *Kpashimɔ* musical performances which also prolong the entire duration of

the festival. Of course, without the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances the festival will only last for a week. The *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence provides such a frame where issues that have been left to idle are freely discussed (in speech and songs) before, during, and after the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event is observed. The beginning silence is the period before the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper. The internal silence occurs during the week of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper. The week after the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper marks the ending silence. In brief, Cone's theory of silence as frame (for music) helps to comprehend the role *Kpashimɔ* musical performances play before, during, and after the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event within the complete festive space.

I am fully aware of the fact that some scholars oppose the idea of analysing African works through the lens of European theories. African works, according to these scholars, must be analysed using African theories and, similarly, European theories should also be used to analyse European works. Such notions of difference, like Kofi Agawu argues, are political and meant to denigrate the African continent. Also, these notions of difference must be reconsidered for “beyond local inflections deriving from culture-bound linguistic, historical, and materially inflected expressive preferences, there is ultimately no difference between European Knowledge and African Knowledge” (Agawu, 2003, p.180).

1.7 METHODS

To achieve the purpose of this research, this dissertation combined both primary and secondary sources of data.

1.7.1. Primary Source of Data

The primary sources of data included structured, semi-structured, and in-depth face-to-face interviews. For a qualitative research such as this that is both ethnographic and

historical, ethnographic methods like participant-observation and personal communication also formed part of my primary sources of data.

The interviews were mainly based on purposive sampling, where I sampled 9 traditional religious adherents. Because traditional knowledge expands beyond religious authorities, I also sampled 7 non-traditional religious adherents purposively (See Table 1). (The choice of these non-traditional religious adherents was also meant to facilitate the validation of the data I gathered from the traditional religious adherents.) These non-traditional religious adherents are people who have lived and experienced Ga tradition and have participated in its religious ceremonies. Interestingly, I had most of the answers to my questions from them. The ritual experts on the other hand, were generally good at narrating the ritual processes and stories. (See Appendix H for the sample questionnaire that guided this research and supported my main research questions.)

Traditional Religious Adherents	Number	Sex	Age
Priests	3	Males	40 – 80 years
Mediums	2	Females	45 and 73 years
Traditional Warriors	2	Males	40 and 55 years
Ritual Musicians	2	Males	50 and 63 years
Non-Traditional Adherents			
Cleric	7	5 males, 2 females	53 – 88 years

Table 1- Purposive sampling of Traditional and non-Traditional Religious Adherents

The purposive sampling method employed in this work, was influenced by the need to know (among others) the Ga conceptualisation of silence (and noise), the actual meaning of the ritual code of silence, why it is being accorded the strict observance, and whether it is aimed at seeking vengeance on non-Ga in Accra. The method also sought to ascertain the impact of the ritual code on the socio-political and religious lives of the Teshie community.

During my interview sessions with these traditional and non-traditional religious adherents, some of them recommended other interlocutors (5 traditional religious adherents

and 1 non-traditional religious adherent) and I took full advantage of it. Snowballing was, thus, employed because, some of the selected interlocutors directed me to individuals they believe are in a better position to answer my questions (See Table 2). These interlocutors, I must say, do not only have an in-depth knowledge of the festival but have also witnessed the complete *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival for atleast three decades. During these interviews, I generally asked my interlocutors the same questions as a way of triangulating my collected data.

It is worth emphasising that the selected and suggested traditional religious adherents are ritual experts who fully participate in the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony as well as the performance of various religious rituals within the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. These interlocutors included Priests (*Wulɔmei*), members of the traditional war companies (*Asafoiatsemei*), *Kpa* religious musicians (*Amlakui*), and mediums (*Wɔyei*) -these are titles given to authorities within the Ga traditional religion. The *Amlakui* for instance, are solely in charge of the *Amlakuiakpa* ritual music that accompanies the *Gbemlilaa* ritual. *Asafoiatsemei* on the other hand, play diverse roles in ensuring the success of every ritual event. The *Wɔyei* are mediums and they form part of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers just like the Priests (*Wulɔmei*).

Traditional Religious Adherents	Number	Sex	Age
Priests	1	Male	60 years
Musicians	1	Male	80 years
Assistants	3	2 males, 1 female	35 – 44 years
Non-Traditional Religious Adherent			
Cleric	1	Male	90 years

Table 2- Snowballing of Traditional and non-Traditional Religious Adherents

As stated earlier, I also employed personal communication in my methods. The people in this category are both academics, from the University of Ghana, and two non-academics from the Teshie community (See Table 3). My communication with some of these interlocutors begun at the initial stages of my research before I even started my fieldwork. On

the other hand, those I conversed with after I had commenced my fieldwork were non-indigenes who also practice a similar ritual code of silence in their communities. The 2 non-academics are natives with whom I usually converse with, some of the statements they made during one of my typical discussions with them, I found, was relevant to this work (see Pages 2, 3 and 96 for some of the examples).

Interlocutors	Number	Sex	Age
Academics	5	Males	36 – 75 years
Non- Academics	2	Male and Female	46 and 88 years

Table 3- Personal communication with Academics and non-Academics

Another ethnographic method I employed was Participant-observation. By participant-observation, I do not mean to say that I participated in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual since participation is solely based on one’s position as a qualified ritual expert of the larger Teshie community or the *Gbemlilaa* ritual community. Rather my notion of participant is based on my position as an indigene who lives in the community, a relation of the Senior Priest and his personal assistant and medium, and finally as one who has access to ritual sites and spaces which otherwise would be inaccessible by the external researcher. In this regard, participant-observation as a method I employed in this research is based on my knowledge of the community’s tradition and the use of its language, my observation of its religious rituals since childhood, my shared relation with specific ritual experts, access to ritual spaces which are inaccessible by non-natives, and my participation in the annual festive musical performances while growing up.

My position is therefore what Chou Chiener describes as a “native researcher”. I would like to state that that position is not only based on my shared ethnicity, but also on Chiener’s conceptualisation of the term as “researchers who are themselves already experienced....within the tradition that they subsequently choose to investigate...” (Chiener, 2002, p. 458).

1.7.2 Carrying out my research

In carrying out this dissertation, I spoke to my neighbours about my research and the need for me to interview both traditional and non-traditional religious adherents. One of my neighbours, Abednego Martey, then suggested that I talk to an old man in his house called Friday. Apart from being well-versed with some histories of Teshie, Friday was also recommended because he had claimed to have rigorously participated in some of the religious practices that have now been integrated into Teshie's version of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. I arranged to meet him on a day and time he suggested.

A day after my interview with Friday, I met Alfred Marquaye during one of my errands in the town. Because he is an indigene who is well-acquainted with the history and traditional practices of the community, I told him about my research and asked him few questions about the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence. After some time of deliberation, he directed me to one Mr Kumah Sowah whom we usually buy building materials from. Mr Kumah Sowah is an *Amlaku* but he presently claims he is no longer involved in the traditional practices of the town because of his Christian faith⁸. After my first interview with him, he asked me to go and interview their current clan head called Nii Boye since Nii Boye's position permits him to perform the *Gbemlilaa* ritual alongside the Senior Priest. Unfortunately, all attempts to meet Nii Boye proved unsuccessful. Mr Sowah however, became one of my key respondents because of his in-depth knowledge in the traditional practices of Teshie and La.

I also scheduled a meeting with the lead cantor of the *Amlakui* who also doubles as their clan's *Asafoiatse*. He is called *Asafoiatse* Omrugu but popularly identified as Alaska. After several postponements, I finally met and interviewed him when I paid him an

⁸ *Amlaku* (singular) or *Amlakui* (plural)- They are the custodians of one of *Lakpa*'s music popularly known as *Amlakuiakpa*.

unexpected visit. I additionally interviewed another *Amlaku* by name Clement Achimore. I noticed him while I was observing and videoing a musical performance by the *Amlakui* in their principal house. He regularly corrected the musicians because they were almost corrupting some of the music texts whilst substituting others with their own version. After observing him for a while, I decided to interview him. I therefore spoke to him after the performance and took his contact number. Two days later, I contacted him and we scheduled a date for the interview. During my interview with him, he revealed so many things to me. According to him, I am a student and I must get things right. Truly, he revealed a significant amount of information that otherwise, must not be spoken about to anyone except some ritual experts who have attained a certain age. At this point, I would like to shift my attention to the insider/outsider debate which “focuses upon the *person* of the observer or researcher and his share in the culture to be studied” (Kubik, 1996, p. 6), and how the dialectic manifested in my interview with Clement Achimore. It is evident that Achimore’s statement that ‘the researcher is a student and he must get things right’ indicates an immediate shift in my position, from insider to outsider. For if he had continued to see me as an insider, he would not have been ‘forced’ inwardly to disclose such sensitive facts to me, he would have assumed that I already have some knowledge of those facts- even though I did not. His decision to reveal certain ‘hidden facts’ of the culture to me was thus not based on my insider position. (It should be noted that his comments do not suggest that all student-native researchers are automatically outsiders.)

One of the people I had wanted to also interview was Dr Eric Ago Kwei, a Teshie historian. Together with Adzei Anang and Adjei Bekoe, they recently published a book on Teshie titled “*Teshi Administrative and Cultural practices*”. I got his contact number from one of my elder cousins, Mr Ben Kwetia Sonne. I called Dr Kwei several times (on phone) the same day I was given his number but he did not pick the call. I decided to pay him a visit

at his residence at Tema. Unfortunately, I received a phone call two days later from Ben Kwetia that Dr Kwei has passed away. He died a day after I had tried calling him on phone.

After Dr kwei's demise, Ben Kwetia suggested that I meet with an Oldman called Okoe Ahuloo. Okoe Ahuloo is a Teshie indigene who is well-versed in the oral history of Teshie's chieftaincy system. I visited him one evening in his residence. According to him, my questions are too difficult to answer. He called one of the ritual experts (called Nkwei) in his clan to grant me an interview. Nkwei is presently the one in charge of the ritual hoe⁹ of the royal family. Mr Ahuloo told Nkwei that the interview must be done that same evening because, I urgently need the information. I immediately left to Nkwei's house that night and upon reaching there, I realised that he had also invited one of his siblings to join in the interview.

During my interview with these respondents, it became evident that most of my vital questions have not been answered. Upon several reflections, I remembered having once met a Ga historian and scholar (called Rev. Ebenezer Odai Tettey) who also doubles as a Presbyterian minister. After several searches for his contact number, I finally had that of his wife one evening, from Alfred Marquaye. I immediately called Reverend E.O. Tettey, who, after listening to why I want to meet him, asked that I came over the following day at 10:00 am. I went to his residence at Nungua (somewhere around the Royal Ravico Hotel). After introducing myself again, he asked if I had met Nii Adjei Klu (the Ga journalist at *Obonu* Fm) but I responded in the negative. He then asked me to tell him what I know about the *Gbemlilaa* ritual, which I did. Afterwards, he answered my basic questions and further narrated the history as to how the ritual code of silence came into existence. We deliberated

⁹ Information on this ritual hoe is provided in the next chapter.

on several issues after which he finally said, ‘Young man, you have rekindled my research and writing spirit again’.

I must admit that, prior to my final decision to research on Teshie, I had had some insights into the ‘road-blocking’ ritual through a conversation with *Wulomɔ Opɛkɔ*- a ritual expert in Teshie. *Wulomɔ Opɛkɔ* told me of how the ritual was performed in the past and the present developments. He was the one who first told me of the ritual game called *Otoono*¹⁰. Unfortunately, the observance of this ritual game has ceased. Details of it would be provided in the subsequent chapter.

Apart from these interviews, I also engaged in unstructured discussions with some of my siblings after going to observe a *Hɔmɔwɔ* religious ceremony. These siblings play key roles in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony and other festive rituals. Those of them who do not play any key role are indirectly linked to the festive events. The intent of the discussions was three-fold:

- ✓ To retrieve a significant amount of information which otherwise would be kept as secret or forgotten.
- ✓ To further examine my findings from the field i.e. the live performances of the various rituals I observed and of which they participated in as officials.
- ✓ To get their independent side of the story.

In turn, I also tried to explain the notions behind some of the rituals they perform. The intent was to help them avoid attributing everything to time-honoured tradition. This methodological approach was influenced by my observations and experiences as an indigene who was not only born and raised in Teshie but still lives there. (Meanwhile, this

¹⁰ *Otoono* is a ritual game that preceded the performance of Teshie *Gbemlilaa* in the past. It involves the use of stylistically carved wooden snails called *Alokoto*.

methodological approach also helped me to triangulate my collected data.) Beyond the intent of this method, lies my quest to also intervene (as a member of the community) in some of the community's religious narratives which are being lost to rapid socio-cultural changes within urban Accra.

I am fully aware that in the field of ethnomusicology, some researchers “often tried not to change the object of their study, attempting not to intervene” due to the ethical questions interventions raise (Chiener, 2002, p. 474). I however agree with Chiener on her position that “unlike the foreign researcher, who may turn to a distant country and produce publications in a foreign language, there is no option for the native... researcher not to become some kind of mediator in the tradition” especially when he/she continues to stay in the tradition and engages in a daily interaction with its people (ibid).

1.7.3 Why I chose Teshie as my research site

As stated earlier, the ritual code of silence is not distinct to the Ga neither is the word *Gbemlilaa* (or the phrase *Ala gbemli*) to the people of Teshie. Though Nungua and Tema also enforce the ritual code of silence, they are mostly known for their strong involvement in the *Kplejoo* festival rather than the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Similarly, La is noted for its numerous *Kpa* musics. Ga Mashie and Osu are also noted for their own unique rituals. Nevertheless, of all the Ga communities, Teshie is known for its *Hɔmɔwɔ* musical performance called *Kpashimɔ*. Participation in this musical performance is open to the public. But more especially, *Kpashimɔ* is known for its role to comment on the community. This, is achieved through the hierarchically organized traditional musical groups known as *Aflaŋai* literally “flags”. Their main function is to compose and perform as many songs as they can during the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festive period.

Also, Teshie is known to have separated from La due to some misunderstandings. My intention for settling on Teshie is to see how the community has been able to develop and maintain its own system of tradition different from that of La. One might argue that the study must then be conducted as a comparative research. Doing a comparative study would however overburden the researcher due to time constraints and funding. Moreover, Teshie and La do celebrate the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival within the same month. Also, both communities perform most of their festive rituals on the same day and time. In such ethnographic research as this, the researcher is compelled to choose one community over another especially when he does not have an assistant.

Additionally, I chose Teshie because the community has not had a King (*Mantse*) for more than two decades now. Presently, one of the three royal houses claim they have installed a King in Teshie. Interestingly, most community members and ritual experts including the Senior Priest do not recognize him as King. Based on this, I selected Teshie to examine how the community achieves its socio-political and religious ritual purposes without a King, especially when one is installed and yet, they have refused to recognise him as such.

Finally, I chose Teshie as my research site because apart from being the last Ga town to be founded, it is also the only settler-community within the larger Ga-Dangme State. Every member of Teshie can trace his or her ancestry to a Ga-Dangme community. In this regard, it is possible that religious rituals in Teshie have had influences from the various Ga-Dangme communities.

1.7.4 Limitations

Apart from the lack of funding for this research, my insider position created a major challenge to my data collection. For example, some ritual experts who initially agreed to be interviewed, kept postponing our meetings. Some of them even refused to give me their cell

phone numbers so I could reach them to fix a meeting time. Their belief was that I am going to make monetary profit out of this research. Meanwhile, the information I was searching for are daily issues they freely discuss for several hours in the community. Yet, within the context of an interview, they demanded money before granting me an interview. Because my background somehow restricts them from directly asking me to pay them for granting me interview, they opted to keep postponing the interview. At a point, I had to reassure a ritual expert that I know the basic requirements and I have made all such provisions. Only then, were we able to schedule an interview.

On another occasion, an elderly interviewee, told me of a ritual event that would be of great benefit to this research. This ritual is held annually by his family in their clan house. He gave me the exact time the ritual was set to begin and asked that I got there on time. Coincidentally, I had been trying to interview another ritual expert who was avoiding me for the reasons exposed above. When I, finally, got him to grant me the interview, I also asked him about the ritual event. He gave me the right time but asked that I got there three hours later. He also insisted that we held the interview in a noisy environment, a place they usually entertain themselves through playing cards. While being impatient, he gave wrong answers to most of the questions I asked him¹¹. I compensated him after the interview. Two days later, we accidentally met in town and I asked what time I could come to watch the ritual event the old man told me about. To my amazement, he asked me to come at the exact time the ritual was to commence. I later met the old man and reported the conduct of the expert. But before telling him I gave the expert some money, he had already concluded that what the expert did was a way of demanding money from me.

¹¹ I knew those answers were wrong because of my position as an indigene and further because my elders used to tell me about some of these rituals while growing up. Also, some of the elders I interviewed validated what I already knew.

I understand the politics of these incidents. These traditional or ritual experts believe that education places one over the uneducated. Especially, in a community where the ‘educated few’ (those the Ga refer to as *Owulai/ Awulai*) are the only supposedly rich or successful people, one is sure of such experiences as mine. To these indigenous people, their religious rituals are the only means of showing-off. While some of these challenges are not easily escaped, it is evident that the native researcher at this point in his/her research must be able to employ his/her sense of ‘the community’s language’ to aid in a quick deciphering of situations that would otherwise impede the research. (In my case, that ‘community language’ revolves around the ‘educated few’).

To this end, I constantly remind myself of the researcher’s dual identity – insider/outsider- to negotiate creatively and successfully some of the challenges that arise within the insider/outsider space when doing fieldwork, whether inside or outside his/her community. For as Gerhard Kubik argues,

Many case studies demonstrate the need for abandoning the idea of cradle-to-grave cultural membership, as if individuals were born with their names stuck on a ticket, and their seat reservations never to be changed. Individual life is not only a personal process of constant learning and relearning, but it is also a process of continuous cultural adjustment (Kubik, 1996, p. 9).

Existing chieftaincy disputes began to heighten prior to the day of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. The Senior Priest, who stood in the centre of these conflicts, was compelled to perform the ritual ceremony at a fast pace. Additionally, the ritual ground was highly overcrowded which made movement in and out of it very difficult. These were the two major challenges that stood in my way when I had to film the ceremony.

1.7.5 Secondary Sources

To ascertain the validity of my ethnographic research, I further employed secondary sources like scholarly literature, from the library and internet, and documentary on the topic. Although very few of these written sources directly have information on Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony and *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, most refer, even if tangentially, to the concepts of sound, silence, and music. I must emphasise that the use of more than one method, to gather my data, as seen under this section of ‘Methods’, helped in the general triangulation of the data and contributed to the validity of the data in this work. Meanwhile, the data collected for the entire research was analysed by employing phenomenological, discourse, textual, and conversational analyses to reach conclusions- as would be seen throughout the work.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The annual *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival is a paradox. It incites and resolves conflicts through its religious rituals and musical performances. The yearly observance of this ritual in the Ga *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival has ensured the survival and sustenance of the culture and history of the entire Ga state despite the heavy presence of demographic and religious pluralisms in recent times (Kropp Dakubu, 1997).

This study will deepen one’s understanding and appreciation of how the Ga community of Teshie, through its *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence, assesses itself and addresses sensitive issues in the community with the aid of religious rituals and *Kpashimɔ* musical performances. The study will further contribute towards sustaining the interest of younger generations who now participate in the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival and *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony by ensuring that knowledge of its history and renewal processes are documented for future generations. The study additionally provides insight into the perspectives and

strategies used in studying sensitive or restricted contexts within ritual/religious spaces like the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE REST OF THE DISSERTATION

The rest of this dissertation is structured as follows:

In the next chapter, I provide an insight into the socio-political structure of Teshie by examining the town's indigenous Quarters and their contribution towards the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. The emergence of the town's traditional musical groups, performance style, and their hierarchical arrangement are also examined. The chapter, thus, provides information on the principal houses, ritual officials, the town's traditional musical groups, deities, and other ritual performers who contribute to the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony and other religious rituals within the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festive space.

Chapter three gives an in-depth description of the Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ritual performance. It highlights the various religious and secular preparations that are observed before the ritual ceremony is performed. Information on the procession to and recession from the physical *Gbemlilaa* ritual site, by *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers, is also provided. The chapter also describes how the individual ritual segments of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony are performed by the ritual performers.

In chapter four, I delve into the Ga notion of sound, silence, noise, and death in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The three *Gbemlilaa* ritual segments are also analysed within the framework of Peircean semiotics. The chapter also engages with the concepts of repetition and reincarnation as observed during performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony. I finally highlight how the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence frames the complete *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival by using *Kpashimɔ* musical performances.

In chapter five, I textually analyse some *Kpashimɔ* songs from selected traditional musical groups. The intent is to show how the Teshie community gives itself for scrutiny through *Kpashimɔ* songs. Musical notations of the songs are, further, provided to aid in the analysis.

Chapter six is my concluding chapter. It provides the reader with the summary of the whole dissertation. My findings and recommendations are, also, outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND *GBEMLILAA*

RITUAL PERFORMERS OF TESHIE

2.1 BACKGROUND

This chapter focuses on the socio-political structure of Teshie by looking at its five quarters (called *Akutsei*), their performance roles and contributions in the celebration of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival¹². Examining the five quarters would help trace the possible emergence and socio-political structure of Teshie, its *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers as well as the major traditional musical groups and their contribution towards the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The intent is to highlight the extent to which the town's quarters influence the renewal of the socio-political and religious lives of the Teshie community through firstly, the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony and, secondly, the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances. Meanwhile, a brief historical account on the emergence of Teshie would firstly be provided to show the place of Teshie within the Ga-Dangme State.

2.2 TESHIE WITHIN THE LARGER GA-DANGME COMMUNITY

The Ga are a people who live on the Accra plains of south-eastern Ghana and speak a Kwa language (Kilson, 1970; Nii-Dortey, 2012). The Ga, despite their individual towns, are also believed to have close ties with the Dangme, another Kwa language speakers¹³. Kropp Dakubu argues that apart from belonging to a Kwa group of languages, the Ga and Dangme are linguistically close to each other than with any other language (Kropp Dakubu, 1972). Apart from the linguistic similarities, are resemblances in the origin and religious rituals of these two groups (ibid). Together, they form a larger State called Ga-Dangme due to their linguistic, historic, and ritual similarities.

¹² *Akutsei* refers to the quarters of a town; singular- *Akutso*.

¹³ The Kwa language is a sub-group of languages of the Niger-Congo stock of languages

Teshie was founded in 1710 by Nuumo Okang Nmashie, the then *Mankralo* of La (Osae, 2002)¹⁴. Teshie lies West to Ga Mashie, Osu and La and East of Nungua and Tema. It directly shares borders with La and Nungua. The community is composed of inhabitants from almost every part of the Ga-Dangme State. Teshie is thus, a community of mixed people with the majority, coming from La. The rest of the inhabitants are people from Nungua, Tema, Lashibi, Ga Mashie, Osu, and Prampram (ibid).

This characteristic of the last Ga town, being a settler-community, is evident in the indigenous names of the inhabitants in the various principal houses (*Wei*) that make up the five quarters of Teshie. An indigene's local name therefore distinguishes him/her by pointing to the Town, then to the Quarter, and further, the specific family to which he/she belongs (Quartey-Papafio, 1914) in the township. After getting to the family, the name can also point to the specific room (*tsunaa*) that bears the name. Probing further would then reveal the hierarchy of the bearer of the name i.e. if the name is that of a first, second, third or fourth born.

Being a settler-town does not, however, render Teshie amorphous since like the other Ga townships, it also “perceive and bound its social space at various levels” (sic) (Osei-Tutu, 2000, p. 60) despite its separation from La sometime after both groups arrived and settled in the Ga region.

2.3 THE SEPARATION FROM LA

Before Teshie's separation from La, the two Ga groups (namely, Bonny and Boma) were believed to be known as the La people¹⁵. Teshie was the Boma group while La was the

¹⁴ *Mankralo* is one of the three king makers in Teshie and head of the team. He is the caretaker of the town.

¹⁵ According to Kwei et al. (2004), Bonny is located somewhere in Southern Nigeria whereas Boma is believed to be in present day DR Congo.

Bonny faction. The two groups were believed to have met at Agoye in the present-day Republic of Benin (Kwei et al., 2004). Osae (2002) argues that the arrival of the two groups at their La settlement was the culmination of several migrations in large family units. These migrations were, nonetheless, not peculiar to the two groups. The entire Ga and Dangme States, before getting to their present settlements, were also involved in migratory journeys.

The separation of Teshie from La occurred after the two sub-groups had settled at the present location of La. Nuumo Okang Nmashie, the founder of Teshie, is believed to have fled from La to Ledzokuku upon a tip-off from the then Ga *Mantse* whom, according to oral history, was contracted by the then La *Mantse* Odoi Atsem to help him fight Nuumo Okang Nmashie. The cause of this conflict has been attributed to the unapologetic behaviour of Nuumo Okang Nmashie's nephews. In fact, they are associated with majority of the conflicts that arise in old La community. Oral history has it that Nuumo Okang Nmashie's nephews saw themselves as the sole conquerors in La. They would injure anyone who tries to challenge them especially, during traditional games where they expect no other person to win apart from them. It is these deviant actions of Nuumo Okang Nmashie's nephews coupled with his being protective of them that sparked the conflict between him and *Mantse* Odoi Atsem hence, the separation. The conflict that led to the separation, therefore, only served as a catalyst. Kwei et al. (2004) provides an in-depth information on what finally triggered the conflict between *Mantse* Odoi Atsem and Nuumo Okang Nmashie.

The departure from La was a partial rather than total separation. The two communities continued to maintain close ties in relation to their religious rituals. Teshie, for instance, continued to honour its religious responsibility of contributing a cow to *Lakpa* during the La annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival (Field, 1961). This was tolerable since the people of La felt uncomfortable to by-pass their Teshie brothers to purchase the cow for *Lakpa*'s annual religious ceremony. The leader and the section whose responsibility was to contribute the

cow, according to oral sources, were part of those who fled with Nuumo Okang Nmashie to Teshie. The absence of the two parties compelled the people of La to desist from changing the tradition on their own due to its connection to *Lakpa*. The people of Teshie despite the separation, also, often called on their La brothers to help them perform the Teshie annual *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. These customs, Teshie's provision of cow to La and La ritual experts coming to assist in Teshie *Gbemlilaa* rituals, were successful throughout the reign of thirteen different Kings of Teshie¹⁶. It was during the reign of the fourteenth Teshie King, *Mantse* Ashitey Akomfra II (1916-1937), that Teshie decided to completely breakaway from La. The need to bring an end to those customs was in response to the mockery and insult by the people of La who usually told the Teshie people *Nyεgblaa tsina nyεke bahaa wε wεke jaa La Kpa* (literally, you drag a cow to us to worship *Lakpa*). Some elders of the community were sent to La to enquire about the necessary rituals that can end this annual assistance¹⁷. According to oral sources, La embraced the initiative upon the arrival and request of the delegation from Teshie. The necessary rituals were immediately performed in their presence and that was how Teshie finally became independent and gained the right to perform all its religious rituals by itself¹⁸.

It is not surprising that Margaret Field never mentioned the *Gbemlilaa* ritual in Teshie despite her in-depth research (first published in 1937) on the whole Ga State. There is a possibility that the people of Teshie had not fully settled to start their 'own' *Gbemlilaa* rituals when Field researched the Ga. The *Gbemlilaa* ritual, as performed and known to the people of Teshie in present times, is a relatively recent activity that started during the period *Mantse*

¹⁶ Those kings are Kamoia I (first king of Teshie), Ashitey Akomfra I, Tettey Otipon, Amarh Oshiapem, Akwete, Tetteh Kpabi, Ofori Shajo, Akuete, Amarh Otrenah, Ashiboi Balawi, Korley, Adjei Otipon, and Agbosu.

¹⁷ The delegation comprised of Nii Okang Paku, Nuumo Meepe Laryea and Nii Adjeifio- all from Ashiao *We*.

