

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IN TAMALE

By

MOHAMMED SHERIFF YAMUSAH

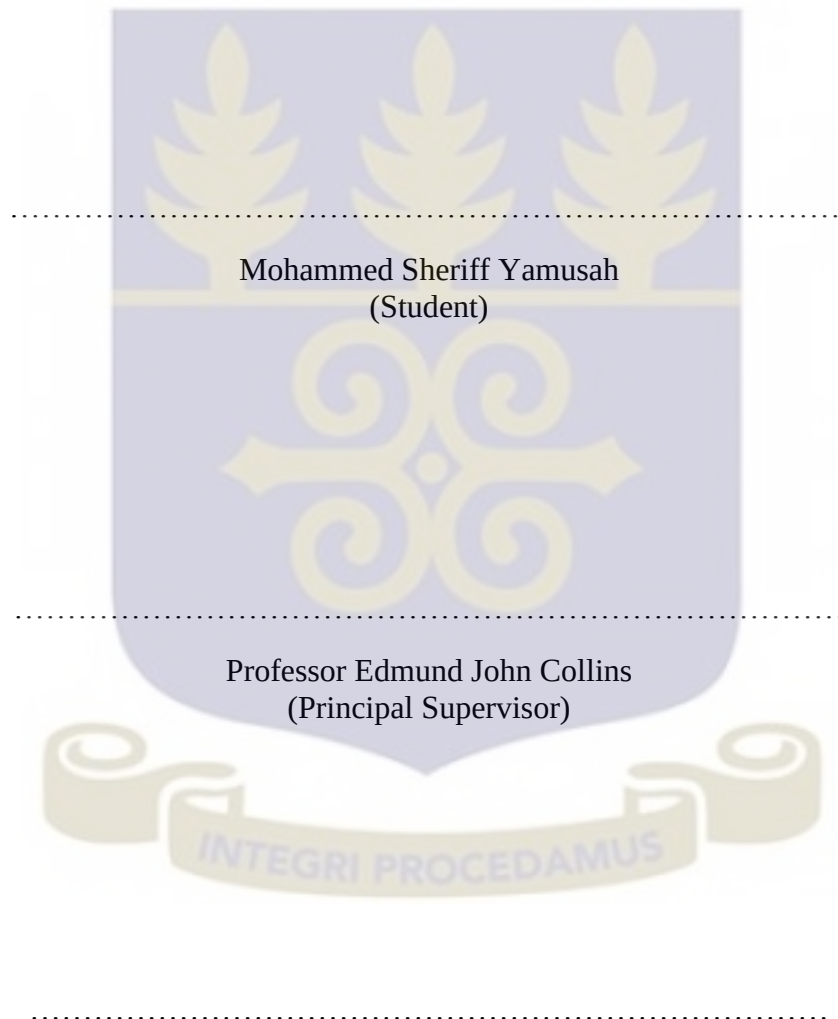
(10363568)

This thesis is submitted to the University of Ghana, Legon in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of **MPhil Music degree**

July 2013

DECLARATION

This is a declaration, that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Mohammed Sheriff Yamusah under supervision towards the award of MPhil Music degree at the Department of Music, University of Ghana – Legon. This work is original and duly cites and acknowledges all sources of information.



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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the expanding music industry in Tamale, focusing on its artistes. It examines how they create and produce their music, how they market and promote the music and their images, and also the nature and art of their performances and the scope of their export beyond Tamale. The contemporary popular musicians of Tamale have been making all efforts since to gain a national appeal and attention to no avail. The problem discussed in the study is that, as long as an artiste bases in northern Ghana he/she will most likely never become a national music icon in Ghana: until he/she migrates to Accra. This thesis reviews literature on the traditional and neo-traditional music of Dagbon. Then moves on to examine the underlying problems of the Tamale music industry – and suggests solutions. The study draws much of its information from the perspectives of the artistes, through interviewing them, and analyzing what they have to say.

Tamale is the center for these contemporary popular artistes and their music, but most of them until as recent as 2008/2009, only recorded their music from Accra and Kumasi. The music industry in Tamale still faces major challenges. The artistes and their music appear not to have travelled much beyond their home region especially into southern Ghana. Other problems include limited formal education among artistes, and the lack of capital investment. However, it has some very visible prospects for a brighter future.

This study sets the tone for real discussions of the music industry in Tamale based on facts and verifiable information. It also uncovers some of the challenges to the industry. This study is an attempt at throwing light on the life problem for many young people in the Tamale area, who have the gift of music, which they thereby wish to use as a medium to enhance their socio-economic livelihood. Finally, this thesis lays the foundation for further academic studies into the music industry in Tamale.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all the artistes and musicians of northern Ghana (past, present and future), who have kept faith with their industry. Despite the very challenging circumstances in which they work, and despite the obstacles before them, they refuse to be weary.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I do hereby wish to acknowledge and show my deepest appreciation to all the people who have contributed in diverse ways to my life, education and career, bringing me this far. I pray that Allah richly bless and reward all of you.

Thank you to my family, personal friends, and mentors: Alhaji Yamusah Mumuni (father), Hajia Abiba Fuseini (mother), Kadri Wun-nam Nafisa (wife), and all my numerous siblings.

Thank you Laura Barrett, Yidana Hameed, Iddrisu M. Saani, Suhuyini Abdulai, Abdallah Karakara, Iddrisu Adam Kpalsi, and Nuhu Abukari. Alhassan S. Suhuyini, Hamza Suhuyini, Sulemana Musah, Abu Razak, Baba Salifu, Hawa Mohammed, Youssef Abdul-Rahman Nasigri, Abdul Hanan Gundaado, and Mohammed Abdul-Aziz. Dada-Cee, Youssef A. R. Nasigri, Suweidu M. Saani, M. Najimu-Deen Abdullah, Misbao Mohammed Mahamoud, and Abdallah Tahidu.

Thank you Lt. Cmd. J.A.N. Dennis (Rtd), Mr. Victor Dotse, and Ahmed Baako Alhassan. Fuseini Tia, Rex Omar, and Prince Mahama. Alhaji Mohammed Haroun (Cambodia), Dr. Abdulai Salifu Asuro, Dr. Abbas Adam, Dr. Adam Gamel Nazer, Prof. David Locke, Prof. Haruna Yakubu, Dr. Rowland Otchwemah, Prof. David Millar, and Mr. Samuel Awuga.

Thank you to my teachers and lectures. Prof. E. John Collins (University of Ghana), the late Dr. Emmanuel Boamah (University of Ghana), Dr. Pascal Zabana Kongo (University of Ghana), Mr. Timothy E. Andoh (University of Ghana), and Dr. Joshua Amuah (University of Ghana). Dr. C.W.K. Mereku (University of Education, Winneba), Dr. Eva Ebeli (University of Education, Winneba), and Dr. Kingsley Ampomah (University of Education, Winneba).

Thank you to my professional friends. Phil Babcock (Tufts University, USA), Sara-Maria Sorrentino, Evans Oppong, Benjamin Oduro Arhin Jnr, Edwin Ferguson, Grace Takyi Donkor, and Matthew Fianu. Mark Millas (Fish), Eric Sunu Doe, Kofi Kudonu, and Frank Ferguson Laing. Victor Luftig (University of Virginia, USA) and Paul Muldoon (Princeton University, USA). Dominik Phyfferoen, Shoshana Iten (Sababas), and Bettina Furstenberg (Sababas).

To all the unmentioned heroes of my life, thank you. Allah best knows you all, may He richly bless and reward you in His divine abundance. Aameen...!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER ONE	1
CONTEMPORARY POPULAR MUSIC IN TAMALE	1
1.1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1.1. Early Contributions and Subsequent Decline	2
1.1.2. The Toll of Conflicts.....	3
1.2. BACKGROUND	4
1.3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM.....	11
1.4. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	12
1.5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	13
1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	14
1.6.1. Diffusionism	14
1.6.2. Historical Particularism.....	15
1.6.3. Symbolic Interactionism	18
1.6.4. Conclusion	19
1.7. METHODOLOGY	21
1.7.1. The Approach and Research Instrument	21

1.7.2.	The Population and Sample Size	23
1.8.	LITERATURE REVIEW	25
1.8.1.	The Neo-Traditional Era before 1985: The Essential Influences.....	28
1.8.1.1.	Simpa “ <i>The Disco Mataaya</i> ”	31
1.8.1.2.	The “Akarima” and “Kambonsi”	32
1.8.1.3.	The Traditional Variety in Modernity	33
1.8.1.4.	The Soloists.....	34
1.8.1.5.	The Youth Bands “Achika-achika”	35
1.8.1.6.	The “Taamaale” Bands	36
1.8.2.	Contemporary Popular Music Era beyond 1985: A Justification	37
1.8.3.	Music Breaks Barriers: Some Ethnomusicological Perspectives.....	42
	CHAPTER TWO	46
	THE CREATION AND PRODUCTION PROCESSES	46
2.1.	INTRODUCTION	46
2.2.	THE INSPIRATION.....	47
2.3.	WRITING AND COMPOSING	49
2.4.	THE STUDIO SESSION AND BEARING THE COST.....	52
2.5.	THE JOB SATISFACTION	57
2.6.	RELATED CHALLENGES	60
2.6.1.	The Lack of Appropriate Studios.....	61
2.6.2.	The Deficiency in Technical Knowhow	61
2.6.3.	The Problem with Formal Education	62
2.6.4.	The Financial Limits	63
	CHAPTER THREE	66
	MARKETING AND PROMOTION	66

3.1.	INTRODUCTION	66
3.2.	THE PUBLISHING DEAL AND MASS PRODUCTION	66
3.3.	LOCATING THE MARKET: Distribution & Retails	68
3.4.	PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY	72
3.5.	THE OFFICIAL RELEASE: The Launch	75
3.6.	THE VIDEOS, VIDEO ALBUMS AND MOVIES	78
3.7.	RELATED CHALLENGES	81
3.7.1.	Difficulty of Accessing Television Media	81
3.7.2.	Technological Advancement and Piracy.....	82
3.7.3.	Payola.....	82
3.7.4.	Lack of Access to Auxiliary Professionals and Services	83
CHAPTER FOUR.....		84
PERFORMANCE CULTURE.....		84
4.1.	INTRODUCTION	84
4.2.	THE “MIME” OR LIP-SYNCHING ARTISTES	85
4.3.	THE CONCERT PARTIES	88
4.4.	ON THE BAND STAND	89
4.5.	COMMERCIAL CONCERTS: The Promoters, Agents and Managers.	92
4.6.	THE “BARTER TRADE” APPEARANCES.....	94
4.7.	THE OCCASIONS	96
4.8.	GOING BEYOND BORDERS.....	97
4.9.	RELATED CHALLENGES	101
4.9.1.	Lack of Investment Capital	101
4.9.2.	Lack of Professionalism and Knowhow in Event Promotions.....	102
4.9.3.	Lack of Access to Equipment and Technical Knowhow	102

4.9.4.	Amateurish and Unprofessional Attitudes among Artistes	103
CHAPTER FIVE.....		104
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		104
5.1.	SUMMARY	104
5.1.1.	Creation and Production Processes	104
5.1.2.	Marketing and Promotion	105
5.1.3.	Performance Culture	105
5.2.	CONCLUSION	106
5.2.1.	The Defining Identities: Who is a “ <i>Northern Artiste</i> ”?.....	108
5.2.2.	The Appearance of Welfare and Unions of Artistes	110
5.2.3.	The Changing Notion of Copyright and Royalties	112
5.2.4.	A Comparative Analysis: The Pop Music of North and South	114
5.2.5.	What the Future Holds	116
5.3.	RECOMMENDATIONS	118
5.3.1.	Higher Education:	118
5.3.2.	Effective Unions or Collective Interests Groups:	118
5.3.3.	Regular Live Band Music and Performance Venues:	119
5.3.4.	Investment Capital:	119
5.3.5.	Auxiliary Personnel and Services:	120
5.3.6.	Modern Technology in Sales/Marketing:.....	120
5.3.7.	Improve Media Collaborations:	120
5.3.8.	Collaborations:	121
5.3.9.	Travel and Exposure:	121
5.3.10.	Socio-Economic Development of Communities:.....	122
5.3.11.	Collectively Fight Piracy in All Forms:	122

5.3.12. State and Institutional Funding:	122
5.3.13. Establish Festivals To Showcase Northern Music:	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	124
ONLINE RESOURCES.....	128
MISCELLANEOUS	131
APPENDIX A	132
PROFILE OF MOHAMMED SHERIFF YAMUSAH (Doobia/Sheriff Ghale)	132
APPENDIX B	137
INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE	137
APPENDIX C	141
LIST OF RESPONDENTS.....	141
APPENDIX D	149
LIST OF OTHER ARTISTES MENTIONED	149



LIST OF FIGURES

<u>ITEM.....</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Figure 1: Map of Tamale.....	5
Figure 2: Binkumda Studio in Tamale.....	53



CHAPTER ONE

CONTEMPORARY POPULAR MUSIC IN TAMALE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This study seeks answers to some recurrent questions that bother many musicians and music enthusiasts in Northern Ghana. The contemporary popular music industry (CPMI) of Northern Ghana and specifically that of Tamale (capital of the Northern Region) is the area of special interest. Some of the questions include the following: Why does it seem impossible to pursue a nationally acclaimed music career while resident in the north of Ghana? What is it that constitutes a successful music career in the first place? Why is it so easy for contemporary popular music from Southern Ghana, to make hits in Northern Ghana and not vice versa? Are there some elements in the contemporary popular music of Northern Ghana that can boost its reception in the rest of Ghana?

This study tries to identify and raise all the relevant questions from their logical genesis and to seek answers to them, hoping that the information gathered and analyzed will lead to some practical propositions on the way forward for the music industry in Tamale. This study includes a wide review of accessible literature and information on the music industry to help direct the focus. I hope that this will provide some viable answers for the recording, publishing and performing artistes in Tamale.

In instances where Northern Ghanaian music gets airplay around Southern Ghana and other parts of the world, the reception among peoples of diverse backgrounds has been very good. So how can this benefit the contemporary popular artistes and music of Tamale?

1.1.1. Early Contributions and Subsequent Decline

Prior to the emergence of the contemporary popular music industry of Tamale in the late 1980s, almost every studio recording and live performance of songs in Northern Ghana came from Accra and Kumasi, except for performances of the police band. In October 1970, the Ghana Police Dance Band formed its branch in Tamale, it helped train two singers, Christie Azumah, and Lady Talata of the Uppers Chapter 1 and Uppers Chapter 2 bands based in what was then the Upper Region (Tawiah, 2013). There were no recording studios in the whole of the north of Ghana, nor were there either record companies or radio stations. However, a number of individual artistes and musicians, inspired by the records (from Accra and Kumasi) as well as their live band performance experience coupled with their traditional/cultural music backgrounds, decided to pursue music careers, even though that meant for most of them an eventual migration to Southern Ghana. In this regard, I am referring to the whole of the Northern and Upper regions of Ghana and not just the Tamale area.

Some of those individual artistes included Christie Azumah, Onipa-Nua, Lady Talata, Prince Ali, Amoah Azangeo, and T. B. Damba. Some later artistes in this category include Atongo Zimba, the African Show-Boys and Abubakari Kaba. These artistes played live band music just like their southern counterparts. Nonetheless, due to the unavailability of recording infrastructure in Northern Ghana, these artistes could not stay and practice at home. An extensive review of these artistes and their works may be necessary at some point, unfortunately that goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Amoah Azangeo for instance, according to Schoonmaker (2003), played recording sessions for Fela Kuti of Nigeria. He also regularly played Fra-Fra calabash for Faisal Helwani's Basa-Basa Sounds, and he jammed (played) with Harris and McCann's modern jazz

group at the Soul-to-Soul concert held in March 1971 at the Black Star Square in Accra (Collins, 2012: 133 – 211).

The music industry in the Northern Region got its best facilitation during the later years of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government led by Jerry Rawlings that extended electricity from the national grid to Tamale in 1989. I was in class five at the Sakasaka Primary School then, and I remember very well the jubilations in Tamale. The construction of a West African sub-region highway, stretching from Kintampo to Paga through Tamale in the early 1990s was also a major factor in opening up Northern Ghana for development. These bold developmental steps taken by the state at that time also tremendously helped the area, to access technological development from other parts of the world. The region began to experience advancement in recording, performance and publicity. However, the influx of these latest technologies such as digital recording studios and CD burners although positive, also came to impact negatively on the new generation of artistes. The computers would take care of the technicalities of their music, so the musicians no longer bothered to learn to be technical. Miming or lip-synching soon became the order of the day instead of the live band. All these happened right around the birth of this contemporary popular music industry in Tamale between the late 1980s and early 1990s.

1.1.2. The Toll of Conflicts

The Northern Region of Ghana had had its fair share of inter and intra ethnic conflicts over the years. The Gonja – Vagla mini war in 1980, the Nawuri, Basari and Konkomba against Gonja in 1991 and May 1992, the Konkomba against Nanumba and Dagomba in 1993/94 and a number of others all exacted their toll on the region. All were due to various remote and immediate causes

(Mahama, 2003: 1, 76, 84). The Gbewaa palace assault of 2002 is a classic example of an intra ethnic conflict. “From 25 to 27 March 2002, an armed assault on the Gbewaa Palace in Yendi, the paramount seat of the Dagbon people in the Northern Region of Ghana, led to the death of several people including Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II, the King of Dagbon, whom the assailants decapitated. Many suffered injuries in the fighting; several houses including the Gbewaa Palace were looted and burnt, and several properties destroyed. The three-day attack triggered a mass exodus of residents to safe locations outside Yendi, particularly Tamale and its environs, and nearly led to the breakdown of law and order in Northern Ghana. The Yendi carnage created nationwide panic and anxiety, and compelled the Government to declare a state of emergency in the Dagbon area” (Wuaku Commission, 2002: 1).

All these conflicts clearly had some very negative effects on the music industry of Tamale and the Northern Region as a whole. The conflicts (especially those from the 1990s onwards) slowed down capital investments and killed the nightlife in Tamale in particular, thereby causing the venues to lose the enthusiastic audiences they used to entertain in the early 1990s. There will be detailed examination later in this thesis, of some of the roles that the artistes and their music played in these conflicts, especially regarding peace-building and developmental campaigns.

1.2. BACKGROUND

Tamale is the Northern Regional capital of the Republic of Ghana. It is the biggest city in the Dagbon traditional area, as well as the Northern Region and it is the fourth biggest city in Ghana, approximately 922km sq. in size. It is located within the Guinea Savannah belt and experiences one rainy season from March to October and a dry season with severe harmattan winds from November to January.

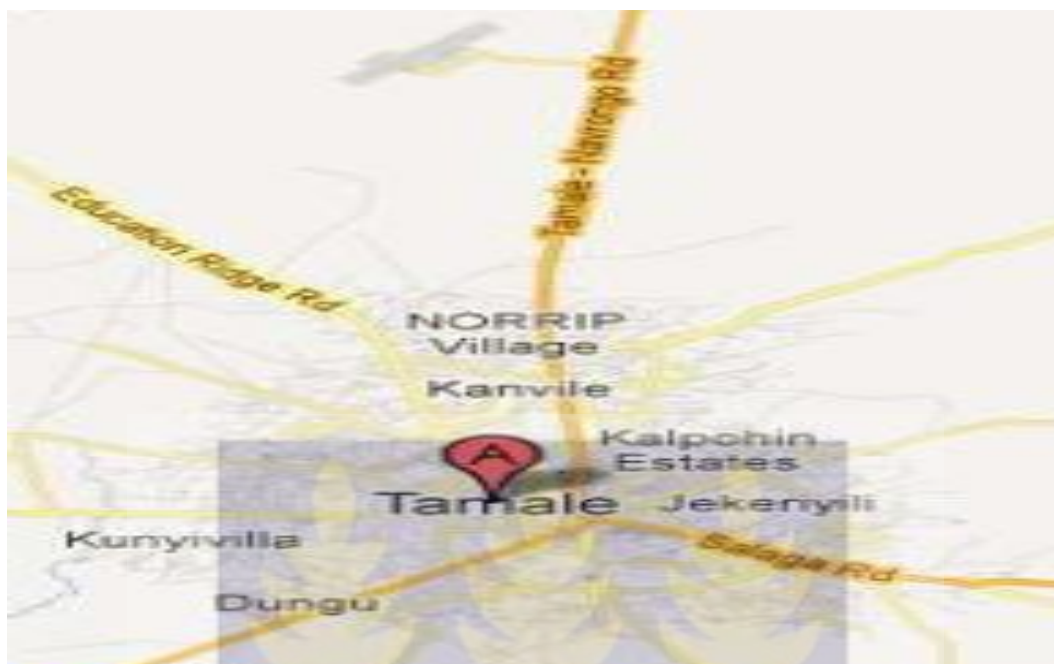


Fig 1: Map of Tamale City (Google Maps 2013)

Trading and peasant farming are the main economic activities of the people of Tamale and the city is the most attractive center of migration for the peoples across the three regions of Northern Ghana. Tamale has a population of 293,881 comprising 146,979 males and 146,902 females with a growth rate of 3.5% (UN-HABITAT, 2009: 6). Most of the population is native Dagomba, but as a cosmopolitan area, there are diverse ethnic communities in the area ranging from those of the close dialects of Mamprusi, Nanumba and Mossi to diverse Akan, Gonja, Hausa, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo and many others. It is also predominantly Muslim.

The contemporary popular music industry of the Northern Region of Ghana is relatively new (approximately twenty-five years old) with Tamale as its center. While earlier historical developments contributed in sparking its evolution, the actual explosion of the industry only occurred in the period immediately following the 1989 extension of the national electricity grid to Tamale. Before that event, there was only limited electricity supply in Tamale starting from the

late 1920s (ecgonline.info, 2015) and a regular electricity supply is a prerequisite for industrial development anywhere in the world.

As young as the music industry in Tamale is, some of its pioneering acts include names such as T. B. Damba, Prince Ali, Gordon Lari, Nana Gazor, Fuseini Tia, Alibeela, Rafiq Dachar, Sirina Issah, Maurice Maiga, Kassim Gazor, Sheriff Ghale and Ahmed Adam. Except for Sirina Issah, Kassim Gazor, Sheriff Ghale, and Ahmed Adam, all the others mentioned above have either retired or moved on to other spheres of life.

Most often, music enthusiasts in Northern Ghana debate among themselves whether what goes on in Tamale qualifies to be called a music industry, and whether it qualifies to be viewed separately from the national music industry of Ghana, which is mostly centralized in Accra.

Music enthusiasts often expect that Northern Ghana should produce a different genre of music, or at least one that would sound different from the highlife and associated genres that evolved out of Southern Ghana. This expectation is perhaps due to the fact that the peoples of the three regions of Northern Ghana (Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions) are predominantly historic migrants from the Sahel region and descendants of *Tohazie (the Red Hunter)*, who according to Mahama (1987: 3) travelled from Zamfara in Northern Nigeria to the Mali Empire.

The Mole-Dagbani group in particular originally migrated from Biun, in Gruma, interacting with many other cultures along the way. “It was Kpogunumbo’s grandson Gbewaa, who, after he had become the king of Gruma, migrated from Biun with a large following to Pusiga near Bawku in about the 12th Century” (Mahama, 1987: 1, 2). Gbewaa and successive rulers later pushed further south to cover their present day settlements in Ghana. Naa Gbewaa is the first King of ancient or Greater Dagbon, which includes Mamprugu, present day Dagbon and Nanung

(Mahama, 1987: 2). Present day Dagbon is the oldest Kingdom in Ghana, and it is one of the oldest in Africa (Mahama, 2009: 1).

Hence, the nature and character of the traditional music of Northern Ghana at least appears to be more comparable to the musical cultures of the Sahel, such as that of Mali and Senegal than it is to the musical cultures of most of Southern Ghana.

On the other hand, Northern Ghana is *Ghanaian* by all standards. All its peoples settled in the area long before the Portuguese arrived at the Gold Coast in 1471. It took quite a long time before the area fully incorporated into the nation state of Ghana, which occurred only after the British eventually proclaimed the Gold Coast colony by July 1874 and expanded it to include Ashanti by 1896. Thus, until the Berlin Conference organized by Otto von Bismarck from November 1884 till February 1885, [which set the principles to guide European powers in their partitioning of the African continent (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2011: 3)], the colonialists were not committed to engaging Inland Africa. They stayed on the coast to manage their economic interests. As a result, their interactions with Southern Ghana resulted into many of the features of the national character of Ghana today. Consequently, for a long time this did not directly involve a Northern Ghanaian component. For example, the introduction of western type school education to the North was close to a hundred years later than the South. This is why around independence Nkrumah pursued a policy of free education for Northern Ghana in an attempt at closing the North–South education gap.

The *Indirect Rule* of the British colonial power did not help matters either. It certainly did not help towards building a national character that would effectively involve a Northern Ghanaian cultural identity. *Indirect Rule* was a system by which the British used existing local governance

structures and traditions in their colonies as conduits to administer those colonies from behind the scenes by exercising power through designated chiefs.

Under indirect rule, the British fragmented the country into the *Colony* and the *Northern Protectorate/Territories*. They did not openly take full responsibility of collective development of the country and integrating the diverse ethnicities and cultures. Akologo & Klinken (2008) argue that the colonial system even discouraged missionary educationists in Navrongo from promoting education in the north. They preferred the status-quo where the uneducated populations of the Northern Territories were the labor reserve for the mines and plantations down south. This approach negatively affected the north, considering the level of education among the contemporary artistes, and their access to western musical instruments and knowledge, which drive their industry. This also affected the general level of national integration.

Hence, even today, one will hardly find the Sahelian flavor of Northern Ghana in for instance, the highlife music of Ghana. Indeed Northern Ghana does not seem to feel itself to be part of the highlife culture of Ghana.

The emergence of the contemporary pop culture in the Northern Region today is a result of the ideas of a globalized world influencing sub-Saharan Africa. The key influences in the emergence of this contemporary ideas and pop culture in Northern Ghana, particularly in Tamale and the Dagbon traditional area, mostly came from the south of Ghana. For example, the Post-Independence *African Personality* and *Consciencism* concepts propagated by Kwame Nkrumah [described by Professor Mazrui as a product of Africanity, Islam and Euro-Christianity (Mazrui, 2004:1)], played a part. These ideas of Nkrumah stimulated the state to support and promote both the traditional neo-traditional and popular music and artistes of Ghana.

An example of one such neo-traditional music of Dagbon is simpa music that became associated with the independence movement, even though the creation of simpa itself predates the Nkrumah era, as Collins, (1996) notes, “Highlife spread from the coast into the hinterland through the medium of records, brass bands, and guitar bands. By the 1930s, it had reached Dagbon, where it transformed into simpa. A clue to this southern root of simpa is in the name simpa itself, for this is the local name of Winneba, one of the Fanti port towns in which highlife was born”.

In this thesis, the term neo-traditional means as Collins defined in a private conversation, the new 20th Century forms of older musical traditions that borrow elements of popular music but retain continuity with the past. These new traditional forms use mainly non-Western instruments, which they mostly play in the context and locations of traditional ceremonial, social and recreational music.

Yakubu Gowan, one of the most popular contemporary artistes through the 1980s in Dagbon, is still popular for neo-traditional simpa music. The Kakpag’yili Wait & See simpa group is very popular in Tamale. Bikuraba and Dickson Gowan are also of the current generation and very popular for their simpa music.

Charismatic church music, which came from Southern Ghana to the north, also played a key role in laying the foundations. It even groomed the person who later became the bedrock of the contemporary popular music in Dagbon; this was Blessed Gregory alias Nana Gazor. He was born in Tamale, although his father was from the Central Region of Ghana. He learned to play the keyboard and bass guitar from the Pentecost Church in Tamale in the early 1980s and got to work for a media unit of the Catholic Church in Tamale known as Depsocom. Depsocom set up the first music-recording studio in Tamale in the late 1980s and it was from this studio that the first generation of the contemporary pop artistes was born. The recording and release of almost every

single contemporary pop or neo-traditional song in Tamale between 1985 and 1995 was from the studio of Depsocom and produced by Nana Gazor.

However, despite these key influences from the south of Ghana on the music of Tamale, the artistes and their music have retained some peculiar identities and character of their own, quite different from the highlife and related genres of Southern Ghana. Some contemporary pop artistes like Yakubu Gowan, Fuseini Tia, Kakpag'yili Wait & See, Doobia, Bikuraba, Yakubu Salifu, Alibeela and Sey have carried on the neo-traditional genres like simpa, baamaya¹ and jinjeling². Gordon Lari, Sheriff Ghale, Rafiq Dachar, Abu Sadiq, Zanjina and others took up what they called Northern Reggae. This is a sub-genre of the Jamaican reggae music sung in the native dialects of Northern Ghana, and fusing some local/traditional musical elements and instruments like the Lunga (traditional Dagomba hourglass drum), pentatonic scales, call and response, repetitions etc. Other artistes like Ahmed Adam and Memunatu Lardi took up a Bollywood influenced genre they called the "Indian Style", where they assimilate songs from popular Bollywood movies, copying their melodies and beats but singing in Dagbani. Whilst Prince Mahama, Prince Okla, KKC, Umar Janda, Mama Rams and others have leaned towards the south of Ghana bearing the torch of highlife and hiplife genres.

In relation to northern music fans and audiences, the fashion for northern popular music might reflect cultural identity, or could be just a matter of individual taste, or an opportunity to enjoy a wide variety of musical genres.

¹ Although baamaya is traditional to Dagbon, some neo-traditional artistes have infused western instruments into their contemporary baamaya recordings.

² Jinjeling is originally traditional music, but Doobia and Nana Gazor in his production of Fuseini Tia's albums, infused western instruments and harmonies, evolving a neo-traditional sub-genre.

However, the fact remains that every hit song in Accra becomes a hit in Tamale but the reverse never happens. Most hit songs in Tamale, until very recently, never got radio airplay even once in Accra. That is a major concern that always comes up at forums on popular northern music. Therefore, the questions remain, whether the contemporary popular artistes and music of Tamale should just stay in Tamale or seek to gain some national appreciation in Ghana. How can they travel beyond Tamale, if they chose to? Are there elements within the contemporary popular music of Northern Ghana that keep it from travelling beyond Tamale, if so, what are those elements?

1.3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The approximately twenty-five-year old contemporary popular music industry of Tamale has been making all efforts to gain a national appeal and attention to no avail. The contemporary popular artistes of Tamale feel very strongly that the whole Ghana needs to hear their music. They believe that their music has its own character and deserves a better appreciation and patronage of the Ghanaian people than it currently receives. Apparently, even the very few among them who have been able to make their presence felt in Accra and across the country, still feel their popularity is not commensurate with their efforts. If an artiste from Northern Ghana has to make a significant national presence, then he/she has to migrate to Accra the national capital, or even adopt [upon migrating] a particular genre of music and language to sing in. Examples of such artistes are King Ayisoba, Blakk Rasta, Sherifatu Gunu and others. That is a very big problem for them. Hence, as long as an artiste stays in Northern Ghana he/she will most likely not be able to make a successful music career worthy of national appreciation in Ghana, until he/she migrates to Accra. Yet, if they migrate, then they have to integrate, a process that poses for them the danger of losing their artistic character and identity.

This study investigates the nature of the music industry in Tamale, seeking answers as to why contemporary artistes based in Tamale are unable to pursue nationally acclaimed music careers from their base. The investigation focuses largely on inherent factors within the local industry in Tamale that limit the spread of the music and artistes beyond their base.

1.4. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is primarily the music industry in Tamale as perceived by the local artistes and other key players such as promoters, distributors, retailers and those involved with local radio stations, recording studios and concert venues. The focus is on stakeholders who are resident in Tamale and those who may be outside but make Tamale their headquarters or center of distribution, marketing and performance.

This study of the music industry in Tamale is very significant in the sense that it sets the basis for real discussions based on facts and verifiable information. Currently, among music enthusiasts, keen observers and stakeholders in the music of Tamale, discussions concerning its music industry are mostly just hearsay. Moreover, the artistes themselves appear helpless about the way forward for their industry. This study therefore is an attempt to fill the information gap.

At the heart of this thesis lies an analysis of the practical challenges of a young industry. Therefore, it attempts to supply information that will help solve a real life problem for many young people who have the gift of music but are not able to use it as a means of livelihood. This study also charts some very important lessons for other regions of Ghana towards decentralizing the music industry away from Accra.

This research also adds to the basis for further academic studies of the music industry in Tamale.

1.5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general objectives listed below arise out of an attempt at finding answers to some very fundamental questions regarding the music industry in Tamale. Some of those questions are as follows: Is there a music industry in Tamale? What defines the contemporary popular artistes and music in Tamale? How do the contemporary popular artistes in Tamale produce, market and perform their music, within and outside Tamale? What is the level of reception for the contemporary popular artistes and music in and outside Tamale? What are the main challenges of the contemporary popular artistes in Tamale? What can the contemporary artistes of Tamale do to better enhance the success of their careers in and beyond Tamale? Have any Tamale based artistes succeeded beyond Tamale, and what did they do right?

An attempt to answer the above listed questions results in the following objectives for this thesis:

1. Provide a history of the contemporary popular music industry in Tamale and discuss some of this area's main popular music styles.
2. Itemise the integral elements of the industry; analyzing their various definitions and roles.
3. Describe the work processes of the contemporary popular artistes in Tamale: considering their production, marketing and performance processes.
4. Identify all the major challenges facing the music industry in Tamale.
5. Prescribe some realistic solutions to all the identified challenges.
6. Explain how the contemporary pop artistes and their music can travel beyond the Northern Region of Ghana.

1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis approaches its subject matter based on three fundamental anthropological theories: *Diffusionism*, *Historical Particularism*, and *Symbolic Interactionism*.

1.6.1. Diffusionism

Ruth M. Stone (2008) described Diffusionism as an anthropological theory concerning the spread of cultural practices, including music performances, from one location to another often over long distances and the passage of time. She acknowledges Franz Boas as one of the key American scholars associated with this theory.

The fundamental assumptions of the diffusionists' theory are as follows:

1. Cultural traits diffuse or move from one place to another over time.
2. There is a single point of invention and over time, the trait moves outward from that original location.
3. Many traits build societies that exhibit various origins and histories.

Musical diffusionism has interest many comparative musicologists, who have studied the movements of musical instruments, pitches, scales etc. across various locations around the world. Some examples being drum bracing techniques diffusing between Indonesia and West Africa, and Xylophone tuning diffusing between Africa and Asia etc. (Stone, 2008: 27 – 29).

Diffusion and societies accepting influences from other societies, is a theory relevant to the emergence of Tamale's contemporary popular music industry. The first major external factor to kick start the industry was the extension of electricity from the national grid to Tamale in 1989. The construction of the sub-regional high way through Tamale to Paga was another essential factor. The subsequent influx of technology, hard and software, graduated some isolated musical

cultures into a full-fledged industry. However, even before these infrastructural developments, cultural traits have always diffused from Southern Ghana into Tamale. Thus, the artistes in Tamale continue to adopt new ways of doing things from the environment outside their traditional area.

1.6.2. Historical Particularism

Historical Particularism largely stemmed from the diffusionists' school and it is widely attributed to Franz Boas, the German born American anthropologist. Boas held that every society had its peculiarity, hence, it was not appropriate to compare different societies, grading some as civilized and others as savage. This kind of grading, as done by the anthropological evolutionists he considered Eurocentric and racist. He thereby advocated that anthropologists should engage in fieldwork, where they could properly understand the environmental circumstances of every culture. "According to Boas, the societies cannot be categorized as 'savage' or 'civilized'. This approach follows a kind of belittling. Rather than following a 'nomothetic' (considering several cases at a time) approach, he encouraged the anthropologists to follow an 'idiographic' (dealing with particular/ specific cases) approach". This is the basis for his thought of 'historical particularism'. "According to him, each culture of each society has its own uniqueness and the society has its own distinctive historical development. That is why he introduced the concept of 'cultural relativism' and invited the anthropologists to disregard the prevailing ethnocentric views." (Diah, Hossain, Mustari, & Ramli, 2014, p158-159: Quoting Langness, 1974; 57, and Scupin and DeCorse, 2012).

Hence, in the light of continuity and particularism, one notes that the idea of organizing the art of music making to include economic benefits for the performers is not new to Dagbon. No doubt, the *Lunga* (singular)/*Lunsi* (plural) culture in Dagbon is one of the most organized musical

systems in Ghana. It is the traditional royal court's institution of drum/musical history, singing/reciting the historical appellations of every family line in the state. It is an integral part of the area's political tradition. Every traditional music and dance culture in Dagbon, traces its roots back to the *Lunga/Lunsi* tradition. As the official historians of the state, there are official structures in place for rewarding the *Lunga/Lunsi*, by both the chieftaincy and the common people. All that is in the peculiarity of Dagbon, and these structures continue to patronize even the contemporary popular music of today in diverse ways.

Today, the contemporary popular artistes of Dagbon have taken up some of the traditional roles of the *Lunsi*. Some contemporary artistes learn and preserve the history of Dagbon *Nam* (*Chieftdom*) in their music. Prince Mahama in his song 'Ti teeimiya ti nanim yela', Sheriff Ghale in his 'Sochira', and Prince D in his 'Nanima', all recount the history of Dagbon chieftdom, and its unifying relations with the Mamprugu and Nanung traditional areas. Artistes like Bikuraba, Abu Sadiq, and Sheriff Ghale make extensive use of Dagomba proverbs, typical vocabulary and classical logic in their musical narratives. Some of them also infuse traditional instruments, like the *Lunga* (*hourglass drum*), and rhythmic patterns in their instrumentations. They sing traditional praises of some traditional heroes of Dagbon. They sing to console and empathize with the poor and vulnerable people in society. They uphold the traditional moral standards and values in their music. Hence, they virtually play most of the traditional roles of the *Lunsi* of Dagbon, except not in the traditional settings.

The reverence of the Dagomba traditional society for the *Lunsi* and their music, for the essential roles they play, has somehow culminated in the society's appreciation of the contemporary pop artistes and their music too. Hence, as part of its peculiar history, Dagbon is a society that has always valued music and its makers.

Some challenges however exist in today's popular music industry, which find their roots in the peculiar traditions and history of Dagbon. These problems emanate from gender imbalance and the influences of Islamic traditions.

For example, the society reserves the *Lunsi* tradition strictly for male. Although women traditionally participate in musical performances, their role is usually limited to only wailing, singing and clapping. Women do not play the *Lunsi (traditional drums)*, and they are not motivated to study the history and praise singing in public as the men do. They are only encouraged to learn and perform lullabies, work songs, and a few praise songs for rare occasions. This stratified traditional role for women has found its way to the contemporary era. Not many women as men are engaged in the contemporary pop music industry today. The society largely perceives women who boldly engaged in such public musical performances as prostitutes, and such women find it hard to find husbands in marriage.

The Dagbon state formally adopted Islam as a state religion during the reign of Naa Zanjina in the early sixteenth century (Mahama, 2014: 28-29). Hence, Islamic traditions have penetrated every aspect of the Dagomba culture, albeit syncretized. As part of the Islamic influence, women are not encouraged to participate directly in public life, including musical performances, especially in the midst of men who are non-relatives. In addition, the use of musical instruments are quite discouraged, except for some rare instruments in traditional contexts.

Since western musical instruments and knowledge of their use, [which are at the center of the contemporary pop music industry today], largely spread in Ghana through the proliferation of churches, Tamale did not benefit much from this spread. The Islamic influence in Dagbon did not allow a Christian penetration. Hence, today, most of the contemporary pop artistes in Tamale do not play any western musical instrument. The most convenient places to learn to play such

instruments in Tamale are the churches, but these artistes are largely Muslim. This is a case of a sixteenth century peculiar historic situation of Dagbon, affecting the nature and character of an entire pop music industry in Tamale today.

1.6.3. Symbolic Interactionism

According to Herbert Blumer (1969), the roots of Symbolic Interactionism lie in the work of early 1900s sociologists, social psychologists, and philosophers who emphasized studying culture through human consciousness and action rather than material phenomenon.

According to Barkan, Symbolic Interactionists believe that, “People do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them; instead they construct these roles as they interact. As they interact, they negotiate their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations. In doing so, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction” (Barkan, 2012: 22).

Again, Barkan (2012: 17) outlines the fundamental assumptions of the Symbolic Interactionists theory as follows:

1. People construct their roles as they interact.
2. They do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them.
3. As this interaction occurs, individuals negotiate their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations.
4. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction.

Thus, the contemporary popular music industry in Tamale today evolves out of the conscious enterprises of individual artistes. Their upbringing and engagements with the cultural

environment around them informs their judgment. Nevertheless, they form their peculiar belief systems, which inform their ultimate goals, and they set out their own strategies to achieve those goals. These artistes believe that their destinies are in their own hands.

They, experiment in their individual musical contexts, including new musical forms and technologies, old religious and cultural practices, and the changing socio-political values around them. They learn lessons from every musical enterprise and engagement they make, and they apply those lessons to subsequent engagements. Thus, from the Symbolic Interactionists' view, these individual artistes actively make themselves. They are not the conscious product of any specific institution. The contemporary pop artistes actively select elements from the Dagbani language and Dagomba culture, elements like proverbs and wise sayings, rhythmic and melodic patterns, values and logical analogies etc. They blend these traditional elements with modern and western musical patterns and instruments, producing their own music for their contemporary cultural setting.

1.6.4. Conclusion

The diffusionist theory is a necessary element as no society is an island, because it interacts with its neighbors. In those interactions, it gives and takes cultural traits with the neighbors. Hence, we describe those exchanges of cultural traits as diffusing from one society to the other.

On the other hand, this thesis considers Historical Particularism and Symbolic Interactionism, in the light of the peculiar and unique nature of any society and its individuals. Although Tamale interacts with its neighbors, it is still a society with its own distinct history, environment and customs. Therefore, one must understand the society in Tamale in line with that peculiar background.

In addition, the societal individuals actively define their own characters, as they interact with and interpret the various societal symbols and institutions linked to multiple ethnic traditions and modernity. There is therefore a constant struggle between the *need for maintaining the peculiarity* of the society and the *necessity for change* stemming from its neighbourly interactions. In other words, there is a constant struggle between “Continuity” and “Change”.

Diffusionism implies the emanation of cultural traits from outside the society, exerting itself in ways irresistible to both the artistes and their society in Tamale, whilst they (the artistes and their society) resiliently strive in maintaining their historical peculiarity despite the constant neighborly and global pressures towards modifications. At the same time and at the individual level, young people (artistes) interact with traditional and modern societal institutions, fabricating their personal ideals and images, which reflect in their contemporary popular music.

The contemporary popular music industry in Tamale today, represents continuity in the old Dagomba tradition of making a living from music making which constantly experimented with its cultural resources and occasionally adopted ideas from outside itself. The contemporary popular artistes of today likewise interact with multiple cultural complexes, interpreting them in their own ways, and redefining them to suit their current circumstances. However, its present nature completely differs from the traditional setting in one important way; this being the world outside of Dagbon that heavily influences the music industry of today. This involves a new system of recording studios with producers, publishers, distributors and retailers, all working to support the composers and performers in building their individual images. These new ideals and technologies are alien to the traditional Dagbon culture of music making and so are changing and disrupting entrenched traits of Dagbon.

However, the facts are that today Tamale is not an island as it borrows from its neighbors and the world at large, especially in these days of globalization. Thus, it cannot remain static but has to keep evolving. Nevertheless, Tamale is peculiar in its historic and cultural nature. Therefore, researchers approaching this subject matter must seek to understand Tamale and its people in their own historic and cultural contexts. More so, the contemporary popular artistes of Tamale, although heavily influenced by the cultural environment, are individuals with their own perspectives to life who are using musical symbols to fashion their own identity. Therefore, any researcher approaching them must try to understand their musical activities from their perspective.

1.7. METHODOLOGY

1.7.1. The Approach and Research Instrument

The approach to this research is on the ethnomusicological paradigm of ethnography. Ruth M. Stone described ethnography as “the single most important shared aspect among the paradigms of ethnomusicologists at present”, and that it “typically involves face-to-face observation of and participation in performance”. It describes, “How people create, perform, and critique music in societies around the world, including our own”. She emphasizes fieldwork as very essential to ethnography by ethnomusicologists (Stone, 2008, 4).

This research was qualitative and so the best way to conduct it was to be an insider participant, establishing confidence and trust between the researcher and the respondents. Cotner (2000, 2 – 3) cites James Banks, in his 1998 AERA Presidential Address, as itemizing four types of researchers:

1. *Indigenous Insiders*: Those who are members of the community they study.

2. *Indigenous Outsiders*: Those who were once members of the communities they study, but through high levels of education or other circumstances are no longer members.
3. *Non-Indigenous Insiders*: Those whom the community accept to become insiders.
4. *Non-Indigenous Outsiders*: Those who remain outsiders.

Each of these categories of researchers may have some degrees of advantages and disadvantages in various research circumstances. However, in this particular research, the best researcher character to possess is the *Indigenous Insider*. Hence, the researcher himself being a contemporary popular artiste in Tamale with almost twenty years of working experience in the area is an appreciated added advantage.

The instrument for data collection in this research was mainly through interview. I interviewed all members of the sample population in person. I conducted the interviews in Dagbani, which is the lingua franca of the target population, and the music industry in Tamale. Most of the contemporary popular artistes of Tamale sing in the Dagbani language. A few of them sing in Mampruli, and a few in Gonja and English languages. More so, almost every one of the few who sing in these other languages, do understand Dagbani.

In this research, I employed audio-visual technologies in data collection. Where necessary, I also took notes during these interviews, for later references and translations of the recordings during data analysis. Nonetheless, I rely very heavily on my own almost twenty-year old Tamale-based music career and on my personal experiences as an active composer of eleven studio albums. These experiences helped me put all the information gathered in their right perspectives and contexts for a better understanding.

The fundamental method employed in this thesis is that of an *Insider Participant Observer*. This is because I am an insider to the music industry under study. Hence, most of the issues that this research deals with and analyzes are in my personal knowledge and based on first-hand experience. Nonetheless, I emphasized the need for objectivity by interviewing as many respondents as possible, to confirm or deny some existing facts, and to avoid missing any alternative view.

1.7.2. The Population and Sample Size

The target population for this research is mainly the contemporary popular artistes, and specifically composers who have published works, who are based in the Northern Region, the artistes who live and work in and around the Tamale metropolis, as well as the surrounding and other major towns in the region such as Yendi, Bimbila, Gushegu, and Walewale. The target is composers with published records only, because the aims and objectives of this thesis center on published works. Therefore, it does not capture amateur artistes, instrumentalists, music teachers, recording studios, radio DJs, distributors, retailers and their likes. Neither does it include as a main portion of the target population, artistes of Northern Ghanaian extraction who are based elsewhere. References to these categories of actors in the industry may come up from time to time, as and when the needs arise, but they are not a main portion of the target population, and so the interview does not include them for the purposes of this research.

From the Northern Region records of the defunct Copyright Society of Ghana (COSGA), now Ghana Music Rights Organization (GHAMRO), as at July 2013, eighty active composers had registered with the organization as having published their music albums in the region, whilst a number of composers were yet to complete their registrations. Hence, majority of the active

published composers had joined the GHAMRO, whilst a few of them were still working to complete their registration with the organization. The Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) has an alternative register of artistes; however, it is not realistic to work with that of the MUSIGA because, it includes all musicians; published composers and non-published composers, singers, instrumentalists, music teachers etc. That will be too broad for the target population of this research.

Based on the my personal knowledge and survey of the Northern Region, the maximum number of active published composers who are not part of the eighty registered members of the GHAMRO, will not exceed fifty percent (50%) of those on the register. More so, since registration with the GHAMRO is economically beneficial to the composers, it will not be very realistic to assume that there is any significant number of composers outside that organization. Actually, the few composers who have not yet joined the GHAMRO are in constant touch with the organization, in their efforts to join it. All registered members receive payments from the organization from the distribution of royalties collected from commercial users of music across the country every six months. It is therefore more realistic to rely on the register of the Ghana Music Rights Organization (GHAMRO), since that will be closer to the true population of active published composers in the Northern Region. However, I decided to add approximately fifty percent extra to the population of the GHAMRO register to form the actual working population of one hundred and twenty active published composers in the Northern Region.

This research employs a non-probability/purposive sampling technique, since the population is not very large and not too diverse. However, for a more representative sample of the target population, it considers other internal diversities like genre, gender, age, education, and

community of residence of the selected composers. In addition, since it employs a qualitative technique in data collection and analyses, this thesis makes do with a reasonably moderate sample size. It goes for a more in-depth data from the respondents. The sample size ranges between twenty percent (20%) and thirty percent (30%) of the estimated total population of One Hundred and Twenty composers. The researcher eventually interviewed some Thirty-One active published composers from the Northern Region. Upon the collection of all information, he carried out analyses to arrive at some scientific and rational conclusions, pointing to actual realities and some possible ways forward at enhancing the reach of the contemporary popular artistes and their music within and beyond the Northern Region of Ghana.

1.8. LITERATURE REVIEW

The structure of the music industry as we know it today goes back to the 20th century. This is in reference to the companies and individuals who make money from creating and selling music. They include musicians who compose and perform the music, music producers, music publishers, recording studios, sound engineers, record labels, performance rights organizations, distributors and retailers, booking agents, promoters, music venues, road crews, artiste managers, entertainment lawyers, TV and radio stations, music educators, journalists and musical instrument manufacturers etc.

Perhaps it was a big revolution when the world first developed its earliest form of writing and recording music. A Belgian friend, Dominik Phyfferoen in an informal discussion mentioned, on the current global crisis in the music industry that he was very confident musicians would survive, because it was not the first time the industry suffered and survived such crises. He said that when composers first discovered the art of transcribing music on sheet in Europe, their

benevolent aristocrats did not need to keep them in the courts anymore. All they (the aristocrats) needed to keep were the transcribed sheets of music and hired any musician of their choice to play occasionally. That when the first technology of sound/music recording was discovered (records and then reel/magnetic tape), the broadcasters did not need to keep even the musicians anymore. They only recorded a session and played it repeatedly, but musicians found a way to survive even that. Now with digital recording, distribution, and the internet, people just share the music free of charge. Yet again, musicians will find a way to survive this. One cannot help but agree with Phyfferoen especially knowing that music has always been and will continue to be with humanity. We will always find a way to adopt it to our new and modern circumstances.

According to Dave Laing (2009: 15), of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), [the NGO that represents the interests of record companies], the value of the wider music economy in 2005 was a hundred billion US dollars. Although some consider this figure, a ‘maximalist’ assessment of the industry, at least it gives a clue as to the value of the music industry the world over as per rough estimates.

Africa (specifically Ghana), has played its due role in the global music industry development. It has served as a surplus market to the global industry, but it has also contributed in other significant ways to the development of the global music industry. The African continent has heavily influenced the development of pop music. For example, pop music generally draws heavily on the dance music idioms of the African-Americans.

The African-American musical connection with the African continent goes back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade era, when African slaves carried their music to the Americas, instigating a retention and influencing a subsequent evolution of the pop music of that continent.

In modern times, the African continent still affects the global music industry, via its creative assimilation of supposed foreign values into local African styles and circumstances, and echoing them back to the rest of the world as Afro-pop and world music. Today, African popular music is clearly a global phenomenon, consumed globally as ‘*world music*’ (Impey, 2000: 116). In this Afro-pop sector of world music, West Africa has produced great artistes like Youssou N’Dour (Senegal), Salif Keita (Mali), Mory Kante (Guinea) and many others. Ghana on its part has contributed its ever popular and enduring highlife genre to the annals of world music.

As fledgling as the popular music industry is in Tamale, not very much academic writings exist on it yet. Among the few notable writers on music of the Northern Region of Ghana that easily come to mind are John Collins (1996), John Miller Chernoff (2012), Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje (2000), David Locke (1990), Dominik Phyfferoen (2012), and a number of relatively young and up-coming writers both native and non-native to the region. However, it is very easily noticeable that most of the writers, except Dominik Phyfferoen and John Collins, are more interested in the traditional music of the region rather than the young contemporary popular music. Nonetheless, popular music is popular music whether in Tamale or anywhere else. Hence, it is important to review any available variety of literature on popular music and its industrial prospects, especially as perceived by ethnomusicologists even if they do not directly relate to Tamale and its music industry.

It is important to summarize and synthesize the various viewpoints from the variety of literature, and to present the researcher’s view in the context of this thesis. This thesis discusses the music industry in Tamale under two broad themes: “*The Neo-Traditional Era*”, covering the period before 1985, [the period prior to the emergence of the contemporary popular music industry

of today], and *“The Contemporary Popular Music Era”*, for the period beyond 1985 when that young industry started to emerge among the youth of Tamale and its environs.

It also looks at the impact of the neo-traditional music on the contemporary popular music era beyond 1985. It considers the similarities and differences of the two eras and their impact on the Tamale-township and the Dagbon traditional area as a whole.

1.8.1. The Neo-Traditional Era before 1985: The Essential Influences

Music is a deep integral part of the Dagomba traditions and culture. In the Dagomba royal courts musicians play special roles, as in most kingdoms of Africa both ancient and contemporary. According to Ruth M. Stone, this is a tradition that existed in Africa since the ancient kingdoms that emerged in sub-Saharan Africa between A.D. 700 and 1900, including the ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires. She writes, “Typical of these kingdoms were large retinues of royal musicians who enhanced state occasions and provided musical commentary on events” (Stone, 2000: 5). Stone (2005: 15) also writes that it is very difficult to find in all West African languages any word that is equivalent to the Western idea of ‘*music*’, since music, dance and even drama bind very closely in West Africa. This tradition continues even today. John Chernoff (2012: 1) writes in his article entitled “Music and Historical Consciousness among the Dagbamba of Ghana” that, “In their traditional state, music and dance play an important role in bringing historical meaning down to the level of participatory social action”.

However, along with it, since the beginning of the 19th century, have been new influences from mostly the Americas. There evolved in Africa a new trend of neo-traditional and contemporary forms of music (Collins 2002), with its new artistic identities and character. A trend called ‘Trans-Atlantic Black Musical Feedback Cycle’ as used by John Collins (1994) and also

described by Collins (2002) as ‘black musical homecoming’ (citing A. A. Mensah, 1971) and as a ‘cultural feedback’ (citing Stearns, 1988), as ‘affinity’ (citing Roberts, 1974) and as ‘resonance’ (citing Jacobs, 1989).

The first instance of inter-continental export of music between the two continents, Africa and America began around the 15th Century. It was through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade carried large numbers of Black Africans from mostly West and Central Africa to the Americas. They travelled with their traditional music and found very creative and enduring ways of retaining them through the centuries, and later influencing the evolution of various forms of music from jazz, blues to calypso and reggae, as I learned in my African Popular Music lessons from John Collins at the University of Ghana. After the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the 19th Century and the repatriation of some freed slaves to West Africa, these newly evolved forms of music from the Americas, eventually hit the African continent, influencing the neo-traditional and contemporary art forms, especially music that emerged on the African continent.