¹⁸ This information was obtained through my ethnographic research. It was first provided by Achimore (a 70-year-old *Kpa* ritual musician- *Amlaku*) and some other ritual experts- *Wulomei* and other *Amlakui*- like Nuumo Opeku, Nuumo Kumi, and Kumah Sowah. Alhaji Sowah Sedik, a native Teshie also confirmed most of the information.

Ashitey Akomfra II reigned. One of my interlocutors remembers how the beating of the La ritual drums to signal an end to the La ritual code of silence also cued the people of Teshie to lift the ban on the supposedly noise-making activities¹⁹. The ritual drums, he argues, were loud enough to be heard in Teshie when played in La. A quick analysis may help to comprehend my argument.

Margaret Field wrote her book, “*Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*”, in the earliest period of 1936 and published it in 1937. Ashitey Akomfra II died in 1937. This means that Field’s research preceded Ashitey Akomfra II’s call for Teshie’s complete autonomy. Field was thus, conducting her ethnographic research when Ashitey Akomfra II was seeking the autonomy of Teshie, an assumption that can be corroborated in her chapter on ‘Public worship in Teshie. In page 75 of her book, she posits that the “head god” (sic) of Teshie (called *Ayiku*) still acknowledges the supremacy of *Lakpa* because Teshie had not completely broken away from La. She argued that such acknowledgement would cease and *Ayiku* would gain his supreme status once Teshie completely broke away from La “which it is trying to do” (Field, 1961, p. 75)²⁰. The above analysis suggests that Ashitey Akomfra II might have established the change during the latter part of his reign. It is possible Field did not witness or never witnessed the *Gbemlilaa* ritual of Teshie after the town had completely broken away from La. She might have even left Ghana before the Teshie community finally gained its autonomy.

¹⁹ Kumah Sowah

²⁰ Currently, *Ayiku* is not the sole head deity of Teshie. *Osabu* has been joined to him, hence the name *Osabu-Ayiku*. The Senior Priest of Teshie is presently known as the *Osabu-Ayiku* priest rather than *Ayiku* priest.

2.4. THE FIVE QUARTERS OF TESHIE

In the individual Ga-Dangme states is an institution known as Quarters (singular *Akutso*; plural *Akutsei*). The political, religious, and or artistic roles of these quarters help to strengthen the ties that bind a town. For example, the formation of these quarters within the coastal towns enhanced the institutional reconstruction of the Ga State in the past (Parker, 1995).

Kwaakye-Oppong (2014) posits that there are seven quarters in Teshie and each of them identifies with a specific colour of costume (p. 118). My ethnographic research, on the contrary, suggests that there are five quarters in Teshie namely, Kle, Lenshie, Krobo, Agbawe, and Gbugbla. Additionally, these quarters are associated to political and religious offices, shrines and ritual hoes. It is believed that the shrines are their guardians. The ritual hoes, on the other hand, permit the quarters to participate in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony through their individual representatives (called *hulɔi*, pl; singular, *hulɔ*). Also, the total number of these individual representatives of the quarters is six rather than eight as argued by E.A. Ammah (2016) in his book “*Kings, Priests, and Kinsmen: Essays on Ga Culture and Society*” edited by Marion Kilson.

Within the five quarters of Teshie are principal houses called *Wei* (singular, *We*) and, because of the Ga belief that “a person is related to each of his grandparents and through them to other kin”, every citizen of Teshie compulsorily belongs to a principal house (Kilson, 2012, p. 111). This practice of compulsorily belonging to a principal house, nonetheless, seems to be a common phenomenon within the entire Ga-Dangme region and possibly most indigenous societies in Africa.

In this subsequent section, the chapter primarily focuses on the larger quarter and those principal houses (*Wei*) that have some connection with the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony.

2.4.1 Kle Quarter

Kle (or Klemusun) is one of the five quarters in Teshie. It houses two major political offices (the Senior Priest's office called *Osabu-Ayiku Wulɔmɔ*, and that of the *Akwaashɔntɛ*) as well as eight principal houses²¹. Three of these houses (*Tsiɛ We*, *Ashiao We*, and *Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa*) participate in the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony.

Presently, the office of the Senior Priest is at *Tsiɛ We*²². Tradition demands that the Senior Priest gets an assistant (*Laabia*) and *Osrama* medium (*Osrama* is the thunder and lightning deity) from the *Tsiɛ We* principal house. These ritual experts assist the Senior Priest in almost every ritual activity. Their presence is believed to, among other things, motivate and enable him to fully concentrate when performing religious rituals like the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. The present Senior Priest, *Osabu-Ayiku Wulɔmɔ*, is Nuumo Adjei Kwanko II and he has been the senior priest since April, 1976.

Apart from the *Laabia* and *Osrama* medium, there is the *Afiɛye* medium who, by custom, is the Senior Priest's wife although her role transcends domestic activities- she serves as the immediate and close ritual partner of her husband. There is also *Maa Yoomle*, one of the female deities in the Senior Priest's ritual house. *Maa Yoomle* is religiously an older female deity and, currently, has one of the Senior Priest's daughters as her medium. *Maa Yoomle* is solely in charge of the religious cleansing of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual hoes from the five Teshie quarters.

Another key institution in the Kle *Akutso* is the *Amlakui* from *Ashia We*, a principal house believed to hail directly from La. The *Amlakui*, according to oral sources, were (in the

²¹ *Akwashɔŋ* (traditional council of the town) *tɛ* (father)- He is therefore the head of the council and responsible for organizing council meetings.

²² *Tsiɛ We* is one of the principal houses in the Kle *Akutso* just like *Ashiao We*. The house is named after its founder, Nuumo *Tsiɛ*, whom according to oral tradition accompanied Nuumo Okang Nmashie to Teshie when the latter fled from La.

past) the main ritual performers of the entire *Gbemlilaa* ceremony. Their role shifted after Teshie became autonomous and had its own independent Senior Priest. Now, they have been restricted to performing the religious music (called *Amlakuiakpa*) that accompanies the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony. They are also the only legitimate performers of religious rituals required for the burial of a native who passes away during the observance of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Apart from these religious roles, the *Amlakui* are also what Thomas Hale describes as “masters of words and music” (cited in Yankah and Peek (eds), 2004 p. 326). The performance style they employ is cantor-chorus hence, a call-and-response. For every song they sing, the Cantor asks for success by exclaiming Hail! Hail!! Hail!!!, May we be successful, Okang unite with your siblings (*Tswa! Tswa!! Tswa!!! ni Omanyaba, Okang gbe'eyi* in Ga language) for three times. This phrase is immediately followed by a recitative from the cantor before he calls the song. The cantor uses the same phrase when he is ending or changing a song (see Figure 1).

***Amlakuiakpa* Song Performance Structure.**

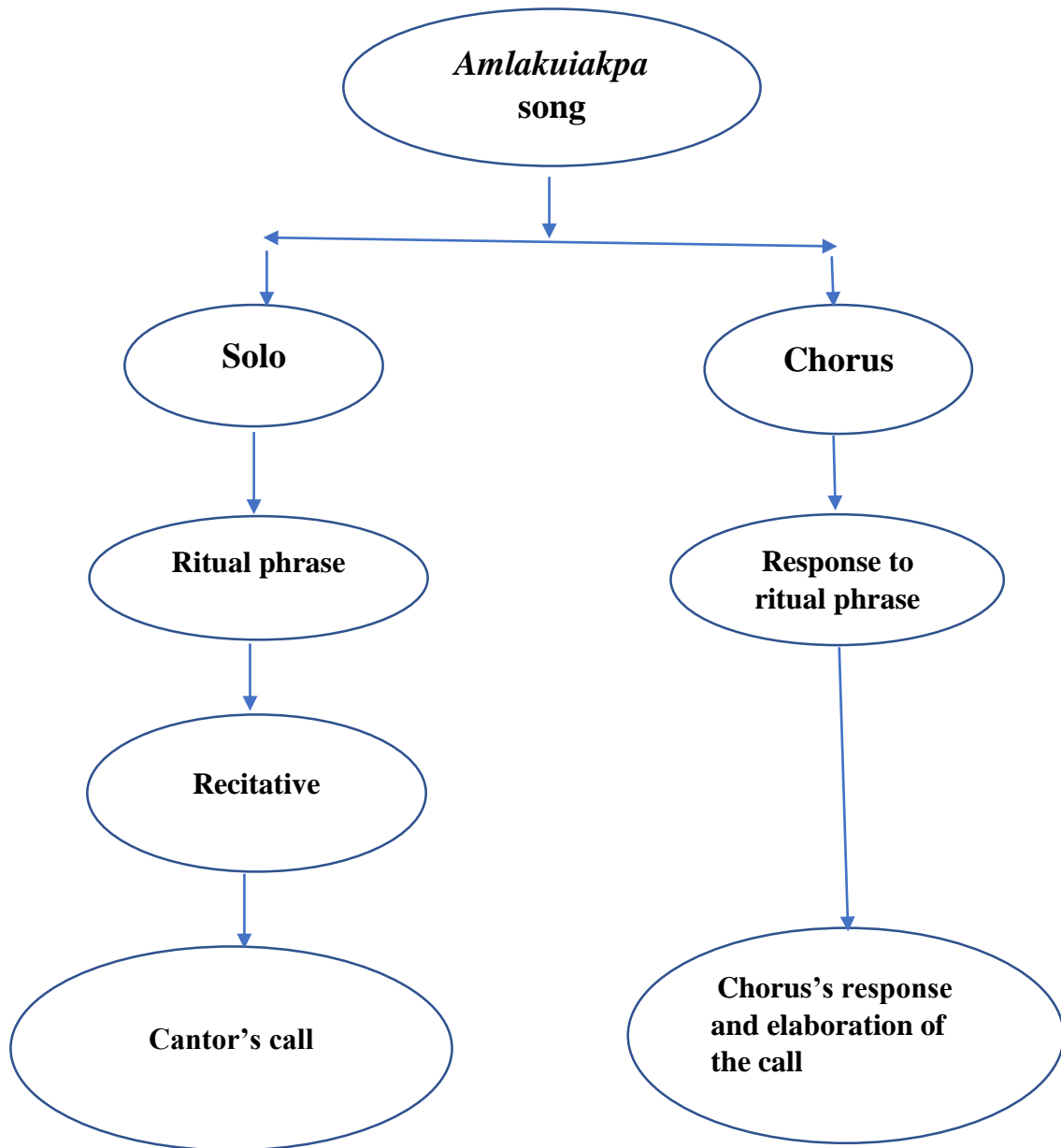


Figure 1- A visual representation of *Amlakuiakpa* song performance structure. This visual representation is motivated by Nii-Dortey's diagram on Kple Song Structure in his PhD dissertation.

In present times, the principal house of *Ashia We* has been divided into two due to intra-family conflicts. This newly formed principal house is called *Obeney We*. They, too, have an *Osabu* shrine that forms part of the shrines that are prayed to during the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performance.

Another principal house in the Kle quarter is Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa*. Playing of musical instruments and clapping are forbidden within its precincts throughout the year. The people of Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa* are responsible for performing the final religious ritual required to complete the *Gbemlilaa* religious ceremony. The narrative, according to the *Ayiku* priest of the Gbugbla quarter, is that the deities (*Okwei Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa* and his wife *Tsaade*) of Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa* played a key role in defending Teshie against spiritual forces that were sent to attack the community when it was being established. Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa*'s contribution to the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony has been outlined in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa* is, additionally, known for the *Tsese* ritual act created by the deceased chief fisherman *Woleiatse* Odametey and his assistant Ataa Oman Gɔdzi, to specifically celebrate the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival in their own way²³. According to oral sources, Odametey and Oman Gɔdzi would fill a grinding dish (*Ka*) with water and specific herbs and portray it as a ritual pot. They sprinkled or poured the ritual water on anyone who gave them money and/or made a request. Community members began to patronize the ritual act after experiencing its potency the following year. The Teshie community, in turn, gave the ritual act the necessary recognition. A ritual wooden bowl (called *Tsese*) was chosen in place of the grinding dish (see Figure 2). Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa* was mandated to continue with the *Tsese* ritual act since it was their sons who invented it. Despite being a recent creation, the people of Teshie strongly argue that *Tsesebumɔ* forms part of their origin. A new carrier of *Tsese* would only be elected or chosen if the one carrying it dies or is suffering from a severe illness

²³ Ataa Oman Gɔdzi is said to be a medicine man (called *tsofa tse*, in Ga language) and was in the company of his relative Odametey, the chief fisherman. The only song they sung whenever they had to parade the town with their *Tsese* was *Kiya bamba ledu, Mami (Papa) ni yaa keemi kpaajwe*. The text is basically an appeal to people to give them some money as a token of love during the festival. The *Tsese* is a religious wooden bowl that is filled with water and ritual herbs. It is brought into the public domain during the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The name *Tsese*, is now corrupted and hence, pronounced as *Sese*.

that disallows him from walking. Presently, the ritual act serves as the religious ritual (called *Tsesebumɔ*) whose observance marks the end of the entire Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.

During the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performance, the Kle Quarter is represented by two hoes- one from the quarter and the other from the *Amlakui* because of their role as ritual musicians.



Figure 2- The *Tsese* (painted with red, black, and white colours), carried by the present expert. He is circling the *Manjaranɔ* shrine together with the *Tsese* ritual community. Picture taken on September, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

2.4.2 Lɛnshie Quarter

Nuumo Trebi, an indigene of Tema, is believed to have founded the Lɛnshie quarter of the Teshie town. The quarter is made up of three principal houses namely Ashikwei (or Ashie) *We*, Ashitey *We*, and Asheley *We*. These houses rotate the office of the King amongst them. Their principal deity is *Ashie Odame* and it is situated opposite the King's palace.

According to oral sources, Nuumo Trebi was the first person Nuumo Okang Nmashie met when the latter fled from La to Ledzokuku- close to the *Kpeshie* lagoon between Teshie and La. Nuumo Trebi is said to be engaging in trade with Fante fishermen at the time (Kwei

et al., 2004). Sometime after the Teshie community was founded, Nuumo Okang Nmashie asked Nuumo Trebi to be the King of the town whilst he (Nuumo Okang Nmashi) continues to act as *Mankralo*²⁴. According to the narrative, Nuumo Trebi refused to be personally enstooled as King of Teshie and rather handed the position over to his children whose names now serve as traditional names for the three principal houses.

The three royal houses in the Lenshie quarter make the royal council (*Dzaase*) with its Kingmaker (*Dzaasetse*). They are responsible for providing the Teshie community with a King. The Kingmaker acts as King in the absence of a King. Although the political office of King is rotated amongst them, the rotation and enstoolment have been unsuccessful for the past two or more decades due to intra-family disputes in Lenshie. Presently, the people of Lenshie claim to have enstooled a King called *Mantse* Ashitey Akomfra III from Ashie *We*. The enstoolment is, however, being disputed by both community members, traditional executives and officials like the Senior Priest. During the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performance, the Lenshie quarter is represented by one ritual hoe.

2.4.3 Krobo Quarter

The political office of the Krobo quarter is Caretaker (*Mankralo*) of the Town. The office is rotated among three of the quarter's principal houses namely: Nii Klu Diŋ *We*, Otwe *We*, and Abadantse *We*. Majority of the people in this quarter are believed to be blood relations of Nuumo Okang Nmashie. Krobo also houses immigrants from other Ga communities like Ga Mashie and Nungua. The quarter has its own council (*Dzaase*) and leader (*Dzaasetse*) who oversee the affairs of the quarter's political office of *Mankralo*. The hyena (*Kla*) deity is found in this quarter but it plays no role in the performance of *Gbemlilaa*.

²⁴ Nuumo Okang Nmashie is said to have purchased the Teshie land from the people of Nungua. Kwei et al. (2004) gives a detailed account of the entire process that was involved in the land acquisition.

Apart from their *Mankralo* and the representative in charge of the ritual hoe, Krobo is the only quarter in Teshie that does not play any key role in the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony.

Geographically, the quarter is also not close to the physical *Gbemlilaa* ritual space compared to the other four quarters.

2.4.4 Agbawe Quarter

The Agbawe quarter in Teshie is known to be responsible for the position of secretary/ chief linguist (popular called *Shikiteli*) of the town. With the *Agogo* bell as their emblem, they refer to themselves as the announcers of the community. Together with Kle and Lenshie, it is believed that these three were the first quarters to be founded in Teshie.

According to oral sources, majority of the people in this quarter hailed directly from La as can be identified in their names and rituals. Immigrants believed to have come from Ga Mashie and Nungua can also be found in this quarter. Another major characteristic of this quarter is that three of its deities, namely *Osabu Olatεεo*, *Otεkpεlu*, and *Ayala*, are all involved in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony.

2.4.5 Gbugbla Quarter

Gbugbla, like Teshie itself, is the last quarter to settle in the community. The name, Gbugbla, suggests that the people in this quarter are from Prampram. However, there are also traces of people from Ga Mashie and La in this quarter. Its political position in the community is that of treasurer (or *Atofotsε*, in Ga language). One cannot discuss this quarter without making reference to the *Manjaranε* shrine (see Figure 3) which serves as the major contribution of Gbugbla to the community's sustenance.

In spite of the many deities in Teshie and those involved in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual, there is a principal deity planted in the middle of the town called *Manjaranε*. The coming into

existence of this deity is as a result of a peace treaty between the people of Teshie and the Gbugbla quarter sometime after the latter had settled in the town. According to oral sources, the people of Gbugbla gave out their own virgin daughter (*kpokuafoyoo*) in her youth²⁵. She was buried alive after which the shrine (called *Otutu* in Ga language) was erected over the burial place. This shrine stands to be the main and probably only public shrine created by the people of Teshie themselves²⁶. It, therefore, belongs to the whole Teshie community.

Although all the other deities in the town have their names, this particular one is solely referred to as the *Manjaranɔ Otutu*. It does not have a priest, medium, or acolyte. Also, all *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremonies begin and end with the *Manjaranɔ* shrine. During the *Kpashimɔ* performances, the traditional musical groups circle the shrine anytime they get to *Manjaranɔ*. Whilst the shrine could have been named after the woman who was sacrificed, doing so would cause rage and trouble in the town since that would make tracing of her family line very easy.

Additionally, there are *Naa Yoomo*, *Ligblɛ* and *Osabu* deities (in Gbugbla) that come to the fore in the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual²⁷. This *Osabu* deity is known as Gbugbla *Osabu* because of the other *Osabu* in the Kle *Akutso*. Gbugbla *Osabu* is the only *Gbemlilaa* deity located in a house rather than in the open. It is in *Aner We*, a principal house situated opposite the *Manjaranɔ* shrine.

²⁵ The name of this woman is Owiekor and she is believed to be the daughter of *Mantse* Korley, the then *Mantse* of the Gbugbla quarter. According to oral sources, *Mantse* Korley willingly offered his daughter, Owiekor, for the treaty.

²⁶ Majority of the deities were brought into the community.

²⁷ *Ligblɛ* is, sometimes, called *Digblɛ*.



Figure 3- The Teshie Manjarano shrine. Picture taken on August, 2016 (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

Because of the great deal of overlap between the quarters, the principal and associated houses become important quarter (*Akutso*) identifiers. The *Manjarano* shrine is, in this case, directly encircled by *Lenshie*, *Gbugbla* and *Agbawe* quarters.

Figure 4 shows the five Teshie quarters, their major political offices and the number of ritual hoes in each quarter. Accounts from my interlocutors suggest that the office of the *Akwashantse* is a minor one. Its role in society, compared to the five major political offices and the *Amlakui*, is lower in rank. Based on these reasons, the office of the *Akwashantse* has been excluded from the representation. The *Amlakui*, on the other hand, have been included because of their position and participation in the town's religious rituals like *Gbemlilaa*. The relative position of the quarters, in the representation, does not suggest any political hierarchy.

The Five Quarters Of Teshie, their Political Offices, and their Ritual Hoes.



Figure 4 - The five Teshie quarters, their political offices, and ritual hoes.

2.5 THE *GBEMLILAA* RITUAL PERFORMERS OF TESHIE

The *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers, who help institute the code of silence, include both ritual and non-ritual experts and may be analysed at three levels, namely: the Heads (*Yitseɪ*), the Assistants (*Yeli kɛ bualɔi*), and those at the background- the traditional executives (*Akulashɪŋ*). This hierarchy, according to the Gbugbla *Ayiku* Priest, is indigenous to the practitioners and the entire Teshie community. Figure 5 shows the hierarchical arrangement of the Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers. The top represents those at the highest level in the category. The Assistants are second in the category and those beneath them are described as the lowest category of the ritual performers. This hierarchy is based on the participation of the performers within the ritual community of the town.

Hierarchical Arrangement of the *Gbemlilaa* Ritual Performers of Teshie.

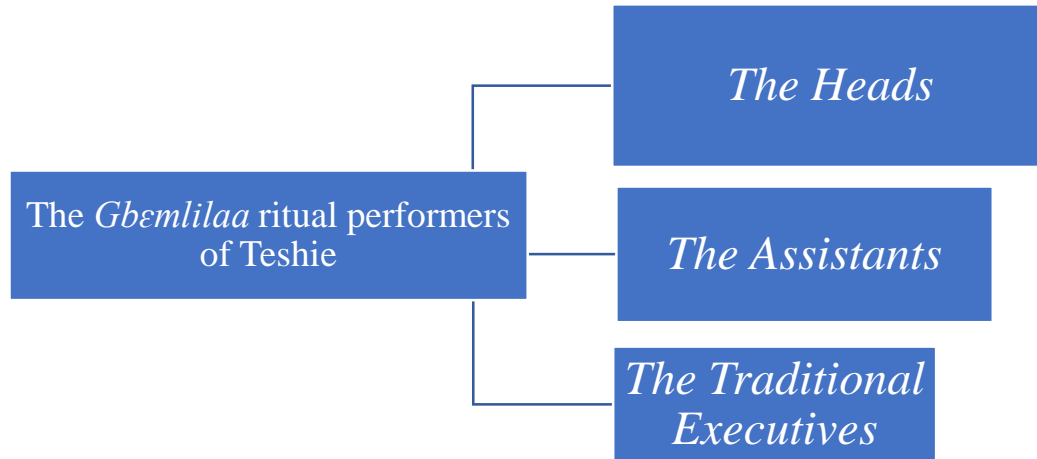


Figure 5- The hierarchical arrangement of Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers

2.5.1 The Heads (*Yitse*)

The main ritual players of the Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ceremony are the Heads. They comprise priests (*Wulomei*), mediums (*Woyei* and *Wohii*), *Amlakui*, members of the traditional warrior companies (*Asafoiatsemei* and *Asafoianyemei*), and acolytes like the *Laabia*. The highly religious nature of their role places them at the foreground of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony. As heads, they fully participate in the entire ceremony.

In addition to these heads are specific deities from four of Teshie's quarters. They are *Naa Yoomo* (grandmother), *Ashie Odame*, *Obeney We Osabu* (warrior), *Ocquaye Nyohmo Tsaa* (and his wife *Tsaade*), *Ayala* (messenger), *Ligble*, *Osabu Olaatεεo*, *Otakpɔlu*, *Gbugbla Osabu* (warrior), and the *Manjaranɔ* shrine. Apart from fully protecting community members, these autochthonic *Kple* deities are believed to have helped in the establishment and sustenance of the town. They are also believed to lead in the renewal of the entire town. Their involvement in the performance of *Gbemlilaa* brings to the fore the extent to which *Kple* is significant to the renewal of the Teshie town. It, thus, becomes evident that beneath the

entire Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival is *Kple* religion, institution, and philosophy in its totality. Meanwhile, the strict engagement of *Kpa* music during the ritual and the entire *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival points to the *Lakpa* deity and his deep connection with the Teshie community despite the community's complete separation from La.

2.5.2 The Assistants (*Yeli kɛ bualɔi*)

Ritual players that follow after the heads are the Assistants. They include the individual members (*hulɔi*) in charge of the ritual hoes. In addition to them are children believed to be reincarnated ancestors who once held the position of priest when they were alive. These supposed incarnates are, during the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony, dressed like priests and made to lead a part of the ceremony.

According to the priests I interviewed, the role of these ritual assistants is to assist in the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony. So assistants like the *hulɔi*, only aid in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performance as representatives of their respective quarters. An individual may be called upon at random to represent a quarter he or she does not belong to when the need arises. During the 2016 *Gbemlilaa* of Teshie, for instance, an intra-quarter dispute ensued with Gbugbla. According to the Teshie Gbugbla *Ayiku Wulɔmɔ*, one of the principal houses in his quarter claims to own the ritual hoe when it is not yet their turn to own it. The ritual experts of Gbugbla requested the Senior Priest to provide a replacement from Kle until the dispute is resolved. Gbugbla withdrew their ritual hoe thereby refusing to physically participate in the ceremony. A young man between the ages 21-24 was selected from the Kle quarter by the Senior Priest. The young man was then provided a new ritual hoe with which he represented the Gbugbla quarter. This scenario shows the extent at which ritual assistants in this category are engaged in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony.

While it is evident that there are acolytes in the foreground and the middleground, the difference between acolytes in the foreground and middleground is that the former is not limited to the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony or the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. They assist in other religious rituals outside the *Hɔmɔwɔ* ritual space. The latter, on the contrary, do not play any other significant role, in the community, outside of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* period and context.

2.5.3 Traditional Executives (*Akulashiŋ*)

The town's executive body (called *Akulashiŋ*) is the third category of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers. It comprises various political offices (apart from the *Osabu-Ayiku Wulɔmɔ*) like office of the King (*Mantse*), traditional secretary (*Shikiteli*), head of the traditional council (*Akwashɔntse*), Caretaker of the town (*Mankralo*), Treasurer (*Atofotse*), the head captain (*Shippi*), Chief fisherman (*Woleiatse*), and leaders (*Dzaasetsemɛi*) of the traditional councils within the various quarters²⁸. During the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performance, these and other political officers associated with them mainly observe the ritual. Before the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony begins, the Senior Priest goes to inform them about the ritual's commencement. After completing the ceremony also, he goes to inform them about it. The Teshie Gbugbla *Ayiku Wulɔmɔ* reiterates, 'we only inform the traditional executives about the ceremony before its commencement and after its completion'. In brief, the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers in this category are mainly observers.

²⁸ The office of the Senior Priest is both religious and political. In this category of performers however, he does not form part of those at the background because of the role he plays during the performance of the ritual code of silence.

2.6 THE TRADITIONAL MUSICAL GROUPS (*AFLAIŊAI*)

Another major contribution of the town's quarters, towards the celebration of Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, is the emergence of traditional musical groups described in Ga, as *Aflaŋai* due to their use of flags that readily distinguish them from the *Amlakui*. In her article "Clothing and Colour Symbolism in the Homowo Festival: A means to Sociocultural Development", Kwaakye-Opong (2014) argues that these groups are "*Kpa* dance groups..... and they usually perform during the *Tsesefaa*" sic (p. 118). My field research, however, suggests that these so-called dance groups are mainly associated with singing. Identifying them as dance groups is inappropriate in that they consider themselves as musical rather than dance groups. Also, it is worth stressing that these groups perform throughout the entire *Hɔmɔwɔ* festive period rather than only the *Tsesefaa* period. The only day they do not perform is the Tuesday that immediately follows the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony.

According to oral sources, the traditional musical groups emerged from the quarters sometime after Teshie had been established. From the period of their emergence till now, only seven of them (namely *Kɔɔle Wɔko*, *Gbee matele*, *Mind You*, *Six*, *Tafo yɛ fɛo*, *Ghana*, and *Greece*) are recognised by the community. These seven are believed to be responsible for the introduction and performance of the *Kpasɔkpa* musical type. Meanwhile, new musical groups continue to emerge regardless of the inability of some musical groups to endure the competition for recognition and following. These new groups have, on the other hand, deviated from the traditional societal standard of decorum. They employ profane musical texts and costumes during *Kpashimɔ* musical performances. The traditional musical groups, as well as older generations in the community, describe the new musical groups as renegades who are destroying a long-cherished tradition of music-making ritual meant to renew the community. The new groups have, thus, become a threat to the seven traditional musical

groups whose membership keeps shrinking as some of their members now prefer to be with the new groups of solely youthful natives and non-natives. According to the ritual experts I interviewed, there is the urgent need to abolish these new groups. They lamented that this act of abolishment can only be done once the community gets a King.