There were also some key influences from Europe through the colonial administration and Christian missionaries. These two collaborated and eventually took a full grip of the then Gold Coast after the abolishing of the slave trade. The experiences of some West African peoples with the military bands of their colonial masters in the World War II era and the orchestrated propagation of such music by Europeans made its own impact on the Ghanaian contemporary music. “The colonial rulers and white missionaries wanted to turn Ghanaians into punctual, disciplined and ‘civilized’ workers for the new colonial economy and utilized music to help do this: particularly the martial music of regimental bands, refined classical orchestral concerts,

‘highbrow’ theatre and Christian hymns and anthems to counteract ‘pagan’ drumming and dancing. Ironically these imported styles were subsequently initially utilized by coastal, Ghanaians to create their own acculturated or trans-cultural styles of music, dance and drama such as highlife and a local popular theatre known as the concert party” (Collins, 2006: 172).

Prior to the feedback from the Americas and the European orchestrations, were influences from Islam, especially from the Sufi brands of Islam. According to a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report by Hussein D. Hassan for the United States Congress, Islam had reached Africa by the 7th Century. This was when the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH³) sent a group of migrant Muslims to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) to escape persecution from Mecca. This became the first Hijrah (Muslim migration). “Africa became the first safe haven for Muslims and the first place Islam would be practiced outside the Arabian Peninsula” (Hassan, 2008: 1). “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the consolidation of Muslim trading networks, connected by lineage, trade, and Sufi brotherhoods had reached a crescendo in West Africa enabling Muslims to wield tremendous political influence and power” (Hassan, 2008: 2).

These influences eventually got to the north of contemporary Ghana via the sub-Saharan trade routes and ethnic migrations and in association with Wangara and Hausa clerics at various points in time (Ibrahim, 2002: 7, 8). Per the accounts of traditional historians of Dagbon (the Linsi), Islam was later adopted as a state religion in Dagbon by Naa Zanjina (1648 – 1677). He travelled out of Dagbon, before ascending the throne, on trade and study expeditions. These expeditions took him to Senegal and other areas. After his amassing of wealth and knowledge of Islam, he

³ PBUH (Peace be upon him): A highly recommended (if not obligatory) salutation for Muslims at the mention of the *Prophet Mohammed*.

returned with a group of Islamic scholarly friends to Dagbon. Whom, on his ascension to the throne he integrated into the state by making them chiefs over some of his villages in Dagbon. Hence, today, the influences of Islam still predominate in the traditions and culture (including but not limited to music) of Dagbon. Naa Zanjina brought many dramatic changes to the Dagbon state. This includes his amendment of the constitution to limit the eligibility to the “*Yani*” (kingship of the Dagbon traditional state) skin. “The amendment limited the eligibility to the skins of Yani to those Yanabihi (sons of a Yaa-Naa/King of Dagbon who qualify to aspire to the skin) occupying the ‘gate skins’ of karaga, Savelugu and Mion” (Dagbon.net, 2006).

These Western and Islamic influences have left the African continent in quite a modified state described by Ampomah (2003: 13) as Contemporary African society, in reference to postcolonial Africa. He defines this Contemporary African society on the terms of Nketia (1974: 5) as “it is based on concepts of the modern society such as the nation state, school-based education, new religions as well as new forms of occupation and association”. The contemporary African society now takes advantage of its turbulent historic experiences, by adopting and fusing its traditional music with new institutions and technologies. Doris Green (1998/99) described these adoptions as follows: “Systems of technology have made it possible not only to write African music and dance on paper as in Western notation, but to reconstruct and perform them from the same printed page with the ease of reciting a nursery rhyme.” (Green, 1998/99: 51)

1.8.1.1. **Simpa “*The Disco Mataaya*”**

In the midst of all these noted influxes of influences, it is apparent that Southern Ghana has always influenced Northern Ghana more than Northern Ghana has influenced the south, especially in terms of music. Before the emergence of the contemporary popular music industry in Tamale,

elements from southern music had already influenced the neo-traditional music of the area in many ways. For example, Collins writes that although simpa music of Dagbon is a combination of Dagomba and Hausa music with Western influences, such Western influences came from “Western-influenced African styles such as highlife and gome (gombe)”, which emerged from the south of Ghana. He established that Highlife had reached Dagbon by the 1930s as it spread from the coast into the hinterland. It carried clues such as in the name of Simpa itself, being the traditional name of Winneba, on the coast of Ghana where Highlife emerged (Collins, 1996: 105, 108).

This particular genre of neo-traditional music has stood the test of time and has maintained the influences. Collins (1996) also notes that Simpa Music was predominantly for and by young people. They played it in open spaces when he visited Yendi, the Dagbon traditional capital, in 1974, and they played at funerals, weddings and out-dooring ceremonies. Incidentally, the simpa music tradition remained prominent and was exactly as Collins described it when I was growing up in the 1980s in Tamale. Some of the current leading simpa stars are the “Kakpag’yili Wait and See”, Bikuraba, Captain of Nyohini, Dickson Gowan and the late Yakubu Gowan of Ginggaani.

1.8.1.2. **The “Akarima” and “Kambonsi”**

Another form of neo-traditional music in Tamale and the Dagbon area has to do with what I call the Akan/Ashanti factor. This includes the “timpani” (an Akan drum called Atumpan) and the “Kambong-waa” (Akan/warrior dance) and their related influences. According to Staniland (1975), the Ashanti kingdom “invaded Dagbon in 1744 – 45, and Ashanti musketeers were sent to Yendi to train Dagomba soldiers in the use of fire arms”. As a result of which, “the present military usage of the Dagomba largely consist of corrupted Akan (i.e. Ashanti) terms (citing Rattray, 1932,

pp. 565-6, 569; Manoukian 1952, p. 58; Tamakloe, 1931. P. 34; Fage, 1964, p. 180)". Hence, these military and related interactions between the Ashanti and Dagbon left a tremendous influence of the Akan culture on that neo-traditional music of Dagbon.

However, one must note that some traditional historians of Dagbon dispute this claim. They argue that the relationship between the Dagbon and Ashanti kingdoms was only cordial and one of friendly alliance. That the Dagomba also influenced the Ashanti through the contribution and subsequent stationing of troops at "Bantama". These troops aided the Ashanti in some of their coastal invasions and subsequent wars against the British. They say "Bantama" is the name of a suburb of Kumasi with Dagbani root; "mba-nti-ma", meaning, "It's my father who gave me".

Whatever the case maybe, it is clear that the Dagbon kingdom adopted into the courts of chieftaincy the "Akarima" tradition. The "Akarima" plays the 'timpani/timpana' (Ashanti; atumpan) based on the Twi language even today. The military interactions between the two states left its mark on the Dagbon traditional army. The Dagomba call their traditional army "Kambonsi" meaning "Ashantis/Akans". The Dagomba military music (Kambonwaa) is very similar to the "Asafo" music of the Ashanti army. The Dagbon traditional army even adopted Ashanti names such as "Adu" (Ashanti; Adu), "Achiri" (Ashanti; Okyere), and "Kpaachi" (Ashanti; Kwakye), for their names and military titles. Names and titles that are still in use.

1.8.1.3. **The Traditional Variety in Modernity**

The other forms of music such as *baamaya*, *takai*, *tora*, *jera*, *gonje* and their likes, though typically traditional of Dagbon, have also found their way into some form of neo-traditional contemporary functions and functionality. The youth of Dagbon have effectively taken up these dances/music and found places for them in modern events and functions such as youth-gatherings,

political functions, and national celebrations. Even a later generation of traditional singers like Tinbobli and Yakubu Salifu (baamaya), Somed Akonsi (gonje), Fuseini Baba (lunga), the Dakpema Ladies (tora/luwa/damba singers) and others, have evolved some neo-traditional subgenres of these traditional music/dances. They have even recorded and published albums as well as performed in concerts of neo-traditional genres.

1.8.1.4. **The Soloists**

Another type of neo-traditional music comes in the form of solo artistes. Some individual musicians from traditional *Lunsi*⁴ origins evolve their own styles. They deviate from tradition by taking up their own inventions or adopting existing instruments to back themselves as solo artistes. Fuseini Tia (from the Lunsi tradition) took up the *Jinjeling*, [a one-cable string instrument with a small calabash at one end serving as a resonator]. Issahaku Moglo took up the *Moglo*, [a simple two-string lute]. Even though he even rose to become the “*Lun’naa*” (chief drum historian) of Nyolgu⁵, he continued to play his Moglo. Alibeela and Sey of Savelugu both invented their own kinds of small percussions, which they played to accompany their story telling and singing. Interestingly, even though most of such ‘*gone solo*’ musicians broke out of the Lunsi tradition of large ensemble group/band performances, some of them, especially Fuseini Tia, eventually formed small backing bands of their own. All of these artistes have also published albums and played at concerts of their genre of music.

⁴ The official musicians/historians in the Dagbon royal courts.

⁵ Nyolgu: a village in the Dagbon traditional area.

1.8.1.5. The Youth Bands “Achika-achika”

Another kind of neo-traditional music, which emerged out of the creativity of the youth and young people of Tamale, is ‘*Achika-achika*’. According to Haruna Salifu, a pioneering member of the Sabonjida Youth Group, Achika-achika originated from the Sabonjida suburb of Tamale in the mid-seventies. They played congas/percussions, which were similar but shorter than those of the simpa music were. They had rattles worn around their ankles similar to those worn by baamaya dancers and there were female singers who clapped along as the males played and danced. Their costume was generally similar to the baamaya dance costume, a skirt and a singlet with the rattles around the ankles. This dance rose to prominence among the youth in Tamale and different groups emerged in many of the various suburbs of Tamale like Changni and Tishigu. Achika-achika was however short-lived probably under circumstances that John Collins describes as a societal censorship of the arts by African traditional authorities. In an article entitled “One Hundred Years of Censorship in Ghanaian Popular Music Performance”, Collins writes “Traditional ethnic authorities were concerned with preserving their control in the face of western influences. So there are also cases of chiefs, elders and other traditional authorities being antipathetic to both acculturated popular music and dance and even to some neo-traditional performance genres: these being traditional type drum-dances created in the twentieth century but influenced by popular performance” (Collins, 2006: 176).

Haruna Salifu narrated how elderly people of Sabonjida warned their youth group leaders to dissolve the achika-achika dance groups because the dance evoked evil spirits, which came to dance with them each time they played. This simply scared the young people, and many abolished their dance groups sometime before the 1980s.

However, around the demise of achika-achika, there emerged religious youth bands in connection with the Sufi festivals marking the birth of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), the “*Maulud/Maulid*”. Sufi leaders and schools in and around Tamale still organized the Maulud annually. They have young students play in bands similar to the western/military brass bands, with the bass drum, side drums, snares and cymbals. Although majority of Islamic scholars in Tamale especially from the Sunni schools have condemned these festivities marking the birth of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as un-Islamic, the practice continues to thrive among the Sufi schools. Mushtaq (2011: 174) in his rejection of the later Sufi concept of ‘Islamic Music’ writes that, “the early Sufi scholars were quite aware of the corrupting influence of music on the human soul. Only a tiny minority of some of the later Sufis regarded Islamic singing – **without** the use of musical instruments – as permissible, but with stringent conditions attached to it”.

This music further evolved, taking up a new character since 1992, when Ghana returned to a fourth republican constitutional democracy. The re-emergence of political parties saw the youth in Tamale by the 1996 elections form brass bands, drawing on their previous experiences with the achika-achika and Maulud and incorporating trumpets and other brass instruments, making it almost like the western/military brass bands except for their repertoire, functions, costumes and activities. These bands still exist in Tamale today with all of the major political parties running their own youth bands.

1.8.1.6. **The “Taamaale” Bands**

Another neo-traditional music worthy of note is one which the ‘hausa zongo bands’ play. The indigenes of Tamale call it “taamaale”. The Hausa zongo bands are groups of traditional Hausa musicians whose repertoires are in the Hausa language. They play some side drums, the goombay

frame drum, and a very small hourglass armpit controlled drum. These bands usually feature male lead vocalists with mixed backing voices, both male and female. Although these groups normally perform at weddings and out-dooring ceremonies, they also play at religious functions of some Tijaaniyya/Sufi orders. Some of the most famous Taamaale musicians in Tamale led by Maurice Maiga started publishing recorded albums of the Taamaale music, fusing into it some western instruments like the keyboards and brass. This move was quite a departure from the traditional character of these groups.

In summary, all these Neo-Traditional genres, most of which are still very active in Tamale, laid the foundation for the contemporary popular music industry, which emerged from the second half of the 1980s.

1.8.2. Contemporary Popular Music Era beyond 1985: A Justification

Carlos Sakyi (2006) described the 60s and 70s as the “Golden Era” of Ghanaian music, but that golden era in his terms only applied to the music of Accra. Although Accra based bands toured the whole country with their music in those times, Northern Ghana particularly was only a consumer of the music in that era.

In a research published in the 2012 edition of Hidden Cities Journal entitled “Hiplife: The Location, Organization and Structure of the Local Urban Pop Industry in Tamale”, the writer aimed at coming to a better understanding of the organization, the richness and the diversity of the urban popular music industry in Tamale (Phyfferoen, 2012).

This was an obvious article to start with because of my personal involvement with the author during some of his numerous fieldwork in and around Tamale. I was a respondent and

resource person to some of his questionnaires. I was always interested in the outcomes of his research, as I hoped for pointers to the best way forward for my personal career and the music industry of Tamale. In focusing on the socio-economic structures of the popular music culture of Tamale, he specifically considered factors such as the recording studios, informal music market, radio airplay time, music education, music distribution and sales, the copyright law, music ownership and piracy, music NGOs and the influential position of some musicians. In all, he had a general look at all the factors and their roles in the popular music culture in Tamale.

Dominik Phyfferoen surveyed a section of the population of Tamale and some Senior High School students. He confirmed the prevailing presence of creative music talents in and around Tamale. He also acknowledges the influence factor of the extension of electricity from the national grid to Tamale in 1989, and the related technological influx it brought with it to Tamale. The connection of Tamale to the national electricity grid broadened the access of artistes and related actors to so much technology in a relatively short period. The first recording studio, 'Depsocom', came up during that period. Government extended the coverage of the national television broadcast and FM radio to Tamale a few years later, triggering an influx of private radio stations. Phyfferoen also acknowledged the musical dynamics of a variety of influences, ranging from traditional and neo-traditional styles to the more modern and contemporary styles like highlife, reggae, and Bollywood influenced Indian Style.

In all of these, it is clear that Phyfferoen's focus and outcomes were on the most important factors of 'continuity' and 'change' in musical identities in terms of 'tradition' versus 'modernity' and the socio-economic impact of the music industry of Tamale on the musicians and their stakeholders, as well as the general population of Tamale. Phyfferoen, in his 2012 article makes

the interesting note of the fact of transformations in the pop culture, and the central role of musicians in that regard, and the transition of traditional music and dances into modern urban pop music and pop culture generally, through the influences of Afro-American and Western inspired idioms, as noted earlier from Collins (2002). He emphasized the presence of this new ‘Hybrid Pop Identity’ and tried to examine the consciousness of the actors themselves in fashioning this new identity. Hence, the thrust of Phyfferoen’s observations is the fact of the existence of a self-authenticated ‘Hybrid Identity’ by musicians themselves, fighting to bring along their traditional identity on their ever modernizing artistic journey.

The obvious question, which remains, is about addressing the present major challenges and future concerns of the contemporary pop artistes of Tamale, in terms of making their arts better and expanding their market beyond the borders of the Northern Region of Ghana.

It is also obvious that Dominik Phyfferoen’s works are more like just a scratch on the surface of the music industry in Tamale. Some of the issues touched on really do not go deep enough to get a very vivid picture of the primary issues. For example, how the composers originate their works, the recording processes musicians go through in the studios, the specifics on how live performances are prepared and carried out, how far the recordings and performances travel within and beyond Dagbon and the specific and collective aspirations of the musicians and actors of this fledgling industry, all still remain to be answered. Other questions raised include issues of who invests in the industry. How much do they invest in the industry? What stages of the production process get these investments? What is the actual impact on the industry and the people of Tamale?

Phyfferoen has quite a vivid description of the distribution network in Tamale but he does not touch extensively on the “Executive Production” elements (investments) made by people like the I. K. Brothers and a few others, and sometimes by the musicians themselves as he notes.

It is also quite interesting that Phyfferoen in his article notes the informal nature of music education in Tamale. And the role of the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) in organizing meetings, teaching and holding workshops, to share useful information and lessons with musicians, on taking care of their own welfare and learning to educate themselves musically.

Therefore, it is fair after considering the factors noted above, for one to say that, there is at least the beginning of a contemporary popular music industry in Tamale and its environs. This industry may not be as developed and complex as what happens in Accra, but certainly, there is an industry in Tamale itself. Even the music industry of Accra, which is a representation of a national music industry of Ghana, is itself quite deficient in many ways. The challenges range from those related to recording studios to those related to radio and television airplays. They even relate to performance (sound equipment quality and engineering) and a general attitude of professionalism. More so, the Accra-based artistes who are mostly very popular in Ghana are hardly popular outside the country. Ironically, just like the Tamale-based artistes, who are mostly only popular among Northern Ghanaian migrant communities in the south, the Accra-based artistes are mostly only popular among Ghanaian migrant communities abroad. Nonetheless, the fact is clear that even though Southern Ghana has not produced very many world-famous artistes, it has been able to produce the evergreen coastal highlife music. Highlife is one of Africa’s most popular, enduring and potent forms of popular music (Impey, 2000).

So yes, the music industry in Tamale has limits, but so has every music industry based on national or regional geographic market distribution and control. Even the big multi-national corporations/record labels do not appear to control the music markets any more. The advent of the World Wide Web has changed the music industry/market very drastically. Nowadays, anybody from any part of the world can employ the World Wide Web to his or her own advantage. Perhaps this is precisely what the contemporary popular music industry of Tamale should do.

One interesting feature of the Tamale artistes is the diversity of their backgrounds as individual practitioners, despite societal stratifications. According to Impey (2000), the Griot, who are the itinerant poet-musicians and custodians of historical and cultural knowledge, in Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau, dominate and lead the contemporary popular music making in those countries. However, the case in Tamale is different. Virtually any and everybody, male or female, native or non-native, *Lunga* (traditional drummer), butcher or blacksmith can master the art of music making. This is despite the existence of the *Lunsi* tradition in Dagbon (which is similar to the griot although not as itinerant), and despite the general stratification of traditional Dagomba society [where every family bears its official vocation]. In the traditional Dagomba society, a person is born either into a family of the *Machelinima* (blacksmiths), *Nakoh'nima* (butchers), *Gunuyili/Wanzamnima* (barbers), or the family of *Lunsi* (court musicians/historians) etc.

Although there are some contemporary popular musicians in Tamale who trace their family vocations to the Lunsi tradition, this does not apply to the majority of artistes. Perhaps because of that, the Tamale artistes are very much welcoming to innovations and hybridizations in their art compared to the traditional Lunsi, who sing about history (Chernoff, 2012). The Lunsi are more

conservative and strict in maintaining the traditional status-quo because that is the very essence of that institution. As a result, the contemporary popular musicians are taking advantage of learning from the Lansi some instrumentation, rhythms, proverbs and historic narratives and incorporating them into their music, since they owe no obligation to maintain any traditional status-quo.

1.8.3. Music Breaks Barriers: Some Ethnomusicological Perspectives

“The concept of identity played an important role during the 1960s and 1970s in problematizing the received definition of ethnomusicology as ‘the study of music in cultural context,’ a formulation which too often reduced the complexities of history, ecology, culture, and society to a generalized backdrop for the technical analysis of musical sound” (Waterman, 2002: 19).

In a quest to make sense of this north–south musical dichotomy of Ghana, the question to constantly come to mind is that; music is music, should the where, how and when it is made really matter? It appears that although people attach so much importance to their musical and cultural identities, they also wish to see their musical identities travel beyond their own cultural boundaries. Another question that comes to mind is how the Dagbon popular artistes strike a balance between maintaining their cultural/musical identities whilst at the same time tolerating other cultural/musical identities from outside Dagbon. As difficult as it may appear to strike this balance, it seems that many people across Ghana are doing just fine at blending in with their multiple musical identities. Hence, it should not be too difficult to strike a balance between one’s indigenous cultural/musical identity and one’s ability to assimilate other influences from non-indigenous cultural/musical identities. Phyfferoen labelled this dual approach as the ‘Hybrid Pop Identity’,

and in the case of contemporary artistes in Tamale, they found a balance between ‘continuity’ and ‘change’ and between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ (Phyfferoen, 2012).

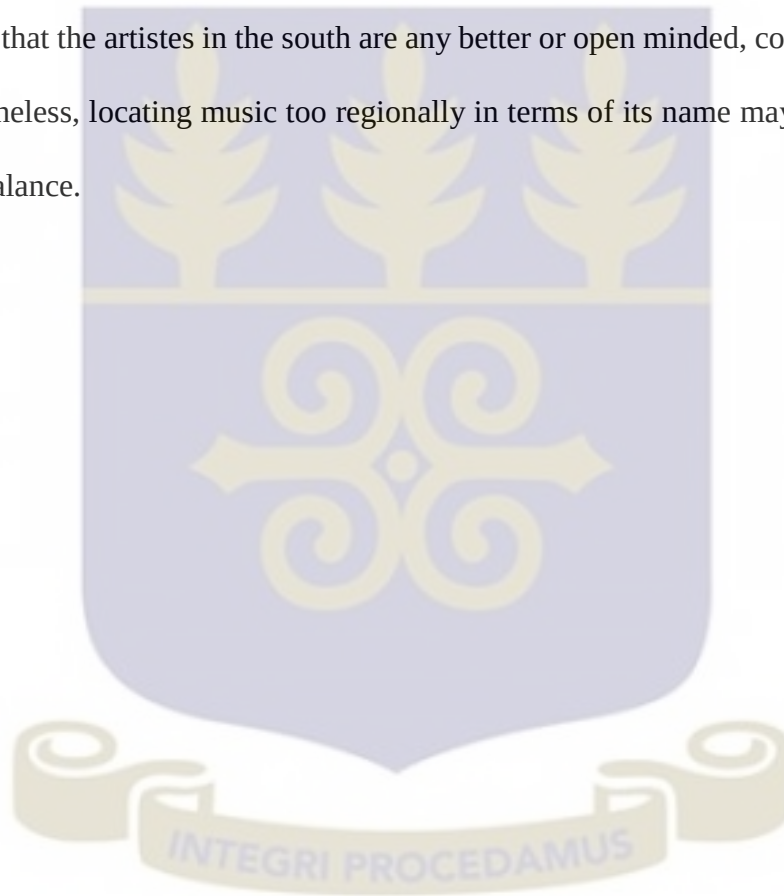
It must be noted that the north–south dichotomies of Ghana are not perhaps deliberate and limited to only contemporary music and artistes, but are historic and structural in nature, as argued by Akologo & Klinken (2008) in their article “Ghana: why the North matters”. They argue that the double jeopardy of Trans-Saharan and Trans-Atlantic Slave Trades both took their tolls on the population and economy of Northern Ghana, and so did colonialism. “Granted that the developmental agenda of the British Empire in its formal colonies was rather limited, but for the Northern Territories it was entirely non-existent” (Akologo and Klinken, 2008: 2). The administration’s only interest in the north was to maintain law and order, not education or development, because to some extent their intent was to keep the population of the north as a source of labour supply to the mines and plantations in the south. All these, adding to the ecological difficulties of the north [one torrential rainy season with dryer and hotter climate] compared to the south have come to reinforce the tendency of Northerners migrating to the south as the only solution for economic betterment. A trend that continuously persists.

The idea of migration sometimes goes beyond the physical and into the psychological and ideological perspectives. There is also a reinforcement of all that in the over centralized administrative structure of post-independence Ghana. The situation where all government ministries and resource allocation headquarters are at the national capital, leads all to look to Accra for their economic salvation. Being a native of Tamale and living there all my life, I know that this structural arrangement has somehow gradually instilled in some Northerners an inferiority complex. Therefore, they may underrate some of the traits that emanate from themselves in terms of keeping up with modern trends, but overly appreciative of anything that comes from Accra and

the south in general. These trends also reflect in the music and musical identities. It follows that Northerners, especially young people, easily accept music and musical identities from the capital rather than accepting those that originate from Tamale. On a broader note, this whole arrangement appears to be like a microcosm of the situation between Ghana as a whole, on one hand, and Europe and the U.S.A on the other.

It must be possible to break some of these barriers, especially those related to psychological mind-sets around the music and musical identities. Borrowing from Shelemay (1996), although her focus was on “Crossing of Boundaries” within musicology itself, paying attention to the subtle borders of Ethnomusicology, Systematic and Historical Musicology, there may be some lessons to draw from there. She quotes Charles Seeger as saying: “The first fallacy is to regard one’s own particular brand of music or musicology as the whole”. To paraphrase Shelemay’s argument, it is to some extent necessary for an artiste to identify him/herself by the genre of music or by their geographical base or origin. For example, one would say he/she is a reggae or hiplife artistes and so on, or say one is a *Northern Artiste*, or a Tema artiste etc. However, that should only be a supplementary description to one’s image. Otherwise, when these geographical or genre labels get too deep into the artistes themselves [and by extension the music fans], then it may become problematic, because we need also to accept, promote and support creative artistes and good music no matter where they come from. Certainly, it will be a fallacy to think that any one brand/genre of artiste/music from any one part of Ghana collectively represents the general label of Ghanaian Music. Neither can we represent Ghanaian Music by just a numerical collection together of all the genres of music that artistes make in Ghana. For Ghanaian music as a whole, the mutual relations and interactions and influences of all the music, the genres and artistes on each must all come to play.

In the case of the contemporary popular artistes and music of Tamale, it is possible that the artistes and their fans will be contributing to the failure to help themselves towards the acceptability of their music beyond the borders of Tamale and Dagbon. It appears that most of the artistes designate themselves as *Northern Artistes*, and if this designation permeates their thoughts, then it will of course reflect in the kinds of production and post-productions they engage in. On the other hand, the fact that there is wide acceptance of Southern Music in the north does not necessarily mean that the artistes in the south are any better or open minded, compared to those of the north. Nevertheless, locating music too regionally in terms of its name may be another factor creating that imbalance.



CHAPTER TWO

THE CREATION AND PRODUCTION PROCESSES

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, artistes have many sources of inspiration for song writing. This chapter indicates some variety of ways in which the Tamale based artistes find their inspiration for songs. It also indicates how they put together all their varied ideas to finalize a masterpiece. It reflects on the writing skills of unlettered artistes like Kassim Gazor and Original Shoe-shine-boy. This chapter highlights some two categories of artistes. Those who reflect societal happenings, seeking to lead and influence the opinions of people, and those who only seek to exploit societal happenings for entertainment. This chapter will also explain how the artistes finance their recordings. Most of them have no other jobs besides music, and considering the current levels of music sales, one wonders what motivates a person to spend money on studio recordings?

This chapter also looks at the work processes of the artistes in the studio. It details the amount of work involved and who does what. Who makes the decisions on job satisfaction of finished studio works and so forth? It is interesting how artistes go about deciding what to write about. However, even more interesting is how they go about deciding what song makes it on to the recording list and what genre or sub-genre should the song reflect? It is also interesting to note how much influence an artiste's experiences with live performances have on their recording sessions. The technology of recording has become an integral part of the artistes' daily affairs. They enjoy employing it, but lately it also poses some of the toughest challenges for the music industry. These are the basic areas reflected in this chapter, starting with artistes' inspiration.

2.2. THE INSPIRATION

In a 1993 documentary by Nicholas Campbell on the life and music of Peter Tosh entitled “Stepping Razor – Red X”, one of the stars, Leroy Sibbles, made a very important statement that, “...the only thing we have in the ghetto that’s for everyone is the inspiration of the almighty God”, and he wonders if ghettos are like that everywhere. Tamale is certainly not anything like the Jamaican ghetto shown in that film. However, interestingly after interviewing the respondents for this thesis, it emerges that Tamale, just like the Kingston slums, has its fair share of inspiration coming from one’s belief in God.