M. Nii-Dortey, a research fellow at University of Ghana, Legon, argues that what these new groups do and portray during the festival can be summed up as rebellion against authority (personal communication, September 15, 2016.). To maintain the main focus of this dissertation, I limit the scope of my research to the seven traditional musical groups since they have been able to develop their own *Kpa* musical type that is revered by the Teshie community due to the musical genre's socio-political, religious, and psychological role it plays in the renewal of the town. The seven musical groups thus, help to experience and analyse the festival in its traditional form.

2.6.1 The Emergence and Performance Style of the Traditional Musical Groups

According to oral sources, the emergence and performance style of the traditional musical groups was influenced by a tradition the people of Teshie practiced while they were in La. It was a tradition of folks coming together to sing and dance (stamping of the feet) majestically on the streets on the Wednesday of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* celebrations. Natives, by way of expressing communal love and acceptance to one another, hug themselves as well as strangers. People who are at loggerheads *must* (my own emphasis) also, on this occasion, hug each other wherever they meet, as an expression of reconciliation. This tradition of public hugging amidst *Kpa* music, on the Wednesday of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, is known as *Shakamɔ*. It is still practiced in La although there might be some changes today due to the passage of time.

The people of Teshie continued with this practice of *Shakamɔ* after their separation from La. According to oral sources, the one-day observance of the custom did not seem enough for community members. Extra days were added, by the community members, to prolong the observance of the custom on their own. They then started to observe the *Shakamɔ* in small groups²⁹. As the years passed by, these small groups began to gain public attention and following. To gain recognition from the traditional executives of the community, these small groups took on familiar names, created their own little flags and emblems, and began to parade the streets. At the initial stages, the groups mainly performed in the style of *Amlakuiakpa*. In present times however, they have transformed and created a distinct performance style. They no longer perform in the style of *Kpa kanemɔ* where they walk majestically and recount incidents like the *Amlakui*. The groups, instead, perform at their own pace by running and stopping at particular intervals amidst their singing. Also, they no longer adhere strictly to the distinct vibrato-like voice mostly employed in singing *Amlakuiakpa* as practiced by the *Amlakui*. They further incorporate biblical or christian texts into some of their songs. In brief, the traditional musical groups have dominated the *Amlakui* and their *Kpa* musical style. *Amlakuiakpa* can therefore, no longer be heard on the streets like it used to before the emergence of the traditional musical groups.

Despite these developments, one can witness an *Amlaku* performance on *Hɔmɔwɔ Shɔ* (in Ashia We) apart from the *Amlakui* public performance during the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony and the sprinkling of the festive food. On this day (*Hɔmɔwɔ Shɔ*), they continuously perform for hours with brief breaks of about five minutes in each instance. The break comes in, only when the head of the principal house wants to make an announcement. A break is not

²⁹ The formation of these groups mostly started with two, three, four or even 8 people thus the numbers were not that large. It was just between friends who were somehow related together through mutual or family ties but most especially through their fishing occupation which mostly consists of members from the same *Akutso* or *We*.

observed in the absence of any announcement or discussion and even if there is, it must be brief.

The status of the *Amlakui* as religious musicians (and ritual experts) and the potency of their songs are affirmed on the Wednesday of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* celebrations. For instance, mediums do not get possessed during the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival in Teshie because of the belief that, the festive season is a resting period for the deities. This is different for the *Amlakui* and the people of Ashia *We* in Teshie. It has been observed that their *Osabu* medium gets possessed on this particular Wednesday, in their principal house, as a result of the *Amlakuiakpa* performance. In summary, the *Amlakui* have been able to maintain their performance style despite the emergence of seven traditional musical groups and the new musical groups.

2.6.1.1 Gbee matele

Gbee matele, literally kill and let me carry, is the first traditional musical group that emerged in the Teshie community. *Gbee matele* is from the Krobo quarter. According to oral sources, a founding member (Anang Kinka) of this group died at a time when the group and the entire town were preparing for the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* celebrations. Because of the festival's ban on funerary rites, members of *Gbee matele* decided to mourn Anang Kinka by wearing black T-shirts and red trousers sewn from *Bue*³⁰. They further hanged a black cloth called *Blishii* on a stick and paraded the town with it, amidst singing. The following year, *Gbee matele* mobilised itself and decided to maintain the group. They also maintained the same

³⁰ *Bue* is a piece of red cloth or traditional thong used by women (in the past) during their menstrual period.

costume, colours, and new performance style they used in mourning Anang Kinka (see Figure 6). *Gbee matele*, additionally, adopted the Spider (*Ananse*) as their emblem³¹.

Members of the other quarters, like Kle, Agbawe, and Gbugbla, also began to form their own groups like *Gbee matele*. Since then, new groups have continued to appear during the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival of Teshie. The act of mourning Anang Kinka was thus, just the beginning of something the Teshie community never thought of. It marked the beginning of the emergence of musical groups who would later be described as flags (*aflaŋai*).

Being the first musical group to be formed did not guarantee *Gbee matele* the leadership position among the seven traditional musical groups called *aflaŋai kpawo*. *Gbee matele* is second to *Kɔɔle Wɔko* on the hierarchy of the seven musical groups. *Gbee matele*'s position within the seven traditional musical groups, according to some ritual experts, is partly due to the group's adoption of black as its colour. The belief is that, it is unfitting to follow the *Tsese* community of ritual experts (who wear white costumes) in black outfit. It is also argued that, since *Kɔɔle Wɔko* and the *Tsese* are from the same principal house, it is just reasonable to allow the musical group to closely follow their family members before any other group follows. Although people might question these reasons, it is worth emphasising that *Gbee matele*'s position was mainly influenced by the town's belief system which aims to eliminate conflicts within its confines.

³¹ This narrative about the emergence of the first traditional musical group in Teshie is confirmed by the name of the musical group *Gbee matele*.



Figure 6- *Kpashimɔ* performance by the *Gbee matele* musical group at *Manjaranɔ*. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

2.6.1.2 *Kɔɔle Wɔko*

Kɔɔle Wɔko, (literally, *Kɔɔle* is not asleep), the leader of the seven traditional musical groups and all other musical groups that continue to emerge in Teshie, is from the Kle quarter. The group emerged from the same principal house, *Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa*, as the *Tsese*. With the rooster as their emblem, *Kɔɔle Wɔko* is also known as *Wuɔ nuu* literally, the rooster. They are associated with the colour red.

Interestingly, telecommunication companies are taking commercial advantage of the colours symbolising these groups. For instance, the red colour of *Kɔɔle Wɔko* has made it possible for Vodafone Ghana (which uses red as a corporate colour) to sponsor them.

Figure 7 shows women in red, carrying stools that showcase the rooster in various positions. The stools depict the rooster (from left to right) firstly, as a priest; secondly, as a rooster with a maize in front of it; thirdly, as a ritual official; and finally as a King. Behind the three women is the flag itself with the rooster on top of it.



Figure 7 -*Kpashimɔ* performance by *Kɔle Wɔko* in the Teshie township. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

2.6.1.3 Mind You

Another traditional musical group that emerged from the Kle quarter is Mind You (see Figure 8). Its emblem is *Sankɔfa* (meaning, the need to return to one's roots). *Sankɔfa* is an Adinkra concept and originally, foreign to the Ga. During the *Kpashimɔ* performances, the Mind You flag wears white clothes.



Figure 8- *Kpashimɔ* performance by Mind You. In the picture is a young man holding the Mind You flag with the *Sankɔfa* symbol in and on the flag. With its neck bent backwards and an egg in its mouth, the *Sankɔfa* bird is displayed standing on a traditional stool. Picture taken on August 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

2.6.1.4 Greece

Greece is the third flag that emerged in Teshie from the Kle quarter. Their emblem is a hand holding a white egg. The colour of their costume is white and green (see Figure 9). During the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances, members of Greece portray themselves as hospital nurses.

2.6.1.5 Six

From the Agbawe quarter emerged Six, a musical group which is associated with the colour blue. They have the hawk as their main emblem. In their flag is a drawing of a grey haired and bearded traditional priest with a hawk in his left hand and the *Agogo* bell in his right hand (see Figure 10). This group, just like its name, is the sixth group on the hierarchy of the traditional musical groups.



Figure 9 - *Kpashimɔ* performance, in the Teshie township, by Greece. In the picture are two young men, one carrying a stool with a hand holding an egg on it; the other is a stool with an Ambulance on it. Behind them is the musical flag of Greece. Picture taken on August 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)



Figure 10 - *Kpashimɔ* performance, in the Teshie township, by Six. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

2.6.1.6 Ghana

Ghana is by position, the last among the seven traditional musical groups.

Coincidentally, it emerged from the last quarter- Gbugbla. Just like its name, this musical group has fully adopted the Ghana national colours and coat of arms as its emblem (Refer to Figure 11).



Figure 11 - *Kpashimɔ* performance, in the Teshie township, by Ghana. Picture taken on August 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

2.6.1.7 Tafo ye feo

Tafo ye feo, literally *Tafo* is beautiful, is the fourth musical group that emerged in the Teshie community. Their association with a quarter is not really known by many in the community. Some priests and natives, however, argue that, a principal house in Kle (called *Nadu We*) is responsible for the group's emergence. *Tafo ye feo*, unlike the other traditional musical groups, is geographically located at what looks like the town's outskirts. Also, the group seems to be highly populated by members of almost all the five quarters. *Tafo ye feo* has the porcupine as its emblem. It is further associated with the colour yellow (Refer to Figure 12).



Figure 12 - *Kpashimɔ* performance, at Manjaranɔ, by *Tafo Ye Feo*. Picture taken on August 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

2.6.2 HIERARCHY AMONG THE TRADITIONAL MUSICAL GROUPS

The issue of seniority is very significant to the musical groups since some groups, during the *Kpashimɔ* performances, engender conflicts by trying to dominate the rest of the performing groups. For this reason, members of the community and the musical groups

constantly remind themselves of the organizational structure of the groups. In performing the *Tsesebumɔ* ritual to end the *Hɔmɔwɔ* celebrations at the Teshie landing beach for instance, the seven traditional musical groups follow the *Tsese* ritual community according to each group's assigned position. Any musical group that goes contrary to the arrangement is fined an amount of money and may sometimes be severely beaten, by some senior groups, whilst the procession is going on. These seniority positions have helped to maintain a level of peaceful co-existence and order among the musical groups especially, with the emergence of the new groups.

Figure 13 illustrates the hierarchy of the seven traditional musical groups as influenced by the *Tsese* ritual community of Teshie. It must be observed that the *Tsese* is not a musical group like Kwaakye-Oppong (2014) argues.

Hierarchical Arrangement of The Seven Traditional Musical Groups and The *Tsesé* Ritual Community in Teshie.



Figure 13- The seven *Kpashimɔ* musical groups and their hierarchies.

2.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have highlighted the socio-political structure and *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers of the Teshie community through the lens of the five quarters of Teshie. The information in this chapter shows that, beyond political and religious offices in the community, the quarters of Teshie also contributed to the emergence of the traditional musical groups that today, serve as a major tool for inspection during the observance of the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. This chapter, basically, serves as a background for the subsequent

chapters. Chapters four and five, on the other hand, demonstrate how the traditional musical groups help the community to assess itself within the festive space.

In the succeeding chapter, we see how the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers carry out the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony that institutes the ritual code of silence.

CHAPTER THREE: *GBEMLILAA* RITUAL CEREMONY IN TESHIE

3.1 BACKGROUND

This chapter gives a detailed description of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony as performed by the Teshie community. The intent is to highlight the belief systems at the core of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence in relation to the renewal of the Teshie community. The chapter would thus, serve as an avenue to know about the ritual code of silence from the community's perspective- a perspective beyond the general quietude and ethnic and spiritual conflict themes mostly expressed by some traditional religious adherents, scholars, the media, and non-Ga (refer to Chapter 1). For instance, although the ritual code of silence is associated with the planting of millet and meditation by traditional adherents, not all Ga-Dangme towns perform this religious activity. Beneath the ritual code of silence are several activities, not necessarily done quietly, performed for the social, political, psychological, and religious purposes of the individual communities.

3.1.1 The Ga ritual Calendar

Communities and religions that observe a code of silence do so periodically. Among the Ga-Dangme's, the ritual code of silence is an annual religious ceremony whose observance generally lasts for a month although some communities like Nungua only observe it for a week.

To know when to observe their religious ceremonies, Ga-Dangme communities employ an indigenous and religious time reckoning system based on three elements- the moon, months, and stone. This practice, through which the Ga always had thirteen months in a year, is described as *Tekɔmɔ* (lit. the picking of stone). Within this time reckoning system, Ga religious experts use stones to represent a month based on the position of the moon. They

thus, put a stone aside when the position of the moon changes. If the counting, for example, started in January and the present month is April, the expert is supposed to have 4 stones.

The Ga, however, had challenges with this *Tekomɔ* system. The positions of the moon, as known to represent the months, kept changing annually. A position that represented June (the previous year) may move to July or August (this year or next year) hence, the lack of consistency. Also, the Ga thirteen-month calendar year became a challenge for ritual experts and the communities since it did not fit into the twelve-month Gregorian calendar. These inconsistencies compelled Ga ritual experts and the larger Ga-Dangme State to employ the Gregorian calendar alongside their *Tekomɔ* system.

Apart from the *Tekomɔ* and Gregorian calendar system, ritual activities within individual Ga-Dangme towns do serve as cues for other towns to know the closeness and exact period of their own religious ceremonies. In preparing for the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival for instance, the people of Teshie know they always perform their preparatory religious ritual of *Blɔiahejuu* (lit. bathing of brooms) a week after Nungua has performed its opening religious ceremony (called *Dudɔɲnuwoo*)³². Also, the week and day of *Blɔiahejuu* in Teshie marks Nungua *Abeleshwamɔ* (lit. the spreading of maize).

There are series of religious rituals that are also performed prior to the Teshie *Gbemlilaa* and in preparation for the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. These preparatory rituals, such as worshipping of the Sea deities and deep-sea fishing, signal the closeness of the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. In brief, ritual ceremonies serve as efficient time-markers within indigenous societies as apparent among the Ga-Dangme.

³² Both *Blɔiahejuu* and *Dudɔɲnuwoo* are preparatory rituals performed in the month of May by Teshie and Nungua respectively. The Tsie *We* principal house performs the *Blɔiahejuu* ritual. The ritual, after its performance, officially forbids the *Osrama* medium, *Afieye*, *Laabia*, and some other mediums from attending funerals, both in and outside the community, until the end of the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.

3.2 PREPARATIONS TOWARD THE TESHIE *GBEMLILAA* CEREMONY

On the Ga ritual calendar, Teshie celebrates its *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival between August and September. The festival begins with the performance of *Gbemlilaa* ceremony on the first Monday in the month of August. On the midnight prior to the Monday of *Gbemlilaa*, the Senior Priest together with some ritual experts cleanse the community with smoke from a bundle of smouldering dried palm flowers called *Iɲmatsu*, in Ga language (see Figure 14). This practice is however, no more observed. Nonetheless, another *Iɲmatsu* cleansing ritual is performed as part of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual activities. This latter ritual cleansing is not a substitution since the two were both performed in the past. Undeniably, the use of smoke in religious ceremonies is a universal and ancient practice.

The day of *Gbemlilaa* is full of sacred and secular preparations by both indigenes and ritual officials. These preparations take place at four places namely: *Manjaranɔ*, the *Wulɔmɔ*'s house, *Ashiao We*, and *Tsiɛ We Kwei Wulu Shishi*³³. Of these four places, *Manjaranɔ* is the only place natives do perform secular activities while waiting for the arrival of the Senior Priest and his team of ritual experts. Preparations at the three other places are, however, sacred since they mainly involve ritual experts, deities, and libations.

³³ The Senior Priest holds his meetings at this place.



Figure 14- A bundle of smouldering *Nmatsu* covered in the traditional goodwill plant (called *Nyanyra* in Ga language). Picture taken on August, 2016 at the Senior priest's ritual house. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

3.2.1. Preparations at *Manjaranɔ*

Before the *Gbemlilaa* ritual begins at *Manjaranɔ* on the ritual Monday, natives and non-Ga begin to assemble at the ritual grounds from around 2:00pm. Most natives, on this day, entertain themselves by playing traditional games (including *Ampe*, *Tuumatu*, *Olu*, *Otonsa*) and music (*Sɔnti*- something) in preparation for the religious ceremony which begins at 4:00pm. Some natives (mainly men) also assemble and play car rims. They sing to accompany themselves while rhythmically playing the rims in a contrapuntal form.

Individuals, including the *Akulashin* and non-Ga, who do not partake in these secular performances become the main audience for the displays. The general atmosphere is one of a 'noisy' environment made up of several sounds produced at the same time within the same space. One of my respondents reiterates, *Amɛfɛɔ hoo* literally, they make noise. This statement brings to the fore an aspect of Ga notion of noise-making where sounds that are not

in furtherance of the period are deemed as noise hence, secular. Presently, these pre-*Gbemlilaa* performances at *Manjaranɔ* are no more observed. Most of them have been forgotten and sometimes only mentioned in passing. In more recent times, members of the community who assemble at *Manjaranɔ* to witness the *Gbemlilaa* ritual solely engage in conversations with one another. They have further converted the period into a waiting session where people mostly familiarize, make new friends, and meet old ones who have also come to witness the ceremony.

Similarly, the noisy or secular activities at *Manjaranɔ* have been replaced with sounds from operators of Public Address (PA) systems. The operators of these sound systems, popularly called spinners, have now become the key secular noise-makers in present times due to the unusual loud music they play in the town prior to the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performance. The operators of these sound systems are mostly indigenes and this is the job they do to financially support themselves and their families.³⁴

The natives' engagement in noise-making activities, especially the musical performances, some hours before *Gbemlilaa* partly confirm Nii-Dortey's assertion that the period of the ban is meant to musically starve the public (Nii-Dortey, 2012). It partly confirms Nii-Dortey's assertion because, apart from music, the ban or starvation extends to other activities like traditional games, funerals, and some household chores like fish frying. The moment prior to the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony thus, serves as an avenue for members of the town to make their last and loudest noise before they move into what Mircea Eliade describes as '...the time that was created and sanctified by the gods....' (Eliade, 1959, p. 69).

³⁴ The ritual code of silence keeps them out of service for the entire festive period. They only function when their services are demanded outside the town.

All the secular activities performed at *Manjaranɔ* before the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony, ended with a ritual game called *Otoono tsemɔ* in the Ga language. The *Otoono*, a snail-like object made of wood and plastic, is played (with a specially designed rope) by some specific indigenes from the five quarters of Teshie³⁵. These indigenes assemble and play the game in turns between *Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa* and *Manjaranɔ*- this space also forms part of the larger *Gbemlilaa* ritual space. This is how the *Otoono* game is played: The players strike the *Otoono* object and wait for it to twirl. They then begin to follow it to wherever it stops and strike it again to continue the twirling. No official/player is supposed to strike another player's *Otoono*. Going contrary to this rule is considered cheating and may result in quarrels and fights. The game continues in this manner until the players are notified of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers' procession to the ritual grounds. This ritual of *Otoono tsemɔ*, like the other secular activities, have also ceased and seems to be a lost tradition since the period prior to *Gbemlilaa* is the only moment members of the community witness it. In present times, the ritual is only described orally by the older generation to the younger generations.

The issue is that this is one of the ancient ritual games of the Ga-Dangme state but its significance seems to have been forgotten by the present generation of ritual experts who are to enforce and maintain it. This is possibly because they, the ritual officials, relate to *Otoono tsemɔ* as one of the ordinary traditional games like *Ampe* and *Tuumatu*. But the game's association with the ritual code of silence is not a coincidence especially if one should consider the snail creature the carved object portrays and its presence on the day of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual.

³⁵ It is common knowledge that playing the *Otoono* game with real snail shells would result in making no progress at all because the shells would break immediately they are struck with the ropes. Also, real snail shells would not be able to travel the distance a designed *Otoono* can cover. It is these reasons that compelled the past generations who instituted this ritual game to have the *Otoono* object made of both wood and plastic in a more larger size than the small snail.

Snails, by their nature, are considered to be very silent and slow creatures that are supposed to calm heated circumstances and persons in African societies (Peek, 2013). What is the relationship between the wooden carved snail and the ritual code of silence and what does it signify during the festive period? Looking at *Gbemlilaa* from this perspective of silent creatures in African divination/religious systems provides a deeper understanding and appreciation of the ritual code of silence. As a way of expressing disappointment in the ritual officials and all responsible for the gradual loss of the ritual game, the Mind You *aflaṇaa* (in the year 2015) composed the song below:

*Nii mēi kē Naa mēi,
Nyefite Teshie Kusum fēē*

Elders,
You have destroyed all the traditions
of Teshie

*Keje tsuutsu blema' keji abaala
gbemli' abaatswa Otoono*

From time-immemorial, *Otoono* was
played before the *Gbemlilaa* ritual

Otoono 'ε negbe atswaa keje?
Atswaa ye Nyōḥmō Tsawe Naa
keyagbee Manjaranō.....

Where was the *Otoono* game played?
It was played from Nyōḥmō Tsawe
Naa to *Manjaranō.....*

*Nye fite Teshi kusum fēē, nyeke mansō
ewo mli*

You have destroyed all the traditions
of Teshie by extending your quarrels
to them.

3.2.2 The Senior Priest's Ritual House

While members of the community wait at *Manjaranō* amidst conversations, ritual performers of *Gbemlilaa* throng the Senior Priest's house for the necessary ritual preparation. The main people involved in this sacred preparation are the Senior Priest and the *hulɔi* with their ritual hoes. All of them go through distinct preparations at separate periods.

The *hulɔi*, for instance, begin to arrive in the Senior Priest's house an hour to the performance of the ritual. Each carry with him a bottle of Schnapps from his quarter as a religious requirement. The Senior Priest uses these Schnapps for his libation prayers during the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony and the *Hōmōwō* festival. Upon their arrival and presentation of

the Schnapps, they take off their shirts and trousers leaving only their underwear on. The *hulɔi*, while seated, are marked with a white clay (called *Ayilɔ*) by Naa Afieye. The marking, which is done on specific parts of their bodies, is that of the *Kple* symbol of II (see Figure 15). The *Kple* symbol inscribed on *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers and hoes is indexical-indexical because it points to *Kple* religion and the basic philosophy that undergird the whole *Hɔmɔwɔ* celebrations. After the marking, the *hulɔi* wear a white calico (called *Klala*, in Ga language) around their waist to cover the lower parts of their body³⁶. A garland made of *Nyanyra* vine is, then, placed around their necks.



Figure 15 -Naa Afieye is marking the *hulɔi* in the ritual house of the Senior Priest. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

The hoes, on the other hand, are ritually cleansed before the arrival of the *hulɔi* and the public. Afieye cleanses the hoes by using ordinary water and fragrant soap to bath them. She then mixes water from three different sources (sea, river, and rain) in a ritual bowl that is

³⁶ There is a Ga saw that *Ake Mantse fuuu daa* literally, you do not challenge the King. This is one of the reasons for stripping the *hulɔi* half-naked with only a yard or two of white calico around their waist. Politically, it restricts them from overshadowing the status of the Senior Priest.

reserved for this ceremonial cleansing³⁷. The *Nyanyra* vine and other ritual leaves are, afterwards, added to the mixed water to create the complete sacred water with which the hoes are rinsed³⁸. Afieye finally uses white and red clay (*Ayilɔ* and *Tuŋ*) to mark the hoes, with the same *Kple* symbol of II, after which they are adorned with a garland made of *Nyanyra* vine around their necks. The heads of the hoes are, finally, placed on the *Maa Yoomle* shrine (See Figure 16).

During this same period of preparation, the supposed incarnates are also brought to the Senior Priest's ritual house by their mothers to be adorned with a garland made of *Nyanyra* vine and further marked with the *Kple* symbol. This is done after the *hulɔi* have been taken through their ceremonial cleansing. Anyone who enters the Senior Priest's ritual house, on this day, gets to wear a garland made of *Nyanyra* vine around his/her neck for free or for a token.



Figure 16 -The ritual hoes, in their cleansed and decorated state, with their heads on the *Maa Yoomle* Shrine. Picture taken in the house of the Senior Priest on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

³⁷ There is a separate basin that is placed in an open space when it is raining. The rain water for this ritual is considered sacred since it has had no contact with a building's roofing.

³⁸ Like *Otomɛ*, *Too lilei*, *Odobi yaayilo*, and *Tookpoku agbe*; these are ritual leaves.

The Senior Priest is the last person to be marked during this period of preparation in his ritual house. It is assumed that everyone and everything is ready once he sits on his ritual stool. Upon seating, Afieye goes to mark him with the *Kple* symbol (see Figure 17) after which his *Laabia* hands him a garland made of *Nyanyra* vine. For two times, the Senior Priest ceremonially and rhythmically puts the *Nyanyra* vine around his neck and lifts it up as if trying to take it off. He finally wears it on the third round. The Senior Priest puts the *Nyanyra* vine around his own neck by himself because he holds the highest office in the land. It will therefore take an expert of his status, or even higher than him, to put the *Nyanyra* around his neck. Not only is this religious, it is also political since by personally putting his garland made of *Nyanyra* around his neck he asserts his position as most senior to all.

Upon realising that the Senior Priest is convinced and ready to commence the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony, the *Laabia* pours out Schnapps into the Priest's *putua* while he (the Senior Priest) is still seated beside the *Osrama* deity³⁹. He then prays for a peaceful and successful ceremony by firstly calling on *Bɔɔ Mawu* (Creator God). He proceeds to acknowledge, in an orderly manner, all the autochthonic (*Obuade*) deities of the community⁴⁰.

³⁹ The *putua* is a small coconut shell mainly designed for libation. Ritual experts also do drink from it after libation prayers.

⁴⁰ There is another breed of deities (called *Tsofa wɔjii*) the Senior Priest does not acknowledge during this libation prayers and all other prayers within the festive season. The belief is that, they are foreign to the town and its traditions.



Figure 17- The Senior Priest, seated on his ritual stool. Standing beside him is his ritual and real wife, Naa Afieye. To his left is a ritual stool and the *Osrana* deity. He is at this moment, waiting for a cue from his *Laabia* before he pours libation to seek permission from the deities. After this libation, he will begin the procession to *Tsie We Kwei Wulu Shishi* with his section of ritual experts to meet with the *Amlakui*.

3.2.3 The Convergence at *Tsie We Kwei Wulu Shishi*

Tsie We Kwei Wulu Shishi on this day of *Gbemlilaa*, becomes a place of convergence for the Senior Priest and the *Amlakui*. On the issue of converging before finally moving to *Manjaranɔ* as a team, one party mostly arrives ahead of the other. For example, during the 2016 *Gbemlilaa* ritual, the Senior Priest and his team arrived first. After waiting for a while, he sent word to the *Amlakui* to announce his arrival and the need for them to hasten up. The *Amlakui* would also do the same should they arrive before the Senior Priest.

In moving to the place of convergence, the Senior Priest's team process in an entourage of priests and mediums. They are led by the *hulɔi* and followed by the *Laabia* who for religious purposes, gently wields the bundled smouldering *Iɲmatsu* in his hand. The

Amlakui, whom by this time are already in their ritual costume and ceremonially prepared, also process to the venue. They are led by their *We* elder who is followed by the *Osabu* medium (See Figure 18). Like their *We* elder, all *Amlakui* who are supposed to join in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual must also wear their ritual hat (called *Sɔŋ fai*). They also wear the sacred stringed leaves (called *Kɔmi*) around their neck. The only *Amlaku* exempted from this costuming is their *hulɔ*. As soon as both parties are present, the Senior Priest is once again served Schnapps by his *Laabia* (See Figure 19)⁴¹. The *Laabia*, as a way of alerting everyone concerning the libation prayers to be offered, then exclaims *Agoo Nyemei ke Tsemei* (lit. *Agoo* mothers and fathers). Afterwards, the Senior Priest offers the libation prayer on the shrine called *Kpankpɔii Kpawo*⁴².