Whereas some of the artistes in Tamale obtain their inspiration from their own life experiences, others obtain theirs from learning about other people’s encounters. These inspiring experiences most often have nothing to do with music initially. They are mostly about social, political, economic, and cultural issues or religious matters. For example, Prince Okla said he first considers an issue in its socio-cultural context to be sure that the public would like the song. He then settles on it as a theme and begins to write his lyrics. However, there are other forms of inspiration, which are musical right from the onset. For example, Deensi mentioned that they are sometimes inspired from listening to the chord progressions and rhythmic patterns of other people’s songs, so they try to create something similar.

When asked what they sing about and what they seek to achieve with their songs, there emerged from their answers that, whereas some of them only just seek to entertain their audience by reflecting on the contemporary happenings in society, others are seeking to lead opinions on critical social issues by criticizing the status quo and suggesting alternatives. Artistes like Sheriff Ghale, Abu Sadiq and a few others argue that they must identify and challenge societal irregularities, and suggest solutions as demonstrated by Ghale in his song “Sochira”, and by Abu

Sadiq in “Azindoo”. Other artistes like Umar Janda, Original Shoe-shine-boy, and B-Motion believe that entertaining the people is the most important thing.

Apart from the two kinds of inspirational genesis of songs noted above, there have been times when people contracted artistes to compose for purposes defined by those commissioning them. For example, Sheriff Ghale composed the University for Development Studies’ (UDS) anthem. He also made a couple of songs and radio jingles for the Ghana Guinea Worm Eradication Program. Deensi on their part signed a contract and produced a song for the Ghana Road Safety Campaign.

There have been numerous peace songs recorded by both solo artistes and groups over the years. These peace songs reached their peak in 2003, beginning from around the 1994 Konkonba-Nanumba ethnic war that broke out in late 1993. This conflict broke out of a quarrel between two men, over a guinea fowl in a market place in the Bimbila district. Their quarrel ignited a host of underlying disagreements between the Konkonba and the Nanumba of the Northern Region. Within a few weeks from that quarrel, the conflict grew into a full-blown war, spreading even into Mamprusi and Dagomba territories. The spread was perhaps due to the blood ties among the Mamprusi, Dagomba, and the Nanumba. The founders of these three groups were all sons of Naa Gbewaa, the founder of the larger Mole-Dagbani group, who led their migration to present day Ghana (Mahama, 2014). It also turned out that the Konkonba had long been demanding their own chieftaincy system and land related autonomy from the Dagomba who ruled over them for centuries.

Musicians also became involved when the Yendi crisis broke out in 2002 between the Abudu and Andani royal gates of the Dagbon chieftaincy. A group of Tamale artistes, Sirina Issah, Sheriff Ghale, Black Stone (Flex and Kawawa), KKC (Big Adam and Lil Malik), and Lord

Wumpini came together in 2003 to form a group called the “7 in 1 for Peace”. They recorded a peace song entitled “Nangban’yini (Unity)”. In this song, they preached the need for peace and unity to the feuding sides in the conflict. The group recorded additional songs to make a full album, launching what they termed their peace campaign project. The timing of this project was very significant to the people of Dagbon. Politicians, chiefs and ordinary people were still too divided and angry to talk peace at that time, but artistes from the opposing Dagbon gates had shown that peace and unity through dialogue was the way forward.

2.3. WRITING AND COMPOSING

“I have not been to school. I cannot read and write, so I write my songs in my mind” (Kassim Gazor, 2013). This is what Kassim Gazor told the interviewer for this thesis. Kassim is one of the pioneering artists in Tamale. He said that he normally starts a song by creating a chorus after settling on a theme. He creates the words in his head and the words dictate the melody and rhythmic pattern for him. Hence, the inspiration is the first point of call, which he obtains by sitting and talking to his peers about topical issues of the day. Inspiration can wake him from sleep at night or come to him while he is running his ordinary daily errands. These days Gazor tells me he owes many appreciations to the inventors of the mobile phone technology. Since he has not been to school and so cannot transcribe music, he prefers a mobile phone with a voice recorder application. He always carries that on him and records whatever words, rhythm or melody that comes to his mind. He later listens over the recordings and then develops it further. He establishes the central melodic line, the chorus, and finds words to fill his melodies. The final shape and arrangement of his work however only takes place after the beat programming in the studio.

Sheriff Ghale in contrast to Kassim Gazor in terms of his level of schooling and music education, still records short melodic lines on mobile phones. Both of them had their first experiences of public performance of music in childhood Islamic schools. The Islamic schools in Tamale that celebrate the annual festival of “*Maulud or Maulid*”. Marking the birth of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). During this festival, the teachers prepare their students on some reported sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), and songs about Prophet (PBUH). The students perform on the final day of the festival to an open audience. Both Ghale and Gazor also recorded their debut albums from the Depsocom Studios in Tamale, produced by Nana Gazor. Unlike Kassim, however, Ghale starts most of his songs on the guitar, sometimes even without words, just a couple of chord progressions and some melodies. He is also able to transcribe some of his songs on paper or on the “*Finale*” computer music writing software, right from the initial stage of composition.

Sheriff Ghale majored in music from the University of Education, Winneba and the University of Ghana respectively. Although he started out just like most of the artistes in Tamale (getting his first music education from observation and self-tutored practice), he eventually went back to correct what he felt was wrong in the way he started. Ghale enrolled in the university to study music, but even before that, he enrolled for guitar lessons from the blind musician, Prince Mahama. Prince Mahama is one of the earliest contemporary pop instrumentalists/musicians from Tamale. Ghale decided to learn the guitar after he met Rex Omar, the Ghanaian highlife star who had come to play a peace concert in Tamale with his group, the NAKOREX, sometime around June 1995. Rex advised Ghale to learn an instrument if he was serious about being a musician, and he heeded that advice.

Ahmed Adam⁶ on the other hand said, “I get my songs when I’m writing a movie script, because my movies set the basis for my music”. Ahmed is famous for popularizing a musical sub-genre in Tamale, the “*Indian Style/Line*”. This is a style of music, which heavily depends on Indian (Bollywood) movie musicals. In the middle of the 1990s, both rhythms and melodies from some of Ahmed’s music were direct replicas of particular Bollywood songs. The only difference was in the language and perhaps the production quality. Quite a number of artistes including Memunatu Lardi, Alfa Tuferu, and Sherifatu Issah all took to the Indian line. They sometimes just produced Dagbani covers/versions of some popular Bollywood songs. Ahmed Adam said that, his love for the Indian style evolved out of his love for the Bollywood movies. Bollywood movies were very popular in Tamale around the 1980s. He actually was an actor and filmmaker, a pioneer of what they called *Tallywood* (the Tamale movie industry) before venturing into music. He said that he only does music because his movies require it. Hence, he situates the production and appreciation of his music in the context of his movies. In recent times, however, he (Ahmed) and some other artistes like Lardi and Tuferu have learned to evolve further. They are now quite independent of the direct Bollywood influence. Now they create their own melodies and rhythms although still in the Indian style.

At the end of the interviews for this research, a number of things came clear. These include the fact that contemporary artistes of Tamale create songs based on their own conscious inspirations. They identify specific themes to write about which are of socio-political, economic, cultural and religious significance to them and to their society. Most of them compose their own melodies and write their own lyrics. A few of them occasionally record Dagbani covers of popular

⁶ The pioneer of Bollywood influenced style (Indian style) of music in Tamale. Famous for his music and film productions.

songs from outside their region. Some of the much younger Hiplife artistes of Tamale like Lil-K, Deensi, Don Sigli, Fancy Gadam and Lord Destro also engage in a new phenomenon of producing what they call “*mix tapes*”. By this, they employ the internet in searching for and downloading popular instrumentals, and they perform and rewrite their own lyrics over those instrumentals.

Generally, the Tamale artistes who have learned lyric writing by assimilation, have done this by studying some famous international songs. As a result, they are able to write their own lyrics in their own language and context. In this, they blend elements of their cultural/traditional music like call and response, repetition, complex rhythmic patterns etc., with some foreign ones such as the poetic rhymes of American rap and harmonies of western music.

2.4. THE STUDIO SESSION AND BEARING THE COST

Different studios charge different amounts of money per song or per session. In order to determine how much one will pay to record a song or even a full album, there are a number of cost factors to consider. These include the choice of studio, finding out how much and in what form does the studio charge for its services. In an exceptional case, Sheriff Ghale owns a personal studio, which he operates as a non-commercial entity. This saves a lot of money and gives him a lot of time and flexibility at work. Nevertheless, that does not come cheap, considering how much it cost to acquire the physical structures and equipment as well as the knowhow to run a studio. With the current levels of schooling and music education among the artistes in Tamale, it is very doubtful whether the Sheriff Ghale approach is feasible for the rest of the artistes. He said when he did work outside of his own studio; he preferred places that charged per session (usually eight hours per day or night session). He specifically preferred working at Fredyma Studios, near the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, at Odorna in Accra. He paid to book a session, which included the studio engineer. He paid for the services of a keyboard programmer and he led the production, telling them both what to

play and record. Sometimes after laying the tracks at Fredyma, He would transfer the data to some other studio, usually a superior and more costly one, for the mix and mastering. He also worked at the Combined House of Music (CHM) studio at Mataheko, Accra, and at other times at the D-Sharp studio at Nungua, Accra. He said he enjoyed working with the engineer, Emmanuel Zola Gyaben, who worked for both studios at different times. Now he does all the laying of tracks and voice recordings at his own Binkumda Studio in Tamale, and transfers the data to Zapp Mallet at the Title Track Studio in South Odorkor, Accra, for the final additions and mix. He does all the work from composition, instrumentation to vocals and engineering, so he said he needed a more experienced producer than himself to finish the work. That keeps him in check. Zapp Mallet is the most experienced producer he had worked with since 2007. In 2004, he recorded completely live with a band and some session musicians at the Pidgin Studio at Kanda, in Accra. Panji Arnoff was the engineer and co-producer there. However, it is too expensive to record live. Especially with the current crisis in sales of music. These days Ghale prefers to lay the tracks with keyboard programming, and to do some over-dubs with guitars and other instruments at his Tamale studio.



Fig 2: Binkumda Studio in Tamale

The Sheriff Ghale model is obviously not the norm. The typical contemporary popular artiste in Tamale raises an amount of money commensurate with the studio at which he/she decides to record. He/she might be able to afford the fee for just a song, a couple of songs or a full album. After making payments, an appointment is booked with the studio engineer, who in most cases also doubles as the keyboard programmer. The standard studios in Tamale are computer based. The basic set up of a personal computer with a professional soundcard externally connected to it. On the computer is installed all the appropriate software for music production, which comes in a wide variety. Different studios and sound engineers prefer different software, some of which include Cubase VST32 and SX series, Fruity Loops, Ableton, Pro-Tools, and the Cakewalk series. They input an electronic keyboard synthesizer to the soundcard as a musical instrument digital interface (midi), through a midi cable. They then connect the output channels of the soundcard to a mixer, which they in turn connect to the studio monitor speakers. They set up all the equipment in the engineer's work area. They fit this area soundproofed to keep noise levels and feedback to the barest minimum. There is usually a smaller partition in the room called the "*voicing room*" or "*voicing box*", in which there is setup a microphone for voice recordings. The partitioning is in a way to keep sound from the engineer's work area out of the voicing room. They therefore wire the microphone through a little hole from the voicing room to the engineer's work area and input it to the soundcard. A headphone is output from the soundcard and wired back to the voicing room. So that the artiste, who is voicing, can listen to the instrumentation, as well as hear his/her own voice while singing. The engineer records the voice through the microphone back in the engineer's work area.

In a typical work session in the studio, the artiste sings out the melodic theme of the song he/she chooses to work on. The programmer picks up either the melodic line or the rhythmic pulse

pattern on his keyboard, depending on what he wishes to begin with. The choice of instruments and creation of rhythmic and melodic patterns begin. For example, in a recording session with Zanjina, one of the favourite reggae artistes in Tamale, the programmer started by establishing a 4/4 metronomic pulse as Zanjina sang out a line from the chorus of his song entitled “*Sangar’li*”. The engineer then placed an emphatic ‘kick’ on the third beat of a 4/4 rhythm. The next instrument that followed was a drum rim shot and then some high hats. Through this, the engineer created an emerging rhythmic pattern that he called a ‘one-drop roots reggae style’. Zanjina appeared quite satisfied with the choices made by the programmer. They let the rhythm play for a while as they both tried to get into the feel of the rhythm. The next instrument was the congas played from the electronic keyboard synthesizer, after which the programmer tried a variety of percussions from among the list of midi sound modules. Zanjina resumed the singing of his tune at this point as they were moving to the next stage of the programming involving the tonal/melodic instruments. The piano was the first instrument they played in this category. Without any hesitation, the programmer played what he called an offbeat strum, in a syncopated accompaniment to the progression of Zanjina’s melody. The remaining instruments orchestrated for this particular song of Zanjina followed in the order of ocarina, bass guitar, rock organ, some strings and pan flute. All these instruments followed the so-called one-drop roots reggae style established earlier by great reggae artistes such as Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. The artiste and programmer both contribute ideas in the selection of instruments and composition of phrases. However, the artiste has the final say on what is accepted or rejected.

The next step was for Zanjina to take a recorded sample of the complete instrumentation on CD and go home to practice his vocal parts. Actually, it emerged from some of the respondents during our interviews that, sometimes, it is when they take the instrumentation home on CD, that

they complete the writing of their songs. However, if the song is already complete, as in the case of Zanjina, then he/she needs only to practice and master the singing skills. After which, he/she books the next appointment at the studio.

The next thing when an artiste gets back to the studio is to go into the voicing room, put headphones over the head. This blocks out from his ears any other external sound and pumping on to the artiste's eardrums the pre-programmed instrumentation of his song. Zanjina told me he feels like he is in a different realm of life at this stage. He gets into the mood of the song and sings it without stop until the end. He says it is best if he memorizes all the words and sings them without consciously thinking of the next word. However, in case an artiste fails to memorize the words, he/she might have it written on paper. This only applies to artistes who are able to read though. Otherwise, the only option is to memorize all the words to every song they record, and that is the case of Zanjina, Kassim Gazor, Original Shoe-Shine Boy and some others.

The next stage of the recording session now rests with the sound engineer who in most cases is the very same programmer who began the recording. His job is to select the best tones for each of the selected instruments, based on the virtual midi sound modules available to them on the computer. He also applies computer sound effects like equalizers, reverb, compressors etc., to the recorded vocals. He then finally sets the appropriate levels for each instrument and voice, to make sure the loud sounding ones do not overshadow the soft sounding ones. Creating a perfect balance for *clean sound*, where they hear each instrument or part distinctly on its own, even though playing in the midst of a collection of instruments. The sound engineer then exports the sound from the primary music production software to an identifiable location on the computer.

The final stage after the mix is "Mastering". At this stage, they import the final exported sound file from the mix to mastering software such as Sound Forge or Wave Lab. The engineer

gives further treatment to the sound until both parties are duly satisfied with the outcome. Since most of the artistes in Tamale are not very conversant with sound engineering standards, they usually leave this final stage to the studio engineer. They may also carry that part forward to the mass production stage, as some of the mass producers also do mastering.

The other cost factors at this stage, besides the studio charges, come in the form of transportation from Tamale to where ever the studio is located, and cost of transportation within the city and in all other necessary errands concerning the recording. Studio locations have mostly been in either Accra or Kumasi. It was until quite recently, around 2008 when a few studios sprung up in Tamale. The extra cost factors, besides studio charges, also include accommodation in the city where the studio is located. For the artiste and those travelling/working with him, for the duration of the recording. Feeding and general upkeep of the artiste during the recording period counts in the cost factoring. Hence, it is difficult to state an amount as the cost of recording. Every case may vary in terms of cost, depending on which artiste is recording, where he/she is recording and who is financing the project.

2.5. THE JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction in the case of contemporary artistes in Tamale is of three types. The first comes up at the recording stage when the artiste is finalizing the work in the studio. Some of the respondents who do not play any musical instrument confirmed that, they sometimes only discover the beauty of their songs after the engineer has put the final additions to the mix. It is only at this stage that they obtain an opportunity to confirm if the production process has uncovered the full potential of the song. Umar Janda and Deensi specifically mentioned that there have been times in the studio when the production quality of a song even exceeded their expectations. Mostly at this stage, although they make other considerations, the technicality is their priority. What the engineer

and the artiste care most about at this point is whether the instrumentation is satisfactory. Whether the artiste's own vocal performance is satisfactory. Whether the final mix is clear and clean enough to please the ear. During mixing, they may still have additional instruments to the song, just to meet that satisfaction. "In my personal recording experience, I usually just know it when a song has not attained its full potential, it is a feeling I have that I could do better. This is one of the reasons why I like playing with the band, because every live performance is an opportunity to remix my song, and these remixes during my live performances compensate for any reservations I gathered from the studio about the song's recorded potential" (Sheriff Ghale).

The second aspect of job satisfaction concerns the financier. The artistes in Tamale call them the *producers* or *executive producers*. This person invests money into the project and therefore wants the money back as a matter of priority. He is not concerned about the technicalities of quality recording or artistry. Perhaps that can wait, until he recoups the cash investments. Ras Queysen, one of the respondents based in Walewale, said that he had an intense argument with his producer during the recording of his last album. The producer wanted him to record more Highlife songs than reggae. He (the producer) argued that their female audience related more with the Highlife songs, and that they were the ones who bought more records than anyone else did. Of course, Queysen, though concerned about the sales of his album, was more concerned about his image and career. Considering the brand he had already established for himself, he felt obliged to record certain kinds of songs, to keep his fan base. Most importantly, he felt that the producer was over stepping his bounds, but the only way around such a producer would be for the artiste to finance his/her own recording. Nonetheless, he (Queysen) eventually gave in to the producer's demand. Hence, in many cases, the producers have high stakes in determining the kinds of songs that the artistes record. They insist that the final product must come to meet their satisfaction.

The third aspect of job satisfaction is in regards of the audience and fans. For some of our respondents, how the audience will receive their final product matters to them the most. They consider that right from the start of the production process in conceiving the theme to the song. What to say or not to say in the song must improve or diminish their honour and respect in the public eye. Prince Okla said this is the first thing he considers before writing a song. Kassim Gazor said that anytime he wrote a song that he thought contradicted his public image, he gave it out to another artiste to record. Mostly younger and relatively unknown ones.

Up until quite recently, when an artiste released a song, he/she got the feedback from the audience through sales on the market, through the talk in town, through radio airplay and comments, and through phone calls made to him/her. All these reflected the level of public support and satisfaction with the job. Nowadays with the challenges artiste encounter as regards the influx of computer and mobile phone technology, coupled with the free internet distribution of music, the sales of records cannot be a sure way to tell if there is job satisfaction among the audience. Again with the number of radio stations in Tamale now (at least ten) and the difficulty in distributing promotional materials to radio DJs as regards to the payment of “*payola*” (bribe offered for unofficial promotion of songs and products) to them, radio may not be the right medium to determine the public’s satisfaction with an artiste’s work either. Perhaps the only ways that are still quite reliable for an artiste to measure the level of public satisfaction with his/her work include, first and foremost, live performances of the music, followed by the public talk of the town, and the feedback to artistes through phone calls and social media like Facebook, tweeter etc. In addition, free downloading of the music through these very same social media by the fans is quite an effective way of estimating public satisfaction. In all of these however, only the live performances is economically beneficial to the artiste. When people share the music free via Bluetooth on their

phones, computers and related internet technology, it constitutes an economic loss for the artiste. However, some artistes have taken advantage of the free distribution to increase their popularity. They initiate the free distribution of their own music through Bluetooth and social media. If their campaign succeeds, the music and their names become popular. So that they can play live concerts, for which they are paid. At the live concerts, audience reaction is one of the best ways of measuring the public's satisfaction with the artiste's output. Furthermore, the artiste gets an opportunity to rectify some of the studio shortfalls. They may also get new ideas during a live performance. So live performances go a long way to enhance the future studio works of the artiste. Most of the respondents in this thesis said that they were always reflecting on some of their previous experiences on stage, while working in the studio. They said that it helped the quality of their studio performance. For instance, when Sheriff Ghale programmes instrumentation in the studio nowadays, he only chooses instruments that he can access during live performances. That is because; he wants to sound, as close to the record as possible when playing live. It is not necessarily to sound exactly like the studio recording though, he noted. Umar Janda and Abu Sadiq both said similar things as they both insist on playing with the band as much as possible these days. Thus, the connection between live performances and studio recordings are very real.

2.6. RELATED CHALLENGES

In the interviews, it emerged that, the challenges that all the respondents expressed about their production processes, fall into four categories. Although the way in which they each expressed those challenges varied in details, the underlying factors to the challenges remained the same. They all boiled down to either a lack of access to appropriate studios and equipment or some deficiency in professional and technical knowhow. Thirdly they also had challenges with regards their levels of formal education generally, and music education specifically. The fourth and final

category of challenges is about the inadequate financial capital to pay for the desired quality of recordings.

2.6.1. The Lack of Appropriate Studios

The first recording studio to ever open in Tamale was Depsocom somewhere, in the late 1980s. It operated into the early 1990s but closed down by the middle 1990s. Nana Gazor, who had previously worked with Depsocom, then set up his own studio, Studio 502. Afa Digital Studio opened in the centre of Tamale town in the late 1990s. However, by 2004/2005 there was no properly functioning studio in Tamale. Nana Gazor had migrated to Accra on becoming a second vice president of the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA). Afa Alhassan of Afa Digital Studio went more into video and filmmaking. This was a huge challenge, since all the artistes in Tamale had to go to either Accra or Kumasi to record. By the late 2000s, the influx of computers and ICT knowhow in Tamale had intensified with many young people being at the forefront. Over the past three to five years, a number of small-scale computer based studios have sprung up. There are the “Binkumda Studio” of Sheriff Ghale (although non-commercial), “Stone-B Studio”, “P-Jay Studio”, “Anfaani Studio”, and “Hyperlink Studio”. All these studios came up between 2009 and 2015. There is also “Tap Tax Studio” which however focuses on sound tracks for the “Tallywood” films/movies (the Tamale movies/film industry).

2.6.2. The Deficiency in Technical Knowhow

The second production related challenge I noticed is in the form of deficient professional and technical knowhow among the studio engineers. No studio engineers in Tamale, whom the researcher encountered, who had made significant contributions to the recording industry, had had any professional or formal training in sound engineering. They all learnt on the job. In essence, they experimented on the professional career dreams of the artistes they recorded. Although it is

remarkable what they have achieved, they could do better. There are some more tricks, artistry, standards etc., they are yet to learn. For example, there are standard tried and tested ways to apply equalizers, compressors and the likes. Many records from Tamale clearly fall below the benchmarks. Even the way to set up the studio environment, especially the voicing room to ensure quality recording, is a problem in most of the studios in Tamale.

Most of the engineers also double as keyboard programmers but lack the very basic knowledge about the rest of the instruments that they work with in their orchestration. For example, working within appropriate pitch levels for particular instruments is a challenge for some of them. There was an incident at Afa Digital studio years ago, where the engineer could not even differentiate the tone colour (timbre) of various instruments. He occasionally recorded instruments in different keys and meters without noticing. Nana Gazor was a much better hand, as he had learned to play a couple of instruments from the Pentecost church in Tamale. There was also a programmer at Stone B studio who did not play any instrument, not even the keyboard. He only programmed from a virtual keyboard on his computer with the help of Fruity Loops software. The software allowed for the synchronization of the computer's keyboard with the installed fruity loops instruments and sound modules. Hence, with his aural skills he programmed but could not play a real keyboard instrument. Things have certainly improved over the years, especially with access to the internet nowadays that allows some young engineers to learn remarkable things on their own. However, the reality remains that they have to get more serious and they should obtain as much music education as possible. Even if it were just some apprenticeship with more learned and experienced engineers.

2.6.3. The Problem with Formal Education

The third challenge to the artistes is their levels of formal education. Among all the contemporary artistes based in Tamale, only Sheriff Ghale stayed in school while in pursuit of a music career. He went as far as pursuing a masters-degree in music, while remaining an active recording/performing artiste. The majority of Tamale artistes have not gone beyond the senior high school level. A few artistes including Tarimbua, Icon, Umar Janda, and Kawastone, have gone back to school nevertheless. Beyond the general formal education challenge is a more serious and specific challenge of music education. Prince Mahama the blind musician plays the guitar and keyboard. Sadiq Flash plays the bass guitar and sings. Sheriff Ghale plays the guitar, keyboards, Jinjeling and percussions. Most of the rest are just singers/songwriters. Although they express interest in learning to play instruments, they are yet to do so. This is clearly a big problem for them, since most of them are composers of their own pieces. They would certainly be better songwriters if they played instruments like the keyboard and guitar, or even just transcribed sheet music. Most of the artistes cannot compose a new tune until they listen to someone else's music, because of their limits in music education. This results in some of them directly copying other people's songs. From our interactions, however, artistes like Abu Sadiq and Ahmed Adam over the years have tremendously matured in their art of song writing and recording. Even though they did not receive much formal education, perhaps learning from many years of practice is one other way of perfecting the art.

2.6.4. The Financial Limits

The financial capital to invest in studio recordings of the contemporary popular artistes of Tamale is a big challenge. The early 1990s until middle 2000s appear to have been the golden age of capital investment for the music industry in Tamale. The key players then were the I. K. brothers. I. K. Acheampong of I. K. Music Productions, and Nana Akwesi Owusu of the Central

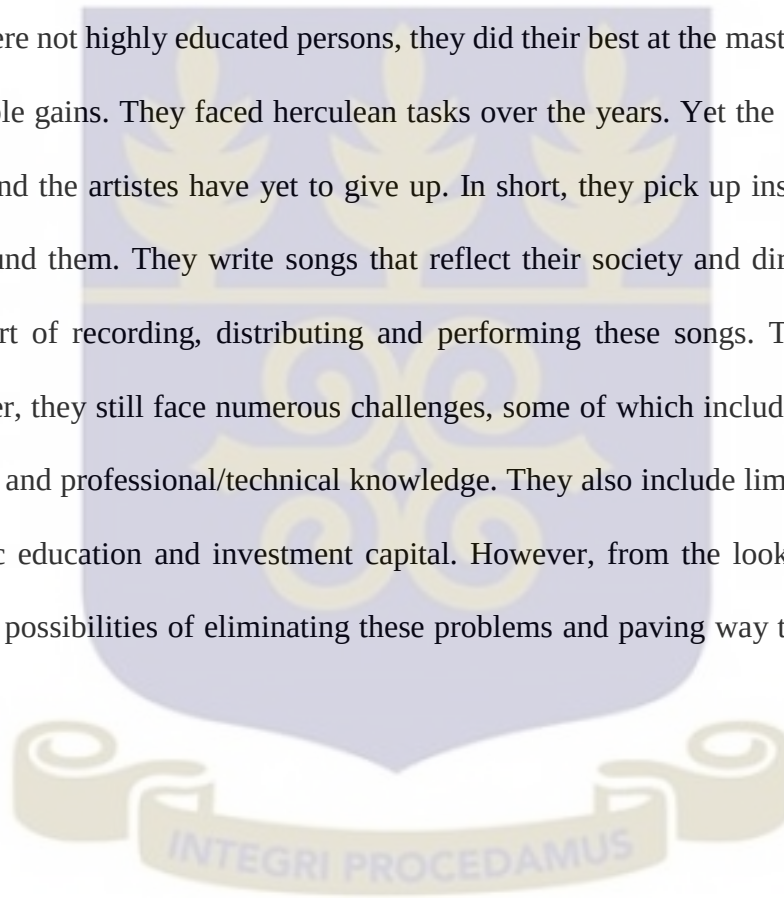
Music Spot. The Central Music Spot paid Nana Gazor in the early 1990s to produce artistes like Kassim Gazor, Rafiq Dachar, Sheriff Ghale, Maurice Maiga and a few others. The I. K. brothers later gave money to artistes covering studio charges, transportation, feeding and accommodation allowances, to go and record in Kumasi and Accra. They then just waited for the master CDs, from which they mass-produced records at companies in Accra.

However, beginning middle 2000s a severe downward trend in music sales started to hit Tamale. This was due to factors like multiple radio stations, influx of computers and related technology, mobile phone technology and the internet. As Tamale got more access to the internet and related technologies, pirate downloading of the music surged. Music fans upload the music in audio-visual formats on to the internet, mostly without the consent of the artistes. Many more people download the music from the internet in the same way. Music sales ever since have declined drastically and so has the cash investments in recordings. The likes of the I. K. Brothers and even smaller investors like Elpazo Music Productions, and Adoco Music Productions, started to pull out their money from the industry. Nonetheless, they contributed their quota to the golden age of music production in Tamale.

Since the middle 2000s, almost everyone who has invested heavily in music recording in Tamale has had serious challenges with sales. This has in turn almost killed the motivation for such capital investments in the industry. These days, almost all the artistes who go to the studios in Tamale, bear their own recording costs. Recently, only Abu Sadiq and Sheriff Ghale had their latest projects paid for, by City Face and I. K. Music Productions respectively. This situation demotivates artistes from working hard and creating more, and that is bad for the industry. Many of the artistes from the golden age of recording have not released any albums over the last three to

five years, although they are still active and perform concerts. Some of them even think studio recording is not worth its cost anymore.

Recording and sales of records proved over the past thirty years to have been the best thing that happened to the contemporary popular music industry in Tamale. Recording began at the onset of the industry, and the sales of Dagbani music took its rightful place in Tamale. In the opinion of the artistes, it gave the people a certain sense of identity and pride. Although the artistes and actors in the industry were not highly educated persons, they did their best at the mastery of their art and made some notable gains. They faced herculean tasks over the years. Yet the industry still has a long way to go and the artistes have yet to give up. In short, they pick up inspirations from the environment around them. They write songs that reflect their society and direct ways forward. They learn the art of recording, distributing and performing these songs. That in itself is an industry. However, they still face numerous challenges, some of which include limited access to studio equipment and professional/technical knowledge. They also include limited access to well established music education and investment capital. However, from the look of factors on the ground, there are possibilities of eliminating these problems and paving way to a brighter future for the industry.



CHAPTER THREE

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the what, where, when and how of marketing and promotion of music in Tamale. The questions to ask are; what do they sell? Where do they sell it? When do they sell? How do they sell it? It also considers some specific factors, which are peculiar to the music industry in Tamale. These include the music videos albums and the close connections between the music and film industries. The chapter also looks at some of the very pertinent challenges that the artistes face in the publishing, marketing and promotion of their works.

3.2. THE PUBLISHING DEAL AND MASS PRODUCTION

The next thing that an artiste does after finishing the studio recordings is to secure a publishing deal, if that is not already in place. This means that the artiste has to convince an investor to inject some cash into the project. Such cash injection may go into cutting recordable CDs of the finished songs, designing inlay covers and CD jackets, and the general packaging of the finished product. This is the mass production stage. It also covers the cutting of other distributable formats for music, such as cassettes. However, cassette sales are no longer a significant portion of music sales in Tamale. The producers⁷ do not even bother to make any cassette copies these days. In fact, due to piracy and technology challenges, music sales generally

⁷ The Producer(s) in this context (as used by the artistes in Tamale) is synonymous to the term Publisher. Both of which are used in a general reference to the one who bares the cost of studio production (Producer in its specific meaning), as well as mass production of retail formats (Publisher in its specific meaning). Sometimes, the same person plays both roles, and sometimes it turns out to be the artiste who plays all these roles.

have fallen drastically. Therefore, it is very difficult for especially the young artistes to attract investors. Most of them publish their own works, upon failure to secure any publishing deal. That is all because technological advancement has outdone almost all the music sales distribution formats. Even audio CD sales faces unprecedented challenges these days. Audiovisual technologies, like DVD players and computers are so common nowadays. Even television sets now have USB ports that can directly read digital files. Therefore, there is now more demand for digital music in the audiovisual formats than in the audio only formats. As a result, the production burden on artistes and publishers is even heavier now. Since, they now have to proceed to make videos of their music either before the first release, or soon after. Comparatively, it costs more, per song, to produce a music video than to produce a song from the studio. The two topmost studios in Tamale, “Stone-B” and “P-Jay” studios both charge an average of GH¢200.00 per song. Whilst the topmost video production studio, Marvelous Film Productions currently charges an average of GH¢250.00 per music video. Whereas the artiste, in producing a music video, has to bare the extra cost of costumes, transportation to various set locations, feeding of crew and supporting artistes etc., the music studio production requires no such extra costs. It is therefore such an extra burden for the artistes and producer⁸.

The current crop of publishers⁹ like Buaro Productions, Sagrigungong Productions, Parinjani Productions and K-Mankind Productions, are all small scale compared to what the I. K. Brothers did in the 1990s. These publishers are also more into film and audiovisual productions than audio only productions. They work with both the film and music industries in Tamale, publishing Dagbani movies and music videos. Thus, they only wait until the artiste finishes an

⁸ The one who pays for the studio production as explained earlier in chapter two.

⁹ Those who pay for the mass production of retail formats like CDs, DVDs etc.

audio album, and if it is a hit at least on radio, then they might take an interest in pre-financing the making of its music videos for sale. If it is not a hit, then the artiste has to bear the cost, if he wishes to make a video album, after which these small-scale publishers may then take up the mass production and distribution. However, lately some artistes even proceed to do their own mass production and distribution, either by choice or by force of circumstances. Hence, they bear every cost of the production from studio to promotion and marketing. If they are lucky, they make enough money to recover their investments. In these cases, artistes who do not have other sources of income have had to borrow money from friends and family to invest in their projects. If the sales do not make that money back, then they find other means of paying the debt. One of the creative ways of artistes raising such money is through putting up official launch concerts to give publicity to the album release. There is a detailed discussion of this creative move ahead in this chapter, under the sub-heading: *“The Official Release”*.

3.3. LOCATING THE MARKET: Distribution & Retails

The primary market for the Tamale music industry is the Dagbon traditional area. This comprises the city of Tamale and many towns and villages including Yendi (seat of the Yaa-Naa) which has a population of about 40,336, Savelugu (the third largest town) with a population of about 24,937, Gushiegu, Karaga, Zabzugu, Nyankpala, Kumbungu, Diari, Nanton, Tolon, Sang, Dalun and Chereponi (Mahama, 2009: 1).

Tamale is the headquarters of the contemporary popular music industry in the Northern Region. It houses the artistes, the recording studios, and the distribution and retail outlets for the music. From around 2007, Parinjani Productions started producing the design and cutting of CDs and DVDs in Tamale. Hence, today, they do every aspect of the production in Tamale, except the

jackets, inlays, and posters. Very soon, they may even start doing those too in Tamale. These days, a graphic artist called *Innocent*, at Hackensack Prints in Kumasi, does most of the design and printing of CD/DVD inlays, jackets, posters, stickers, and banners for both music/video albums and movies. A few publishers occasionally do their design and printing in Accra. Nevertheless, Kumasi seems to be the preferred place, perhaps because of its proximity to Tamale. There are some other graphic design/printing companies in Tamale, like Second Sight Enterprise and Damba Multimedia. They do design and printing of CD/DVD inlays, jackets, posters, stickers and banners too. However, their capacities are not as those in Accra or Kumasi yet. Hence, they take some of the contracts, but end up printing them in Accra or Kumasi. This is because of the lack of large-scale printing facilities. Hence, the cost of printing in Tamale is not competitive compared to Accra and Kumasi. However, Parinjani and Damba Multimedia are effectively carrying out the mass design and printing of CDs/DVDs in Tamale. They deliver to both film and music industries without fail.

The chain of distribution for the contemporary popular music starts right from the centre of Tamale. The I. K. Brothers are very effective in the distribution of music in Tamale. Other distributors include Parinjani Productions, K-Mankind Productions, Buaro Productions, and Sagrigungong Productions. Most of them also distribute for the film industry. They act as the main distributors who keep and sell the finished products in bulk, although they also do retail. All other retailers purchase from the distributors any number of copies they can afford at a time. Currently, it costs approximately GH¢1.00 to produce a finished packaged audio CD and GH¢1.40 to produce a finished packaged DVD. The audio CDs are sold to the key distributor(s) at GH¢2.00 each and they sell to the retailers at GH¢2.50. The retailers in turn sell to the consumer at GH¢3.00 or GH¢3.50. Sheriff Ghale distributes his audio CDs directly to the retailers at GH¢5.00 and they sell

to the consumer at GH¢7.50 or more. DVDs are sold to the key distributor(s) at GH¢2.50 and they sell to the retailers at GH¢3.00, who then sell to the consumer at GH¢3.50. Audio cassettes have gradually phased out of the market. No publisher has produced cassettes of their products since 2010. Retailers come from all over the country to buy from the key distributors in Tamale. There are those who come from around northern Ghana including Yendi, Gushegu, Bolgatanga, Bawku, Walewale, and Wa. There are also those who come from outside the north including Kumasi, Ejura, Techiman, Ashaiman, Agbogbloshie, and from even as far as Takoradi. For those retailers who have a good record of sales and payment to the distributors, they may just get supplies on credit. They place an order via telephone, the distributor sends the product to them through public transport, and they wire the money back to the distributor through the bank. They may even get more than what they can pay for at a time, to sell and pay later.

There are other few distributors outside the Northern Region. They sometimes do their own publishing and distributions from where they are. These include Adoco Music Productions at Alabar in Kumasi, King Hassan Productions and Naa Yakubu Productions at Agbogbloshie in Accra.

There are situations where some of the artistes, like B-Motion and Original Shoeshine Boy, carry out their own production and publishing. They sell to the distributors at a price of GH¢1.80 per CD/DVD, making a profit of only GH¢0.80 (on each CD) or GH¢0.50 (on each DVD). The distributors in turn sell to the retailers at two Ghana Cedis (GH¢2.00). However, these are relatively young and unknown artistes. Artistes who do their own production/publishing usually do not receive payment upfront from the distributors. They only receive payments after sales, and they are free to distribute their works anywhere they like and find suitable. Very popular artistes, whose fans are anxiously waiting to buy their products, may sometimes receive some advanced

payments from the distributors. Such cases are usually an opportunity for the distributors to cash in on the anxious anticipations of the fans.

Radio Ten Thousand, (name of a distributor/retailer of music and film) is a mobile van based distributor/retailer of music and film. Mohammed is his real name and he has made a special mark in the Tamale music industry in his own way. He distributes and retails music and film in a mobile van/car, on which he has mounted a public address system, including a DVD player, monitor screens and speakers. He roams the streets of Tamale selling music and film; he also travels to the main towns like Savelugu, Tolon and their surroundings. He has done that for many years now and has become a household name in the industry. Most artistes and main distributors include him in their distribution network. His success, with the mobile van distribution/retails, has attracted most of the main distributors in Tamale to acquire their own mobile vans too, that go round to distribute and retail their products.

With the distribution network described above, coupled with the worldwide web, Tamale music, which is predominantly in the Dagbani language, can now be accessed from almost anywhere in the world. However, so far, only Sheriff Ghale has his music available for sale online via the iTunes store. Any other contemporary popular Tamale music found on the internet is usually what music fans or the artistes themselves have uploaded on social media sites like YouTube, Facebook and related websites. Usually for promotional purposes. However, there is a project initiated by an American researcher and musician, Phil Babcock, in collaboration with Sheriff Ghale and other Tamale artistes, which may soon see some of the Tamale music on sale online, via a website they call “*sakasakamusic.com*”.

3.4. PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY

Sheriff Ghale told me “Music is not drinking water that you can just leave in the shop and wait for people to come and buy when they are thirsty”. Abu Sadiq echoed very similar sentiments in the interview for this thesis. All the respondents expressed the need for effective marketing and promotion of their music. Most of them believe these directly correlate with good sales. Ahmed Adam argued that even in this current sales crisis situation, marketing and promotion are still very relevant to the number of records sold. He said that although payola was not the way to go, he did not mind paying it to the radio DJs, if that will make them play his music enough times to get the sales going. In essence, he believes that the more a song plays on radio, with appropriate accompanying commentary by the DJ, the more people would understand the message of the song and would want to own a copy of it. Prince Okla agrees with Ahmed on the point of appropriate commentary but disagrees on paying payola, no matter what. Sheriff Ghale agreed with Okla on this point, and he said, “I feel too shy to pay a DJ to play my music. I will not even enjoy the song when I hear him play it on radio, because I know he will not be playing it out of love and appreciation for my work. I personally might be willing to participate in campaigns to get radio DJs better salaries and working conditions from their employers. However, to go out of my way to entice the DJ with money to play my music is not fair. This is because, if every artiste did that, then it will just be advertising, and the public will not be able to rely on the DJs anymore to introduce genuinely good music” (Sheriff Ghale, 2013).

Umar Janda on his part thought that radio did not even help much these days, because there are just too many of them in town. He said, one could not guarantee how many times a song will have to play before it gets to the target audience. He also said that the more a song plays on radio, the fewer the people who see the need to own copies of that same song, a direct opposite to Ahmed

Adam's argument. Janda believes in identifying his target audience and devising appropriate strategies to reach them with his music. He prefers the use of record shops, mobile vans and live performances to advertise and sell his music. He is actually one of the artistes who first took up and entrenched the strategy of a market place live performance in 2002. Sheriff Ghale first introduced that strategy along with the radio launch strategy. There is an expanded discussion of these two strategies later in this chapter under the heading *The Official Release*. Janda said that television would have been the best for him, but that there is none located in Tamale, and the ones in Accra are just too expensive. He would pay to advertise on TV, but not radio, since payola has tainted the reputation of radio. More so, there is no obvious way of estimating whether the airplay is worth the money paid, or even measuring the effectiveness of the airplay a song is getting. I do not personally have any scientific basis to agree or disagree with any of these arguments. However, it intrigues me, the amount of creativity and independence demonstrated by the artistes in their thinking, especially relative to the age of that fledgling industry in Tamale. The artistes think freely and apply what they believe to work for them, and that is highly commendable.

The artistes and publishers also use a number of alternative media to market and promote their works. These media include the retail record shops that have public address systems set up at the entrances. They play loud music out to the public all day long and sometimes until as late as 11:00PM. Some of the popular retail record shops in Tamale are the I. K. Productions shops, The Central Music Spot group of shops, Mr. Ali's shop, Buaro Productions shops, Star Boy's shop, K-Mankind Productions shop, BBC's shop, Zacuss Music shop and many more. They also employ the idea of mobile vans in and around Tamale. Almost all the major distributors have established mobile van departments attached to their distribution network, following in the successful footsteps of Radio Ten Thousand. They also rely heavily on posters, banners, leaflets and stickers

to advertise, especially for new and relatively unknown artistes. For them, this is the best way of promoting their names and images. They post these banners, posters, leaflets and stickers at vantage spots in town and public spaces, on the doors of shops, in barbering saloons, kiosks and containers, on tree trunks and on vehicles. Just to catch the public eye.

Most of the young artistes, especially Hiplife artistes, employ an innovative strategy with the Bluetooth technology on mobile phones and laptops. From the studio, they start sending their new songs to their peers and friends via Bluetooth, who in turn share with their friends and friends of their friends. When the song is good it easily goes viral on people's mobile phones. Although they share it free of charge, the artiste's earnings will come later, in the form of popularity, when he/she bargains for gigs and endorsing of products and adverts.

Now, there is also the phenomenon of "*caller tunes*" which works in collaboration with the mobile phone network providers like MTN, Vodafone, and Airtel etc. This is where a subscriber/mobile phone user downloads a song into his/her account, so that whoever calls them hears the song play while waiting for the answer. These service providers have sub contracted the caller tunes arrangements to some smaller companies. To get in contact with the artistes and sign contracts with them to upload their music to the mobile phone networks. Each song they upload to the network has a unique identity code, by which subscribers can request to download the particular song to their mobile phone accounts as a caller tune. These smaller companies, in collaboration with the artistes, advertise the unique identity codes to their fans, and all mobile phone users of the particular network. Every mobile phone user who subscribes to the caller tunes service on MTN currently pays a monthly subscription fee of GH¢0.50 and then pays GH¢0.30 per song download. The mobile phone service provider (MTN) pays a percentage of the money received from the subscriber to the subcontractor. The subcontractor in turn pays an agreed percentage to

the artiste. The caller tunes advertise the music to mobile phone users and earn the artiste some money, not very much though. Some artistes in Tamale who are on the caller tunes application of MTN include Kawastone, Deensi, Don Sigli and Sheriff Ghale.

Nowadays, the Tamale based artistes also heavily patronize a number of internet-based publicity media. This is so especially for those artistes who are able to use computers and the internet. They patronize Internet blogs, social networking sites like Facebook, tweeter, Myspace, Reverbnation, ethnocloud, YouTube and a few others. There is therefore quite a very good internet presence for artistes like Sheriff Ghale, Kawastone, Deensi, Umar Janda, Sirina Issah, Don Sigli, Abu Sadiq, and a host of others. Almost all these artistes are on Facebook, where they have personal accounts to interact with their fans. Some of them also have fan pages managed by their associates to advertise their new songs and events. Some fans of the music voluntarily create Facebook pages and YouTube accounts just to advertise the artistes and their works.

3.5. THE OFFICIAL RELEASE: The Launch

After finishing studio works and the mass production, the next thing is to declare the music duly published. This is usually done either by radio launch or by radio publicity and market place performance together, or by radio publicity and a launch concert, or by a combination of all the above. The strategy of the official release depends on the popularity of the artiste, and the publisher, and the resources available. Consideration of the season of release and the target audience also informs the release strategy.

Sheriff Ghale first introduced the idea of a *radio launch* in 2002, when he was releasing his sixth album entitled “*Zolikugli*”. This was in March 2002, when there was turmoil in Yendi, resulting in the death of the Yaa Naa and about forty of his elders. The whole of Dagbon, and

especially Tamale, was in a state of grief, anger and mourning. In Tamale, there were threats of retaliatory attacks by sympathizers of the Andani family against the Abudu family members and their supporters. The Andani believed the Abudu to be behind the Yaa Naa's murder. The government had declared a state of emergency over the whole of the Dagbon traditional area, including Tamale. Consequently, there was a dusk-till-dawn curfew imposed on Tamale. For that matter, nightlife in the city came halt. When Ghale finished his album in the studio, it was due for publishing by the Central Music Spot (CMS). He could not afford to postpone the release of the album indefinitely. However, because of the curfew and tension in town, it was not possible to launch it at a night concert, as was the norm. Therefore, he started looking for alternative ways to release the album. They say that necessity is the mother of invention. This was when Ghale got the idea of launching the product on radio. He discussed the details with the marketing department of Radio Savannah, and got his publisher, the CMS, to buy an hour of airtime on a given day, and that began the tradition of *radio launch* in Tamale. The idea later evolved into buying airtime on radio stations, to coincide with the given launch time, so that they will all pick the feed from the one station where the launch is taking place. Into the launch, they activate the studio phone lines for the public to call in. Some called in and pledged to pay certain amounts of money for the first few copies, a tradition they borrowed from the usual launch concerts.

The *Zolikugli* album launch also saw the novel idea of setting up some public address systems at the central taxi station in Tamale. They had a number of young people selling copies of the album, as the DJ played the music repeatedly. This idea also carried on and evolved, as many more artistes adopted and followed the example. Umar Janda and other artistes later developed this idea of a market place further, where they got the artistes themselves to appear for a live

performance at the market place. While the music is being sold. Hence, the album release saw a combination of the radio launch and the market-place sales ideas.

Official release of albums are sometimes just by radio advertisement. They only pay for an official announcement, declaring the release of the product to the market. In this case, the official release date is fixed and all the radio adverts carry it, to publicize that date. The adverts come mostly before the selected release date. They also normally include a jingle recorded by the artiste/publisher to contain the relevant information about the release date. This is played at specified times of the day on radio. It also includes radio announcements written by the artiste/publisher, and read out on the radio usually in the mornings and evenings, and during regular primetime programs. Sometimes, there is also in the publicity package, an interview session with either the artiste or publisher (or both) on the day of release, or sometimes prior to the day. It is usually at this interview that the official launch is declared. The promotional period lasts between two weeks and a month, depending on the resources available. Sometimes, promotions continue up to two weeks even after the release. Depending on the need for it and depending on how well the product is doing on the market.

Another way to launch an album is to put up a live concert on the release date. This is a tradition that began from the very early years of the industry, when artistes like Sirina Issah and Gordon Lari launched their albums. They used to putting up live concerts. Sirina Issah in the early 1990s had the best of launches for her albums, and those did not only promote her albums but her image as well. Her album launches drew politicians, traditional rulers, and businesspersons to the Picorna Gardens, the most prestigious venue in Tamale then. It was a special privilege for an ordinary person to attend any launch of Sirina Issah's albums. Such events remained the talk of town for weeks and months after.

In organizing a live concert launch, the artistes are usually in charge, whilst the publisher is more concerned about the sales of records. The publisher, because he is interested in effective publicity to boost sales, contributes towards radio and other advertisements. The artistes, if they have funds, will organize the event by themselves. They normally have an advantage of getting fellow artistes to perform free of charge, and that cuts down the cost of organizing. They would only need to pay for the venue, furniture and sound systems. The publisher pays for publicity, usually in the name of the artistes, because the radio stations normally offer some regular discount packages only to artistes. When an artiste has no money to organize the event, he/she will usually collaborate with interested investors or friends to raise money. So that they share the profits after the event, if there are any. They normally fix the concert on the day of release of the album. They direct all adverts towards that specific day. At the launch, there are supporting artistes for the opening performances, whilst the main artiste performs later, to introduce the album. A special guest of honour officially declares the album dully launched, and then they auction it to some special invited guests. After this, they open general sales to the rest of the audience and the product goes on to the market from that evening.

3.6. THE VIDEOS, VIDEO ALBUMS AND MOVIES

Since the late 1990s, when Ahmed Adam launched his first album, which he based on sound tracks from one of his early movies, until today, there has always been a close connection between the film and music industries in Tamale. Although the idea of music video making, to promote a song on television and related media, was already popular outside Tamale, the artistes did not effectively employ in Tamale, in the early years. In the middle 1990s, Ghana Television and GBC radio were the only electronic media in Tamale. Perhaps because of that, it was much

easier for a song to become popular. Everyone listened and watched the same radio and TV station. Television did not serve as the major medium of advertising music in Tamale then. Effective audiovisual productions in the music industry in Tamale largely got its inspiration from the film industry. Ahmed Adam, in his assimilation of Bollywood style movies, required sound tracks and musical interludes in his films. These films eventually became an advertising medium for the songs. As people watched the movies, they fell in love with the songs. This became an effective strategy for advertising songs in Tamale. After Ahmed, many more artistes and filmmakers adopted it. There even came a time in Tamale when almost every audio album released had its movie version. Connecting all the songs on the album to a movie plot. The artistes wanted to use the movies to advertise their music and the filmmakers needed music in their movies to entertain. This became the trend in the industry. Alhassan Yushawu Jahinfo, a famous filmmaker in Tamale, produced a film around Sheriff Ghale's Ghana Music Award winning song, "*Sochira/Crossroads*". He even got Sheriff to star in the movie, which was also entitled "*Sochira*". Thus, music and film worked hand in hand.

The use of music videos to advertise songs on TV and related media eventually gained more grounds in Tamale. This was particularly so after Metro TV in Accra extended its coverage to Tamale sometime after 2003. It had a program called "*Advertising Cycle*", during which paid-for music videos were advertised. Only Accra-based artistes featured on that program initially. In this regard, the pressure to advertise on TV became more apparent for the artistes in Tamale. The music fans in Tamale queried them (the Tamale-based artistes), for not advertising on TV. Some of the artistes argued (explaining to the fans), on radio at that time, that the cost of advertising on TV in Accra did not make economic sense. They could afford to get their music on the Accra-based TV stations only for some short times, but that was not sustainable. This was because, the

Tamale music market was smaller, and could not raise enough money from sales to support paid-for music video adverts on TV. Although there were some opportunities to get the music on TV, free sometimes, those opportunities required an artiste to live in Accra, to access them. In addition, television publicity of the song covered the whole Ghana, but the distribution network of the Tamale music industry only centered in Tamale. It did not make sense to promote a product to an audience that could not access it. The artistes argued that, until there was a structural expansion of the distribution network, it would not be prudent to do more than what they did at the time, as regards TV publicity. That included occasionally paid TV adverts, especially when that coincided with an album launch in Tamale. Occasional live performances on programs like *Music-Music* on TV3 and *Sounds Splash* on TV Africa.

Perhaps because of two main factors, the music videos made in Tamale, after failing to go on TV, found themselves some other useful manifestations. *Video albums*, just like the regular audio albums.

One of the factors responsible for this is technological advancement. That has given rise to people's access to DVD players and similar devices. It has shifted the demand for music from the audio-only formats, to audiovisual formats.

Perhaps the second factor is that, after the artistes learned to make music videos, but did not have opportunities to get those videos on TV, they found an alternative in selling them as video albums. Indeed nowadays, video albums are the hottest commodity any artiste can produce in Tamale.

On finishing an audio album, an artiste has therefore to shoot videos of all the songs or of most of them. Do the same with some of his/her old and popular songs, to attract attention to the new ones. When they finish the video shoots and postproduction, the album is packaged, promoted

and distributed exactly like the audio album. Sometimes the two, audio album and video album are even released together, either in separate jackets or in the same jacket. Average sales of an album these days range from five thousand copies upwards. This allows the producer and publisher just to break even. In order to make profits, an album will have to sell eight thousand copies and more. Hence, the songs have to be acceptable to people and the videos have to be well produced. Usually when an artiste finishes with studio recordings, he/she starts promoting the songs on radio for them to gain popularity and acceptance, whilst they shoot the videos. So that, by the time the videos are ready, the songs are already hits.

3.7. RELATED CHALLENGES

The Tamale artistes face a number of challenges in the area of marketing and promotion. They lack prudent access to television stations. There are copyright violations and piracy. There are widespread demands for payola. There is a lack of auxiliary human resource, in the form of managers, public relations officers, legal support, promoters, and lobbyists, for the industry.

3.7.1. Difficulty of Accessing Television Media

As already explained in the previous section, the fact that there are no television stations in Tamale is a big challenge for the local artistes. All the stations have their production studios and offices stationed only in Accra. They only have a few reporters engaged around the north of Ghana. It is therefore difficult for the artistes in Tamale either to access these TV stations, for business or to participate in their productions. It is difficult to take advantage of their free programs from outside Accra. It is more costly for the Tamale artistes to put anything on TV, as they have to transport and accommodate themselves in Accra to do that. Therefore, the cost benefit analysis does not favour their businesses.

3.7.2. Technological Advancement and Piracy

Although the advancement in technology has many benefits for the artistes, it also poses a number of serious challenges. Now people share music on their phones and computers free. They also share music on the internet free. Some even provide these services to others in return for money, without paying anything to the artistes. This is a blatant copyright violation, and there is no enforcement of the copyright laws. Piracy is therefore a serious threat to the business capital of the artistes and it demotivates their creative output.