Figure 18- The arrival of the *Amlakui* at the place of convergence. They are led by Nii Boi, the elder of Ashia *We*. He is wearing a hat (called *Sɔŋ fai*) with the *Kple* symbol inscribed on it. Around his neck is sacred stringed-leaves called *Kɔmi*. Behind him is a boy carrying the ritual stool of their *Osabu* medium. The medium, who closely follows the boy is also followed by the *Amlakui*. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

⁴¹ The Schnapps for this libation prayer at *Tsie We Kwei Wulu Shishi* is always provided by Ashia *We*. It represents their ritual hoe.

⁴² According to oral sources, Nuumo Okang Nmashie's hair and nails were buried at this place hence the shrine-*Kpankpɔii Kpawo*. It is also said that a medium, after his or her training, must be brought before this shrine and made to jump over it before he/she can fully achieve the status of a medium in the town. In semiotics, the shrine is symbolic and partly iconic- symbolic because it is an embodiment of Nuumo Okang Nmashie and generally accepted by members of the community; partly iconic because it reminds the community of its founder Nuumo Okang Nmashie.



Figure 19 -The Senior Priest (seated) being offered Schnapps, by the *Laabia*, for libation prayers at the place of convergence. Seated right to him is Nii Boye, the *Ashia We* elder. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

The larger unit of ritual experts finally proceed to *Manjaranɔ* in an orderly manner. Once again, the *hulɔi* lead the procession. They are followed by mediums and children believed to be incarnates. The priests and *Amlakui* follow the children after which the public join the procession. The procession, mainly accompanied with conversations rather than music and dance, is guarded by the *Asafoiatsemɛi* and *Asafoianyɛmɛi* who exercise this responsibility till the end of the ceremony.

3.3 PROCESSION TO THE *GBEMLILAA* RITUAL SITE

The procession to the ritual site (*Manjaranɔ*) by the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers is one of an exhibition. In addition to the diverse costumes (See Figure 20) and traditional hairstyles worn

by ritual experts for the ceremony, observers or audience also get to see ritual experts especially mediums with various religious markings and jewellery on their bodies.



Figure 20 - The *Gbemlilaa* ritual community's procession to *Manjaranɔ*. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

The day also serves as an opportune moment for mediums to characterise, through costumes, their respective deities. A male medium whose deity is a female, would dress like a female whereas a female medium whose deity is an old woman would also dress as such. Although some of these characterizations, through costumes, are easily noticed, others are not despite their visibility. For example, one cannot easily know that the length of a religious necklace around a medium's neck tells whether her deity is an old woman or not. Also, it is not immediately known to 'outsiders' that beyond aesthetics the paintings mediums make on their skin for the ceremony are identity markers. They tell whether a medium is a newcomer or an old expert. In brief, the markings on their bodies and the jewellery they wear, their

hairstyles and even the stools they carry to *Manjaranɔ* and sit on, show their statuses within the religious circles-these are not merely for aesthetic purposes⁴³.

The exhibition of costumes is not limited to mediums and priests. It is also, observed among the *Akulashiŋ* and the supposed incarnates. Some members of the *Akulashiŋ* for instance, wear very old costumes that can be traced to generations before them. With regards to the supposed incarnates, the markings on their bodies and the beads they wear signify the specific cult they belong. Although these children are dressed like priests, not all of them are. Some of them are just future *We* elders rather than priests. Because these distinctions are, sometimes, blurred, it demands the effort of a ritual expert to interpret them.

By sunset, all activities at *Manjaranɔ* have ended and everyone is anxiously waiting for the procession to arrive and begin the performance. Natives who are unable to attend the ceremony and are at home would be patiently waiting to hear reports about the ritual drama and how it has managed to end successfully. Their curiosity drives them to ask, even, passer-by's whether the ceremony was well performed.

Once the procession arrives at *Manjaranɔ*, the *hulɔi* (together with their ritual hoes) quickly move to the front space of *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine. They line up in two groups of three each, with one group facing the other. The Senior Priest, on the other hand, goes to greet and inform the already seated traditional executives (as custom demands) of the ritual's commencement.

⁴³ Older women are the ones who mostly carry their ritual stools with them because they usually do not have the energy to participate in the rigorous movement by the ritual team. Young mediums are, on the other hand, not supposed to carry their ritual stools with them. They are to fully participate in the ritual.

3.4 THE GBEMLILAA RITUAL PERFORMANCE

The *Gbemlilaa* ceremony occurs in a three distinct but connected ritual segments that, together, represent the complete ritual. In Segment I, the Senior Priest performs a three-round *Iṣmatsu* cleansing ritual called *Maṣtsukomɔ*. Afterwards, he proceeds with a three-round libation prayer called *Iṣkpaiyeli* which marks the second segment. In Segment III, the *hulɔi*, Senior Priest, *Amlakui*, and the supposed incarnates perform a three-round path clearance ritual called *Gbejee*. People tend to mostly focus on Segment III as the main event. One reason it is easy for anyone to perceive this segment as the main event is probably due to its dramatic presentational style which tends to engage the crowd more than Segments I and II which are supported by ritual experts. In performing these three ritual segments, the Senior Priest and his entourage of ritual experts traverse from one deity to the other.

Figure 21 shows the various deities and their locations in their quarters. The alphabetical labelling is to aid in following the movements of the procession. For instance, both Segments I and II begin at A and end at J. Segment three on the other hand, employs only points J and E.

***Gbemlilaa* Deities and Their Locations Within the Various Quarters.**

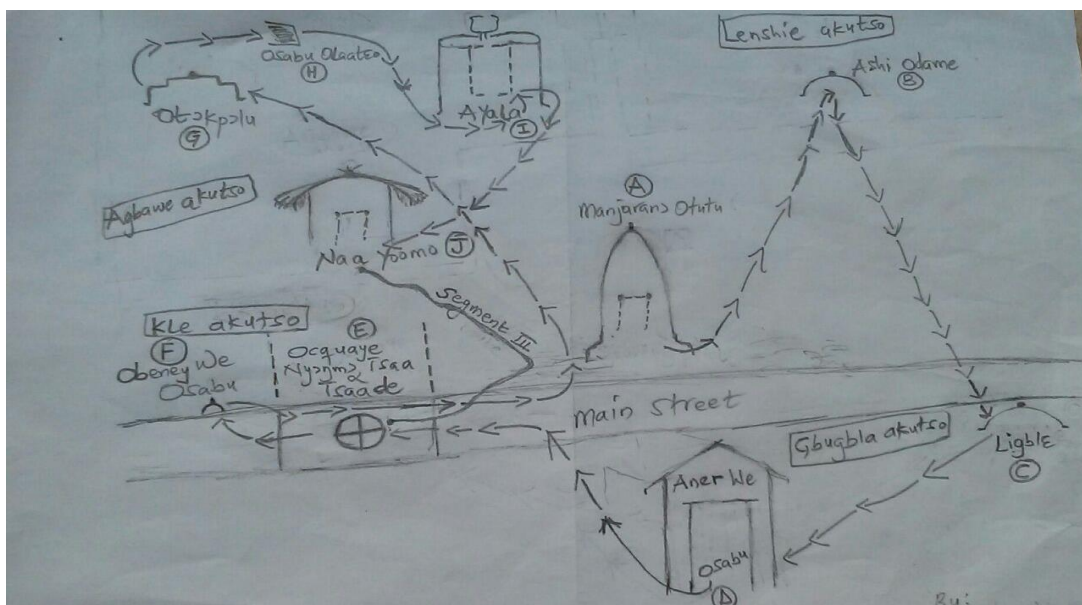


Figure 21- The *Gbemlilaa* ritual deities and their various locations. Drawn by Akwetteh, Laryea.

The performance of all the three *Gbemlilaa* ritual segments (as would be seen below) brings to fore what Richard Schechner describes as the “transportation model”- where the ritual community “enters into the experience, is moved or touched, and is then dropped off” where it entered “no matter how strong the experience” (Schechner, 2013, p. 70). So, after the performance of the three *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony, members of the ritual community – the senior priest and his assistants, the *Amlakui*, the supposed incarnates, mediums and the traditional executives- return to their everyday experiences (ibid).

3.4.1 Segment I- The Ritual Cleansing of the Town (*Maṅtsukɔmɔ*)

No music, dance, or ululation accompanies this segment. One however, constantly hears shouts from members of the traditional warrior companies (*Asafoiatsemɛi* and *Asafoiatsemɛi*) as they try to keep the ritual space free of people and from congestion. The next possible sounds come from the crowd as they freely engage in conversations. These conversations do not however distract the ritual team.

To begin this segment, the Senior Priest and the larger team of ritual experts go to the *Manjaranɔ* shrine. With the bundle of smouldering *Ḳmatsu* in his hand, he opens and purifies it with the smoke⁴⁴. He immediately proceeds, with the team, to the *Odame* shrine and purifies it. They turn back and begin to move toward the *Gbugbla* quarter. Upon reaching there, the Senior Priest wields the *Ḳmatsu* around the *Ligblɛ* and *Osabu* (D) deities respectively. The movement and purification continues to the *Kle* quarter. Whilst there, the Senior Priest purifies *Ocquaye Nyɔḳmɔ Tsa*a (and his wife *Tsaade*) and *Osabu* (F) deities respectively. With the bundled smouldering *Ḳmastu*, still, in his hands, the Senior Priest and the ritual team turn back and begin to head towards the *Agbawe* quarter. The Senior Priest,

⁴⁴ Because of the difficulty in getting *Ḳmatsu* in more present times, the *Wulɔmɔ* suggests that they tie fresh *Nyanyra* around it to make it last throughout the ritual and probably save some for later ritual events.

upon reaching there, walks to the *Otɔkpɔlu* shrine, and cleanses it with the *Iɲmatsu* smoke. The ritual team proceeds to *Osabu-Olaateɛo* and *Ayala* shrines respectively. To end the first round of this segment, the Senior Priest and the ritual team finally proceed to *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine to purify it. The ritual cleansing (see Figure 22) continues for a second and third time following the same sequence. The smouldering *Iɲmatsu* is, at the end of the segment, placed in front of *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine.



Figure 22 -With the smouldering *Iɲmatsu* in his hands, the Senior Priest and his team of ritual experts perform the purification ceremony of the town. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

3.4.2 Segment II- The Libation Prayer (*Iɲkpaiyeli*)

After the three-round *Iɲmatsu* ritual cleansing of the shrines, the *Laabia* hands two bottles of Schnapps to the Senior Priest. These Schnapps are used for the libation prayers of this second segment. Meanwhile, this segment is one of the rare moments (or probably the only moment) the entire community gets to witness the Senior Priest publicly offering libation prayers (see Figure 23).

With the Schnapps in both hands, the Senior Priest moves to the *Manjaranɔ* shrine together with his team of ritual experts⁴⁵. He stands in front of the shrine and in a soft voice prays to Creator God (*Bɔɔ Mawu*, in Ga language) and the *Manjaranɔ* Shrine, while intermittently pouring the Schnapps on the ground. After this prayer, the Senior Priest and the ritual team steadily move to the *Odame* shrine, at the Lenshie quarter, and offers prayers. They continue to the Gbugbla quarter where libation prayers are offered to *Ligblɛ* and *Osabu* (D) shrines respectively. The journey continues to the Kle quarter. Whilst there, the Senior Priest prays to *Ocquaye Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaɔ* (and his wife, *Tsaade*) and *Osabu* (F) shrines. Afterwards, the ritual team goes to the Agbawe quarter where they offer libation prayers to *Otɔkpɔlu*, *Osabu Olaatɛɛo*, and *Ayala* shrines respectively. The final libation prayer is offered at the shrine of *Naa Yoomo* in the Gbugbla quarter. This marks the end of the first round of segment II. The second and third rounds also follow the same sequence as this first round. Once the second segment is completed, the two bottles of Schnapps are placed in front of *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine.

⁴⁵ He partly covers their openings with his forefingers to avoid emptying the bottles early.



Figure 23- The Senior Priest, praying to the *Manjaranɔ* shrine during the segment II of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual. He is crowded by the ritual team. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

3.4.3 Segment III- Clearing of Path (*Gbejee*)

Apart from the ritual drama, music, and dance in this segment, the segment also has its own distinct sequence. *Ocquaye Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa* (and his wife *Tsaade*) and *Naa Yoomo* are the only shrines that are involved in this segment of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. The segment thus, begins in front of *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine (rather than the usual *Manjaranɔ Otutu*) and continues to *Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa*. This segment is, also, accompanied by ululations from mediums. According to one of the priests I interviewed, these ululations are a way of attracting the deities' attention to ensure a successful festive period and to further provide abundant fish and rain for the community. The same ululations are, additionally, meant to deter people from ignorantly occupying the ritual space during the ceremony.

To commence this segment, the Senior Priest and his team of ritual experts join the already assembled *hulɔi* in front of *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine (see Figure 24). He stands directly in front of the shrine, and as a way of asking for success, exclaims:

<i>Tswa! Tswa!! Tswa!!! ni Omanyɛ aba</i>	Hail! Hail!! Hail!!! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Tswa! Tswa!! Tswa!!! ni Omanyɛ aba</i>	Hail! Hail!! Hail!!! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Tswa! Tswa!! Tswa!!! ni Omanyɛ aba</i>	Hail! Hail!! Hail!!! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Okang gbee 'ɛ yi</i> ⁴⁶	Okang unite with your siblings
(Chorus) - <i>eegbo</i>	And resolve the impasse



Figure 24- The *hulɔi*, lined up in two groups of three each facing the other. They have been joined by the Senior Priest and his team of ritual experts in front of *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine as they get ready to begin Segment III. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

⁴⁶ According to oral sources, a misunderstanding ensued between Nuumo Okang Nmashie and his siblings while they were in La. In one of their meetings, his siblings ignored his suggestions as they saw him as a threat to their progress. By his own decision, he opted out of subsequent meetings leaving his siblings to fully take responsibility of their meetings and the outcome. Unfortunately, the siblings did not make any progress and further encountered several challenges. They therefore decided to go and apologize to Nuumo Okang Nmashie. The Senior Priest of La at the time, was also invited to plead with Nuumo Okang Nmashie to accept the apology. It was at this point that in offering a libation prayer, to end the meeting, the Priest said '*Tswa! Tswa!! Tswa!!! Okang gbee onyemimeɪ lɛ ayi koni sane ni eba lɛ agbo*' basically asking Nuumo Okang Nmashie to unite with his siblings and resolve the impasse. This declaration has however been corrupted as *Okang gbee 'ɛ yi...eegbo*. It is this corrupted version that is mainly known and spoken by all religious officials and members of the Teshie community.

The *hulɔi* raise their hoes and bring it down during the first and second proclamations. On the third proclamation, they stretch their hands so the heads of the hoes can touch their opposite hoes after which they immediately get into their weeding posture and begin to mime-weed from *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine to *Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa*. The Senior Priest, with his sacred broom (called *Besa*) in his right hand, also joins the *hulɔi* by mime-sweeping as they mime-weed⁴⁷.

For the ritual experts to know where to end the mime-weeding, a symbolic boundary (called *Akrabatsa* in Ga language) has been drawn on the tarred road right in front of *Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa*. The *hulɔi* and the Senior Priest, thus, conclude the mime-weeding and -sweeping by rising to their feet once they reach the marked spot (see Figure 25).



Figure 25- Standing in the marked spot is the Senior Priest. Together with the ritual team, they are getting ready to journey to *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine after the mime-weeding and -sweeping to *Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa*. In front of the Senior Priest are the *hulɔi* with their ritual hoes in their hands. Picture taken on August, 2016. (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea)

⁴⁷ According to some ritual experts, the use of the *Besa* by the Senior Priest indicates the sweeping of all filth in the community. They argue that ritual experts, indigenes, and non-Ga residing in the community have all engaged in a lot of filthy activities throughout the year. This supposed filth must not be carried into the new year hence, its sweeping by the Senior Priest.

The journey from Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa to Naa Yoomo’s shrine however, assumes a new formation (see Figure 26). The ritual team is led by the supposed incarnates who are then followed by the *hulɔi*- all of them in two parallel lines. The *Amlakui* are the last to follow in the procession as the *Wulɔmɔ* and his team of experts also follow the *hulɔi*.

The New Formation of the *Gbemlilaa* Ritual Performers- from Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa Naa to Naa Yoomo’s shrine.

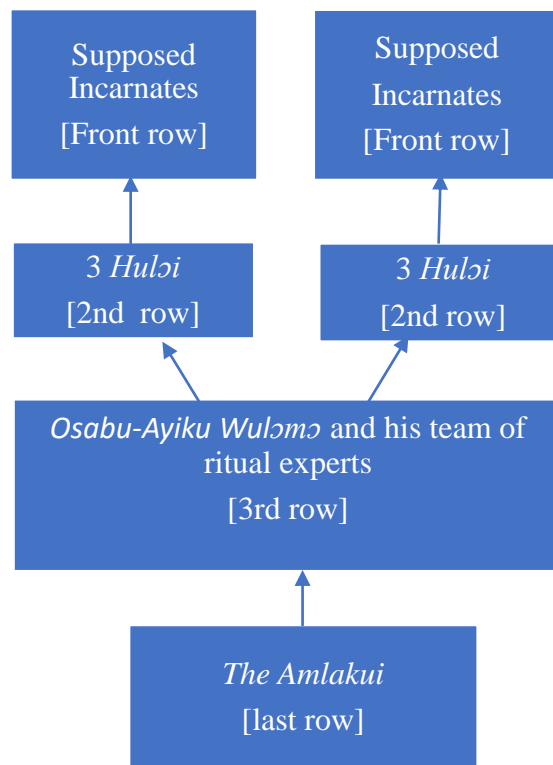


Figure 26- The new formation of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers

Whilst in this new formation, the cantor of the *Amlakui Asafoiatse* Omrugu exclaims (for three times) in a loud voice: Hail! May we be successful. Next, he does a short recitative and finally calls the path clearing song *Ankamah Gbejee*⁴⁸. This is the sole ritual song sung throughout the first and second round of the *Gbejee* segment. A textual transcription of the

⁴⁸ Presently, there is an *Amlaku* who is being mentored to become a cantor. The call is rotated between him and cantor.

song has been provided to demonstrate how the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony seeks to renew the entire Teshie community.

A Textual Transcription of the Path Clearing Song

<i>Tswa! ni Omanyeba</i>	Hail! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Okang gbe'eyi</i>	Okang unite with your siblings
(Chorus) <i>Eegbo</i>	And resolve the impasse
<i>Tswa!! ni Omanyeba</i>	Hail!! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Okang gbe'eyi</i>	Okang unite with your siblings
(Chorus) <i>Eegbo</i>	And resolve the impasse
<i>Tswa!!! ni Omanyeba</i>	Hail!!! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Okang gbe'eyi</i>	Okang unite with your siblings
(Chorus) <i>Eegbo</i>	And resolve the impasse
Cantor does a short recitative	
Cantor's call: <i>Ajeee gbe ajee gbe neke</i>	This is an unusual path clearing
Chorus	
<i>Wonye Ankamah gbejee</i>	We are embarking on Ankamah's path clearing
<i>Ajeee gbe ajee gbe neke</i>	This is an unusual path clearing
<i>Wonye Ankamah gbejee</i>	We are embarking on Ankamah's path clearing.

During the final round of Segment III, from *Nyɔnmɔ Tsaa Naa* to *Manjaranɔ*, the *Amlakui* sing a different song *Ake Omanyebaahawɔ*, that also focuses on the renewal of the Teshie community.

A Textual Transcription of The Song *Ake Omanyebaahawɔ*

<i>Tswa! ni Omanyeba</i>	Hail! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Okang gbe'eyi</i>	Okang unite with your siblings
(Chorus) <i>Eegbo</i>	And resolve the impasse
<i>Tswa!! ni Omanyeba</i>	Hail!! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Okang gbe'eyi</i>	Okang unite with your siblings
(Chorus) <i>Eegbo</i>	And resolve the impasse
<i>Tswa!!! ni Omanyeba</i>	Hail!! May we be successful
(Chorus) <i>Hiao</i>	May it be well with us
<i>Okang gbe'eyi</i>	Okang unite with your siblings
(Chorus) <i>Eegbo</i>	And resolve the impasse

Cantor does a short recitative	
Cantor's call: <i>Omanyɛ wɔkɛ ba ee</i>	We came with success
(Chorus)	
<i>Akɛ omanyɛ aba'awɔ ee</i>	So, let us be successful
<i>Omanyɛ wɔkɛ ba</i>	We came in with success
<i>Akɛ omanyɛ aba'awɔ ee</i>	So, let us be successful

Once at *Manjaranɔ*, the *hulɔi* immediately assemble in front of *Naa Yoomo*'s shrine and wait for the Senior Priest to perform the closing ritual. The Senior Priest, encircled by the ritual experts, stands in front of the *Manjaranɔ* shrine. He lifts the two bottles of Schnapps up, looks at the heavens, and melodically exclaims in a loud voice:

<i>Bɔɔ Maawu oooooo o,</i>	Creator God
<i>Bɔɔ Maawu oooooo o,</i>	Creator God
<i>Bɔɔ Maawu oooooo o,</i>	Creator God

For each of the above phrase, he pours the Schnapps on the ground. After praying to Creator God, he prays to the *Manjaranɔ* Shrine and pleads for mercy for the whole community. He finally prays for a peaceful and fruitful year for the community and the whole country. Those standing with him intermittently respond *Hiao* to all his prayers. After this prayer, members of the town say *Ala gbemli* (lit. The Road is Blocked) to imply a ban on some daily activities like funerary rites, frying of fish, pronouncing a curse, summoning people to a deity, playing of musical instruments (singing is allowed), and all other musical types except *Kpa*.

3.5 RECESSION FROM THE *GBEMLILAA* RITUAL SITE

After offering the final libation prayer in front of the *Manjaranɔ* shrine, the Senior Priest and his *Laabia* go to the traditional executives to notify them of the successful ritual ceremony. The Senior Priest, after informing the traditional executives, joins the larger entourage and together they recess to *Tsiɛ We Kwei Wulu Shishi*. With his ritual walking stick in his right hand, he rhythmically accompanies his steps and whilst moving sideways, he

dances to the *Amlakuiakpa* at his own pace thereby controlling the general pace of the procession. This journey is, however, one of a show for both the cantors and ritual experts. In the case of the senior cantor and his junior, they occasionally exhibit their expertise in the choice of *Amlaku* music to call. In doing this, they may point to their position in the town as true indigenes and further challenge any official, quarter, or principal house that comes into conflict with them. In 2016 for instance, a misunderstanding ensued between the *Amlakui* and the supposed king of Teshie while the two parties were waiting for the commencement of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual. The *Amlakui* expressed their disappointment with the supposed King for behaving as if they are part of those opposing him. The issue was partly resolved after the *Amlakui* had warned the supposed King to desist from getting them involved in his conflicts. The *Amlakui* however, took the issue onto the ritual stage due to their dissatisfaction with the King. On their way to *Tsie We Kwei Wulu Shishi*, they sang the song *Nii Larsey ye La* as a way of declaring their authenticity and status as true Teshie indigenes even before the arrival of Nuumo Okang Nmashie and his founding of Teshie. The exaggeration with which the *Amlakui* performed the song made people curious. Meanwhile, I did not pay much attention to the conflict and its connection to the song until I was told the motivation behind the song by some elders when I went home. It was at that moment that I began to reflect on the song and some of the statements the *Amlakui* made in front of the supposed king. The textual transcription of the song is shown as follows:

Textual Transcription of the Song *Nii Larsey ye La* (Nii Larsey was already in La)

Cantor

Tswa!!! ni Omanyee aba
 (Chorus) *Hiao*
Okang gbe'ε 'yi
 (chorus) *eegbo* (3x)

Hail!!! May we be successful
 May it be well with us
 Okang unite with your siblings
 And resolve the impasse

Recitative by Cantor

Hεε Larsey ye La eeeeeee Larsey ye La
eeeeee Larsey ye La ee, Larsey ye La eeeeeee

Larsey was in La eeeeeee Larsey was in La
 eeeeeee Larsey was in La eeeeeee, Larsey was
 in La eeeeeee

(Chorus) <i>aaaaahhh</i>	chorus <i>aaaaahhh</i>
Recitative (continued)	
<i>Hee Nii Larsey ye La shi Nii Larsey ye La moooooooooo mo!</i>	Yes! Nii Larsey was in La, but Nii Larsey was already in La
<i>Kojo Osabu Olaateo Nii Larsey ye La ee! Nii Larsey ye La ee,</i>	Kojo Osabu Olaateo Nii Larsey was already in La! Nii Larsey was in La ee, Nii Larsey was in La ee,
Cantor sings chorus	
<i>Dani ake bo ba ee Nii Larsey ye La</i>	Nii Larsey was in La before you were brought there ee
(Chorus)	
 <i>Mooo mo!</i>	Already
<i>'ni ake bo bae Nii Larsey m'ye La mooo mo</i>	Nii Larsey was already in La before you were brought there
Cantor	
<i>Okang Nmashie ake bo ba ee... Nii Larsey ye La (chorus responds Mooo mo!)</i>	Okang Nmashie, Nii Larsey was already in La before you were brought there

Apart from the *Amlakui* and priests, some ritual experts also see the recession as an avenue to artistically dance to *Amlakuiakpa*. Because the *Amlakui* themselves are more focused on their music rather than their dance, in more present times, this instance becomes a major avenue to witness the aesthetics of their dance as performed by trained dancers, specifically, mediums who are not necessarily *Amlaku*. To attract attention, these ritual experts do embellish the movements such that they use more than the required or expected space⁴⁹. They creatively dominate the space that can be used by three to four (or more) people based on their levels of agility. In the case of the mediums, although performing the *Amlaku* dance during this recession moment improves their confidence level, it also signals other mediums to take up the challenge and show their skills the following year.

As soon as the ritual team gets to *Tsie We Kwei Wulu Shishi*, the Senior Priest and the elder of *Ashia We* sit on their ritual stools. The rest of the experts and those audience who might have joined the procession remain in a standing position. While seated, the Senior Priest is given the *putua* by his *Laabia* who further exclaims *Agoo* to call everyone to

⁴⁹ Meanwhile, doing the *Amlaku* dance demands calculated and majestic movements of the whole body especially the legs and arms, from left to right.

attention. He then pours the Schnapps into the *putua* for the senior priest. After offering the libation prayer on the *Kpankpii kpawo* shrine, the Senior Priest disperses the crowd with the phrase Happy New Year (*Afi oo afi*) to signify life in abundance⁵⁰. At this moment, the *hulɔi* and the Senior Priest proceed to the Priest's ritual house where they hand over the ritual hoes to Naa Afieye, remove the white calico around their waists, and put on their own clothes to assume their non-ritual position as ordinary citizens of the community.

3.6 FINALISING THE *GBEMLILAA* RITUAL CEREMONY

Meanwhile, the three segment *Gbemlilaa* rituals performed at *Manjaranɔ* is deemed incomplete by ritual experts. To make it complete, *Nyɔnɔmɔ Tsaa Naa* must immediately close the main gates of its entrance for seven days. Because of this ritual closing of the gates, there is an alternative entrance which becomes the house's main entry and exit point during the seven days closing ritual. Their deities (*Ocquaye Nyɔnɔmɔ Tsaa* and *Tsaade*, his wife) and ancestors would be displeased if the house does not play its part in ensuring a successful *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. In the year 2015 for instance, the people of *Nyɔnɔmɔ Tsaa Naa* prevented the Senior Priest from using their part of the ritual space during the sprinkling of the *Kpokpoi*. They further refused to offer him the annual bottle of Schnapps as has been the religious norm. The ancestors of the house were irked and sent word to the members of their *We* when some of their ritual experts travelled to enquire of the oracles for a different purpose. According to one of my interlocutors, the oracle asked the experts if they knew why the Senior Priest always extended the sprinkling of the *Kpokpoi* to the entrance of their house. They were immediately ordered to go and pacify the deities to stop the misfortune about to happen. After complying, they apologized to the Senior Priest and further prepared and

⁵⁰ In semiotics, the phrase *Afi oo Afi* is indexical and partly iconic- indexical because, it is only employed within the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festive season. It is partly iconic because it calls to mind the *Hɔmɔwɔ* ritual space.

opened their part of the ritual space to him the following year. This is one of such issues that are not supposed to be discussed in public. It is a secret kept in the memory of some ritual experts and elders in the town, discussing it in public can start a conflict. On the other hand, matters of this nature can only be legitimately publicised by the traditional musical groups at no other period except the festive season. Interestingly, a conflict still exists between the house of Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa* and the Senior Priest over the position of the town's chief fisherman. The Senior Priest is not in support of the self-acclaimed chief fisherman of Nyɔŋmɔ Tsaa *Naa* and therefore does not recognize him⁵¹. The supposed chief fisherman and his team of ritual experts (called *agbaafoi*) are however, cautious in this matter. Meanwhile, the dispute always heightens during the festive period.

3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have described the three ritual segments that make up the complete *Gbemlilaa* ceremony. The ritual segments highlight the community's commitment to renew its relationship with its complete cosmology. The succeeding chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the segments. It becomes apparent that the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony that institutes the code of silence is, itself, not performed in silence. And even after the ceremony, the community continues to produce sound that can be described as noise. The next chapter further explores the notion of sound, silence, and death (in the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival) and why *Gbemlilaa* uses *Kpashimɔ* musical performances to frame the festival.

⁵¹ The Senior Priest's position is based on his knowledge of which principal house is eligible for the position as well as the deities' action against him if he should connive with the illegitimate candidate.

CHAPTER FOUR: “THE ROAD IS BLOCKED”: SYMBOLISMS OF SOUND AND SILENCE IN GA *HOMOWO*- A TESHIE PERSPECTIVE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I explore the symbolisms of sound and silence in the Teshie *Homowo* by engaging with Ga notion of sound, silence, noise, and death from a Teshie perspective. The chapter further provides an in-depth analysis of the three-segment *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. It finally gives a more general analysis of how *Gbemlilaa* frames the main *Homowo* event using *Kpashimɔ* musical performances.

Gbemlilaa can be described as a symbolic and partly indexical event. It is symbolic because of the connection that exists between the ritual code of silence it institutes and the *Homowo* festive period, through the definition *Ala gbemli* as agreed upon by the Teshie community within the context of the community’s annual *Homowo* festival. It is partly indexical because, it points to the Ga annual period of silence or what the public mostly identify as ‘a period of ban on drumming and noise-making’. Meanwhile, the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence is also iconic in that, it has a similarity relationship with all the various codes of silence observed by societies worldwide.

As a symbolic event that precedes the celebration of the *Homowo* and without which the festival cannot be observed, the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony ushers in a ritual period of symbolic inversion where there is a “Reversal of biological and social roles, and reversal of what is considered to be ordinary biological or social states of existence and behaviour” (Pandian, 2001, p. 558). To present a more rounded, solid, and truly phenomenological and yet critical investigation of the ritual performance of noise and silence, the analytical sites of symbolic inversion would be discussed in the section on Ga notion of noise and silence.

4.2 GA NOTION OF SOUND, SILENCE, NOISE, AND DEATH IN THE TESHIE *HOMOWO* FESTIVAL

According to John Cage, “silence is all of the sound we don’t intend” (in Khan, 1997, p. 558). The *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence is not an absolute negation of sound: it “includes sounds and more and more” (sic) (ibid). The dual/complementary rituals of *Gbemlilaa* and *Gbemlilaa gblemɔ* frames the *Homowɔ* festival by distinguishing sound from silence⁵². For example, the sounds *Gbemlilaa* abhor are the sounds *Gbemlilaa gblemɔ* reinstates. Within the *Gbemlilaa* ritual frame, innocuous sounds from hand clapping, playing traditional games, large-scale fish frying, and musical instruments are all perceived as symbolic noise and thus, prohibited. Yet, *Kpashimɔ* songs blurring on loud public address (PA) systems are allowed during the observance of the ritual code of silence. The *Gbemlilaa* ritual frame of the Teshie *Homowɔ*, in brief, brings to fore, Ga notion of sound, silence, noise, and death.

Richard Schechner’s “transformation model” helps to further comprehend the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. According to him, “transformations...convert dangerous encounters into less dangerous aesthetic and social enactments” (Schechner, 2003, p. 128). In other words, the ritual ceremony and the ritual code it institutes provide a mediated space for issues -no matter how dangerous or sensitive- to be discussed in speech or songs as would be seen in the subsequent sections. (What this means is that, there would be no mediated space without the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual.) In carrying out such transformations during the observance of the ritual code of silence and the larger festival, those who manage the transformation- like the traditional musical groups- are believed to have the power to interact with the sacred and disarm all evil persons in the community. Although Schechner has further argued that liminal rituals, as transformation performances, permanently change who people

⁵² *Gbemlilaa gblemɔ* is the ritual performed to lift the ban the ritual code institutes.

are and that “a person is transformed only a few times in life, if ever” (Schechner, 2013, p. 72), the annual performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony, the various ritual acts the ceremony projects, and the socio-political and religious renewal it brings forth suggests that liminal rituals (as transformation models) also happen annually in some cultures, if not all. In other words, transformation models need not be permanent, they can also be temporal and therefore necessitating subsequent repetitions as happens in the annual Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.

4.2.1 Ga Notion of Sound in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* Festival

Among the Ga, sound is translated as *Gbɛɛmɔ* to imply any form of audibility such as sound from speech, drumming, slaps and beatings, footsteps, songs, urinating, flatulence, whistling, and gadgets. The above Ga term suggests that any activity that is perceptible by the ear is considered, by the Ga people, as a sound. Like every society, the Ga desirability for a sound is based on time, space, or their belief systems. An example is the Ga belief that a baby’s cry, during the night, can attract the attention of spirit beings who may take the baby’s life depending on his/her reason for crying.

The Ga description of sound as any form of audibility also suggests that the content of a sound and what it seeks to achieve at a given time, is very significant to Ga people. During their *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, for instance, one regularly hears a sound (in speech) like *Afiooooooooo afi* (Happy New Year), *Walaeeeeee ee Wala* (life in abundance), and *Omanyeeeeee ee Omanyee* (goodwill, success, peace) meant to renew the community’s socio-political and religious lives. The Ga festive period thus, marks a time when the only desired sound is one that seeks to give life, blessings, and goodwill messages. In semiotics, these desired sounds are indices- they point to the period of socio-political and religious renewal in the community.

Within the Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ritual frame, it is conceived that all sound must be in support of and promote the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festive period. Any sound that contradicts this view is perceived as unproductive and tagged as noise. To better understand the description of unproductivity, the Ga use the term *gbonyo* (literally, dead person) as an affix for whatever they are describing. For example, they refer to: a bad or an offensive person as *gbɔmɔ gbonyo*, a bad character as *suban gbonyo*, a bad law as *mɔla gbonyo*, a bad activity as *nɔ gbonyo* etc. By this, the Ga establish an iconic relationship, based on resemblance, between death and unproductivity. In this regard, any sound (in speech or song) meant to curse, demand for the payment of debts, and summon a person to a deity or traditional elder (during the observance of the ritual code of silence) is considered a dead or an unproductive sound⁵³. The people of Teshie believe that a musical sound, produced within the festive space, must be able to address issues positively. *Kpashimɔ* songs that are composed, solely, to insult are, in this regard, also described as unproductive hence the Ga phrase *Kpa gbonyo* literally, a dead *Kpa*. To the community, such songs are powerless. They cannot contribute to the social renewal the community seeks to achieve. Describing an undesired sound as dead should also draw our attention to the notion of sacred and secular.

4.2.2 Ga Notion of Death in Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* Festival

In describing the state of putrefaction, the Ga say *efite*. Apart from using this term (*efite*) to mainly describe the normal spoilage of food, the Ga also use the term to describe a dead person (*gbonyo*). This state of putrefaction, as used by the Ga to refer to a spoiled food

⁵³ Although frying of fish is quite productive, from a practical perspective, traditional religious adherents argue that the sound that emits from the frying process is noisy. On a more scientific note, it is most likely to be this reason: during the observance of the ritual code of silence, fishing activities in the rivers are forbidden. The rivers, themselves, are believed to be deities and so, going to fish in them during the period of the ban is considered a distraction. People are, on the other hand, allowed to fry fish on a very small-scale, for household consumption.

and a corpse, is considered unclean and unfit to encounter the sacred. During the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, for instance, no corpse is allowed passage into or through the Teshie town hence, the phrase *akɛ gbonyo efooo Kpeshie kɛ Sango* literally ‘A corpse cannot be taken across the *Kpeshie* and *Sango* lagoons’⁵⁴.

The Ga people believe that their ancestors and autochthonic deities are the givers and protectors of life and their presence in the town, during the festive season, signifies life in the community. It therefore, becomes a taboo and a curse to experience death within the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festive period and the Ga treat it as such⁵⁵. In Teshie for instance, anyone who dies during the festive celebration is said to have died on a day death is forbidden. He or she must be buried immediately without any mourning. The only funeral rite observed is the religious rituals performed by the *Amlakui* before and after the deceased is buried. The ritual is meant to cleanse the town of the unpleasant event⁵⁶.

Because of how death is perceived and treated within the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festive space, relatives of a deceased might consult deities outside the town to know the cause of their child’s death. If it is confirmed that the death is not a natural one, then whoever caused it would be dealt with in that year’s *Kpashimɔ* songs. During the reign of Adjei Bugey as chief fisherman of Teshie in the 1990s, a young fisherman (called Kweisa) drowned in the sea. The death, which occurred between the Tuesday and Wednesday immediately after the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony, raised questions concerning the Chief Fisherman’s responsibilities to the sea. Kweisa’s relations could not come to terms with the death of their sibling who was an

⁵⁴ *Kpeshie* lagoon is situated between Teshie and La. It belongs to the people of La and forms part of their deities. The *Sango* lagoon is situated in Teshie. It is the only lagoon between the Teshie community and Nungua.

⁵⁵ In her book “*Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*” Margaret Field gives a vivid account of what happens not only to those who die during the Ga *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, but also what happens to the deceased’s family.

⁵⁶ The only people exempted from this hurried burial are the Christians and non-indigenes. Christians keep their deceased in the mortuary till the end of the festive period when they can start to plan the funeral activities. Non-indigenes can also do same as the Christians or take the deceased to his/her hometown.

experienced fisherman. The sea, according to oral sources, was (at the time) annually given a live cow as sacrifice for abundant fish during the bumper harvest. Adjei Bugey refused to observe this ritual during his tenure. The fishermen, who also double as members of the traditional musical groups decided to bring up Kweisa's death into the *Kpashimɔ* performance, especially when the period of his death forbade them from mourning him. To highlight the Ga notion of silence and death as analysed above, a textual transcription of the song has been provided.

Textual transcription of a *Kpashimɔ* song that commented on Kweisa's death

<i>Adjei Bugey esaaa woleiatse</i>	Adjei Bugey does not deserve the position of a chief fisherman
<i>Shi ice water 'sani ehɔɔ</i>	Instead, he is fit to sell ice water (<i>kleba kleba</i> - a nonsense syllable)
<i>Kleba kleba</i>	
<i>Adjei Bugey esaaa woleiatse</i>	Adjei Bugey does not deserve the position of a Chief Fisherman
<i>Shi ice water 'sani ehɔɔ</i>	Instead, he is fit to sell ice water
<i>Eyana tsofatse, tsofatse 'e kále kita ko</i>	The medicine man he went to consult made him take an oath
<i>Abaaya wuo afii Kpawo shi agbooo</i>	Fishing would go on for seven years without any death occurring
<i>Abaaya wuo afii Kpawo shi agbooo ye</i>	Fishing would go on for seven years without any death occurring
<i>ηshɔ mli eee</i>	
<i>Eshɛko nyɔjii etɛ Kweisa gbo</i>	In less than three months, Kweisa died
<i>Eshɛko nyɔjii etɛ Kweisa gbo ye ηshɔ mli</i>	In less than three months, Kweisa drowned in the sea
<i>Mɛni awerɛho gbele nɛ,</i>	What kind of sorrowful death is this?
<i>Mɛni mɔbɔ gbele nɛ</i>	What kind of pitiful death is this?
<i>Kweisa gbo ye ηshɔ mli</i>	Kweisa died in the sea
<i>Ala gbɛmli Ju, Jufo kɛha Shɔ</i>	They 'blocked the road' on Monday, Tuesday
<i>Kweisa gbo ye ηshɔ mli</i>	into Wednesday, Kweisa drowned in the sea

During the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, songs like the above are used to disarm the culprits and their spiritual powers and further cleanse the community of the act. To this end, it is evident that the Ga notion of death is not only physical. It is also symbolic.

4.2.3 Ga Notion of Silence in Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* Festival

The Ga notion of silence within the Teshie *Gbemlilaa* ritual frame “becomes an important symbol for general community health, as well as for healthy transitions from one phase into another” in the socio-political and religious lives of the Teshie community (Avorgbedor, 2000, p. 11). It is, primarily, concerned with issues that have been left to idle, waiting for the opportune moment to be unearthed. These issues, as broad and encompassing as they can be, are described by the Ga as *sajii ni awɔnɔ* literally ‘issues that have been slept on’. They range from issues at the interpersonal level, to family issues, issues concerning local authorities, issues at the national level etc. Sometimes, they are based on observation community members have made.

Sajii ni awɔnɔ are considered as (unproductive) noise in ordinary life and thus, no one talks about them. But this logic is reversed during the observance of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence: *sajii ni awɔnɔ*, as issues that have been left to idle, become acceptable and productive. To the Ga, this silence (or *sajii ni awɔnɔ*), within their ritual context of symbolic inversion, is “a present reality tied to life... it is a source of life since it leads to the conservation of existence which it otherwise protects” (Zahan, 1979 as cited in Peek, 1994, p. 477). The *Gbemlilaa* ritual frame provides an opportunity to address these issues (in speech and songs) since they threaten the peace and stability of the town. The way and manner they are awakened and commented upon (in speech and songs) within the frame *Gbemlilaa* provides, confirms Philip Peek’s argument that “silence is the supreme virtue, a type of wisdom that subsumes integrity, courage, the power of the soul, prudence, modesty, and temperance” (Peek, 2013, p. 5). In brief, sounds (in speech and songs) that address issues that have been left to idle (*sajii ni awɔnɔ*) are productive and thus, are not considered noise. To the Teshie people, these productive sounds (*sajii ni awɔnɔ*) “establish a secured environment for participants.....and further contribute toward the efficiency of existing mechanisms that

seek to restore and promote.....the wellbeing in individuals and the community at large”
(Avorgbedor, 2000, p. 11).

In the *Gbemlilaa* ritual context, “not only are the rules and procedures of musical practice reversed and interrogated, but effort is also made to extend the boundaries of sound” (ibid). During the Teshie annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, *sajii ni awɔnɔ* become the primary compositional resources for the *Kpashimɔ* musical groups. They are set to memorable tunes with well-crafted texts and are publicly discussed without regards for anyone. Apart from the vocally harmonised parts by the traditional musicians, the only sound that accompanies these *Kpashimɔ* songs is the deliberate sound the performers produce by rhythmically stamping their feet. The songs are, thus, not accompanied on any musical instrument.

Beyond the belief that musical instruments do not promote the festive period, lies another belief that the sounds from musical instruments interrupt the *Hɔmɔwɔ* ritual activities like *Kpashimɔ* performances. The Teshie community, for example, practice a tradition of vocal music. They sing without the assistance of sound devices like microphones and loud speakers. Using musical instruments in such a vocal music performance like *Kpashimɔ*, defeats the purpose of the performance. I have observed that on the day the ban is lifted, the sound from musical instruments incorporated into the performance strongly compete with the songs within the same acoustic environment. In that instance, cantors struggle to communicate with the choruses effectively. The listeners, also, encounter the challenge of not grasping the songs both textually and musically. To avoid facing the same challenge during the observance of the ritual code of silence, traditional religious adherents scout the community during *Kpashimɔ* performances. Anyone who is seen playing a musical instrument is whipped and the musical instrument, seized. By this, it is evident that the Ga consider sound that interrupts as unproductive. Because of the issues *Kpashimɔ* songs address and the way and manner they address the issues, the Teshie community perceives the

Kpashimɔ performances as silence. In summary, *Kpashimɔ* performances are believed to constitute silence.

4.2.4 Ga Notion of Noise in Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* Festival

The notion of noise, as demonstrated in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, is an example of symbolic inversion. Also, spoken comments and actual practices within the space of the ritual code suggests that the people privilege certain sound qualities (Avorgbedor, 2000, p. 21). And while it is evident that these traits are what guide or influence the musical practices of the Ga people of Teshie during the observance of the ritual code of silence, it is also worth highlighting that the depth of the influence of this notion of noise during the festive season is beyond the physical.

Among the Ga, talking or trying to talk about issues that have been left to idle (*sajii ni awɔnɔ*) on an ordinary day is considered *hoofeemɔ* (lit. noisemaking). Similarly, a person who talks about or attempts to unearth these issues (*sajii ni awɔnɔ*) on an ordinary day is described as *hoofeelɔ* (lit. a noisy person). He/she is seen as one who does not know when to keep quiet or who are the appropriate persons to address an issue; such a person is frowned upon. The opposite of a noisy person, among the Ga, is *diofeelɔ* (lit. quiet/silent person). He/she is not only a quiet or silent person but also wise enough to know when and how to talk. The Ga description of a quiet person does not suggest a person who does not talk or a person who is always quiet. Similarly, noisy people might not necessarily be those who make loud noise. In the same manner, the Ga notion of silence does not suggest quietude. And the notion of noise may not necessarily be loud sound. One of my interlocutors rightly argues that noise is *any sound* that does not support or promote the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Such a sound is unproductive and do not also “possess extra-human or supernatural dimensions needed to

facilitate its employment as a preferred medium for negotiating and normalizing physical and spiritual wellbeing” of the Teshie community (Avorgbedor, 2000, p. 21).

4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE *GBEMLILAA* RITUAL CEREMONY

The *Gbemlilaa* ceremony, is a public metasocial rite that makes use of “quotidian spaces” as its stage (Turner, 1979). The issues dealt with during its performance are done “in full view of everyone, they are not secret affairs.....protected from profanation” (ibid. p. 467). To separate the sacred time (being established) from the secular, the ceremony employs “audible markers” like ululation by mediums, shouts by *Asafoiatsemei* and *Amlakuiakpa* by the *Amlakui*. These “audible markers” are indexical nows due to their ability to draw audience attention to “the Now of experience” (Turino, 2014, p. 196). Equally, all the pre-*Gbemlilaa* ceremonies and the name *Gbemlilaa Ju* (refer to chapter 3) fall within this category of indexical nows- they all point to the ceremony of the day.

4.3.1 Segment I- The Ritual Cleansing of the Town (*Maṅtsukɔmɔ*)

In Ga tradition, *tsukɔmɔ* applies to principal areas like steaming of one’s self with medicinal vapour (*Hetsukɔmɔ*); Cleansing of a town/community with *Ḳmatsu* smoke (*Maṅtsukɔmɔ*); smoking of fish, with firewood, for preservation (*Lootsukɔmɔ*); and using smoke to disinfect drinking water and enhance its taste with *Ḳmeasra*- palm kernel husk- (*Nutsukɔmɔ*). Beneath this notion of *Tsukɔmɔ* among the Ga lies thoughts of preservation, purification, good taste, and healing based on the iconic relationship it forms with the everyday *tsukɔmɔ* activities of the Ga. *Maṅtsukɔmɔ* is thus, a religious ritual performed by a town for its physical and spiritual purification, healing, and preservation. The Ga people of Teshie, during their *Gbemlilaa* ceremony, perform the *Maṅtsukɔmɔ* segment first because of the belief that the ritual fortifies the town throughout the whole sacred period.

In semiotics, *Maṅtsukᓄᓄ* is symbolic and partly indexical- partly indexical because the scent of *Ἰmastu* smoke, beyond the visual, points to religious purification of a space. It additionally assumes a metonymic function based on the established connection between the immediate ritual environment (*Maṅjaranᓄ*) and the entire Teshie town. *Maṅtsukᓄᓄ* is symbolic because, the smoke/scent is connected to the purification ritual of a space (the town's sacred period) through an agreed linguistic definition (*Maṅtsukᓄᓄ*). The effect of the sign varies among perceivers due to their individual experiences with it. Traditional religious adherents would relate to it in a highly religious state of worship compared with the non-religious people.

4.3.2 Segment II- The Libation Prayer (*Ἰkpaiyeli*)

Yeli is an affix the Ga attach to food (*Niyeli*), commemoration/celebration (like *Yeleyeli*, *Afiyeli*), libation prayer (*Ἰkpaiyeli*), political office holding (*Lumᓄyeli*), slavery (*Nyᓄṅyeli*), trading (*jarayeli*) etc. In this regard, *yeli* expresses the Ga notion of spiritual, physical, political, and psychological survival as human beings. Offering libation prayers, on a day like *Gbemlilaa Ju*, goes beyond just a mere prayer. It is connected to the complete existence of the Ga within the cosmos. *Ἰkpaiyeli*'s iconic relationship with socio-political and religious activities highlights the extent to which, in Teshie for instance, the ritual is driven by a quest for physical, psychological, political, and religious sustenance. Also, referring to God as Creator (*Bᓄᓄ Maawu*) emphasizes the town's desire to renew itself.

In semiotics, the *Ἰkpaiyeli* ritual of *Gbemlilaa* is symbolic and partly a mass index. It is a mass index because it stands out in relation to all libations prayers that are offered on the day of *Gbemlilaa*, the larger *Hᓄmᓄwᓄ* festive space, and the entire year. It is also symbolic because it has an agreed linguistic definition (*Ἰkpaiyeli*) that connects the sign (libation) to its object (prayer).

Both the *Maṅtsukəmɔ* and *Ἰkpaiyeli* ritual segments contiguously serve as an index in relation to the ritual that follows. Similarly, the third ritual segment contiguously does index what follows immediately the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony is completed. To show the extent to which one ritual segment points to the other, ritual experts or members of the town often say:

Once they arrive at *Manjaranɔ*, on *Gbemlilaa*'s Monday, the Senior Priest begins the religious ceremony by performing the *Maṅtsukəmɔ* ritual with *Ἰmatsu* for three times. He immediately proceeds to the offering of libation prayers, after the *Ἰmatsu* cleansing, for three times, after which the *hulɔi* proceed with the mime-weeding. (Interview with the Agbawe Priest. September 2016)

4.3.3 Segment III- Clearing of Path (*Gbejee*)

The term *Gbejee* suggests the construction of a path or road. The *Gbejee* ritual, based on resemblance, has an iconic relationship with the town's agricultural life as well as its daily hygienic practice of early morning sweeping of the house⁵⁷. Even though members of the community recognise the ritual as a construction of path or road, the ritual's connection with their daily activities is not fully acknowledged. This situation, "points to an underlying principle called semiotic realism where the objective world influences the capacity of something to operate as a sign, and through the mediation of signs, the external world influences our perceptions of and experiences in the world" (Turino, 2014, p. 192).

Apart from the conventions guiding it, this ritual segment has a linguistic definition (*Gbejee*) which refers to a ritual mime-weeding, -sweeping and singing. Finally, there is generality of sign and object in that the mime-weeding, -sweeping and singing are general

⁵⁷ Almost all indigenous houses in the town forbid sweeping at night for 'religious' reasons. That notwithstanding, some of these reasons can be comprehended as an application of common knowledge. What is however constant is the early morning sweeping of the house- the first activity performed in almost every household for both physical, spiritual, and psychological reasons.

activities that represent a general object- the construction of a path or a road. It is these that, together, make the whole of the third segment symbolic.

While the complete *Gbemlilaa* ritual is meant to ‘block the road’, *Gbejee* opens another path for the community to continue functioning. Symbolically, *Gbemlilaa* does not completely ban activities like music and dance or noise-making. What *Gbemlilaa* does is that, it provides a substitute, *Kpa* singing and dancing, through its *Gbejee* ritual. In terms of renewal, the *Gbejee* songs *Ankamah Gbejee* and *Ake omany abahawo* (refer to Chapter 3) textually communicate the town’s readiness to renew itself. The songs do not only index the *Amlakui* but also call attention to the *Now* of the experience- the *Homowo* festive season, the season established by the community to comment on itself.

The participation of the supposed incarnates in this segment, on their return to *Naa Yoomo*’s shrine amidst the singing of *Ankamah Gbejee* (and *Ake Omany aba hawo*), further highlights the town’s belief in reincarnation hence, ancestors. These supposed incarnates are icons and relative firsts since they behave like those they are embodying and often possess the natural features of the deceased. The resemblance deepens when they are further costumed ritually.

4.3.4 Repetition and Reincarnation in the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony

Liminal time or metasocial rites in some African societies are based on, what Nwachuku-Agbada (2008) refers to as “the cyclical notion of time” which, in the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony, is made evident through the repetitive nature of the ritual’s segments as well as the involvement of the supposed incarnates. According to Nii-Yartey (2012), “African world view reflects a continuity of experience and a recurring relationship between the past and the present; the ancestors and the living.....” (p. 10). Nii-Yartey’s argument brings us to the involvement of the supposed incarnates in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual. Beyond their physical

appearance reflects continuity and a recurring relationship that reminds the town of its belief, especially, in what Vann Genep refers to as “rite du passage”. The presence and involvement of these supposed incarnates in the ritual is also one of a reconnection to and fulfilment of their former life as ritual experts. The *Osrama* medium comments on the incarnates as follows:

You see, some of these incarnates held a ritual office like priest or traditional elder in their lineage but they died without fully accomplishing their task. The death may be because of an intra-family dispute over the same ritual office where the aspirant kills the priest while in office. Those who die before fulfilling all their tasks are the ones who return. (Interview with the *Osrama* medium. December, 2016).

These supposed incarnates, as icons, act as intermediaries between the community and the ancestral world rather than the deities. This assertion is confirmed through the supposed incarnates’ participation in the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival- a festival that relates more with ancestors than deities. The people of Teshie, therefore argue that the performance of *Gbemlilaa* renders all deities in the community ineffective. Additionally, the sprinkling of the festive food (*Kpokpoi*) to the ancestors is also another way of confirming the assertion that the festival is focused on ancestors rather than deities.

Nii Yartey’s argument further highlights the concept of repetition, in general, as an integral element in most ceremonies in African societies. The employment of repetition in *Gbemlilaa*, for instance, is also a strategy to primarily sustain and elongate the ritual ceremony. Beyond sustenance and elongation of the ritual ceremony lies a more substantial reason why each segment is performed three times. *Gbemlilaa* deals with three major entities namely the physical environment, God (and the deities), and finally the ancestors. The belief in these entities are also evident during most individual and public libation prayer sessions throughout the year and becomes more perceptible during *Gbemlilaa*.

Ethnographic evidence suggests that the number three, among the larger Ga-Dangme community, represents truth, confirmation, and a state of stability. The argument, by Ga-Dangme traditional religious adherents, that the oracles must be consulted for three times confirms this notion of three as signifying truth and confirmation. The three-legged traditional hearth (called *late*, in Ga language), used in Ga traditional homes for cooking, also suggests the Ga belief in the number three as representing stability. In brief, the Teshie community's attachment to the number three is based on their knowledge of and belief in the three entities stated above.