3.7.3. Payola

Another problem that most of the respondents mentioned was the demand for the payment of payola by some prominent Radio DJs in Tamale. Some DJs make it clear to the artistes that without payola, they will not play their music. Although some of the DJs may not ask for money directly from an artiste, they will take a CD and never play it. They hope that the artiste will figure out the situation, and so try to entice him, the DJ, with money and other gifts and services. Some DJs will introduce the song on air, play just a little of it and then stop until the artiste gives them money. Most of the prominent Radio DJs are also into events promotions. They expect the artistes to play free of charge. Some artistes have openly made songs condemning such DJs, whom they deem to be the “bad nuts”. However, the payola practice persists. Nevertheless, a few of the DJs do maintain their dignity, and play just what they believe to be good music. Sometimes, disunity among the artistes and the quest for quick fame worsen their plight. A DJ may pick up a young artiste and offer to be his manager. He repeatedly plays the songs of that young artiste over and above all else, and when the songs and artiste become popular, the DJ organizes a concert for the artiste to perform. Makes a lot of money, but pays the artiste just a little of it. Giving excuses, and

arguing that he made the artiste whom he is. This situation frustrates many artistes and weakens their motivation to record.

3.7.4. Lack of Access to Auxiliary Professionals and Services

Another major problem is that, the artistes cannot access most of the essential professional services that they need in Tamale. They have had to render such services for themselves, which are simply out of the range of what an artiste does. They lack managers and managements, to liaise with business partners and the public on behalf of the artistes. They have to lobby for gigs and events themselves, which is not respectable in the eyes of venue owners and event promoters. There are no professional promoters, so they have to organize concerts themselves. They lack a proper welfare system, and they have no legal and medical services. They cannot afford lawyers to protect their contractual rights and interests, and no access to professional music/artiste trainers for enhancing their musical skills. The artistes in Tamale lack access to the basic auxiliary human resource that an artiste requires to help him function properly. Not all these services are in themselves musical, but they are very essential to the success of the artistes' music careers.



CHAPTER FOUR

PERFORMANCE CULTURE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the nature of live performances of the contemporary popular artists in Tamale. How, when and where do they perform their music and to what kind of audience do they perform? Do they play live on a bandstand? Do they mime alongside the recorded voices? Do they sing to instrumentals on CD? These are all questions that this chapter answers. It looks at some of the prominent occasions at which the artistes play. It also looks at who organizes commercial concerts in Tamale and how they organize those concerts. Whom are those playing the role of booking agents and managers? There is also in Tamale a very peculiar arrangement among artistes, where they agree to do barter trading of their performance with fellow artistes. This chapter also considers some of the artistes of northern Ghanaian extraction who have made it in their arts beyond Ghana, mostly in Europe and the United States. Then it considers some of the major challenges in the area of performance in Tamale, as the artistes themselves put it.

It emerged during the interactions with the artistes that, live performance is at the centre of a successful and lasting music career. Abu Sadiq said that live performances, especially on the bandstand, helped him develop his voice quality and to perfect his singing skills. Ahmed Adam was the only artiste who said he preferred studio sessions to live performances. He explained that in the studio he has all the time to him-self to record and make corrections, so he is sure to have a good product in the end. However, he only does miming at his performances and he knows that is not the best he can do, but that he lacks access to a live band, and that is why he prefers working

in the studio. He is both a famous actor and a filmmaker, and his experiences of live performance through movie shoots may have influenced his perception.

4.2. THE “MIME” OR LIP-SYNCHING ARTISTES

A good majority of the contemporary popular artistes in Tamale are “*mime artistes*” (they lip-synch to pre-recorded tracks). At their major concerts, they play records on stage and just act along. Sometimes they sing along and other times they do not, they just dance to the music. Some of them might switch off the microphone and pretend to be singing. The initial stages of the industry did not know such miming or “lip synching” acts. In the late 1980s and very early 1990s, the artistes played live band music. This is evident in Sirina Issah’s launches of her early albums. Nana Gazor and his colleagues all played live music. Prior to that were the likes of Fuseini Tia, T. B. Damba, Yakubu Gowan, Prince Mahama, Prince Ali, and Alibeela who all played live. Although most of them were neo-traditional artistes. Hence, the tradition continued into the early 1990s. Even the audience and music fans in Tamale did not know miming performances until the early 1990s.

The style of miming performance first started to emerge in the secondary schools in Tamale in the early 1990s. It came in through the school funfairs that took place in Tamale around that period. It was however not clear to the respondents as to how the mime performances came to be a part of the funfair traditions or where it first came from. There are a number of speculations. Whereas some believed it was an importation of secondary school funfair traditions from Accra, others believed that the dominant American hip-hop culture of the early 1990s inspired it. In order to remain within the scope of this thesis, we leave the origins of the mime performances in Tamale to the speculators. At the secondary school funfairs, there were besides miming competitions, rap

and dance competitions, beauty and catwalk contests and many more activities. Some of the prominent artistes in Tamale today, who dominated the performance culture in Tamale around the early and middle 1990s, all came from the secondary school funfair tradition. They include Sheriff Ghale, Big Adams of the KKC and Umar Janda. Although it is not clear how miming came to be a part of the school funfairs, products of those funfairs subsequently imported the art, into what eventually became the main stream performance culture in the Tamale music industry.

It is quite clear that, technological advancement strongly facilitated the dominance of the art of miming in the music industry. It supplied to the industry more simplified DJ spinning equipment and relatively cheap public address and sound systems. DJs and sound spinners used cassette players in those days, which had just taken over from the long play records (LP) tradition.

Mime concerts are cheap to put up, so most of the event promoters in Tamale these days prefer them. They pay less for the sound systems, and they pay less for the artistes, since the cost of hiring them does not include musical instruments (live band) fees. For these reasons, miming concerts are predominant in Tamale these days. Only a few artistes insist on playing with a band, and even some of those who insist on playing with the band do occasionally agree to do miming, depending on how much the promoter can afford to pay.

The reception given to these miming concerts in Tamale was very good in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Then it started to decline from the end of March 2002, when the Yendi carnage led to the imposition of a curfew on the Dagbon traditional area. Live band performances, which is the alternative to miming, have not been effectively organized enough to make a serious and sustainable difference yet. Efforts continue in that regard though. In the middle and late 1990s, artistes like Sirina Issah, Sheriff Ghale, Sule Bawa, Kassim Gazor, Ahmed Adam and others, filled the regular venues such as Picorna Gardens and the Warders Canteen. Both these venues had a

seating capacity of about one thousand each. The Picorna Gardens in those times was the most prestigious venue in Tamale. Taking over from the Warders Canteen, which was prominent in the previous era of concert party bands that came from Southern Ghana. Other venues that have emerged since then, are the Radach Memorial Center Auditorium, the University for Development Studies – International Conference Center (UDS – ICC) Restaurant, and the Tamale Sports Stadium. These three are the most prestigious these days, depending on the nature of a concert. The stadium, even though has a total capacity of 22000, only allows about five thousand five hundred (5,500) people, using only a quarter of the total space. This is because the National Sports Council, which runs the place, does not allow for a stage or audience to get on the playing pitch. Hence, it is almost impossible for a musical concert to use the entire stadium. Nevertheless, 5,500 is a huge audience by Tamale standards. Therefore, the promoters normally reserve the stadium for very big festivals and concerts. Where there are artistes coming from outside Tamale. Artistes like Ras Kimono, Rocky Dawuni, Blakk Rasta, Samini, Sarkodie and many more, have all held big festivals/concerts there. The Radach auditorium on the other hand has a capacity of about two thousand (2000) seating and is best for home based concerts.

These days, the same artistes who used to fill Picorna and the Warders Canteen are the very ones who play at places like the UDS – ICC. This is mostly because; they play with the live band and attract a more adult audience. The adult audiences are able to drive out to such distant venues, and are able to pay well for the concerts also. However, the younger generation of artistes, who still do miming concerts, have lost so much audience and prestige. They are only able to hold their concerts at places like the Warders Canteen, rather than the more prestigious places like the Picorna Gardens. Another venue in Tamale with a great potential, is the auditorium at the Center for National Culture (CNC). Its potential is however constrained by some physical and infrastructural

defects of the edifice. For instance, echo in the auditorium is so much so that, no matter what sound system is set up in there, audiences cannot enjoy themselves. Hence, it is the hope of the artistes and other stakeholders that, the responsible authorities will fix the place sometime in the near future. It is at a very good location in town. It is in very close proximity to the central police station and taxi station, and a perfect environment for performances.

4.3. THE CONCERT PARTIES

Concert party first came to Tamale in the 1930s, with the “*Axim Two*” being the first (Collins, 1994). The concert party bands from southern Ghana were very prominent in Tamale throughout the 1980s. Those Concert Parties consisted of guitar-band highlife musicians, travelling with a group of actors. The musicians would play from about 8PM until 1AM, and then the actors took over and presented live stage drama acts, predominantly in Twi. When Ghana Television extended its coverage to Tamale in the 1990s, there was on TV what they called the *Akan Drama Programs*. It later featured other native Ghanaian languages, including Dagbani. The contemporary popular artistes in Tamale incorporated these two concepts, the *Concert Party* and the *Akan Drama*, into their stage performances. The first to do so was Sirina Issah in collaboration with the *Suhuyini Drama Group*, a famous acting group in Tamale. Their first collaborative performance was so successful that they came back in just three weeks with subsequent productions. This time collaborating and featuring many more artistes. Because of the success of this collaboration between music with drama, every artistes who launched his/her album in Tamale in the next couple of years infused the concert party. They included a segment of live drama on stage, usually playing along the themes of the songs in the album.

However, these collaborations all came to an abrupt end in 2002 never to revive until today. This was due to the Yendi chieftaincy crisis, which resulted in the murder of the Yaa-Naa, and the subsequent state of emergency and curfew imposed on Tamale for almost two years. The generation of audience who filled the venues before the 2002 crisis had perhaps grown weary, after more than two years of indiscriminate gunshots, lawlessness, impunity, and political divisions/conflicts among sections of the population. Whatever the reasons may have been, the fact remains that, the audience never made it back to the venues. Recent visits to some album launches suggest that, there is a new audience attracted by a new crop of artistes. The new artistes these days are between the ages of seventeen and thirty and so are their audiences.

4.4. ON THE BAND STAND

Regular bandstands in Tamale are usually “six piece”, consisting of a drum set, percussion, a bass guitar, keyboards and a lead guitar. The rest are leading and backing vocalists. Currently, there are only about five functioning bands in Tamale. The Super Ranches Band at the Kamina military barracks. The Falcons Band at the Air Force base Bawa barracks. The Diema Band founded and led by Prince Mahama the blind musician, who recently renamed it the Savanna Echoes Band. The All Stars Band, constituted by a group of church musicians playing outside the church, and the Binkumda Band founded and led by Sheriff Ghale.

As stated above, the first two are military bands residing in the barracks. They are not as flexible as a group of private musicians. Most of the musicians on these bands are in active military service and so have their restrictions. It is not easy for a civilian artiste to hire them for a concert considering the army bureaucracy. More so army-civilian relations in Tamale are not at their best, given the sectarian tensions in recent times. The Ranches and Falcons normally play at official

government functions, although their services are also open to the public. Many of the contemporary popular artistes in Tamale who took to live band performances in the early years, started out with the military bands. This includes Sirina Issah and Sheriff Ghale.

The Diema/Savanna Echoes Band is perhaps the oldest private band in Tamale. Its founder and leader, Prince Mahama had earlier played with a group of blind musicians in the south. He founded his own band on his return to Tamale. He started the band with his own recruits and students on the drums and bass. He plays the keyboard and guitar and sings. This band is still very active today at their base in *Nyohini*, a suburb of Tamale. Mahama also doubles as a schoolteacher at the Nyohini Presbyterian Junior High School, and the *Bizung School of Music*, both in Tamale. Incidentally, he is Sheriff Ghale's first guitar teacher.

The All Stars Band as earlier mentioned is a collection of individual musicians from various churches in Tamale, who enjoy playing some popular music. Michael Addae Mensah, who occasionally plays keyboards for Sheriff Ghale, leads the group. They get together, learn some songs and find gigs to play around town. They especially play at pubs, restaurants and bars, like *Giddipas* in the centre of Tamale town and the African Touch Restaurant somewhere in the outskirts of town. They also play at private parties and receptions. Some of them have played for some popular artistes in Tamale. All the members of the All Stars Band are non-natives of Tamale, although some of them may have been born there, they are mostly Akan.

Sheriff Ghale, one of the first among the contemporary popular artistes in Tamale to form a band, had his first live band experience with the Super Ranches Band. When he hired them for the launch of his *Nandanbia* album in 1997. The band later invited him on many occasions to sing lead vocals on numerous occasions, as they admired my vocal abilities. He later contracted the *Diema* Band to record his *Sochira* album in 2004. It was after that recording that he saw the need

to form his own band, the *Binkumda* Band. He acquired his own instruments and equipment, and became the first private individual in Tamale to own a set of instruments, in the contemporary popular music era. The *Diema* Band for example, depended on the Center for National Culture for access to a set of instruments for their performances. Whilst the All Stars, would smuggle instruments from their various churches. The difficulty in accessing instruments caused many artistes in Tamale not to even give the live band performance a thought.

In the case of Sheriff Ghale, Rex Omar inspired him to learn an instrument, and Prince Mahama inspired him to form his own band. The musicians who play for him are usually freelance individuals. His initial band members included some former schoolmates from his basic school years, Samuel Ouadraogo (Longman) and Musah Bako (War Lord). He says that various musicians have played for him over the years. On different occasions and at different venues, from Tamale to Takoradi and Accra. They include Samuel Sackey (Snookey), his regular studio programmer/engineer at Fredyma Studios from 1999 until 2007. Snookey still plays keyboards for him. Razak Dimbie has been his guitarist since 2004, and Seth Anim Ampofo, a former schoolmate at both University of Education, Winneba and University of Ghana, who has played bass guitar for him since 2006.

Most of the artistes in Tamale would prefer to play with the live band in the future. Even those who never tried it said so. They believe it is the highest level of performance culture, in terms of a creative relationship between performers and audiences. However, due to lack of access to the musical instruments and related challenges, they are unable to pursue that aspect of their dreams for now. When miming was at its peak in Tamale, some of the prominent artistes, including Ahmed Adam, argued that the audience was not ready for the live band performances yet, so they feared to venture into it. This was perhaps because of some of the challenges that the early live band

performances faced. The early bands did not fill the venues as did the mime artistes, and they had challenges with equipment and technical knowhow. However, in recent times, almost all the artistes say they prefer the live band to miming. They say they consider the live band as the future of their performances.

Nowadays, the Tamale audiences also appear to understand the value of live band performances, and they prefer it to miming concerts. There have been a number of big musical festivals in Tamale since 2006. In that year, there was an excellent concert in Tamale, organized by Rocky Dawuni and the Africa Live NGO and sponsored by UNICEF. The concert brought to Tamale some professional bands, equipment and engineers from Accra. There have been many such concerts ever since. These festivals have played a very important role in introducing the new generation of Tamale audiences to quality live band performances. Now, both the artistes and their audiences know the difference between the live band and miming. That is very good for the music industry because it has helped in defining what the future should be for the industry.

4.5. COMMERCIAL CONCERTS: The Promoters, Agents and Managers.

Among the variety of occasions at which the artistes play is what they call “the commercial concerts”. These are events organized by individuals and groups whose primary motive is to make profits. They invest into these events large sums of money, paying for the venue, lighting and sound equipment. They pay for publicity, which includes radio, posters, banners, leaflets/stickers, and sometimes TV and press adverts. They also pay for the services of the artistes. From this long list of paid-for services, the artistes usually complain of non-payment of their portion (artiste remuneration). They say that the organizers of these events mostly insist on paying part of the

artiste fee before the events and part after. However, after the events, they give excuses, such as low attendance and gate crashing, just to avoid paying the artistes their due balances.

These days, radio DJs are the main organizers of the commercial concert events in Tamale. The artistes say that, in recent times, these DJs tried to barter with them. The DJs promised to give their music the required airplay, in exchange for the artistes' performance at their events, without any cash payments. This arrangement was woefully unsuccessful. Now, the DJs are not able to organize big events themselves, such events are very expensive to put up. For example, putting up an event at the Tamale Sports Stadium requires a big budget and very popular artistes to fill with audience. Those very popular artistes mostly come from Accra or abroad, making it more difficult for the Tamale-based event promoters to handle. Therefore, what they (the Tamale promoters) do is that, they enter into partnership with Accra-based artistes and their managers. Where by those from Accra would transport themselves to Tamale, whilst they, the DJs in Tamale, would bear the cost of organizing all local requirements. At the end of the event, they share profits between the Accra and Tamale teams. This arrangement may seem like a fair and creative way of doing business, but the artistes in Tamale complain, that though these events could not happen without their participation, the DJs always fail to pay up after the event. They blame the DJs for all their woes in this regard, insisting that the DJs have only become agents for the Accra based artistes.

Another situation is that some of the DJs pose as artiste managers lately. They propose to manage individual artistes. Mostly young and relatively unknown ones, who are in the quest for publicity and popularity. By this arrangement, the so-called manager (radio DJ) plays the music of his artistes at least five times more than that of any other artiste. When the artiste and his music gets popular enough, he (the manager) starts to use him for events, mostly free or for just some pittance. Some of these DJs perhaps genuinely think that they are doing their best to help grow the

music industry, but the artistes think that these acts are dangerous for their industry. Even the young artistes that they sign, mostly rebel against them after a few months.

From all indications, the only artistes who are better off are those who insist on their rights and entitlements during events and performances. Sometimes even when the promoters and agents do not want them on the bill, the fans demand them. However, such artistes risk suffering some consequences for their actions. In the form of losing the amount of airtime, the DJs give their music. Nevertheless, these artistes sometimes organize their own events when the DJs refuse to give them gigs. Some of the artistes who considered themselves blacklisted by the DJs even said they were better off. They said that after the collapse of record sales, gigs and commercial concerts were their only source of income. Therefore, their right to reasonable remunerations for those gigs and concerts was non-negotiable, not even to the DJs. Some of them said the only time they may agree to appear at a commercial concert free, is when that concert is at a venue that will help them break new grounds for their careers.

4.6. THE “BARTER TRADE” APPEARANCES

Barter trade is a system where traders exchange goods for other goods with equal measure and equivalent values, without the use of cash. The artistes in Tamale have gradually developed a similar system where they exchange their musical services among each other without the use of cash. Events such as the launch concerts, as explained above, are mostly in the domain of the artistes. They find their own business partners to put in money to organize the event. In this case, they calculate the remunerations for supporting artistes, as part of capital contributions from the artiste whose launch it is. Hence, if he uses his own money to organize, then he gets to keep what he would have paid to the supporting artistes as remunerations. If he is collaborating with other

investors, then they calculate the value of those remunerations, including his own appearance fee, as part of his capital contribution to the business partnership. If you are not an artiste in Tamale, you do not get this kind of arrangement. This arrangement is convenient for most of the artistes. Even the radio DJs wanted to establish similar relations with the artistes. However, most of the artistes say that cannot work, because whereas it is easy to compare the values of artistic services among artistes, it is very difficult to value the services of the DJs effectively in comparison with that of the artistes.

At some point in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the barter of musical services among artistes was not only restricted to commercial concerts, but also included social events. The artistes performed at the wedding and naming ceremonies of fellow artistes. This was perhaps because some of the artistes, after performing for others, were never able to organize their own commercial events. Hence, to take advantage of the system, they decided to convert their barter credits to social events, instead of the commercial concerts. When they had a wedding or naming ceremony, they would set up a stage outside their residence in the late afternoon and invite their fellow artistes, who owed them to come and perform.

This practice went on for a couple of years, but a few artistes who were already very popular, said that they were not interested in the practice and would not participate. Sheriff Ghale was one of such, arguing he would prefer to pay fellow artistes for their services, and so expected payment for his. A decision he said was to check any abuse of his popularity. Some artistes, because they knew they were not paying for fellow artistes' services, would put a countless list of artistes on their bill. When the artistes got to the event that should run from 8PM to 12AM, many of them would not get to perform. Many of the artistes often came late to the events because they did not want to play too early when the auditorium was not yet full. Eventually, the events would

start as late as 10PM, and go on until about 3AM, by which time both the audience and artistes were tired. Sheriff Ghale was always among those invited to play last. This was because of his popularity, which made the audience to stay for as long as it would take to see him. If he played earlier, then the event would automatically close, because more than half the audience would leave after his performance. This, he said was very bad audience management. He is not surprised that, the artistes could not revive audience interests in their live shows, after the Yendi incident, because they had long abused the audience. Moreover, these shows were all miming concerts, so there was not much innovation and creativity going on there. At the same time, he knew the glory would not last as there were just too many events happening week by week. He recalls warning fellow artistes at MUSIGA meetings in those days. Most agreed with him, but none acted to change anything. That was when he decided to back out of the barter trade system. The artistes who refused to change that system have now suffered the consequences, by losing their audience. Now that record sales are down, such artistes hardly earn any income from their music careers.

4.7. THE OCCASIONS

The contemporary popular artistes in Tamale have gradually become an integral fabric of the society there. They do perform at quite a wide range of occasions, including private parties by groups and individuals, wedding receptions, commercial concerts, album launches, developmental campaigns for peace and health education, vocational pass-outs for various categories of artisans, annual congresses of various associations, political rallies and even evening hangouts at some pubs, bars and restaurants. Wherever people gather for socialization, except at funerals, an event will not be complete without an artiste performing at least a song or two. In Tamale, funerals are predominantly Islamic, and they treat them as purely sad events and mourn throughout. Even

though artistes have made songs about death and mourning, they do not perform at funerals. Funerals are largely strict religious ceremonies devoid of contemporary artistic performances. Traditional Dagomba funerals involve a lot of drumming, singing and dancing, but most of the people, especially in Tamale central, are moving away from it. Nonetheless, such traditional funerals with music making are still quite common in Tamale, especially in the native and more traditional neighbourhoods. Just that, even such funerals only uses traditional Dagomba music, not the kind of contemporary music studied in this thesis.

Apart from the situation where artistes are invoking their barter arrangements, all of the events mentioned above are commercial ventures for the artistes. They charge to appear and perform, and for the inclusion of their names in publicity for those events, to attract the audience. The occasions themselves have in a way come to influence the kinds of songs produced by many of these artistes. Most of them said, they are always reflecting on the live performance circumstances of each song during the studio sessions. Thus, the anticipation of events is one of the factors taken into consideration whilst the artiste works in the studio. Some artistes even consider the performance detail of a song, as to the kind of dance movements and costume, during the studio sessions. This in a way goes to confirm that live performance is truly at the centre of the music industry in Tamale. Even when all else has failed in the industry, performance continues always to be here.

4.8. GOING BEYOND BORDERS

One of the ultimate aims of the contemporary popular music industry in Tamale is to travel, as far as possible, beyond its borders. The artistes say they do not only want to see themselves as individual artistes travelling far, but that their music should make gains in territory beyond Tamale

and the Northern Region. This agenda, some of them say, was there right from the beginning. This has always remained one of their guiding principles to come back to, as they make progress.

The artistes confess that they have not made very much progress towards achieving this aim of travelling beyond Tamale. They proudly concede however, that some individual artistes from among them have made some achievements beyond the Northern Region. It appears though that some of those individual strives are simply by chance and not by any systematic efforts made by actors in the industry. For example, music from Tamale plays on radio in Burkina Faso, Mali and Ivory Coast. The artistes and their producers did not personally make any direct effort towards achieving these gains. Except for the indirect efforts in producing the albums and publishing them. As part of the normal publishing, marketing and promotion procedures in Tamale, the artists do not go out of their way to send any copies of their music to radio stations outside of the Northern Region.

Some of the artistes, who have gone beyond the borders of northern Ghana, have done so through either their published music, their live performances, or through both. That list of artistes include Lady Talata, Christy Azumah and the Uppers International Band. It also includes Onipanua, Prince Ali, Atongo Zimba and the African Show-Boys and Abubakari Kaba. Nat Awuni, Sirina Issah, Sheriff Ghale, Rocky Dawuni, KKC, Kawastone and the Black Stone, Abu Sadiq, Samini, Blakk Rasta, King Ayisoba, Sherifatu Gunu, Ras Kalimu, Bawa Abudu, Mohammed Alidu, R2bs, Iwan, and a few others, are all artistes of northern extraction, very well known in one place or the other outside of Tamale and northern Ghana.

Sirina Issah is one of the pioneering artistes of the contemporary popular music in Tamale. She released her debut album sometime in 1993/94 and immediately became a household name all across the three northern regions of Ghana. It was through her albums that members of the later

hip-hop/hip-life group KKC first introduced themselves to music fans. As she featured them, doing rap in her songs. KKC, which was later constituted by Big Adams and Lil Malik (now Big Malik), worked with Sirina Issah for many years and eventually emerged with their own albums sometime in the late 2000s. Sirina Issah who now lives in the United States still pursues her career there, both through publishing of albums and live performances. Big Adams of the KKC now lives in Canada and still pursues his music career.

Sheriff Ghale has always lived in Tamale since the launch of his career in 1995. “I have never left Tamale for more than two consecutive months; all the influences in my music, I mostly acquired in Tamale, even when those influences are foreign to Tamale. I am a product of Tamale, so my music is Tamale music” (Sheriff Ghale, 2013). Over the years, he has published eleven albums. He is the only home-based artiste who has his music available in the iTunes online store for sale. Ghale’s music has travelled very far, through both conscious and unconscious efforts. Since 2009, he has played concerts in Denmark, the Netherlands, Brazil and the United States. However, prior to that, he played across the length and breadth of Ghana. He still records from his base in Tamale, and performs around the world. Sometimes on his acoustic guitar and sometimes with a big band.

Blackstone made their debut release around 1999/2000. Two of their songs, “*Fe mano*” and “*N yura*”, immediately became both radio and sales hits nationwide. In fact, those two songs gained popularity in Accra and Kumasi before finally getting to Tamale, and within one year, they became a household name in Tamale and the whole of northern Ghana. The group is a duo of Flexx and Kawawa. Later in the middle 2000s, Flexx added radio broadcasting to his occupation and Kawawa went solo, adopting the new name Kawastone. He is still very active in the industry in Tamale, recording and performing. Kawastone is one of the few home-based artistes who have

been able to take their performances abroad. In 2009, he was part of an artistic collaboration group, the *Sababas* between some northern Ghanaian and some Danish artistes. This group wrote songs together in Ghana and then went on tour to perform in various cities in Denmark in the summer of 2009. Kawastone has also played at many concerts across Ghana over the past thirteen years or so.

Abu Sadiq made his debut sometime in the late 1990s, and first rose to fame in the late 2000s. He has remained a household name ever since. His music has gone beyond Tamale and the Northern Region, in to Burkina Faso, Mali and the Ivory Coast. Sadiq has played countless concerts across Ghana. He has played on popular TV programs like Music-Music on TV3 and Soundz Splash on TV Africa. To date, he has at least seven published albums to his credit.