4.3.5 The *Gbemlilaa* ceremony and the phrase *Okang gbe'ε'yi.....eegbo*

A phrase that recurs in the *Gbemlilaa* ceremony is the nominalised statement *Okang gbe'ε'yi.....eegbo* which “refers to an event in time” (Barber, 2005, p. 270). Such utterances, according to Barber, are compacted and only hint at the narrative rather than tell it in full since the events that led to its emergence are not easily discernible from the compacted words. Contrary to Barber, a compacted utterance of this kind might not even hint at the narrative due to the passage of time. And younger generations might perceive it as gibberish. There is the possibility that what the narrative hints at (as in this case) would be known to a specific generation. This is what one of my interlocutors, a native of Teshie, told me concerning the ritually compacted utterance *Okang gbe'ε'yi.....eegbo* of Teshie:

My brother, so, what at all is wrong with we Ga? Why can't we just say this in plain language. I have spent all my life in this town yet, I do not know what this very statement means though I often hear it during religious ceremonies. Someone once tried to explain it to me but he failed after a long debate between us. Oh! As for me, I think we Ga are not being helpful to the younger generation. How many people in this town know the full story behind this statement? (Personal Conversation with Sowah Paateng. October, 2016)

Apart from this compacted utterance, nominalized statements are also evident in *Kple* narratives. Nii-Dortey, in his PhD dissertation, gives an account of how the present generation of ritual experts had difficulty in deciphering portions of the drum phrase *Kekle kekle kekle Budu* played to invoke the ninety-nine deities of Nungua (Nii-Dortey, 2012). His account further illustrates the point that the meanings of these compacted utterances in Ga religious ceremonies are being lost.

The Teshie ritual phrase, *Okang gbe'ε'yi.....eegbo*, is derived from the sentence *Okang gbee onyemimeɪ lε ayi koni sane ni eba lε agbo* literally, Okang, unite with your siblings and resolve the impasse (refer to chapter 3). Most Teshie natives of the present generation would find it difficult to understand this compacted statement since it gives no hint (apart from the name Okang which is also a family name in Teshie) to the original sentence. Also, one cannot comprehend such “laconic formulations” without knowing the story behind them. In response, Barber argues that since these kinds of compacted utterance “leave a lot out....., the art of exegesis, then, is to expand these laconic formulations and re-install the agent and his or her context of action” (Barber, 2005 p. 270).

In semiotics, *Okang gbe'ε'yi.... eegbo* preceded by the phrase Hail! Hail!! Hail!!! May we be successful (refer to chapter 3) by the existent object (the Senior Priest or *Amlakui*) is a sign. The interpretant of the sign during *Gbemlilaa* is, thus, dependent on the object (Jappy, 2013). Whilst an *Amlaku's* utterance of this same statement means the calling of an *Amlakuiakpa*, that of the Senior Priest may indicate the beginning or close of a meeting or ritual ceremony. *Okang gbe'ε'yi...eegbo* in its totality, is a symbol of unity for the Teshie community.

4.4 USING *KPASHIMO* PERFORMANCES AS FRAME FOR THE MAIN *HOMOWO* EVENT

This section employs Edward Cone's theory of silence as frame (for music) to demonstrate how the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence uses *Kpashimo* performances to frame the main *Homowo* event (refer to Chapter 1). The section describes the activities that unfold immediately the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence is imposed till the period it is lifted (*Gbemlilaa gblemo*). Doing this would help to comprehend the significance of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence, its impact on the *Kpashimo* performances and how together, they renew the social, political, and spiritual lives of the Teshie community. It would then be realised that the sound *Gbemlilaa* approves of is not a mere sound. Ademola Adegbite argues that, "such sound (both in speech and song), in African traditional belief systems, is evocative....it has mystical powers which can be used to evoke psychic forces of tremendous potency....." (Adegbite, 1991, p. 45).

Table 1 illustrates the activities that emerge within the Teshie *Homowo* festive space. The activities have been alphabetically labelled Q to Y. Having two alphabets in a box mean two separate activities are performed on that day. A single alphabet in a box means a single activity on that day.

The alphabetical labels that have been randomly assigned, and their corresponding activities are as follows: Q => *Kpashimo* musical performance; R=> *Alomi jomom*; S =>Arrival of Village Folks (*Kooseebii*) and preparation of *Kpokpoi*; T => Sprinkling of *Kpokpoi*; U => *Ijoo Wala* (Exchange of goodwill messages); V => *Sisai anihamo* (ritual for the ghosts); W => *Kpafaa* (Official launch of the *Kpashimo* performance); X => *Gbemlilaa gblemo*; Y => *Tsesebumo* (Ritual that officially ends the *Homowo*).

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	<i>Gbemlilaa</i>						
	Q	R	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q
Week 2	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q
Week 3	S, Q	T, Q	U, Q	Q	V, Q	Q	W
Week 4	Q	Q	Q	Q	X	Y	

Table 4- Festive activities that emerge after *Gbemlilaa*.

Weeks 1 and 2 is the period that precedes the main festive event. It is what Cone describes as the beginning silence. Week 3 is the main event (in this case the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper). Within this week, the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances become an internal silence. Week 4 marks the period of the ending silence.

4.4.1 *Kpashimɔ* Musical Performance as a Beginning Silence

After the performance of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony, the first two weeks marks that period Cone describes as that instant when “*nothing* should be happening”. During this period of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, *Kpashimɔ* performances (Q) are held within the context of a vigil. They fill the temporal space *Gbemlilaa* creates for the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Littlefield argues that the beginning silence, in this case *Kpashimɔ* musical performances, “serves as a call to attention; it focalizes the listener towards what will follow” (Littlefield, 1996, p. 4). The *Kpashimɔ* musical performances that precede the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event, prepare the community toward the main event. The performances also enable the community to focus on the activities that emerge within the festive season. The mother of the *Laabia*, in an interview, reiterated⁵⁸,

⁵⁸ First, the narration above relates to a certain generation in the life of the Teshie community. Presently, the evening performance of *Kpashimɔ* only occur on Mondays which implies it is observed four times throughout the festive period. Despite the once-a-week evening performances by the current generation, the notion behind it

We engage in *Kpashimɔ* and make provision toward the preparation of *Kpokpoi* which comes off two weeks after *Gbemlilaa*..... *Kpashimɔ* goes on every evening beginning from the day *Gbemlilaa* is performed. The performance begins around 8:00pm every evening since members of the traditional musical groups, who are mostly fishermen, start arriving from their fishing activities around 5:30pm. The children usually begin the *Kpashimɔ*, around 6:30pm, to warm up the community before the arrival of the traditional musical groups. You also see a group of aged natives involved in this ‘every evening’ performances as they only perform in the style of *Amlakuiakpa* (at a relatively slow pace) rather than *Kpashimɔ*. The performances go on throughout the night and ends around 4:00 am..... (Interview with the mother of the *Laabia* at Teshie. January, 2017)

The entire community, throughout the two-week period, therefore denies itself of sleep every evening as they throng the streets to listen to the traditional musical groups whom through their songs, address the issues that have been left to idle (*sajii ni awɔnɔ*). Members of the traditional musical groups, during these all-night performances, sleep during the day.

The period of the all-night performances, is not pleasant for persons who have gone against societal standards and have a song addressing their misdeeds. The traditional musical groups take their performance to the house and doorstep of such deviant persons. If the person is asleep, they would wake him or her up while increasing the pace of their performance. In such instance, the best option for the supposed culprit is to show a sense of remorse by offering the performers some money or a bottle of Gin, or the two at the same time. This would, however, not completely stop them from performing the song but it may calm them down. Resorting to insults or refusal to show compunction, on the other hand, would worsen matters especially if the issue being addressed is a bad one. They may resort to physically carrying the person being talked about on their shoulders, and roam with him/her

(as it was in the past) is still present. Meanwhile, this research grounds its analysis on the earlier period during which vigils were held every evening. This is to demonstrate the extent to which *Gbemlilaa* employs *Kpashimɔ* to frame the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival and the motivation behind its strict observance.

whilst singing the specific song throughout the night. Until the performers see any feeling of self-reproach, they would repeat their actions anytime they begin to sing the specific song. These actions by the traditional musical groups are not meant to simply deter members of the community who, together with the traditional musical groups, are fully conscious of the immediate presence of their deities, ancestors, as well as forces considered to be evil⁵⁹. It is believed that, the issues that are talked about during the vigils are done in the presence of both cosmic and corporeal beings. Also, such practice is supposed to disarm the target person.

According to oral sources, a native of Teshie (called Atswei) in the 1990's succeeded in secretly using her mother (Atswei Onyɔwu) for money rituals. The case came to the public domain when a different person sent another native (called Adjeley) for the same ritual. Unlike Atswei Onyɔwu, Adjeley was spared by the medicine man in charge of the ritual. It is said that the medicine man, after staying with Adjeley for three days in his house, recognised how hardworking she was and decided to disclose the secret to her. He told her,

You see, I am not your friend's uncle rather, I am a medicine man. You have been brought here for money rituals. You would be placed and locked in this room tonight. At midnight, your name would be mentioned three times whilst you are locked in the room. If you respond, you would immediately walk straight into the river. But if you do not respond, the ritual would entangle the one who brought you here- your friend- and she would be the one to enter the river. You must, therefore, not respond. (Personal conversation with Mary Adjeley Adjei, a native of Teshie. January, 2017).

It happened just as the medicine man had told her. Her friend came to call her that midnight but she did not answer. The following day, the medicine man took Adjeley to the riverside. He sprinkled bread on the river and to Adjeley's amazement, all those who have been brought for such sacrifice floated to the surface. Amongst them was the one who took

⁵⁹ It is even asserted by ritual experts that the period marks a major avenue for these beings to take on human form and physically partake in the *Kpashimɔ* performances.

her there for the sacrifice- all of them were still alive. While still there, Adjeley saw the missing old woman (Atswei Onyɔwu) from Teshie. The old woman is said to have called onto Adjeley and said,

Ao, this is where my daughter is keeping me. Upon your return, tell the people in the town that my daughter should be told to come and release me for I am drowning and feeling cold in the river. (Personal conversation with Mary Adjeley Adjei in Teshie. January, 2017)

Upon Adjeley's return to the town, she reported the incident and delivered the message from Atswei Onyɔwu- the missing old woman. The issue was treated as one of the *sajii ni awɔnɔ*. In fact, the daughter of Atswei Onyɔwu was not spared. Her case became the main compositional resource for the traditional musical groups that year. They neutralised her with their *Kpashimɔ* performance. It is said that she lost her human nature from that moment on and she never regained it till she died.

Below is a textual transcription and an excerpt of the musical score of a *Kpashimɔ* song that commented on this case. (The complete musical score can be seen in the appendices- Appendix A).

<p><i>Aagbo, aagbo nu mli gbele, Yaakwe Tema harbour, eye mɔbo ojogban Mibaya ke miyaaa fee' eje mibi Atswei Ekee miyawa le Ayigbe, Ayigbe Kejebi, Kejebi, ni etsomi faan gbɔmɔ</i></p>	<p>People are dying, they are dying by drowning Go to Tema Harbour, it is very pitiful</p>
<p><i>Bentum eee, Kpeeshi eee, Ashie Odame ooo Agbene' fei m'ye mi (Agbene faa m'sumi) Mi Atswei Onyɔwu ooo, Mi je Ogbobionaa Namɔ po mana mashɛ, eyakee mibi Atswei ake 'Agbene fei m'yemi.</i></p>	<p>Whether I depart or not, all depended on Atswei my daughter She asked me to accompany her to Ayigbe, <i>Ayigbe Kejebi, Kejebi</i> and she turned me into an aquatic being <i>Bentum</i> shrine, <i>Kpeshi</i> shrine, <i>Ashie Odame</i> shrine⁶⁰ I am, at this moment, feeling cold (The river is drowning me now) I, Atswei Onyɔwu, I come from <i>Ogbobionaa</i> Whom shall I send to tell my daughter, Atswei, that 'I am feeling cold now?</p>

⁶⁰ These are names of autochthonic deities in the Teshie community.

Bentum eee, Kpeshi eee, Ashie Odame
 ooo
Agbene' fei m'ye mi (Agbene faa
m'sumi)

Bentum shrine, Kpeshi shrine, Ashie Odame
 shrine
 Now, I am feeling cold (The river is drowning
 me, now)

Aagbo numli Gbele

Teshie Kpashimɔ song

Transcribed by Akwetteh, lary

Cantor
 Chorus

Aa - gbo Aa gbo nu mli gbe le yaa kwɛ Te ma Har-bour E

6
 6

yɛ mɔ boo jo gbanɔ Aa-gbo Aa-gbo nu mli gbe le lo? Aa - gbo Aa-

12
 12

gbo nu mli gbe-le yaa kwɛ Te-ma Har-bour e yɛ mɔ boo jo gbanɔ M'-ba

17
 17

ya kem' yaaa fɛɛ M' ba ya kem' yaaa fɛɛ

E-je m'-bi A - tswɛi E-je m'-bi

From the above, it is evident that *Gbemlilaa* begins its framing process of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival through *Kpashimɔ* musical performances. The issues discussed during this first two

weeks are issues that aim to contribute to what Nii-Dortey describes as the “social renewal” of the community. Something, therefore, happens within the first two weeks of the ban. That something, although designated as silence, “*is heard, even empirically*” (sic) (Littlefield, 1996, p. 4). Out of that something, in this case the *Kpashimɔ* performances, the main renewal period which is the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper, begins.

4.4.2 The *Hɔmɔwɔ* Proper

The period, between Monday and Sunday, marks the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event- the renewal period of the town. All issues that have been left to idle (*sajii ni awɔnɔ*) are addressed (in speech) in the individual principal houses of the five quarters of Teshie during the main event. It is also within this same week that the community renews its relationship with the ancestors. In brief, each day within the week of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper is dedicated to the observance of a religious ceremony aimed at renewing the socio-political and religious lives of the community. This is probably the reason why the days within this third week are the only days prefixed with the term *Hɔmɔwɔ* i.e. *Hɔmɔwɔ Ju*, *Hɔmɔwɔ Jufɔ*, and *Hɔmɔwɔ Shɔ*⁶¹. While these ceremonies are being observed, the traditional musical groups also continue to comment on the issues that have been left to idle through their *Kpashimɔ* songs and all-night performances.

Meanwhile, the all-night *Kpashimɔ* performances become an internal silence during the week of the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event. But like the beginning silence, this internal silence also prepares the community toward the ceremonies that unfold throughout the week. These *Kpashimɔ* performances, as an internal silence, are, however, not effective like the beginning

⁶¹ *Hɔmɔwɔ Shɔ* is *Hɔmɔwɔ*'s Wednesday. No other day throughout the festive period is referenced with such prefix as evident during the week under discussion.

silence. As Littlefield argues, they “tend to be heard as interruptions of continuity” during the observance of the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event (ibid).

4.4.2.1 Arrival of Village Folks (*Koosɛɛbii*)

The *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper begins with the arrival of indigenes (*Koosɛɛbii* (S)) from the various Ga villages⁶². They are, mainly, described as Monday people (*Ju bii*) to indicate the day of their arrival for the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper celebration. These village folks come with farm produce which are sold at a more affordable price or freely given out. Some of the farm produce are used to prepare the festive food- the preparation begins on the eve of the folks’ arrival and lasts throughout the night.

The arrival of the village folks is, solely, accompanied by *Kpa* songs amidst honks and staccato rhythms from hitting the roof or sides of their cars. In Ga Mashie for instance, A. A. Opoku (1970) posits “It is a joyful sight as the convoys of lorries go by with their passengers singing merrily and stamping the decks of the lorries rhythmically to the staccato refrains of the *Kpa* songs” (p. 53). One cannot consider the atmosphere created by this arrival ceremony as noise. It is silence, a silence meant to celebrate not only the safe arrival of folks but also the opportunity for them to witness another festive period. The activity therefore adds up to the framing process of the festive period.

In Peircean thinking, the arrival is symbolic and partly indexical- symbolic because that arrival has a generally accepted linguistic definition (*Ju bii*) with a general sign (procession) that represents a general object (the beginning of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper); indexical because the farm-produce they mostly bring calls attention to the preparation of *Kpokpoi* which begins that evening and lasts throughout the night.

⁶² Ga villages like Pantang and Abokobi.

It becomes obvious that the arrival of the village folks does not only contribute to the preparation process. The arrival also points the town toward the complete weekly activities to follow especially, the preparation and sprinkling of *Kpokpoi* (T) as well as the exchange of goodwill messages (U). These subsequent events engage with everyone in the community irrespective of the person's background.

4.4.2.2 Sprinkling of the Festive Meal

As stated above, the arrival of these folks is followed by the preparation of the ritual food within the context of a vigil. On Tuesday morning, the various principal houses sprinkle the festive food to their ancestors after which the living can begin the feast. To announce the ongoing ritual process, the sprinkling is done amidst *Kpa* songs. Almost every principal house has its own *Kpa* songs that accompany the sprinkling. It therefore becomes easy to know when the Senior Priest has finished with his sprinkling since he is the first person to sprinkle the *Kpokpoi* before any *We* or elder does so (see Figure 27). In Peircean semiotics, the *Kpa* songs sung to accompany the sprinkling are indexical signs- they point to the respective principal houses.



Figure 27- The Senior Priest sprinkling *Kpokpoi* mixed with Palm soup, as his *Laabia* holds the grinding dish filled with the meal. Members and mediums of their principal house are seen accompanying him. Picture taken on August, 2016 (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

4.4.2.3 Exchange of Goodwill Messages (*Iḽḽ Wala*)

The following day, Wednesday, marks an exchange of goodwill messages (*Iḽḽ Wala* (U))⁶³. *Iḽḽ wala* means, Taking and giving of life⁶⁴. It is the only time on Ga calendar where members of the community extend blessings to and resolve issues with each other. It is also the only period when anyone can “let their hair down” irrespective of his or her status in society (Odotei, 2002). The *Iḽḽ wala* ritual is in two-fold: the first is performed by individuals in their respective houses and neighbourhood; the final one is performed in the principal houses.

⁶³ Apart from the evening *Kpashimɔ* performances (Q), no major religious activity occurs on Thursday and Saturday. In more present times however, Teshie engages in a football game (referred to as Harvest) with the people of Nungua. But Friday (V) continues to mark the period for ‘feeding ghosts’- *sisajii anihamɔ*.

⁶⁴ Members of the community sometimes refer to this day as *Daatɔɔgbi* -a day of binge drinking.

The first session of the ritual is observed very early in the morning or at dawn where siblings and neighbours knock at each other's door to greet and wish each other well. Those who fall within the category of old people exchange goodwill messages. Children, on the other hand, are blessed by the elders. Quarrels, irrespective of when they ensued and who is right or wrong, are, also settled. In performing the ritual, a person holds another person's right hand and basically say to each other the following amidst the *Hiao* interjection⁶⁵:

<i>Ijw wala, Ijw wala</i>	Receive life, Receive life
<i>Afi naa akpewo</i>	May the end of year meet us
<i>Kpaanyo anina wo</i>	May eight meet us
<i>Wofee moomo</i>	We should be old
<i>Wosee agbo bene wohishi neke nohoh</i>	We should live like this, next year by this time
<i>Alonte din ko akafo woteh</i>	No black cat should come between us
<i>Keji ataowo le, anawo</i>	When they look for us, they should see us
<i>Keji abi woshile, anu wöhe</i>	When they ask of us, they should hear of us
<i>Keji mito ono le, keemio mi, nyemimeji ji</i>	Tell me when I offend you, we are
<i>wo.....</i>	siblings.....

After these individual efforts to patch up with each other, natives gather in their respective principal houses to discuss the progress of the family- this marks the second session of the ritual. Family members who are at loggerheads with one another are reconciled. Families also take account of all their deceased and new members. In some principal houses like *Ashia We* for instance, the whole day is dedicated to the performance of *Amlakuiakpa* (see Figure 28); every other issue is treated as secondary. Some other principal houses also engage in *Amlakuiakpa* on this day and although they do not have *Amlakui*, the singing is done by one or two persons who have studied the art of performing *Amlakuiakpa* on their own.

⁶⁵ Each of these *Ijw wala* lines is responded with the word *Hiao*.



Figure 28 - A picture of *Ἰῶ Wala* at *Ashia We* on *Ἡῶῶ Shῶ*- The *Amlakui* (seated) singing *Amlakuiakpa*. Standing in front of them is the possessed *Osabu* medium of their principal house. Picture taken on August, 2016 (Courtesy Akwetteh, Laryea).

4.4.2.4 The Main *Kpashimῶ* Event (*Kpafaa*)

The *Ἡῶῶ* proper is crested with the main *Kpashimῶ* event known as *Kpafaa* (W)⁶⁶. The musical groups wear their new festive costumes, exhibit their colourful flags, and perform almost all songs in their repertoire. The public, on the other hand, dress in their finest clothes. Some adults wear clothes that are deemed old-fashioned but expensive while others sew new clothes. Children, on the other hand, are dressed in their best outfits. The euphoria and performance on this day exceed that of the vigils as the traditional musical groups fill the entire community with their songs in different tonalities. Additionally, all traditional musical groups witness an increase in their numerical strength on this day as members, particularly from neighbouring communities, join any of the groups of their choice (see Figure 29).

⁶⁶ The performance initially begins by midday and ends by nightfall.



Figure 29- *Gbee matele*, performing on *Kpafaa* Sunday. Picture taken on August, 2016 (Courtesy: Akwetteh, Laryea).

From the above, it is obvious that the observance of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper somehow renders the all-night *Kpashimɔ* musical performances dormant. The performances, however, continue to hold an iconic relationship, based on resemblance, with the beginning silence and the main musical event (*Kpafaa*).

4.4.3 *Kpashimɔ* Musical Performances as Ending Silence

The week that follows the *Hɔmɔwɔ* proper is the final week of the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival- the ending silence. During this period, the community continues with its tradition of all-night *Kpashimɔ* performances which occurs from Monday to Thursday. These specific all-night performances, which occur from Monday to Thursday, constitute what Littlefield describes as “silences between movements”- they point to and prepare towards the final *Hɔmɔwɔ* ceremony.

The ritual code of silence is lifted on the midnight between Friday and Saturday and on Saturday, the *Tsesebumɔ* ritual is observed. In the past, the complete *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival

ended on the midnight between Thursday and Friday. According to oral sources, the formally educated indigenes (called *Owulai and Awulai*) in the community always missed the ceremony due to the time they closed from work. They (the *owulai* and *awulai*) petitioned the then King (*Mantse Ashitey Akomfra*) and the traditional executives (*Akulashin*) to extend the festival to include the Saturday (Y) that follows this Friday (X). After several deliberations, *Mantse Ashitey Akomfra* and the traditional executives extended the festive period to Saturday. The *Gbemlilaa gblemɔ* ritual has, since then, been shifted to and performed on the midnight between Friday (X) and Saturday (Y).

In present times, the youth of the community have also extended the ritual period to match with their old-time sibling- La. These youths make a trip to La on foot, amidst *Kpashimɔ* songs, on the midnight the ritual code of silence is lifted. The people of Teshie, upon their arrival at La, would continue with their *Kpashimɔ* musical performances which are accompanied on castanets and maracas. The people of La, knowing the Teshie people would visit on this midnight also observe a vigil. The performance continues until cockcrow when the youth of Teshie begin to journey back home for the *Tsesebumɔ* ceremony.

4.4.3.1 The Final Ritual Ceremony (*Tsesebumɔ*)

After coming back from La, members of the traditional musical groups rest for a while before commencing their last *Kpashimɔ* performance (around 12:00 noon) within the festive space. The *Tsese* ritual community later joins them around 3:00 pm. As the *Kpashimɔ* musical groups continue to perform, the *Tsese* ritual community travels across the town amidst their ritual songs. They pour the *Tsese* sacred water on the shrines and at the entrance of the principal houses they visit. Members of the community who wish to be blessed by the *Tsese* community also place money into the wooden bowl after which the ritual water is poured on them. The *Tsese* ritual community, after going through the town for two or three

rounds, begins to journey to the Teshie landing beach where they empty the *Tsese* into its shrine. Tradition demands that they reach the landing beach and perform the *Tsesebumo* ceremony by nightfall, to officially end the festive season (see Figure 30).



Figure 30- A picture showing the ongoing *Tsesebumo* ritual, in the Shrine, at the Teshie Landing beach. The traditional musical groups are struggling to have their flags touch the ritual water that has been poured on the ground, in the shrine. Picture taken on September, 2016 (Courtesy: Akwetteh, Laryea).

4.4.3.2 Lifting the Ban (*Gbemlilaa gblemɔ*)

Before these activities (the journey to La, the final *Kpashimɔ* performance, and the *Tsesebumo* ceremony) that mark the end of the festive season can be observed, the ritual code of silence must be lifted. To perform the ritual, two drummers join the Senior Priest in his ritual house on the midnight between Friday and Saturday. And together, they play the *Osrama* drums (see Figure 31). The *Osrama* medium, while clapping gently and quietly, accompanies the drumming by offering prayers for the entire community. During this same period, the people of Nii Okai *We* also sound their *Obonu* talking drums to the hearing of the

whole community⁶⁷. Nii Okai *We* is known for having the best *Obonu* drums in the community. It is the sound from their drums that signals the lifting of the ban. That sound, therefore, serves as an indexical sign.

Once the ritual is performed, the community is exposed to the profane world. Members of the community begin to immediately play the supposed noisy songs through their already mounted PA systems. Some members of the traditional musical groups also accompany the *Kpashimɔ* songs with musical instruments like maracas and castanets. Probably, this is one of those ending silences which according to Littlefield “protect us from the shock of our return to ordinary time” (Littlefield, 1996, p. 5).



Figure 31 - The Senior Priest and the two drummers playing the *Osrana* drums to mark the lifting of the ban (*Gbemlilaa gblemɔ*) ritual. Picture taken in the ritual house of the Senior Priest on September, 2016. (Courtesy: Akwetteh, Laryea).

⁶⁷ Nii Okai *We* is one of the principal houses in the Kle quarter.

4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have explored the symbolisms of sound and silence by engaging with the Ga notion of sound, silence, noise, and death in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. From that discussion, it is obvious that the Ga perceive silence as any sound that is productive; and noise as any sound that is unproductive. Such unproductive sound, to the Ga, is dead and lacks the potential to cause a renewal. A productive sound, on the other hand, is sound that causes or seeks to cause a renewal.

I have also analysed the three-segment *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony. From the analysis, it is evident that the ceremony serves as an opportune moment for the community to reaffirm their belief system.

Finally, I have demonstrated how the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence frames the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event using *Kpashimɔ* musical performances. It is apparent that without the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances, the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event will be performed within one week.

In the subsequent chapter, I provide a textual analysis of some *Kpashimɔ* songs to illustrate the role *Kpashimɔ* musical performances play in the renewal of the community.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF SOME *KPASHIMƆ* SONGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

To show the extent to which *KpashimƆ* songs/performances constitute silence, how those silences represent the community's *sajii ni awɔnɔ*, and how the issues are addressed by the *KpashimƆ* musical groups, this chapter provides a textual analyses and musical transcriptions of six *KpashimƆ* songs. Because of the variation in the ways the various traditional musical groups use *KpashimƆ* songs to address issues, the songs have been selected from five of the seven traditional musical groups. These five *KpashimƆ* groups are *Gbee matele*, Ghana, Greece, Mind You, and *Tafo yε fεo*. The selected songs address issues like family enmity in the community, robbery and its consequence, ritual murder, etc.

KpashimƆ songs are, textually and musically, made up of exact repeated phrases by both cantor and chorus. Such repetitions, according to Isidore Okpweho, practically enhances the complete organisation of the songs while giving the songs “a touch of beauty” (Okpweho, 1992, p. 44). These repeated phrases, done in a call-and-response or cantor-chorus style, have an iconic relationship with the issues in vogue, making it easier for the audience to follow the story line.

A cantor's call, in *KpashimƆ* songs and during *KpashimƆ* performances, serves as a cue for the chorus who may repeat the exact introductory section before proceeding with their response. This performance style, in performances by song and dance groups, deviates from what Okpweho refers to as “fixed basic text” where only the cantor varies his/her solo section while the chorus rigidly “follow the basic rhythm of the performance” (ibid). Not only do *KpashimƆ* songs deviate from the “fixed basic text” concept, they do not necessarily follow (to a large extent) the cantor's melodic contour. *KpashimƆ* songs additionally employ

harmoniously varying chorus sections which serve as a continuation of the cantor's introductory section.

Beyond the cantor-chorus interaction in *Kpashimɔ* performances is also the use of gestures or what Okpweho describes as “the histrionics of the performance” by which the performers dramatically demonstrate their actions as contained in the musical text (ibid). In addition to the gestures dictated by the song texts, *Kpashimɔ* performers also display with their flags during performances. Such displays, however, merely embellish the *Kpashimɔ* performances and add up to its overall aesthetics.

The musical form of *Kpashimɔ* songs range from Binary (AB) to Ternary (ABA), and even to through-composed (ABCD) form. The songs are often composed in the diatonic scale and, occasionally, in the pentatonic scale. The concept of musical modulation is also inherent in *Kpashimɔ* songs.

The transcribed songs in this chapter attempts to closely follow the literal translations of the Ga verses. The intent is to avoid distorting the intended meanings of the songs. Refer to the appendix for complete musical scores of the transcribed songs.

5.2 NɔNI WEKU KEFEE MI - ‘HOW FAMILY TREATED ME’

BY GBEE MATELE (2016)

The song below is a composition by *Gbee matele* for the 2016 *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The song is about someone recounting the challenges he has faced living among his kin. The presentational style of the song suggests that the story is not a forged one nor is it based on mere imagination. Rather, it is based on someone's true experience. Although the name of the family being discussed is not disclosed, the composer and some members of the traditional

musical groups are fully aware of the family being referenced. Similarly, the targeted family is often not ignorant of the fact that the song is directed at them.

Nɔni weku kɛfeemi

Gbee matele aɫaŋaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Kwɛ mɔ nɔ ni we ku kɛ feɔ mi kɛ m'jwɛi sa neɛe dɔɔ mi waa

Chorus

Nɔ ni we ku

5

kɛ fee mi kɛ m'jwɛi sa neɛe dɔɔ mi waa nie feɔ mi a kɛ mi ya toa kro wa ko

10

Eee nɔ ni we ku kɛ feɔ mi kɛ m'jwɛi sa neɛe dɔɔ mi waa

we ku mɛia shihi lɛ he wɔ nɔ

15

ni we ku kɛ fee mi kɛ m'jwɛi sa neɛe dɔɔ mi waa nie feɔ mi a kɛ mi ya toa kro

Textual transcription of the song *Nɔni Weku kefee mi.*

(Section A)

- Cantor-** *Kwemɔ nɔni weku ke feɔ mi* 1 Look at how my family treats me
ke m'jwei sane'ε 'edɔmi waa 2 I grieve so much when I reflect on
the issue
- Chorus-** *Nɔni weku ke fee mi ke m'jwei* 3 I grieve so much when I reflect on
sane'ε 'edɔmi waa how my family treated me
- Ni efeɔ mi ake m'yato akrowa ko wekumɛi* 4 And it dawns on me to relocate to
ashihile hewɔ another village because of my
family's ill-treatments
- Cantor-** *Nɔni weku ke feɔ mi, Ke m'jwei* 5 I grieve so much when I reflect on
sane'ε 'edɔmi waa how my family treated me
- Chorus-** *Nɔni weku ke fee mi ke m'jwei* 6 I grieve so much when I reflect on
sane'ε 'edɔmi waa how my family treated me.
- Ni efeɔ mi ake m'yato akrowa ko wekumɛi* 7 And it dawns on me to relocate to
ashihile hewɔ another village because of my
family's ill-treatments

(Section B)

- Cantor-** *Ake mi wekumɛi sumɔɔ (taooo) m'* 8 My family members do not wish my
nɔyaa success
- Chorus-** *Wekumɛi ashihile hewɔ* 9 Because of their ill-treatments
- Cantor-** *Ao! Be ona ake ao weku ooo* 10 *Ao!* Have you seen that *ao* family *oo*
- Chorus-** *Bemli ni mibe nɔko afeɔ tamɔ mibe* 11 At the time I had nothing, they
mɔko behaved as if I had no one

Cantor- *Eee ημενε ni m'bana noko*

12 Yes! Today that I have achieved
something

Chorus- *afeo tamō nōni asumōō mi*

13 They pretend to love me

(Back to *Nōni weku*)

The form of the song is binary, sections A and B, as indicated in the table. Lines 1- 4 is the exact repetition of lines 5-8. The cantor, in line 1, presents the call in a manner that suggests that the audience have witnessed the ill-treatment he purports to have received from his family. The statement is, however, an attempt to attract the audience's attention. The immediate response from the chorus creates a bit of suspense until the second part of line 4 where they give a clue to their grievance. It would be noticed that while the response of the chorus (in the first part of line 3) tends to treat the issue as a past incident, the cantor (in line 1) treats it as still occurring. Even though one might consider this an error, it is partly a technique employed by the oral performer to call the audience's attention (as stated earlier). I say partly, because of the possibility that even though the incident being addressed is of the past, some people are still experiencing it. In that case, the cantor's use of 'me' in line 1 serves a metonymic function of both past and present incidents. In line 3, the call of the cantor suggests he has, for some time, pondered over the issue before publicising it. So he considers relocating to a different settlement (in line 4) and he gives reason to justify that consideration. The cantor plainly sums up, in line 9 of section B, the reason for which his family opposes him: they *simply* do not want his/her success- which further reveals the root of the enmity. He also states (from lines 12-14) his/her awareness of the 'feigning game' the supposed family is involved in.

The above theme, among members of the community, has an iconic relationship based on resemblance with a past *Kpashimō* song performed by the same group in the 1990's. That

song stemmed from an experience the then cantor had with his maternal family at a gathering meant to discuss the funerary rites of his deceased mother. At that meeting, there was an indication of funerary politics as the dynamics of the discussion were all in favour of the extended family rather than the children of the deceased. On the next family meeting, the cantor, popularly referred to as *In fact*, intentionally arrived late. And whilst it was expected that he would rush to join the meeting, he rather decided to roam while singing his newly composed song meant to address the on-going family politics over his mother's funerary rites. Some members of the community who heard the song and the motivation behind it, encouraged him to include it in the *Gbee matele* musical repertoire for that year's *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The title of that song is *Mikpe mikpeme*-literally 'I am carrying my own load'. *Gbee matele* subsequently performed it during the 2016 *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival to mourn the death of their colleague and distinguished cantor and composer- *In fact*. Performing *Mikpe mikpeme* to mourn *In fact*, consequently had a mnemonic effect on the community as they remembered and even re-counted the initial motivation behind the composition of the song as well as the composer's capabilities during his youthful days in the group. A textual transcription of *In fact's Mikpe mikpeme* is provided for purposes of a close analysis or comparison between this song and the above analysed text.

<i>Mikpe mi kpeme, miɲa maŋ ko nɔ ee</i>	I am carrying my own load, I am going to another land
<i>Wekumɛi eshwie mi ee miɲa ni m'ya gbo</i>	My relatives have dismissed me, I am leaving to face my destiny
<i>Wɔ shiai amlɪ ni wɔyɔɔ wɔsɛɛ bene akɛɛ nɛkɛ, wɔsɛɛ bene akɛɛ nɛkɛ</i>	The houses we live in, are never free of issues
<i>Mi nyɛ awo baaho wɔtee</i>	Let us relocate, Mother

Wɔya maŋ ko nɔ

Let us relocate to another land

Wɔye ŋkpai wɔshwie amɛnɔ shi akɛ wɔŋtswa

Let us offer libation prayers against them,

eee

for they continue to oppose us

5.3 EFɔ FAI - ‘SHE HAS THROWN THE HAT’ - BY MIND YOU (2016)

The song below is based on a cloth robbery that occurred in the town in the year 2016. This section, rather than narrate the story, would proceed with the analysis- refer to chapter 4 for the background information on this narrative.

Efɔ fai, efɔ fai

Mind You Aflaŋaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Ee e fɔ faie fɔ fai e fɔ faie fɔ fai

Chorus

O pɛɛ kɔ mgbea mɛ ta mɔ

7

E fɔO du moo du fai e fɔO du moo du fai

Naa Yoo Bo tɔ gbea mɛ O

13

Ee e fɔ Lon don fai e fɔ Lon don

pɛɛ kɔ mgbea mɛ ta mɔ Naa Yoo Bo tɔ gbea mɛ

20

Fine

fai Ee e o mɔ kɛo

O pɛɛ kɔ mgbea mɛ ta mɔ Naa Yoo Bo tɔ gbea mɛ

Textual Transcription of the song *Efɔ fai*

Section A

Cantor

Eeei, efɔ fai' efɔ fai', efɔ fai' efɔ fai'

1 Eeei, she has thrown the hat, she has
thrown the hat, she has thrown the hat,
she has thrown the hat

Chorus

*Opɛɛkɔ m'gbe amɛ tamɔ Naa Yoo Botɔ
gbe amɛ*

2 Opɛɛkɔ is killing them like Naa Yoo
Botɔ killed them

Cantor

Efɔ Odumoodu fai 2x

3 She has thrown the Odumoodu hat 2x

Chorus

*Opɛɛkɔ m'gbe amɛ tamɔ Naa Yoo Botɔ
gbe amɛ*

4 Opɛɛkɔ is killing them like Naa Yoo
Botɔ killed them

Cantor

Efɔ London fai, efɔ London fai

5 She has thrown the London hat, she
has thrown the London hat 2x

Chorus

*Opɛɛkɔ m'gbe amɛ tamɔ Naa Yoo Botɔ
gbe amɛ*

6 Opɛɛkɔ is killing them like Naa Yoo
Botɔ killed them

Both Cantor and Chorus

*(Eee 'omɔ kɛ oyɛ mli ni a'ju'ɛ, yaa jie
onaa*

Koni ekwe ni efo sɛɛ) 2x

7 Eee go and confess if you were part of
the robbery so she can stop the deaths

2x

Section B

- Kejee nakai'ε ebaagbe ke oweku fεε 2x* 8 If not, she will kill you and your entire family 2x
- Be nyem' je nyem' wie ake jeee woyoo ji le 2x* 9 You were insulting her and saying that she is not a medium 2x
- Le hu etsɔɔ ake le hu woyoo ji le 2x* 10 She has also shown that she is a medium 2x

Section C

- Hmmm Opeεkɔ Opeεkɔ, osane ja waaa ye Teshimeɪ ahie fεε* 11 Hmmm Opeεkɔ Opeεkɔ, you are proven right before the entire Teshie community
- Shi ke ofee ni efe ma pe'ε osane ejaan ye Teshimeɪ ahie dɔηη 2x* 12 But if you go beyond the limit, you will not be right before the people of Teshie again 2x

Cantor

Eeei, efɔ fai' efɔ fai', efɔ fai' efɔ fai'

Back to Section A

- 13 Eeei, she has thrown the hat, she has thrown the hat, she has thrown the hat...

Chorus

Opeεkɔ m'gbe ame tamɔ Naa Yoo Boto kumɔ ame.....

- 14 Opeεkɔ is killing them like Naa Yoo Boto broke them down....

The song above is in three sections- A, B, C. In line 1 of section A, the cantor establishes an iconic relationship between the ongoing deaths in the community to a hat thrown within a crowd. While the call may be deemed as vague, the response of the chorus in line 2 immediately gives the listener an idea of what the song seeks to address. In brief,

section A (lines 1 to 6) presents the listener with a thematic idea rather than a detailed information about what had occurred. To give the listener a deeper understanding of the song, the chorus establish another iconic relationship between the present form of deaths caused by Opɛɛkɔ and that of Naa Yoo Botɔ. By referring to an earlier form of deaths by Naa Yoo Botɔ, the iconic relationship indirectly suggests that the cause and gravity of the deaths is related to thievery and further helps to decipher the coded theme.

Naa Yoo Botɔ, like Opɛɛkɔ, was a medium. In the latter part of her life (when she was about 100 years old), a car knocked down one of her ducks and the incident was immediately reported to her by the defaulting driver. She later went to the scene to pick her duck only to find out that some ‘unknown’ members of the area had already taken the dead duck and were in the process of going to prepare a meal with it. It is said that one of the supposed thieves, when questioned about the duck by Naa Yoo Botɔ, passed a derogatory comment against the old woman and refused to tell her anything about her dead duck. She, therefore, sounded an alarm by announcing the disappearance of her duck and the consequences that was to follow if she did not see it or hear from those who ‘took’ it. In her announcement, she stated that apart from the culprits, anyone who contributed (whether in the form of giving the thieves salt, pepper, earthen ware, etc) to the preparation of the carcas would die. Additionally, Naa Yoo Botɔ also stated that anyone who smelt the meal would also die. The culprits refused to heed to the warning and it resulted in a series of deaths, as the medium had announced. No medium has ever caused such number of deaths in the town as Naa Yoo Botɔ did and the issue spread in the whole of the Ga-Dangme state.

From the above, it becomes evident that Opɛɛkɔ’s incident has an iconic relationship, based on similarity, with that of Naa Yoo Botɔ apart from they being mediums of the same pantheon. The musical group’s use of the word *hat* (in line 1) to represent the recurring deaths, is symbolic. Additionally, the phrase ‘*Odumoodu’s hat*’ (in line 3) indicates the iconic

connection the traditional musical group seeks to create between Opɛɛkɔ's death toll and a Nigerian movie which portrayed similar series of death through a spiritual hat of death.

The musical group, in line 7 of section B, directs its attention to the thieves by making suggestions that will help to resolve the conflict and end the deaths. In line 8, the musical groups hinted at the possible worsening of the death toll if their suggestion was not heeded. That comment, in line 8, is based on the historical accounts (referred to above) rather than on a personal interaction with Opɛɛkɔ. Line 8 is, thus, an indexical sign based on co-occurrence in that members of the musical group have often witnessed such incidents within the larger Ga-Dangme state and so, they simply knew the outcome if the requisite measures were not adhered to. The statement in line 10 suggests that Opɛɛkɔ's reaction was not only a response to an insult (line 9) by the robbers. Rather, it was also a deliberate attempt to affirm her religious position as a medium of the community and the larger Kple cult.

In section C, the musical group announces the vindication of Opɛɛkɔ's actions (line 12) but immediately cautions her to know her boundaries (line 13). Repeatedly mentioning her name twice in line 12, is a deliberate attempt to call her attention and indirectly warn her not to overdo. This is why they hummed (*Hmmmm*) those lines before mentioning her name. Although the conflict is between the medium and the thieves, the *aflaŋaa*'s mention of the town (line 12) is an attempt to hint at that moment when the community might be propelled to intervene on behalf of the thieves and hold the medium accountable for her actions.

5.4 WɔMAŋ GHANA – 'OUR HOMELAND GHANA' - BY GHANA (2016)

As stated earlier, some issues of concern at the national level also form part of the compositional resources the traditional musical groups employ for their *Kpashimɔ* songs (refer to chapter 4). The song below is one that comments on some occurrences in the Mills-Mahama (2008- 2012) and Mahama- Amissah-Arthur (2012-2016) administration.

The song addresses three main issues within each of its three sections. The main idea is in Section 1. It discusses the issue of the newly provided prepaid metres which were supposed to be a substitute for the traditional post-paid metres. The introduction of the prepaid metres in the town raised numerous concerns like 1: the rate at which the prepaid credits get finished has been described as running too fast; and 2: fixing the metres on the electric poles rather than maintaining the old system of having them fixed in houses. After further protests, some members of the community resorted to the use of coal tar to paint the screens of the fixed prepaid metres. The action immediately led to the arrest of some of the culprits. In brief, the community did not (and does not) support the idea of replacing the post-paid with prepaid metres. Knowing they cannot challenge the government, the community decided to treat all these as one of the *sajii ni awɔnɔ*.

Section B dwells on the Ghanaian economy of the Mahama- Amissah-Arthur government whereas section 3 focuses on Alfred Agbesi Woyome's 51 million cedis judgement debt⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ In the song, the name Woyome has been corrupted and hence, pronounced Wayomi.

Wɔ maŋ Ghana

Ghana Aflaŋaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Textual transcription of the song *Wɔmaŋ Ghana*

Section A

Cantor- *Wɔjaku Ghana, Ghana mɛni gbaa*
wɔnaa?

1 Our homeland Ghana, Ghana what is
our challenge?

Chorus- *Wɔmaŋ Ghana, Ghana nɔni gbaa*
wɔnaa': Prepaidi m'ye wɔ awui

2 Our homeland Ghana, Ghana, this is
our challenge: the prepaid harms us.

Anaa nitsumɔ ni abaatsu Ghanabii'ε hɔmɔ 3 There are no jobs. We, the people of
m'ye wɔ eee. Ghana, are hungry.

(section repeats)

Section B

Cantor- *Ajeei Ghana hɔmɔ m'ye wɔ* 4 Ajeei, Ghana we are hungry
Chorus- *John Mahama hɔmɔ m'ye wɔ* 5 John Mahama, we are hungry
Cantor- *Ajeei Ghanabii'ε hɔmɔ m'ye wɔ* 6 Ajeei we, the people of Ghana, are
hungry
Chorus- *John Mahama hɔmɔ m'ye wɔ* 7 John Mahama we are hungry

Cantor- *John Mahama kεε 'idey bee kεkε'* 8 John Mahama said 'Idey be kεkε'
Chorus- *Asomua eba laka wɔ* 9 Unknowingly, he came to deceive us

Section C

Cantor- *Wɔkεε Kponshai* 10 We say *Kponshai*
Chorus- *Wayomi hewɔ Ghana m'ya* 11 Because of Wayomi Ghana is going
bankrupt eei bankrupt oo
Cantor- *eei, 51 billion Wayomi eee ake wɔ* 12 Eei, 51 billion Wayomi ee we are
m'ya eee being taken away ooo
Chorus- *Wayomi hewɔ Ghana m'ya* 13 Because of Wayomi, Ghana is going
bankrupt ee (Back to beginning) bankrupt oo

In line 1 of the above song, the first call by the cantor occurs in the form of an open-ended question. The musical group's choice of an open-ended question permits them to discuss several challenges confronting the nation. The use of 'us' and 'our' in this section is

an attempt to involve themselves in the narrative and further highlight/affirm their identity as nationals, to validate their claims. Their reference to the prepaid meter as being the major challenge confronting the entire country suggests the use of the metonymic mode of an indexical sign. It is metonymic because they present the prepaid metre challenge confronting them as if all Ghanaian communities are also experiencing it. Also, they use their town to represent the whole country although they are just one among the many ethnic groups in the nation. The musical group's generalisation however, reflects what the masses (rather than the elite class) are faced with in the country.

Before getting to section B, the musical group employs a transitional phrase (in line 3) announcing the hunger they are experiencing because of the lack of employment. This transitional phrase enhances the progression from section A to section B where they talk about their frustration with the Mahama- Amissah-Arthur government. The main theme driving this section is the call to end the supposed hunger that has been caused by the present government. This supposed *hunger*, does not necessarily imply hunger for food. The musical group's use of the word hunger (*hɔmɔ*) is symbolic. Symbolic because apart from having a generally accepted linguistic definition among the people, it is a general sign that represents a general object- the progress of the people and the nation. These, become evident in Line 8 as the musical group talks about a deception by the Mahama- Amissah-Arthur administration. The use of the phrase 'I dey be Kεεε' by the government during its election campaign was, to them, an assurance of their progress or comfort. Of course, their mention of John Mahama does not suggest they are referring to him alone. He is just the main person they use to represent the whole administration. The use of the word *Ajeei* by the cantor in lines 4 and 6 is

a way of communicating the severity of the case⁶⁹. Employing it in this context therefore establishes an iconic relationship (base on resemblance) between *hunger* and physical pain.

Section C introduces a word- *Kponshai*- that is an idiophonic device to signal the breaking of a glass. They immediately begin to discuss the Woyome judgement debt and the nation going bankrupt. *Kponshai* does not in this context solely refer to the breakage of Ghana's financial system. It also seeks to show the extent of the damage and how it would attract people's or the world's attention to the country's economic/financial woes. In brief, the musical group establishes an iconic relationship (based on resemblance) between the breaking of a glass and a bankruptcy.

5.5 AAJO TIGAARE – ‘THEY ARE DANCING TIGAARE’

BY TAFO YE FEO (2013)

This song addresses the issue of alcoholism in relation to some specific group of female mediums in the community. The song is in Ternary form- section A (Lines 1-6), section B (Lines 7- 12) after which section A is repeated and the cycle begins again. Like section A, every single call-and-response between the cantor and the chorus (in section B) is repeated. This is an element the musical group employs to express the gravity of the issue being sung about. This is one of such songs the musical group readily accompany's their singing with specific gestures to create humour as a means of lessening the seriousness of the matter.

⁶⁹ The word, *Ajeei*, is mostly used to express physical pain.

Aajo Tigaare

Tafo ye feo aflaṅaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor
Wɔŋ jo Ti gaa re e nɛ lɛ wɔŋ jo Ti gaareoo

Chorus
Aa jo Ti gaa re

7
Mi

Bo hu oo jo Kpe le e dan to loia wɔ yei fɛ wɔŋ na nyee

13
nye mi keo kee wɔ yoo ji boe Mi

sa ni o le ba jii sɔ to sɔ to

A textual transcription of *Aajo Tigaare*. A song by *Tafo ye feo*

Section A

Cantor- *Wɔŋjo Tigaare, eneɛ wɔŋjo*

Tigaare oo

Chorus- *Aajo Tigaare, bo hu oojo Kpe ee*

1 We are dancing *Tigaare*, we are dancing *Tigaare* oooo

2 They are dancing *Tigaare* but, you are dancing *Kpe ee*

- Dantolai awoyei fεε wɔhna nyε ee* 3 All drunken mediums, we are seeing you
- Cantor-** *Aajo Tigaare, enεε aajo Tigaare* 4 They are dancing *Tigaare*, they are dancing *Tigaare*
- Chorus-** *Aajo Tigaare, bo hu oojo Kple ee e* 5 They are dancing *Tigaare* but, you are dancing *Kple ee e*
- Dantolai awoyei fεε wɔhna nyε ee* 6 All drunken mediums, we are seeing you

Section B

- Cantor-** *Minyemi ke okεε wɔyoo ji bo* 7 My sibling, if you say you are a female medium
- Chorus-** *'sani ole bajii srɔtoi srɔtoi* 8 You must know different, different
(Repeat) herbs
- Cantor-** *Kwεmɔ beni mεi eba oηɔ* 9 Look, at the time people have come to see you
- Chorus-** *Onyie bar tsui amlɪ, oonu K-20 eεe* 10 You are roaming in bars, drinking
ke kakatsofa K-20 and ginger
(Repeat Section B)

Section C

- Cantor-** *Kwεmɔ beni atee jara mli'ε* 11 Even in the dancing arena
- Chorus-** *'ni aajo Tigaare oojo Kple* 12 You keep dancing *Tigaare* whilst they dance *Kple*
- (Repeat section, then back to beginning)

In section A (Line 1), the cantor prepares the audience by making a metaphorical statement which announces the activity around which the song evolves- *Tigaare*⁷⁰. The response of the chorus (in line 2) is an extension of the general idea introduced by the cantor. This extension is however an insult- a direct insult to the mediums involved in alcoholism⁷¹. Meanwhile, *Tigaare* and *Kple* are two unique religious cults with different musical and dance repertoire or movements. A medium's inability to distinguish between the two is therefore inexcusable⁷². The case may be different for young initiates and trainees.

While it may look as if the issue being discussed is one that relates to dance, the message the traditional musical group sought to communicate went beyond dance. Dance has been used to represent the complete existence of mediums in the community. The cantor and the chorus tactfully employ a metaphorical phrase to communicate the seriousness of drunkenness among mediums.

Lines 7 to 12 form the second section of this song. The cantor and chorus begin the section by announcing the general notion of what mediums must muster (Lines 7 to 8) for them to fully operate as mediums. One of such basic requirements is knowledge and administration of herbs for the benefit of society. This is a requirement believed to form part of society's indigenous knowledge about health. Herbs (*Bajii*) in this context is a metonym. The musical group believes that it is the absence of this indigenous knowledge that, partly, gives mediums the free-will to roam and even neglect their responsibility of attending to 'clients' (lines 9 and 10).

⁷⁰ *Tigaare* is one of the religious cults of the Ga. They are believed to be foreign to the Ga.

⁷¹ Among the Ga, it is an insult to refer to someone as *bohu* literally 'You too'.

⁷² The traditional musical group, in line 3, reveal the identity of the 'offenders'- mediums rather than young initiates, acolytes, or trainees. Lines 4 to 6 is an exact repetition of Lines 1 to 3, the only exception being the textual usage of 'they' rather than 'we' by the cantor; meanwhile, the musical contour remains the same.

5.6 WỌYẸ MAጒ KO – ‘WE ARE IN A CERTAIN TOWN - BY GREECE (2015)

The Teshie community has been, for sometime now, experiencing ritual murders by some mediums and natives. These natives and mediums summon their relatives to deities mainly, to be killed by black magic. The issue has become problematic especially because, the authority of the town’s elders seems to be limited: they are believed to be unable to administer sanctions to those who engage in such activities. The song below laments one of such consequences of not having a King in the Teshie community hence, the need to elect a King. Also, it is meant to renew that communal sense of living among members of the community.

Wọyẹ maጒ ko

Greece aflaጒaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of four systems of music, each with a Cantor part (treble clef) and a Chorus part (bass clef). The lyrics are in Yoruba and are placed below the corresponding musical lines.

System 1:
 Cantor: Wọ yẹ maጒ ni maጒ tṣẹ bẹ mli Eei aa gbo sọጒጒ
 Chorus: wọ yẹ maጒ ni maጒ tṣẹ bẹ mli

System 2:
 Cantor: Eee aan ji wọ yẹ maጒ tṣẹ ku'ẹ
 Chorus: Eei aa gbo sọጒጒ sọጒጒ kẹ mọ ko gbe'nye mi abaa

System 3:
 Cantor: Eee aan ji wọ yẹ maጒ tṣẹ ku'ẹ
 Chorus: mọ lẹ a wo lẹ tsu kẹ mọ ko gbe'nye mi abaa

System 4:
 Cantor: Eee Te shieO nu kpai wiewa kẹ
 Chorus: mọ lẹ a wo lẹ tsu a ka bọ wọጒ yẹ Te shie

Textual transcription of the song *Wɔye maŋ ko* by Greece

Section A

- Cantor:** *Wɔye maŋ ni mantse bemli* 1 We are living in a town without a
Eei, aagbo sɔŋŋ King, eei people are always dying
- Chorus:** *Wɔye maŋ ni mantse bemli* 2 We are living in a town without a
Eei, aagbo sɔŋŋ King, eei people are always dying
- Cantor:** *Wɔye maŋ ni mantse bemli* 3 We are living in a town without a
Eei, aagbo sɔŋŋ King, eei people are always dying
- Chorus:** *Wɔye maŋ ni mantse bemli* 4 We are living in a town without a
Eei, aagbo sɔŋŋ King, eei people are always dying

Section B

- Cantor:** *Eee aanji wɔye Mantse ku'ε* 5 Eee if only we have a King
- Chorus:** *Ke mɔko gbe enyemi abaamɔ le* 6 When someone kills his relative, he
awole tsu would be arrested and imprisoned
- Cantor:** *Eee aanji wɔye Mantse ku'ε* 7 Eee if only we have a King
- Chorus:** *Ke mɔko gbe enyemi abaamɔ le* 8 When someone kills his relative, he
awole tsu would be arrested and imprisoned

Section C

- Cantor:** *Eee Teshie onukpai wie ake* 9 Eee the elders of Teshie said that
- Chorus:** *Akabɔ wɔŋ ye Teshie* 10 Summoning of people to a deity
should cease in Teshie
- Cantor:** *Ee maŋ neŋ onukpai wie ake* 11 Eee the town's elders said that
- Chorus:** *Akabɔ wɔŋ ye Teshie* 12 Summoning of people to a deity
should cease in Teshie

*Bo'entse onyemi tete po, ημενε
omɔ lɛ ogbe lɛ 2x*

13 Today, you have killed your very
own sibling

Section A'

Cantor: *Wɔye maηko*

14 We are in a certain town

Chorus: *Wɔye maη ni mantse bemli ee
aagbo sɔηη*

15 We are living in a town without a
King ee people are always dying

The form of this song is ABCA'- Section A (lines 1-4), section B (lines 5-8), and Section C (lines 9-13) and section A' (lines 14-15). Apart from the last section, all sections are repeated at least twice.