Blakk Rasta, Atongo Zimba, King Ayisoba, Sherifatu Gunu, Ras Kalimu, Bawa Abudu, Mohammed Alidu, R2bs, Iwan, Samini and Rocky Dawuni all fall into the category of artistes of northern Ghanaian extraction who did not start their music careers in Tamale. They still base outside of the region, but have been able to make the impact of their music felt back home. Hence, they are not the products of the music industry in Tamale, which is the primary scope of this thesis. However, they have made an impact back in their home region. Atongo Zimba and King Ayisoba, unlike the rest of the artistes on the list above, do not hail from the northern Region, but are from the Upper East Region. Nonetheless, their family roots are of Mole-Dagbani extraction. Blakk Rasta and Samini on the other hand hail from the Upper West Region of Ghana and with roots tracing to Mole-Dagbani. Nevertheless, these artistes from the Upper East and West Regions are a part of the bigger umbrella of northern Ghana. Moreover, in the case of Blakk Rasta, he was born and raised in Tamale and actually started developing his artistic skills in Tamale. Rocky Dawuni grew up in the south, although his father died the chief of *Bunbong*, a village near Yendi. He attended the Tamale Secondary School. All the rest on the list above come from various parts of

northern Ghana, some of them born and raised at home but eventually migrated abroad for various reasons.

4.9. RELATED CHALLENGES

In the area of performances, just as in recording and marketing, the contemporary popular artistes in Tamale face numerous challenges. Although they expressed these challenges in different ways, most of them sounded similar. All the challenges are in three categories. The first category is the lack of promotional capital, knowhow and good faith; the second is little access to performance equipment and technical support; and the third is the amateurish attitude towards performance by most of the artistes. Because of these main challenges stated above, only a few of the home-based artistes are able to export their performances beyond the Northern Region.

4.9.1. Lack of Investment Capital

The lack of investment capital for organizing and promoting musical concerts and events is a big challenge for the music industry in Tamale. It is a young industry and the artistes and investors themselves are very youthful. Furthermore, the amount of money raised within the industry is not enough to grow to the levels that are required. Only few young people in Tamale purport to be event promoters, some of them being radio DJs. They have no money to purchase or hire the kinds of equipment they need. Equipment like musical instruments and sound equipment, scaffolding for erecting stages, and lightings. They also cannot train or hire the technical specialists needed to run all these equipment. The fact that these stakeholders in Tamale do not have the resources to set the basic equipment they need, it self goes to partly explain why the artistes are unable to export their performances.

4.9.2. Lack of Professionalism and Knowhow in Event Promotions

There is no evidence that any of the promoters has even made an effort to learn the basics of event promotions and organization. This defect clearly manifests in some of the mistakes made during their events. From the lack of proper contracts with the artistes, to the lack of a cost effective organizational expenditure during their events. The events also start late. Many of the artistes complained that the event promoters lack good faith and confidence, in themselves and in the abilities of the homebased artistes to attract large audiences to the venues. Artistes accuse the Tamale promoters of cheating them. Comparing what they pay the homebased artistes to what they pay the Accra based artistes, when they come to perform in Tamale. They also say the promoters are only interested in making money for themselves and not promoting the artistes and their performances. So clearly, there is mistrust between the event promoters and the artistes, and the industry cannot grow in such an atmosphere.

4.9.3. Lack of Access to Equipment and Technical Knowhow

The artistes in Tamale do not have any meaningful access to musical instruments and equipment that they need for performances. Even to date, musicians cannot hire a set of instruments for rehearsals or concerts. Those who have access to such instruments have had to buy them themselves or depend on institutions that may choose to assist. Sometimes, the only time an artiste in Tamale will get access to good performance equipment (like the musical instruments, sound equipment, stage, lights, and the likes), is when such equipment come from Accra. Even in such cases, the artistes in Tamale do not get rehearsal access nor sound check before the concerts begin.

In addition, even when some artistes occasionally manage to put together some instruments and equipment for a concert, they lack the professional and technical personnel and ability, to operate such equipment for the best results. Therefore, they may end up playing live but with very poor sound quality. This goes to defeat the very purpose of playing live and this may turn away audiences from subsequent events.

4.9.4. Amateurish and Unprofessional Attitudes among Artistes

Another obvious challenge for the artistes is in their underdeveloped performance skills and attitudes. Most of them approach the performance with a very lazy attitude. For example, today only five of the over eighty active contemporary artistes in Tamale play any musical instruments besides their voices. That is not serious musicianship. Some of them complain of the unavailability of musicians to form bands and play with, when they could have formed the bands by playing themselves, if they simply learned to play instruments. Thus, the general level of their school and music education again clearly proves to be a challenge. This is a challenge that no one but they themselves can rectify.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. SUMMARY

In this chapter is a presentation of summarized conclusions to the thesis. The summary presentation is in the same order as the chapters two, three and four. The first section presents conclusions on the creation and production processes. Second section summarizes the conclusions on marketing and promotion of artistes and their products. The third section presents summarized conclusions on the performance culture of the “*Northern Artistes*”, from their base in Tamale.

5.1.1. Creation and Production Processes

The emergence of recording studios and sales of records have proven, over the past thirty years or so, to be the best thing to ever happen to the contemporary popular music in Tamale. Recording began at the onset of the industry and thus led to the patronage of “*Northern Music*” taking its rightful place in Tamale. In the opinion of the artistes, it gave the people a certain sense of identity and pride. Although the artistes and industry stakeholders were not highly educated persons, they did their best in the mastery of their art and made some notable gains in the industry.

They bravely faced numerous herculean tasks over the years. The artistes pickup inspirations from the environment around them, and they write songs that reflect their society and direct ways forward. They learn the art of recording, distributing and performing these songs. That in itself is an industry. However, they still face numerous challenges, some of which include limited access to studio equipment and professional/technical knowledge. There is also limited access to well established music education and investment capital.

However, from the look of factors on the ground, there are possibilities of eliminating these problems and paving the way to a brighter future for the industry.

5.1.2. Marketing and Promotion

The music industry in Tamale is bedevilled with so many challenges concerning marketing and promotion. This sector seems to be the one that faces the most challenges, compared to the rest. It is perhaps so because, it employs the most of people in the industry and it also requires many non-musical services in order to function properly. In speaking to the artistes, the challenges were so many that it was almost impossible to imagine a solution. Nevertheless, some of them came up with their own solutions to some of those problems.

Some of the suggested solutions are presented ahead in this chapter, under the heading *Recommendations on the Way Forward*. Aside these challenges, it is clear that there are some remarkable innovations by some of the industry actors in Tamale. From the securing of publishing and mass production deals, to the film sound tracks and music for movies. From the video album collections, to the marketing and promotion. The innovative ways in which artistes organize live performances for the launch of their products. The practice of a form of barter trading, where an artiste performs at another's event free, and at his/her turn, the colleague artistes repay the gesture.

Tamale artistes are also able to locate the active markets for their products and do their own cost benefit analysis. For instance, as regards commercial television adverts.

5.1.3. Performance Culture

Performance is still at the centre of the music industry in Tamale. It drives both recording and marketing of the music, and it promotes the artistes. It is also clear that there is no one

particular standard of performance among all the artistes. Whilst some choose to remain with the prevailing circumstances, others always work hard to excel in their own ways, and to export themselves and their music as individuals.

However, overall, Tamale music as an industry is yet to make a move outside of Northern Ghana. There is also evidence that artistes and other stakeholders of the industry have been quite creative, and have tried their best to make significant gains. However, they still have a long way to go, in terms of achieving what the future holds for the contemporary popular music of Tamale.

5.2. CONCLUSION

I approached this thesis on three theoretical models: the diffusionist, historical particularistic and the symbolical interactionist models. These theoretical viewpoints have guided and shaped my various steps during the conduct of this research.

In the light of *Diffusionism*, I conclude that, numerous cultural traits have diffused from especially Southern Ghana into Tamale, affecting the life styles of its inhabitants in diverse ways. I have noted that early Highlife Music in the form of Simpa reached Dagbon by the 1930s (Collins, 1996). Simpa music continues to flourish in Dagbon, as a youthful recreational dance music. It has gained the status of a neo-traditional genre, because it adopts local instruments to Western and Southern Ghanaian highlife influences, for local Dagomba settings and contexts.

I also noted that later musical genres like Hip-hop and Hiplife have continued to influence and alter the musical landscape of the Dagbon traditional area. With the current globalizing trends, factors that influence the music industry of Tamale no longer come from only Southern Ghana, but through general technological advancements and specifically the television and radio media as

well as the internet. Even the Bollywood film industry of India influences the music and film industries of Tamale.

Western influences from especially the United States and United Kingdom now come directly through these modern technologies like television, radio and internet media to Tamale. Examples of such western influences include the modern media of distributing and promoting music (CDs, DVDs, digital files, radio airplay, music videos etc.). They also include ideas of self-branding and image promotion, and the conversion of these celebrity images into negotiable economic value (Shipley, 2013).

In the light of *Historical Particularism*, I conclude that despite all these influences from around the globe, the contemporary popular music industry in Tamale retains some of its peculiar characteristics. These characteristics originate from the traditions and customs of Dagbon. They include the Dagbani language and its classical proverbs, which is the lingua franca of the music industry in Tamale. The contemporary artistes of Tamale also strongly retain an idea of social mediation carried from the traditional *Lunga/Lunsi* custom of Dagbon. They assume the right and authority to be a voice for the voiceless, and to appeal to the conscience of the society in addressing social ills [this is originally a traditional role of the *Lunsi*].

The artistes also retain the Sahelian flavor of the Dagomba traditions. They also infuse some traditional Dagomba musical instruments like the *Lunga* (hourglass drum) in their music.

I conclude also that the contemporary popular artistes are not passive recipients of change in their society, but that they are very actively involved in fashioning their self-identity, as argued by the *Symbolic Interactionist School*. They demonstrate their ability to handle and blend new with old cultural ideas to create hybridized images. These artistes maintain their traditional cultural

values of respect for the older generation, but they beg to differ, charting their own and new courses in a fast globalizing society.

5.2.1. The Defining Identities: Who is a “*Northern Artiste*”?

From my conclusions, a *Northern Artistes* as they call themselves is the product of a creative blend between cultural *Diffusionism* and *Historical Particularism*, all pointing to *Symbolic Interactionist* individuals. Hence, they are active individuals who do not just passively receive what their society gives and teaches them. Symbolically, they have been able to use music to fashion new hybridized identities for themselves. In which they actively drew and draw on pre-existing musico-cultural norms and practices of Dagbon, as well as new ideas coming in from Southern Ghana and global influences.

“*Northern Musicians*” and “*Northern Artistes*” are the most common terms that the artistes in Tamale use to describe themselves. Other stakeholders of the industry like producers, radio DJs and the music fans also use these terms. However, from facts and experience, these terms do not only refer to the artistes who are based in Tamale, they also refer to artistes who are based in any part of the three regions of Northern Ghana, Upper East, Upper West and Northern regions. All the respondents in this thesis affirmed this notion of artistes based in Northern Ghana referring to themselves as *Northern Musicians/Northern Artistes* during our interactions.

Although the Northern Artistes are predominantly Dagomba in lingua franca, a few of them such as Prince D and Faako are Nanumba. A few are Gonja such as Mahama Joseph of the Metal X group, which was very popular in the early 1990s, and Red Fyah, a reggae artiste based in Techiman. Some are Mamprusi, such as Mama Rams [who also has Moshi roots], Kassim Gazor [Mamprusi/Dagomba], Sister Z, Asmawu and Ras Queysen (with Wangara roots). Prince Okla has

Sisaala roots and Sirina Issah and Lil Malik have Moshi roots. Whilst Big Adams is Grushi/Frafra. B-Flesh of Kaya is Talen and Kotokoli, B-Motion is Moshi, Fancy Gadam is Yoruba and Dagomba, and George Kliff is Kasena/Nankana.

In short, the terms *Northern Musicians* and *Northern Artistes* have no ethnic connotation; rather they are largely geographical terms. However, all these artistes sing in Dagbani mostly and very rarely in their native and other dialects.

The geographical connotations of the terms, *Northern Musicians* and *Northern Artistes*, refer either to where the artiste is physically based or to where he/she considers the center of distribution for his/her music. Thus, the geography of the music in this case refers to the primary market and areas where their distribution network operates. More so in this regard, there are *Northern Artistes* who reside in places like Accra, Kumasi and other places outside Northern Ghana. However, they consider themselves *Northern Artistes* because their primary market is located in Northern Ghana. Some of such artistes include Abu Mohammed (based in Accra), Rafiq Dachar (based in Kumasi), Malaika (based in Tema), Lord Wumpini (based in Accra), Sule Bawa (based in Accra), and Yesu Dagomba (based in Tema).

An artiste like Sherifatu Gunu, who is very popular across Ghana and has a huge audience in Accra, may be a little of an exception to the norm. In an interview, at her residence in Accra, on 5 June 2013, she said that she is a northern artiste. However, she did not start her career at home and she bases in Accra, and her music sells across the country. She says the inspiration and focus of her music and image solely builds on the traditions and culture of Northern Ghana. Indeed, she sees herself as a Northern Ghanaian export or an ambassador.

There is another category of artistes based outside of Northern Ghana, who are of Northern Ghanaian extraction and consider Northern Ghana as part of their primary market, but who do not

consider themselves *Northern Artistes*. Such artistes include Blakk Rasta (with Sisaala roots but based in Accra), Iwan (Dagomba born in Accra New Town), Linkman (Dagomba born in Lawra and based in Accra), Rocky Dawuni (partly Konkomba based in the USA), and R2Bs (Nanumba/Dagomba based in Tema).

R2Bs, in 2013 alone, won seven award categories at the Ghana Music Awards, and their first concert after receiving those awards was in Tamale, dubbed “The Home Coming of R2Bs”, but they do not call themselves *Northern Artistes*. When asked, “Do you consider yourself a Northern Artistes?” Iwan simply said, “I’m a Ghanaian artiste”.

The *Northern Artistes* across board are predominantly youthful. Young people are the pioneers and drivers of the industry. The oldest among them, such as Prince Mahama and Yakubu Salifu are in their 50s, and the youngest among them, such as Shaban and Fawal, are in their early teens. An overwhelming majority of them are in their 20s and 30s.

Sheriff Ghale is currently the most highly schooled among them, in pursuit of an MPhil degree at the University of Ghana. Two or three among them either have acquired or are pursuing first degrees at various Universities. About a half of them have had some formal education, ranging from basic school to Higher National Diploma level, and about the other half have not had any formal education. An overwhelming majority of them are Muslim by religious inclination, but a few such as Fatawu One-One, George Kliff and Big Adams are Christians.

5.2.2. The Appearance of Welfare and Unions of Artistes

Unionizing for their own welfare has been one of the most challenging areas for the *Northern Artistes*. The artistes have mostly been on their own, for most of the period since the

emergence of the industry. The only association for musicians in Tamale over the years has been the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA).

People like Alhaji Sidiku Buari and Joe Mensah first inaugurated this union in the Northern Region sometime in the middle or late 1980s. The union has remained active in Tamale ever since, although it was not very functional for most of the time. People like Blessed Gregory Author alias Nana Gazor, Ali konlan, Delali Alormenu, Sheriff Ghale, and Prince Mahama have all led the union in Tamale at various points in its history. Nana Gazor, from deputy regional chair later became a National Vice President to Alhaji Sidiku Buari. Ali Konlan had been a regional secretary for many years and is currently the regional chairperson. Sheriff Ghale served as the regional vice chair from 2002 to 2006.

In the good times of the union, it had close to a hundred active members attending regular weekly meetings and paying monthly dues. The union provided music lessons to members. It advised members on contractual arrangements with producers. It made arrests of music pirates and seized their products. It also attended social events of members such as naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and funerals. The union also occasionally organized concerts for exposure of its relatively unknown members.

However currently, there have been complaints from the membership, which have led to nonrenewal of membership cards and nonattendance of meetings, leading to financial challenges for the regional union and subsequent deterioration of the office infrastructure. Thus, most of the positive functions noted above have completely collapsed and are currently non-existent. However, the generality of the *Northern Artistes* still believe that the only way forward for them is through organized unions and self-help associations.

5.2.3. The Changing Notion of Copyright and Royalties

Before Ghana's independence in 1957, the idea of individual ownership of copyright did not exist in our laws. Traditional musical works were owned collectively by cults, guilds etc. However, since independence, there came an introduction of new ideas of copyright ownership (individual ownerships for certain durations etc.).

The Copyright Law (PNDC Law 110) of the 1980s was a blessing to the Ghanaian musician as many of them believed. It for the first time clearly sought to protect the creative industry from undue exploitation and to generate for them equitable remunerations (Carlos, 2006:p7). Nonetheless, several musicians soon after the promulgation of the law were dissatisfied with the workings of the Copyright Society of Ghana (COSGA), which was an establishment of the same law, accusing the society officials of corruption (Carlos, 2006).

Tamale based artistes only started to receive royalties from COSGA sometime in the early 2000s, when Alhaji Sidiku Buari became president of MUSIGA and by extension a member of the COSGA board, which he eventually chaired. There are at least eighty active composers in Tamale, on the register of the defunct Copyright Society of Ghana (COSGA), now Ghana Music Rights Organization (GHAMRO). Registering the vast majority of them was through the voluntary acts of Sheriff Ghale. In 2011/2012, He took it upon himself, to register all active and qualified composers in the Northern Region, after he found that there were serious challenges with their registration and receipt of royalties.

The organization up until today runs all its nationwide administration only from the Accra and Kumasi offices. It overly centralizes its activities, making it very difficult for the *Northern Artistes* to access even registrations. This arrangement severely hampers effective royalty distribution. Before Sheriff volunteered to help the artistes, there was no definite list of registered

composers. The maximum number of composers to have ever received their royalties then was forty, and sometimes the list came as low as twenty-eight. Those who received their royalties at one time had no guarantee that they would be included in the next list, and it appeared that most of them even got the royalties due to the personal interventions of the former president of MUSIGA, Alhaji Sidiku Buari. The Accra office complained that, the Tamale registrations were not properly documented and streamlined.

Therefore, Sheriff Ghale personally took it upon himself to liaise with the COSGA office in Accra, so that they could re-register every single composer in the Northern Region who was qualified to earn some royalties as per the Copyright Act, 2005. The clauses in this Act that are particularly relevant are as follows: “(1)Wherein any public place by means of broadcasting, cinematography, jukebox or other apparatus, a sound recording or audio visual work is used, the authorized performer and producer of the sound recording or audio visual work shall be entitled to royalty in accordance with this Act. (2) An owner of copyright is entitled to collect royalties for the live performance of the copyright work or for the public performance of the recorded copyright work” (Copyright Act, 2005, 37:1 & 2, p18). “A collective administrative society may acting on the authority of the owner of a right collect and distribute royalties and other remuneration accruing to the owner” (Copyright Act, 2005 49:2, p23).

With the personal support of Carlos Sakyi, Amandzeba and K. K. Kabobo, who were all board members of the COSGA then, now GHAMRO, they re-registered most of the qualified composers in Tamale. Today, at least eighty composers in the Northern Region receive royalties almost every six months. The amounts varying from GH¢100.00 to GH¢800.00 depending on the number of albums registered by the composer.

5.2.4. A Comparative Analysis: The Pop Music of North and South

The problem statement of this research considered why music from Northern Ghana hardly makes it down south, whereas songs from Southern Ghana easily become hits in the north. It inquires if there are any elements of the Northern Music that prevents it from travelling beyond its traditional borders. It also inquires if there is anything; the stakeholders can do to change the fortunes of the music and artistes in Northern Ghana towards the better.

In the context of a north-south dichotomy, there are so many similarities between the *Northern Artistes* and their southern counterparts. In terms of the creation and production processes of their music, there is virtually no difference. Northern and Southern artistes all rely on the social factors in their immediate environments to derive the inspiration for their music. They all start their song writing processes by recording short melodic phrases on their mobile phones or voice recorders, that they can later develop further. Most of them hardly play any musical instrument. Neither have they acquired a higher education in music. The Northern Artistes and their southern counterparts all record in similar studios and sometimes even in the same studios. They both pay the same charges in the studio and there is no difference in the work processes of their studio sessions.

Therefore, it was of keen interest to finding out what made the difference. Such that when it comes to popularity and performance in Ghana, the Accra-based artistes rate ahead of the *Northern Artistes*. Perhaps Shipley found the answer when he wrote, “for young Ghanaians, the musician-entrepreneur is a self-fashioned figure who succeeds by harnessing pure aspiration” (Shipley, 2013. P: 267). By musician-entrepreneur, he was referring to the Accra-based, since he made no clear reference in his book to the artistes based in Northern Ghana in anyway. Thus agreeing with Shipley that the Accra-based artistes are musician-entrepreneurs, the clear difference

between them and the *Northern Artistes* is in the branding, marketing and promotion of themselves and their music.

Most of the Accra-based artistes aggressively promote their music all across the country. They take advantage of the television networks to do that. They also make the effort to go beyond television, onto radio stations in most of the regions of Ghana. Taking advantage of the music being on TV, it then becomes easy to convince the radio DJs to play, since they (the DJs) would already know the music from TV. The Accra-based artistes appear to understand the entrepreneurial side of their art more.

They also have an advantage over the *Northern Artistes* in the area of developmental factors in Accra compared to Tamale. For instance, Accra has a much larger population with better infrastructural development. There are numerous television stations sited in Accra, but none in Tamale [Except for the new television station, Discovery TV that has now launched a test transmission from Tamale this July 2013]. There are ultramodern performance venues in Accra like the National Theatre, the Accra International Conference Center and others, but Tamale has not even one edifice similar to those. In terms of job availability and income levels for the population of Accra, it is further ahead of Tamale.

All these factors are added advantages to the music industry in Accra since they increase the demand for musical services, hence motivating the artistes to become innovative entrepreneurs. In short, the general developmental status of the cities in question (Accra and Tamale) is a major contributory factor to the degrees of advantages and disadvantages that their artistes may have when compared to each other.

5.2.5. What the Future Holds

Throughout the interactions with the wide variety of artistes in and around Tamale, and outside the Northern Region, at least three notions prevailed. One being that, Tamale should build its music industry independent of Accra. Another believes that Tamale should rather work to become a part of the Accra/national industry. Whereas a third notion believes that, both the first and second notions should be encouraged to coexist.

There was a consensus that the music industry is bound to survive for many more years to come. Everybody believed that although they face tough challenges, including declining sales, piracy, dwindling investments, payola, and little technical knowhow, the industry has shown signs of resilience and evolution. Hence, they believe that the industry will now evolve due to the influx of technology, which is the cause of most the challenges posed right own. There is however, disagreement on what the future actually holds for the music industry in Tamale.

From the standpoint of this thesis, there is a bright future for the music industry in Tamale. However, that bright future is in the collective mastery of the art of doing music. The future lies in the mastery of its own art, to the maximum levels, so that there will be an independent and sustainable music industry in Tamale. Which is not just a mirror or an extension of the industry in Accra. Therefore, artistes in Tamale have to be independently creative and different from those of Accra. They may learn meaningful and relevant lessons from the industry and artistes in Accra, but not just echo what they hear from there.

This will require higher education and a better understanding of the general subject of music, because education will attract sustainable investments to the industry. This in turn will entrench the music at home and export it beyond the traditional borders. Artistes like Ahmed

Adam, Abu Sadiq, Sherifatu Gunu, Umar Janda, Deensi and many others absolutely agree with this view.

There is however, another school of thought, which believes that the industry in Tamale needs not to be independent and unique from that of Accra, because Ghana is one single country and the ultimate prize for any artiste in Ghana is to excel in what prevails on the national platform. This, they believe can only be by being a mirror to Accra, and demonstrating that Tamale has the same caliber of artistes. When it does this, they believe that individual artistes will excel on the national platform and therefore draw attention to other up-coming artistes in Tamale. By that, the Tamale industry will be contributing its quota to the development of the national music industry without appearing to be swimming against the tide.

The artistes who believe in this view are mostly the relatively younger ones who are predominantly Hiplife artistes. One of them is George Kliff who has taken some very bold steps of recording an album on which he features at least five of the Accra-based *Northern Artistes*, with the target of using them to introduce himself to their fans. Tuba Dagomba is another of such artistes.

After a reflection on both viewpoints, the ultimate thought is that, all artistes have to have the freedom and encouragement to work in accordance with their belief. I hope that both viewpoints may be realized side by side, and it may not be necessary to have an “either/or” situation.

A very important development in Tamale that needs emphasis currently [stated a little earlier] is that, a new television station, Discovery TV, is test transmitting right from the Tamale metropolis. This is a very vital step towards further enhancing Northern Music at home and exporting it beyond its ordinary territory. It is a satellite transmission, free to air on the Multi TV

decoder, which is an already well-established satellite TV provider in Ghana. The Northern Artistes are very excited about this development and hope that more of such developments will come to Tamale. If this station survives, it will be of great advantage, but if it fails, then similar efforts need to continue until it succeeds.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

During my interactions with the *Northern Artistes*, many of them made their own recommendations to the numerous challenges that the industry faces. Considering those recommendations made by the artistes, I have added my own experiences and analysis to lay out a number of recommendations on the way forward for the music industry in Tamale.

That brighter future will be in a situation where the *Northern Artistes* will be highly educated in their trade and in general contemporary issues. That will be when they will fully manifest their potentials in musical creation and production, marketing and promotion, and the performance of their music. This state will also be where the *Northern Artistes* and their music will export to the rest of the world. My recommendations are as follows:

5.3.1. **Higher Education:** All the *Northern Artistes* should seek higher, general and specific music education. They must all learn to read, write and speak English and Dagbani fluently and, if possible, any other language(s) that are relevant to their art. They must all study at least the rudiments of music, and learn to play at least one musical instrument, besides their voices. That will boost their general understanding of issues and communication skills.

5.3.2. **Effective Unions or Collective Interests Groups:** The *Northern Musicians* urgently need to work together for their collective interests. They collectively need to work for higher education, better recording and performing equipment and infrastructure, bigger

financial investments and better media coverage. No individual artiste can provide any of these on his/her own, but when they work together in a union such as MUSIGA, then they stand a chance. Such a union will also better serve the welfare of individual artistes. It will also provide a regular forum for sharing of ideas and experiences among artistes and setting of regulations regarding fees for their services etc. Such a union will best confront the numerous challenges that artistes face, from time to time, such as the media and payola, access to state and big organization and NGO funding, fighting piracy etc. The artistes should renew their membership and commitment to the already existing Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA), to rejuvenate it, to enable it fulfil the potentials stated above. They should avoid forming new groups or breaking into smaller groups, since that will only further divide them against each other. Moreover, any new group formed in the current circumstances will most likely end up facing the same challenges that the MUSIGA faces currently.

5.3.3. **Regular Live Band Music and Performance Venues:** *Northern Artistes* should begin to insist on playing live band music anytime they perform. This will give them the opportunity to practice and to perfect their performance art. They should also establish venues for regular live band performances, as this would help create a new category of audience.

5.3.4. **Investment Capital:** The artistes need to attract financial investments to the industry. The best way they can do this is to make themselves and their music attractive, professional, and competitive. The competitiveness of the music should be at acceptable industry standards across the world, as northern music should not be limited to only Tamale or Ghana, but the rest of Africa and the world. Musicians should also raise personal

incomes for personal/artistic needs such as setting up of personal recording studios, acquisition of musical instruments, costumes etc. To attract bigger investments for professional studios, concerts and marketing.

5.3.5. **Auxiliary Personnel and Services:** The *Northern Artistes* must solicit the assistance and services of auxiliary non-musical personnel such as managers, public/media relations officers, lawyers, doctors, musical and physical trainers, tour promoters, photographers etc. This will free them from having to handle these services themselves, as they currently do, so that they can better concentrate on the creation, production and performance of their music. This will attract non-musical professionals to the industry and so increase the stakeholders who will also bring in fresh ideas to improve the industry.

5.3.6. **Modern Technology in Sales/Marketing:** The *Northern Artistes* must quickly adopt and apply new and modern technology in the production, marketing, promotion and performance of their music. They must employ computer and internet-based technology such as online radios, social networking sites, and online stores to promote their images, music and sales. Caller tunes and ringtones are also available on almost all of the mobile phone network providers in Ghana and Africa, so they must take advantage of all these to increase their earnings. They must be abreast with the latest technological trends and take advantage of them.