In section A, both the cantor and chorus repeatedly state the theme. The chorus' statement of the theme is an exact restatement and melodically a major 3rd below that of the cantor. In lines 1 and 2, the performers express the consequence of living in a community without a King by embellishing the Ga word for dying with the modifier 'sɔηη' (literally, always). The statement is an indexical indication of all other dangers the town is bound to encounter if it continues to live without a King.

In line 6, they discuss the appropriate punishment that would be given to anyone who takes the life of his relative. It is not that the elders of the community do not know of such punishment rather, they seem to overlook it because there is no leader- a King. The section therefore serves as a metonymic index meant to remind the elders and community members of what was done to persons who engaged in ritual murder in the past. To the performers, the past experience of sanctioning murderers must be revisited to stop the act.

Section C partly gives credit to the minimal effort made by elders of the town to curb the act of ritual murders (lines 9-12). Not only have those rules been ignored but they are also

not the appropriate sanctions, as indirectly suggested by the performers in section B. In line 13, the performers' employment of the word sibling (*nyemi*) symbolically suggests that it can include any member of the community. Also, their use of the word today (*ηmene*) (in line 13) establishes an indexical relationship with their real life experiences.

In section A', the cantor's expression (in line 14) indicates their amazement at living in a community without a King. The chorus' response (in line 15) is textually and musically the same as their response in section A.

5.7 MANJARANƆ OTUTU – 'MANJARANƆ SHRINE' - BY GHANA (2016)

This next song seeks to address the presence of a deity that always demands blood sacrifice. For members of the community, a dangerous deity is one that always demands blood sacrifice. It is believed that such a deity would harm its adherents (and even members of the community at large) the day the adherents fail to offer the blood sacrifice. The community members, again, are suspicious because, almost all the principal deities in the community make no such demand despite the protection and sustenance they provide the town. The traditional music group's performance of this song is meant to lessen (and if possible stop) the regular blood sacrifice to the Obeney *We* deity.

Manjaranɔ Otutu

Ghana Aflaŋaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Maŋ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo Maŋ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo

Chorus

Maŋ

6

Lɛɛ lɛŋ maŋ

j'ra nɔO tu tuooo kɛɛ shɛ a fi lɛɛ buɔ wɔ he

12

j'ra nɔO tu tuooo maŋ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo

Maŋ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo kɛɛ shɛ

18

O tu tu bi biooooo bi biooooo eee

a fi lɛɛ buɔ wɔ he

Textual transcription of the song *Manjaranɔ Otutu* by Ghana

Section A

Cantor- *Manjaranɔ Otutu ooo, Manjaranɔ
Otutu ooo*

1 *Manjaranɔ shrine ooo, Manjaranɔ
shrine ooo*

Chorus- *Manjaranɔ Otutu ooo, kɛ eshɛ afi,
lɛ ebuɔ wɔhɛ*

2 It is the *Manjaranɔ* shrine ooo, that
protects us during the annual festival

Cantor- *Lɛɛlɛŋ manjaranɔ Otutu ooo,
Manjaranɔ Otutu ooo*

3 Truly, *Manjaranɔ* shrine ooo,
Manjaranɔ shrine ooo

Chorus- *Manjaranɔ Otutu ooo, kɛ eshɛ afi,
lɛ ebuɔ wɔhɛ*

4 It is the *Manjaranɔ* shrine ooo, that
protects us during the annual festival

Section B

Cantor- *Otutu bibioo bibioo oo eee*

5 A small shrine, small oo eee

Chorus- *Otutu bibioo ni ema Obeney We,
Otutu bibioo ni ema Obeney We*

6 The small shrine situated at Obeney
We, the small shrine situated at
Obeney *We*

*Wɔŋbi akɛ nakai Otutu'ɛ nɛgbɛ
akejɛ ee ee*

7 We are asking where that shrine was
brought from ee ee

Ni bei kɛ bei fɛɛ ni enuɔ la sɔŋŋ

8 It is always drinking blood

Section A'

Cantor- *Lɛɛlɛŋ Manjaranɔ Otutu oo,
Manjaranɔ Otutu ooo*

9 Truly, *Manjaranɔ* shrine ooo,
Manjaranɔ shrine ooo

Chorus- *Manjaranɔ Otutu oo, kɛ eshɛ afi, lɛ
ebuɔ wɔhɛ*

10 It is the *Manjaranɔ* shrine ooo, that
protects us during the annual festival

The form of this song is Ternary. Section A (lines 1-4) sings in praise of the *Manjaranɔ* shrine in relation to the protection it provides the members of the town without making any demands. Section B (lines 5-8) discusses the authenticity and benevolence of a deity, in Obeney *We*, that always demands blood sacrifice; and section A' re-introduces the listener to section A. All the sections are repeated, at least, twice.

Because of the chorus' response (in line 2) to the cantors' call (in line 1), the listener is partly tempted to assume that the song is in praise of the *Manjaranɔ* shrine when he/she listens to only the first section of this song. That response by the chorus, however, seeks to remind the community of the role of its deities. The mentioning of the *Manjaranɔ* shrine in this section does not suggest it, as the only deity being referred to. In this song, the *Manjaranɔ* shrine represents all the autochthonic deities in the community. That phrase, *Manjaranɔ* shrine oooo, thus, functions as a metonym.

In section B, the performers draw a sharp contrast between the *big Manjaranɔ* shrine and the *small* shrine of Obeney *We*. The contrast is both physical and religious. For instance, the *Manjaranɔ* shrine is considered to be the highest deity in the community (refer to Chapter 2 and 3) and it is always painted white. The Obeney *We* shrine on the other hand, belongs to the people of Obeney *We* and regularly has blood on its shrine. Section two (lines 5-6) is therefore indexical because, based on co-occurrence, the community knows that deities like the *Manjaranɔ* shrine, are benevolent and clean whereas shrines like that of Obeney *We* are malevolent and unclean. The question posed by the chorus in line 7 does not suggest they are unaware of the origin of the deity. Rather, they seek to know beyond the obvious.

5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the textual transcriptions and analyses in this chapter, it is obvious that every aspect of the socio-political and religious lives of the Teshie community is addressed (during *Kpashimɔ* performances) starting with issues at the interpersonal level, family issues, issues involving wickedness towards a neighbour, and issues at the national level. It is also evident that the traditional musical groups would fearlessly sing about anything of interest to the community's renewal and this can also include reprimanding deities too.

What these *Kpashimɔ* performances and songs do is that, by talking about the issues that have been left to idle, they deflate people's egos and even immobilise spiritual powers. Also, once these *Kpashimɔ* songs confront the authorities and deities, and address all the ills that hurt the society in the previous year, the hope and belief of everyone is that there will be a fresh beginning in the new year.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY

This research, as stated in the chapter 1, explores the symbolisms of sound and silence in a ritual code of silence in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival; the research further explores the impact of the ritual code on the *Kpashimɔ* musical performance and how together, they renew the socio-political and religious lives of the Teshie community.

Chapter 1 served as a background to the complete work. The chapter argued that *Gbemlilaa* is the required frame within which the Teshie community inspects itself during the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival celebrations. The chapter discussed the possible historical basis that accounted for the emergence of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence as well as the Ga annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. I also engaged with the etymology of the word (*Gbemlilaa*) and the phrase (*Ala gbemli*) to help comprehend the totality of the ritual code of silence as intended by the Ga. It became obvious that the phrase (*Ala gbemli*) or word (*Gbemlilaa*) does not necessarily suggest a physical blocking of road. As Ammah (2016) argues, *Gbemlilaa* is a ban on one's freedom to do certain things. Also, it became known in the Chapter 1 that the ritual code of silence is not peculiar to the Ga-Dangme community- it is observed in world religions and societies.

Literature about the ritual code of silence was also reviewed. Asante (2012) and De Witte (2008) for instance, focus on the conflicts that ensue between the Ga and non-Ga during the observance of the ritual code. Scholars like Sackey (2001), Nii-Dortey (2012), and Van Djick (2001), on the contrary, argue that the ritual code of silence marks a period of quietude for Ga deities.

The research questions, objectives, and methods that guided this dissertation were, also, stated in the chapter 1. The research questions focused on areas like: what the *Gbemlilaa*

ritual is, and how it impacts the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances; the conceptualisation of silence, sound, and noise and how they reflect in the *Kpashimɔ* musical performances. The methods included both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data focused on structured, semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews, personal communication, and participant-observation. Purposive sampling and snow-balling were the main sampling methods used for the interviews. Whereas being an indigene poses threat to my research, most sensitive and restricted contexts were still researched into- no matter how little- due to my knowledge of the Ga language, family, friendship, and native ties.

The chapter also adapted Peircean semiotics and Edward Cone's theory of silence as frame for music. The Peircean semiotics was restricted to the signs of Trichotomy II (namely: index, icon, and symbol) because of their link with musical performances and religious rituals. Cone's theory of silence as frame for music was chosen to demonstrate how the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence uses *Kpashimɔ* musical performances (as beginning silence, internal silence, and ending silence) to frame the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event. In brief, the chapter 1 defined the parameters of this research and what it seeks to achieve.

In chapter 2, I researched into the ethnography of Teshie by looking at the five quarters of the community (namely Kle, Lɛnshie, Agbawe, Gbugbla, and Krobo), how they compose the socio-political structure of the town, the various roles they play in the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony, and their contribution towards the emergence of the seven *Kpashimɔ* musical groups namely: *Kɔɔle Wɔko*, *Gbee Matele*, Mind You, Greece, Six, *Tafo yɛ feo*, and Ghana. The chapter also highlighted the hierarchical arrangement of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual performers and the traditional musical groups. These ethnographies served as background for the subsequent chapters- Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony, the preparatory rituals that precede and succeed it, and how the ritual ceremony expresses and restates the belief system of the Teshie community. By doing this, chapter three served as an avenue to understand the ritual ceremony (and the code of silence it institutes) from the perspective of the community.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the symbolisms of sound and silence by engaging with the Ga notion of sound, silence, death, and noise within the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ*. I also analysed the three-segment *Gbemlilaa* ritual ceremony using Peircean semiotics. Finally, Edward Cone's theory of silence as frame for music was used to demonstrate how *Gbemlilaa* uses *Kpashimɔ* musical performances to frame the main *Hɔmɔwɔ* event.

To illustrate how *Kpashimɔ* musical performances constitute silence and assist in the renewal of the Teshie community, some *Kpashimɔ* songs were textually analysed in Chapter 5 using Peircean semiotics. Some of the themes the songs addressed were issues of blood sacrifice to a deity, ritual murder, family enmity, and improper mediumship practices.

6.2 FINDINGS

This research, to a large extent, demonstrates that the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence provides the ideal frame within which the Teshie community, through its *Kpashimɔ* musical performances, renews its socio-political and religious lives during the observance of the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence thus, affords the community an opportunity to unapologetically inspect itself both in speech and through *Kpashimɔ* musical performances.

The study reveals that describing the Ga code of silence as 'ban on drumming and noise-making or funerary rites' is problematic. The expression fails to adequately convey the

intended demands and expectations of the Ga ritual code of silence. Indeed, the phrase ‘Ban on drumming and noise-making/ funerary rites’ functions as a metonym- it is just a part representing the whole despite its literal distortion by some indigenes and non-Ga in present times (refer to Chapter 1). Most of my interlocutors attribute this distortion to recalcitrant behaviours. They argued that the silence demanded by the *Gbemlilaa* frame, is not only an integral part of the community’s life, it is also *lived* within the annual festive season.

This dissertation further shows that the *Gbemlilaa* ritual code of silence does not abhor sounds. Rather, it has its own notion of sound, silence, death, and noise and that is what it projects. One of such notions, for instance, is the community’s labelling of silence as productive sound; whereas sound that is unproductive is described as noise. In this productive sound can be found issues that have been left to idle or what the Ga describe as *sajii ni awɔnɔ*. And as stated earlier, these issues are addressed in songs and speech. It would, in this regard, be inappropriate to argue or think that nothing happens within the *Gbemlilaa* ritual frame in that, things happen but those things are conceptualised as silence (Agawu, 1986) and they are “experienced as an embodied activity” (Clifton, 1976, p. 163). Among the Ga people of Teshie, for instance, that silence is a conscious activity that engages with both the cosmic and corporeal worlds during the annual renewal of the community’s socio-political and religious lives.

The study also reveals that some of what has become ‘indigenous practices’ in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, are invented traditions. These practices (like *Kpashimɔ* and *Tsesebumɔ*) have fully been grafted into the community’s belief systems and already existing traditions. Even the Teshie *Gbemlilaa*, as known in present times, is a recently invented traditional ceremony that emerged in the latter part of the 1930’s. During my fieldwork in 2016, some of the traditional religious adherents (both priests, mediums, and acolytes) I interviewed told me that each *Gbemlilaa* ritual segment is performed three times. They also

told me that after the first and second ritual segments, the Schnapps and the smouldering *Iḡmatsu* are placed in front of Naa Yoomo's shrine. But after observing the same ritual, again, in 2017, I noticed that the first two segments- *Iḡmatsu* cleansing and Libation prayer rituals- were performed once, and the *Gbejee* ritual was the only one of the three segments that was performed three times by the Senior Priest. I also noticed that the Senior Priest, after the first and second ritual segments, placed the Schnapps and the smouldering *Iḡmatsu* in front of the *Manjaranɔ* shrine instead of the usual Naa Yoomo's shrine. The point here is that even the *Gbemlilaa* ritual, despite its highly religious form, is still undergoing changes. These inventions, as evident in the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ*, disclose the extent at which the Teshie community has evolved (and continues to evolve) from the time it was founded till present.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

My recommendation for this research is in four-fold:

Throughout the dissertation, it became evident that despite the Teshie community's complete separation from La, *Kpa* songs (of the *Lakpa* deity) are still permeating Teshie's religious ceremonies like the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. A study on the uses and functions of *Kpa* music in La and Teshie and how the music acts as religious ties for the two communities, is worth researching into.

I also recommend a research on the supposed renegades or new traditional musical groups that keep emerging during the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Questions like the motivation behind their emergence and how, as renegades, they are influencing a festival that seeks to cause social renewal, would be a starting point for this recommended research.

I additionally recommend that when one decides to embark or embarks on a research among his own people, he/she (in taking opportunity of the period) should cautiously depend

on family/friendship/native ties as well as the native language to help access the needed information and even restricted areas. Doing this would help the researcher to avoid, to a large extent, getting entangled in the various intra-/ inter- family politics that might otherwise threaten his/her access to research data or the overall outcome of the research.

As a way of managing the violent clashes that erupt between the indigenous Ga and non-Ga during the observance of the ritual code, I propose a greater education on the relevance of music-related rituals of Ghanaian (and African) communities through the formal education system and the media too.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTION OF AAGBO NUMLI GBELE

Aagbo numli Gbele

Teshie Kpashimɔ song

Transcribed by Akwetteh, laryeɛ

Cantor

Aa - gbo Aa gbo nu mli gbe le yaa kwɛ Te ma Har-bour E

Chorus

yɛ mɔ bɔo jo gbaŋŋ Aa-gbo Aa-gbo nu mli gbe le lo? Aa - gbo Aa-

6

gbo nu mli gbe-le yaa kwɛ Te-ma Har-bour e yɛ mɔ bɔo jo gbaŋŋ M'-ba

12

ya kem' yaaa fɛɛ M' ba ya kem' yaaa fɛɛ

12

E-je m'-bi A - tswɛi

17

E-je m'-bi

E-je m'-bi A - tswɛi

E-je m'-bi

22

E kɛɛ m'ya wa lɛ A yi gbe E kɛɛ

A - tswei A-yi-gbe Ke-je-bi Ke-je-bi nie-tsoomi faaŋ gbɔ̄mɔ

27

m'ya wa lɛA yi gbe

A-yi-gbe Ke-je - bi Ke-je-bi nie tso mi faaŋ gbɔ̄ mɔ Ben tum eee

32

Kpee

33

shi eee A-shiO - da meooo a gbɛ nɛ faa ŋsu mi Ben-tum eee Kpee - shi eee

40

40

Aa-gbo Aa-gbo nu mli gbe-le loo? Aa - gbo-

A-shiO-da-meooo a gbɛ nɛ fɛi n̄ye mi

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 40 through 46. It features a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody in the treble clef begins with a whole rest in measure 40, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef part provides a steady accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the staves, with 'Aa-gbo' appearing in measure 41, 'Aa-gbo nu mli gbe-le' in measure 42, and 'loo? Aa - gbo-' in measure 43. The first line of lyrics ends with 'A-shiO-da-meooo a gbɛ nɛ fɛi n̄ye mi' in measure 46.

47

47

Aa

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 47 and 48. It features a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody in the treble clef consists of a single note in measure 47, followed by a long horizontal line representing a sustained note or a series of tied notes. The bass clef part also consists of a single note in measure 47, followed by a long horizontal line. The lyrics 'Aa' are written below the staves in measure 47.

APPENDIX B: MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTION OF *NONI WEKU KEFEE MI*

Noni weku kefeemi

Gbee matele aflaraa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Kwe ma noni weku kefee mi ke m'jwei saneedoo mi waa

Chorus

Noni weku

5

kefee mi ke m'jwei saneedoo mi waa niefee mi ake mi ya toa kro wa ko

10

Eee noni weku kefee mi ke m'jwei saneedoo mi waa

weku maia shihi le he wo no

15

ni weku kefee mi ke m'jwei saneedoo mi waa niefee mi ake mi ya toa kro

20 **Fine**

a ke mi we ku mei su mwo mno yaa

wa ko we ku meia shihi le he wo we ku

24

a ke mi we ku mei tawoo mno yaa he wo

meia shihi le he wo we ku meia shihi le he wo

28

beo na a ke a o we kuoo

be mli ni mi be no ko a feo ta mo mi be

32

beo na a

mo ko

33

kɛ a o we kuoo

Eee ɲmɛ nɛ ni mba na

be mli ni mi bɛ nɔ ko a fɛɔ ta mɔ mi bɛ mɔ ko

38

nɔ ko

ni mba na nɔ ko

a fɛɔ ta mɔ nɔ nia su mɔ mi

a fɛɔ ta mɔ nɔ nia su mɔ mi

43

Nɔ ni we ku

kɛ fɛɔ mi kɛ mɲwɛi sa nɛɛ dɔɔ mi

mi

APPENDIX C: MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTION OF *EFO FAI*

Efo fai, efo fai

Mind You Aflaṅaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Ee e fo faie fo fai e fo faie fo fai

Chorus

O pɛɛ kɔ mgbea mɛ ta mɔ

7

E foO du moo du fai e foO du moo du fai

Naa Yoo Bo to gbea mɛ

O

13

Ee e fo Lon don fai e fo Lon don

pɛɛ kɔ mgbea mɛ ta mɔ Naa Yoo Bo to gbea mɛ

Fine

20

fai

Ee e o mɔ kɛo

O pɛɛ kɔ mgbea mɛ ta mɔ Naa Yoo Bo to gbea mɛ

26

ye mli nia ju'e

yaa jieo naa ko nie kwe nie fo see

31

o mo keo

ye mli nia ju'e

32

ye mli nia ju'e

yaa jieo naa ko nie kwe nie fo see

38

ke jee nakai le

na kai e baa gbe keo we ku

ke jee na kai e baa gbe keo we ku

44

be nyen je nyen wiea ke be nyem je nyem wiea
fæ jee wə yoo ji læ

51

ke jee wə yoo ji læ læ hue tsə a ke læ hu wə yoo ji læ

57

læ hue tsə a ke læ hu wə yoo ji læ O pæ kə 'pæ kə o sa ne

64

ja waa ye Te shi meia hi ε fæ shikəo fee nie fe ma pe o sa nee

70

jaaa ye Te shi meia hi ε dəŋŋ

APPENDIX D: MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTION OF *Wɔ MAŋ GHANA*

Wɔmaŋ Ghana

Ghana Aflaŋaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor



Wɔ ja ku Gha na Gha na me ni gbaawɔ naa?_

Chorus



Wɔ maŋ Gha na

7



Gha na no ni gbaawɔ naa Pre pai di m'ye wɔa wui a naaa ni tsu mɔ ni a baa

13

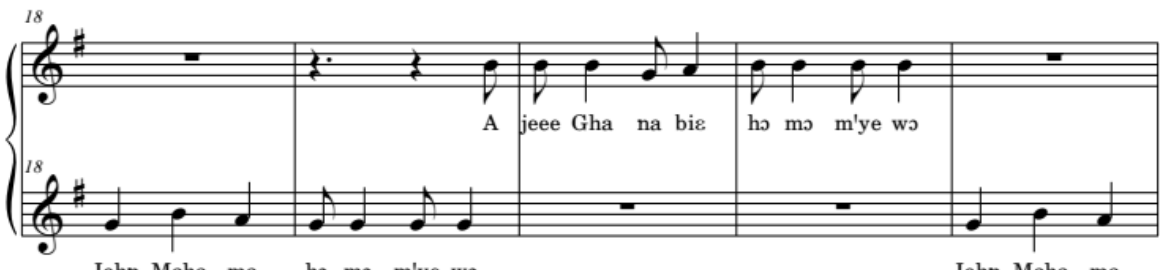


1. 2.

A jee Gha na ho mɔ m'ye wɔ

tsu Gha na biɛ ho mɔ m'ye wɔee ho mɔ m'ye wɔee

18



A jee Gha na biɛ ho mɔ m'ye wɔ

John Maha ma ho mɔ m'ye wɔ John Maha ma

Wɔ maŋ Ghana

23

John Maha ma kɛɛ I dey bee kɛ kɛ Wɔ kɛɛ

hɔ mɔ m'ye wɔ A so mua e ba la ka

28

kpon shai

wɔ Wa yo mi he wɔ Gha na m'ya ban krɔpt

32

Eei fif

ee

33

ty one bi llion Wa yo mi eee a kɛ wɔ m'yaeee

Wa yo mi he wɔ Gha na

39

m'ya ban krɔpt ee

APPENDIX E: MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTION OF AAJO TIGAARE.

Aajo Tigaare

Tafo ye feo aflaṅaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Wəŋ jo Ti gaa re e ne le wəŋ jo Ti gaareoo

Chorus

Aa jo Ti gaa re

7

Mi

Bo hu oo jo Kpe le e daŋ to loia wə yei fæ wəŋ na nysee

13

nye mi keo kee wə yoo ji boe Mi

sa ni o le ba jii sro toi sro toi

19

nye mi keo kae woyoo ji boe

sa ni o le sa jii srɔ toi srɔ toi

25

Kwe ma be ni maie bao ɲɔ

o nyie bar tsuia mli oo nu K twen ty

31

ke:

32

ka ka tso fa

33

kwe mə be ni meie bao ɲoo

o nyie bar tsuia mli oo nu K twen ty

39

Kwe mə be ni a tee ja ra mli

e ke ka ka tso fa ni aa jo Ti gaa re oo jo

46

Kwe mə be ni a tee ja ra mli

Kpe le ni aa jo Ti gaa re oo jo Kpe le

APPENDIX F: MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTION OF *WɔYE MAŋ KO*.

Wɔye maŋ ko

Greece afaŋaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Wɔ ye maŋ ni maŋ tse be mli Eei aa gbo sɔŋŋ

Chorus

wɔ ye maŋ ni maŋ tse be mli

7

1. 2.

Eee aan ji wɔ ye maŋ tse ku'e

Eei aa gbo sɔŋŋ sɔŋŋ kɛ mɔ ko gbe's'nye mi abaa

14

Eee aan ji wɔ ye maŋ tse ku'e

mɔ lɛ a wo lɛ tsu kɛ mɔ ko gbe 'nye mi abaa

20

Eee Te shieO nu kpai wiea kɛ

mɔ lɛ a wo lɛ tsu a ka bɔ wɔŋ ye Te shie

25

Ee man nɛɛŋ O nu krai wiaa ke

a ka bo wɔŋ ye Te shie Bo'ɛŋ tɛso nyɛ mi te te

31

po ɛme ne o

32

mɔ le o gbe le

33

wɔ ye man ko

bo'ɛŋ tɛso nyɛ mi te te po ɛme ne o mɔ le o gbe le wɔ ye man ni

39

man tɛ be mli Eei aa gbo soŋŋ

APPENDIX G: MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTION OF *MANJARANO OTUTU*.

Manjarano Otutu

Ghana Aflanaa

Transcribed by Akwetteh, Laryea

Cantor

Maḡ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo Maḡ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo

Chorus

Maḡ

6

Læ læḡ maḡ

j'ra nɔO tu tuooo kæ she a fi læ buɔ wɔ he

12

j'ra nɔO tu tuooo maḡ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo

Maḡ j'ra nɔO tu tuooo kæ she

18

O tu tu bi biooooo bi biooooo eee

a fi læ buɔ wɔ he

25

O tu tu bi biooo ni e maO be ney We O tu tu bi biooo ni

32

e maO be ney

33

We Wəŋ bia kə na kaiO tu tu ε nə gbəa kə jəeeee ni

40

bei kə bei fəɛ nie nuɔ la sɔŋŋ

Ləɛ ləŋ maŋ j'ra nɔO tu tuoo maŋ

46

j'ra nɔO tu tuoo

Maŋ j'ra nɔO tu tuoo kəe shə a fi ləe buɔ wɔ he

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Sample Questionnaire

Because the research site is a Ga community, the sample questionnaire was prepared in Ga and the interviews were, as well, conducted in the Ga language. I have however provided the English transcription- in bold and brackets.

- ✓ Ani ole noko ye Gbemlilaa he, obaanye osusu otsɔɔmi?
(Do you know about the *Gbemlilaa* ritual, can you describe it?)
- ✓ Keji akɛɛ Ala gbemli le, te eshishi tsɔɔmɔ?
(What is the meaning of the phrase *Ala gbemli*?)
 - Ani Gbemlilaa tsio miyii ke hoofeemɔ naa?
(Is *Gbemlilaa* a ban on drumming and noise-making?)
- ✓ Mina mile ake tsuutsu le, akutsei fio ko pe Gbemlilaa mlai le mɔmɔ ye Teshi. Shi noni wonaa nmenemene ji ake, mlai le mɔmɔ maɲ le fee. Meni hewɔ?
(I am reliably informed that *Gbemlilaa* only affected certain parts of the community in the past. In present times however, it affects the whole community. Why?)
- ✓ Mɛɛ tsakemɔi kookro eje Gbemlilaa mlai le anoyeli le amlɔi keba ye shitramɔ nɛɛ mli?
(What other changes have emerged in the observance of *Gbemlilaa* in present times?)
- ✓ Ye Gbemlilaa bei amlɔi le, meni ji diofeemɔ, gbɛɛmɔ, ke hoofeemɔ?
(During the observance of *Gbemlilaa*, what constitutes silence, sound, and noise?)
- ✓ Ani eji anɔkwale ake Gbemlilaa sumɔɔ gbɛɛmɔ ko kwraaa? Meni hewɔ?
(Is it true that *Gbemlilaa* abhors sound-making altogether? Why?)
- ✓ Mɛɛ gbɛianɔ Gbemlilaa tsɔɔ eyeɔ ebuaa Hɔmɔwɔ yeli le?
(How does *Gbemlilaa* impact the complete *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival?)
- ✓ Meni ji Gbemlilaa he sɛɛnamɔ keha Teshie maɲ le fee?
(What is the relevance of *Gbemlilaa* to the Teshie community as a whole?)
 - Ani esa ake Gbemlilaa atee nɔmɔ ke bei ashi ye maɲ le mli?
(Is *Gbemlilaa* supposed to incite conflict in the town?)
 - Ani alaa gbemli koni anyɛ ake maɲsɛɛ bii abe?
(Is it also meant to fight other ethnic groups?)
- ✓ Ye Gbemlilaa beiamli le, meni ji nibii ni teɔ nɔmɔ ke bei ashi?
(What are some of the causes of the conflicts that arise during the observance of *Gbemlilaa*?)
 - Te afeɔ amɔɔ neke nɔmɔ ke bei nɛɛ anaa?
(How are these conflicts resolved?)