5.3.7. **Improve Media Collaborations:** The *Northern Artistes* must address the current issues with media relations especially those with payola and airplay. They must go beyond DJs to deal with radio station owners/managers, but this they can only do effectively in a collective union. Such a union could be an ad hoc group formed to address this particular

challenge. However, the best will be to have a more sustainable union like the MUSIGA tackling this kind of challenges.

5.3.8. **Collaborations:** They as the artistes in Tamale must take up collaborations with other experienced artistes outside of their territory, so that they can learn from such artistes how to succeed in their markets outside Tamale. Such collaborations can be in the form of studio recording projects, live performances, and promotion/marketing. It can also be in the form of discussion forums, workshops and seminars for them to share knowledge and experiences with each other. Such collaborations should also be with other industry stakeholders and practitioners such as artiste managers, events promoters etc. They can also through their unions, collaborate with other unions outside of their territory.

5.3.9. **Travel and Exposure:** It is highly recommendable that all *Northern Artistes* travel across Ghana and the rest of the world, (Europe and the Americas especially) to see how the music industry works. There are many lessons, especially in Europe and America, on how individual artistes, who are relatively unknown, can successfully pursue their careers. The most important lesson that I have learned from my own travels is confidence building. The artistes can collectively build confidence among themselves about what they do at home. There is a lack of confidence in most of them. This is due, partly to their lower levels of education, knowledge and experience of what really happens in other places like America and Europe, or even Accra. Which they consider more advanced than their home region. If they discover the simplicity of many professional musicians, the commitment and investment in personal/artistic needs (education, equipment and instruments) of such musicians/artistes etc. Then the *Northern Artistes* will perhaps realize that they do not need to live in America, or anywhere outside their home, in order to succeed in their careers.

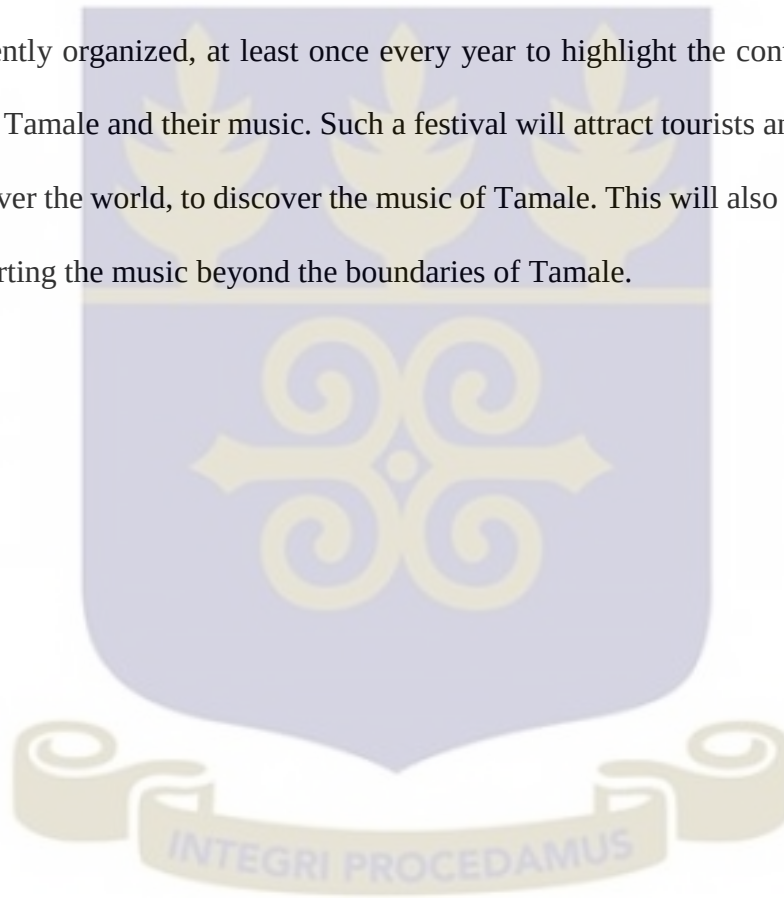
5.3.10. **Socio-Economic Development of Communities:** *Northern Artistes* should effectively engage in community development, in order to make themselves relevant in the everyday life of their people. They should consider and take up public education roles, as some of them already successfully did. For example, during the national campaign against the guinea worm disease, Sheriff Ghale composed songs and jingles, did public endorsements, concerts etc. Some other artistes like Rocky Dawuni, Sherifatu Gunu and Lord Wumpini, did similar things. They should also set up their own campaigns, or participate in NGO activities, voluntary services, charities etc. They should identify relevant social issues and make their voices heard on them. Some of these, they can do either individually or through their collective unions.

5.3.11. **Collectively Fight Piracy in All Forms:** Through MUSIGA, the *Northern Artistes* should publicly fight piracy, and make sure to get media coverage of their actions. They should educate the public against the patronage of pirated music. This will help improve public support against the canker of piracy. The union leaders need to study all the available laws and regulations against piracy, and collaborate with the police to invoke such laws to the fullest.

5.3.12. **State and Institutional Funding:** There are many state facilities available to support the creative arts industry in Ghana. The *Northern Artistes* need to collectively and individually learn about these funds and access them. Some of these big institutions and organizations and NGOs include Star Ghana, the various branches of the United Nations Organization, the Danish Culture Institute etc. They allocate portions of their funds to

support the creative arts industry. *Northern Artistes* must learn to take advantage of all these forms of assistance.

5.3.13. Establish Festivals To Showcase Northern Music: Another important recommendation is that, the *Northern Artistes* should establish an annual festival (if not festivals) in Tamale, to display their arts. Such a festival can either be incorporated into an already existing traditional festival of the area (like the Damba or Fire Festivals), or independently organized, at least once every year to highlight the contemporary popular artistes of Tamale and their music. Such a festival will attract tourists and industry players from all over the world, to discover the music of Tamale. This will also establish a basis to start exporting the music beyond the boundaries of Tamale.



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APPENDIX A

PROFILE OF MOHAMMED SHERIFF YAMUSAH (Doobia/Sheriff Ghale)



Ghale on board “MV Explorer” Cruise Ship (February 2012)

Sheriff Ghale was born Mohammed Sheriff Yamusah in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana, on 26 March 1978. His father is Alhaji Yamusah Mumuni and his mother Abiba Fuseini (both natives of Tamale). Ghale is the eighteenth child of his father, the second child of his mother and the first-born of both parents together. The traditional vocation of his family is blacksmithing.

Sheriff had all his education to the level of a trained teacher in Tamale. After his basic education at the Sakasaka Primary ‘B’ and Bishops J.S.S. respectively, he went to Tamale secondary School from 1994 to 1996 where he offered courses in General Arts. He went to the Tamale Training College to become a professional teacher from September 1997 to May 2000. From 2006 to 2010, he obtained a Bachelor of Education (Music) from the University of Education, Winneba. He presents this current thesis in pursuit of a Master of Philosophy (Music) at the University of Ghana, Legon.

Ghale launched his music career in Tamale, in 1995, at the age of seventeen. He has published eleven studio albums. Ghale started out as a rapper in his early teens, participating in rap competitions and winning many. The Tamale-based reggae artiste released his debut album in March 1995. He released his ninth album, “*Sochira (Cross-roads)*”, in 2004, which won him the GMA 2005 Reggae Song of the Year award. The title track “*Sochira (Cross-roads)*” preaches peace to the people of Dagbon. A variety of artistes influenced Sheriff Ghale’s music, ranging from Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, to Rex Omar and 2pac. He inspired a crop of later artistes in Tamale, like Abu Sadiq, Bikuraba, Naazo, MC Rauf and others, to do what they later called the *Northern Reggae* sub-genre. Sheriff sings in Dagbani and English.



Ghale Playing at Vartov in Copenhagen (August 2009)

His first experience on the bandstand was in 1997, with the Ranches Band in Tamale. Ghale formed his own band, the Binkumda Band in the early 2000s. He learned to play the guitar from Prince Mahama, the Tamale-based blind musician, around 1998. He has played on numerous big and small stages around the world. His song “*Election Time*”, the first one to win him international acclaim, was included on the “Crucial Reggae from Outside Jamaica Vol. 2” compilation by Skank Productions, published in the U.S.A. (www.skankproductions.com). “*Illusions*”, one of his

personal favourites, features on the “*Black Stars: Ghana’s Hiplife Generation*” compilation CD published by Out-Here Records in Europe (www.outhere.de). In the summer of 2011, Ghale was in the Netherlands to perform at the World Damba Festival and other venues including “*No Limit*” in Amsterdam. In September 2012, he played at the World Damba Festival, at Tufts University, Boston, USA. In March 2013, Ghale played at the Princeton University Poetry Festival, in Princeton, USA.

Sheriff says he is an ambassador for peace. He entitled his second album, “*Peace*”. Which he solely dedicated to peace and reconciliation in northern Ghana, after the *Konkonba-Nanumba* war. He was seventeen then, and UNICEF sponsored that album. Ghale, together with six other Northern Artistes, *Sirina Issah, Kawastone, Flexx, Big Adams, Lil Malik and Lord Wumpini*, formed the “*7 in 1 for Peace*” band. In that collaboration, they released the album “*Nangban’yini (Unity)*”, which the Accra-based Metro TV sponsored, and gave tremendous airplay. Sheriff also produced a peace song entitled “*TI BOM SUHUDOO*” in 2008 composed and performed by himself, *Sherifatu Gunu, Blakk Rasta, Abu Mohammed and Lord Wumpini* in a project published by *Tarch-House Productions*. This song obtained a nomination in to the 2010 *GMA/WORLDBANK Music for Development* category.

In 2006, Sheriff Ghale started a voluntary collaboration program with the Carter Center and the Ghana Guinea Worm Eradication Program of the Ghana Health Service in the fight against Guinea Worm in the Northern Region. In this partnership, Ghale set out with his band playing in rural communities where the Guinea-worm disease was endemic. He attracted to the village squares thousands of music fans at risk of Guinea-worm infections. He and other artistes sang to the people, lyrics on the causes, management, treatment and prevention of guinea worm disease. Ghana truncated the guinea worm infection cycle in 2013, and currently awaits a W.H.O. certification, as a guinea-worm free country. Ghale has also on many occasions voluntarily produced theme songs and jingles in support of many UNICEF public education campaigns.



Ghale with Rocky Dawuni in Diyele (July 2010)



Ghale at the Muzik Haus in Aarhus, Denmark (August, 2009)

Sheriff Ghale is a founding member of an arts platform called the *SABABAS PROJECT* www.sababas.net, which brought together very diverse audio-visual artistes from various

backgrounds and countries, to explore the power of arts in social change. A project that united artistes from Ghana, Denmark, Egypt, Surinam, Somalia and others, creating and performing together. This saw the artistes living and working together in Tamale, and taking an extensive eight major performance tour of Denmark in 2009.

In 2011, Sheriff Ghale composed and orchestrated an anthem for the University for Development Studies (UDS). He trained the university choir to perform same, at the 2011 congregation of the school. Also, through the Sababas Arts Foundation, which he founded with others, Ghale has continued to hold workshops, seminars and training sessions for many young artistes in and around Tamale. Sharing experiences and guidance towards brighter artistic careers.



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

B.1. PERSONAL DATA:

1. Surname:
2. Other Names:
3. Pseudonym:
4. Date of Birth:
5. Place of birth:
6. Home Town:
7. Current Base:
8. Ethnicity:
9. Languages Spoken:
10. Religion:
11. Denomination:
12. Marital Status:
13. Children:
14. Formal Education:
15. Other Occupation(s):
16. Since when have you had your other occupation?

B.2. COMPOSITION AND RECORDING:

1. When did you start making music /how long have you been making music?
2. When/where, did you publish your first song/album?
3. How many songs/albums have you Published?
4. What are your musical specialties (writing/composition/singing/instrument)?
5. Where, when and how did you learn your musical specialty?
6. What languages to you sing in and why?
7. What genre of music do you do?

8. Do you write and compose your songs by yourself?
9. How do you write and compose your songs?
10. Where do you record your songs?
11. How do you record your music (producer, instrumentation, engineering and voices)?
12. Who finances your recording?
13. How much does it cost you to record a song/album?
14. How/who decides what kind of music/song you record?
15. About what do you sing?
16. What challenges do you face in relation to your compositions and recordings?

B.3. MARKETING AND PROMOTION:

1. Do you sell your music?
2. Who sells your music?
3. Where do you sell your music?
4. How do you distribute and retail your music?
5. Do you sign any agreement(s) with the distributors/retailers?
6. Briefly describe the agreement you sign (if yes)?
7. How do you calculate your earnings?
8. How do you monitor sales?
9. How do they pay you?
10. What are your average sales?
11. How do you publish/release your songs/albums?
12. Who promotes them?
13. What are your media of promotion (mobile van/radio/TV/internet/spinners/record shops)?

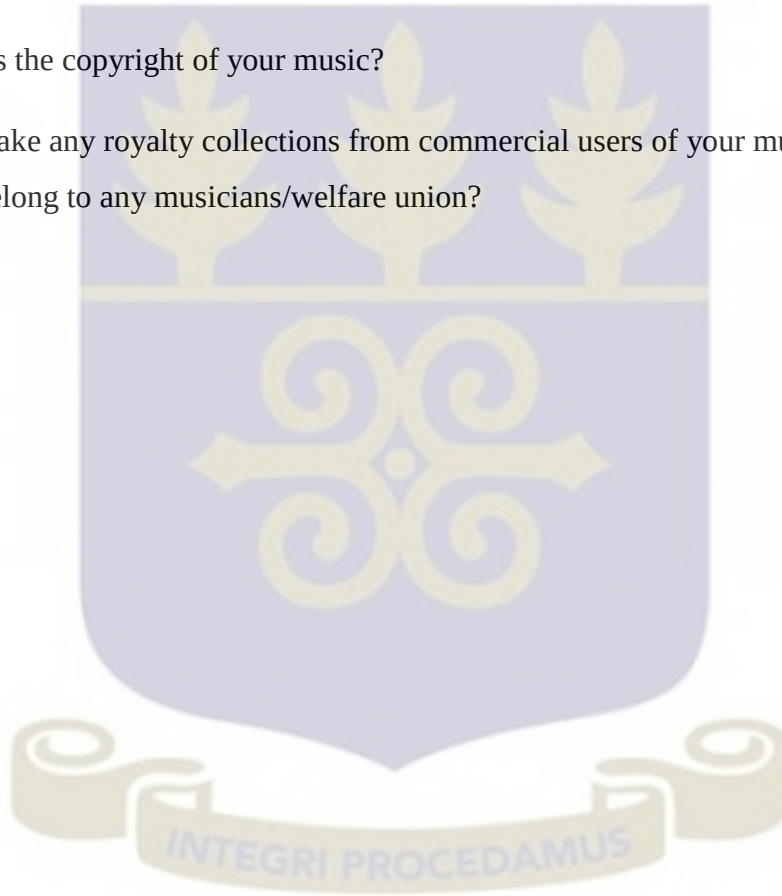
14. Where do you promote your music and why?
15. How long do you promote a song/album?
16. How do you measure the effectiveness of your promotion?
17. How does your promotion relate to your marketing?
18. How much do you spend on promotion?
19. Who finances your promotion?
20. Which medium do you consider best for your promotion?
21. What are your challenges in relation to your marketing and promotion?

B.4. PERFORMANCE:

1. Do you perform your songs after recording/publishing?
2. Where do you perform (city) / town(s) and venue(s)?
3. At what occasions do you perform?
4. What is the size of your audiences?
5. How do you perform (backing-track or band)?
6. Which do you prefer/enjoy (backing-track or band)?
7. How often do you perform?
8. Who are your audiences?
9. How does your performance relate to your recordings and marketing?
10. Which do you enjoy most, recording or performance?
11. What are your challenges in relation to performance?

B.5. AUXILIARY QUESTIONS:

1. Whom else do you work with (musicians, manager, lawyer and promoters)?
2. Do you consider yourself a Tamale/Northern Artiste? (For artistes of northern extraction who base elsewhere).
3. Any other matter (which has not come up)?
4. How does your religion influence your music?
5. How does your ethnicity and culture influence your music?
6. Who owns the copyright of your music?
7. Do you make any royalty collections from commercial users of your music?
8. Do you belong to any musicians/welfare union?



APPENDIX C

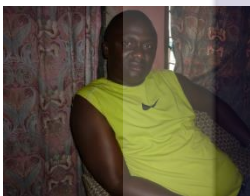
LIST OF RESPONDENTS



- C.1. PRINCE OKLA (Highlife Artiste): Interviewed in the last week of April 2013 at about 2:30PM at the Binkumda Studio at Tishigu, Tamale. He published his first album in 1997 and now has six albums to his credit.



- C.2. ZACUSS (Reggae Artiste): Interviewed in the last week of April 2013 at the Binkumda Studio at Tishigu, Tamale. He published his first album in 1993 and has five albums to his credit.



- C.3. LIL MALIK OF KKC (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed at his residence at Kuku, Tamale in the last week of April 2013. Published his first album in a group (*KKC*) with *Big Adams* in the year 2001, and they have published four albums so far.



- C.4. ASMAWU (Highlife Artiste): Interviewed in the last week of April 2013 at the District Education Office in Walewale, Northern Region. She has two albums to her credit. One audio album and one DVD album published over the last three years.



C.5. AHMED ADAM (Indian Style/Highlife Artiste): Interviewed, on April 30, 2013, at about 6:30PM, at the Binkumda Studio at Tishigu, Tamale. He published his first album in 1997 and currently has nine albums published since then.



C.6. KAWASTONE (Hiplife/R&B Artiste): Interviewed, at House Number 96, Sagnarigu in Tamale, at about 1:00PM on May 1, 2013. He has four albums to his credit since publishing the first one, in a duo called *Black Stone* in the year 2000.



C.7. STRAW OF DEENSI (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed, at House Number 96 Sagnarigu, Tamale, at about 2:00PM on the 1 May 2013. Works in a group called *Deensi*, with *Commy Dada* and *Shocker Blaze*. They published their first album in 2010, and currently have four albums to their credit.



C.8. ALFA TUFERU (Indian Style/Gospel Artiste): Interviewed, on Wednesday, 1 May 2013 at about 5:00PM at the Binkumda Studio. He published his first album in the year 2001 and currently has seven albums in total.



C.9. KASSIM GAZOR (Highlife/Reggae Artiste): Interviewed, at 11:30AM on Thursday, May 2, 2013, at the Binkumda Studio in Tamale. A fifty-year old singer-

songwriter born in Zabzugu in the Northern Region. Currently resides in Tamale. He released his debut album in 1994, and currently has ten albums to his credit.



C.10. ORIGINAL SHOESHINE BOY (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed on March 3, 2013 at about 10:40AM at the Binkumda Studio. He is about nine years old in the industry and has two albums to his credit.



C.11. B-FLESH (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed together with Original Shoeshine Boy on May 3, 2013 at about 10:40AM at the Binkumda Studio. He has five albums to his credit working in a group called *Kaya*.



C.12. THUG OMEGA OF FAAKO (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed on Friday May 3, 2013 at about 3:00PM at the Binkumda Studio. He is an HND graduate and works in a duo called *Faako* with four albums to his credit.



C.13. MC RAUF (Indian Style/Reggae Artiste): Interviewed at about 4:00PM at the Binkumda Studio on Friday May 3, 2013. Started singing in the late 1990s, and released his debut in the year 2000. He currently has two albums to his credit.



- C.14. RAS QUEYSEN (Reggae Artiste): Interviewed on 5 May 2013 at about 10:45AM at the Binkumda Studio. He has two albums to his credit since starting his career in the year 2004 at his base in Walewale.



- C.15. B-MOTION (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed on May 5, 2013 at about 5:00PM at the Binkumda Studio. He is a Moshi but sings in Dagbani, and has published three albums so far. He used to work in a group called *Ninbihi* but has gone solo now.



- C.16. THUG-LEE (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed at the Binkumda Studio on 5 May 2013 at about 6:00PM. He published his first album in April 2010 and has two albums so far.



- C.17. ABU SADIQ (Reggae Artiste): Interviewed at about 7:00PM on 5 May 2013 at the Binkumda Studio. Released his first album in 1999 and currently has published seven albums.



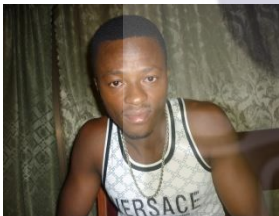
- C.18. FANCY GADAM (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed on May 7, 2013 at about 12:07PM at the Binkumda Studio. He has two albums to his credit since the launch of his career in 2002, eventually publishing his debut in 2010.



- C.19. UMAR JANDA (Hiplife/Highlife Artiste): Interviewed on May 8, 2013 at about 2:15PM at the Binkumda Studio. Janda launched his music career with a debut album in 2002 and then two more subsequent albums making three so far.



- C.20. BLACK ECHO (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed at the Binkumda Studio on May 8, 2013 at about 5:55PM. He works in partnership with Leo Khan another Hiplife artiste. The duo has published three albums since 2006.



- C.21. GEORGE KLIFF (Hiplife Artiste): Interviewed on 10 May 2013 at about 4:40PM at the Binkumda Studio. He made his first demo in 1998 but published his first album in 2005, and currently has three albums to his credit.



- C.22. IWAN (Reggae/Dancehall Artiste): Interviewed at the Papaye Restaurant at Osu Oxford Street in Accra, on Tuesday June 4, 2013 at about 5:45PM, along with

Linkman. He comes from Kumbungu, in the Northern Region. He was born in Accra and bases in Accra Newtown. He sings English and some Dagbani, but typically considers himself not a *Northern Artiste* but a Ghanaian Artiste. He has published two albums since 2010.



C.23. LINKMAN (Reggae Artiste): Interviewed, along with Iwan at the Papaye Restaurant, in Accra at Osu Oxford Street. He has published two albums, and has widely travelled and performed around the West African sub-region. Especially Nigeria and Burkina Faso. He recorded his first album with a live band in Nigeria.



C.24. SHERIFATU GUNU (Hiplife/Afro Pop Artiste): Interviewed on Wednesday 5 June 2013 at her residence, in Dome Accra at about 11:30AM. She has published two albums since 2005. She is from Savelugu but bases in Accra.



C.25. PRINCE D (Highlife Artiste): Interviewed at the Discovery Hotel in Tamale and at the Binkumda Studio, on Sunday 9 June 2013, at 3:00PM and 5:30PM respectively. He is currently a student of the University of Professional Studies. He has published three albums since the release of his debut in 2004.



C.26. TARIMBIA (Highlife/Reggae Artiste): Interviewed at the Binkumda Studio on Thursday 13 June 2013 at about 7:25PM. He is currently the Student

Representative Council (SRC) President of the Tamale Polytechnic. He has published three albums since the launch of his debut in 2006.



C.27. BIKURABA (Reggae Artiste): Interviewed on Friday 14 June 2013 at his residence at House Number 33 Jisonaayili Tamale, at about 12:00PM. The year 1999 was when he released his debut album and has published seven albums since then.



C.28. MEMUNATU LARDI (Highlife/Indian Style Artiste): Interviewed at Marvellous Films Studio at Zogbeli, Tamale. On Friday 14 June 2013 at about 3:34PM. She published her first album in 1998 and currently has five albums to her credit.



C.29. SHERIFATU ISSAH (Indian Style/Highlife Artiste): Interviewed on Saturday 15 June 2013 at the BBC Record Shop at Aboabo, Tamale, at about 2:30PM. She has published five albums since the launch of her career in the late 1990s. Prior to that, she was an actor and produced her own sound tracks for her films.



C.30. YAKUBU SALIFU (Baamaya/Neo-traditional Artiste): Interviewed on Saturday 15 June 2013 at the BBC Record Shop at Aboabo, Tamale, at about 3:20PM. He has been singing and performing over the past twenty years. He published his first album in 1995 and has currently published five albums in all. He plays the traditional Simpa drums though he prefers Baamaya.



C.31. RAMATU FUSEINI (Highlife Artiste): Interviewed at her Tamale residence, House Number B57, Tishigu Tamale, on Saturday 15 June 2013 at about 4:30PM. She currently has four albums to her credit since the launch of her career in the early 2000s. She has a new album all set and ready for release.



APPENDIX D

LIST OF OTHER ARTISTES MENTIONED

D.1. SIRINA ISSAH (Highlife/Reggae Artiste): Currently bases in the USA. She is a pioneer of the contemporary popular northern music, and a household name across northern Ghana. Since the release of her first album in 1993/94. She founded the 7in1 for Peace group in 2003 to promote peace in the Northern Region after the Yendi crisis.

D.2. LORD WUMPINI (Hiplife Artiste): Originally, from Tamale, but currently bases in Accra and has so far published two albums. He was a member of the 7in1 for Peace group, founded by Sirina Issah.

D.3. NANA GAZOR (A Producer/Engineer/Filmmaker): Originally, from the Central Region, but grew up in Tamale and was the first producer/programmer/sound engineer of the music industry in Tamale, from the late 1980s. He rose to become a national vice president of MUSIGA, for one term, and currently bases in Accra, where he is more into film and television.

D.4. PRINCE MAHAMA (Highlife Artiste): A great musician from Yogu, in the Tolon District of the Northern Region, who is blind. He is one of the pioneers of contemporary popular northern music. He learned to play musical instruments and played with some bands in southern Ghana, before he finally returned to Tamale. He plays the guitar, keyboard and bass guitar. He has published at least four albums. He is one of the most outstanding music teachers in northern Ghana. He was Sheriff Ghale's first guitar teacher in 1998, and he currently teaches music at the Bizung School of Music in Tamale. A school founded by Mohammed Alidu and funded by the US-based *"Play for Change Foundation"*.

D.5. LIL-K (Hiplife Artiste): One of the young and promising artistes in Tamale, who launched his career over the last seven years and has published at least three albums so far.

D.6. LORD DESTRO (Hiplife Artiste): Founder of a duo, *"Tuumba"*, with his younger brother *Don Sigli*. They are both Sheriff Ghale's biological younger brothers. He is currently a graduate from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

D.7. SADIQ FLASH (Highlife/Reggae Artiste): A famous bass guitarist, with one album to his credit. He learned to play the bass guitar from Prince Mahama, and still plays for his *Diema Band*, no *Savanna Echoes Band*. He played bass guitar on Sheriff Ghale's *Sochira* album, recorded in 2004 at Panji Arnoff's *Pidgin* Studio in Accra.

D.8. DON SIGLI (Hiplife/R&B Artiste): One of the most popular promising artistes in Tamale. He used to work with *Lord Destro* in the duo, "*Tuumba*", but went solo about four years ago. He has two albums to his credit and is currently one of the most featured performing artistes in Tamale.

D.9. The Late FUSEINI TIA (Jinjeling/Neo-Traditional Artiste): Died about five years ago with at least four published albums to his credit, produced by Nana Gazor. He is one of the most celebrated artistes in Dagbon as he alone kept the Jinjeling traditional music alive. Most of his recordings, apart from the ones made by Gazor, were in open-air performances, by fans and audiences. He influenced most the current crop of popular artistes from their childhood days. Sheriff Ghale remixed some of his songs in his 2003 *Propagation* album. He was an extended family grandfather to Ghale. He even taught Ghale to play the one string Jinjeling instrument.

D.10. T. B. DAMBA (Neo-Traditional Artiste): Now retired from music. He is into politics and holds the national second vice chair of the New Patriotic Party. He is one of the most remembered artistes of old, in the age just before the clear emergence of the contemporary popular music of Tamale today. He played some improvised instruments, influenced by both traditional and western elements. Two of his children, *Hamida Damba* and *Prince D*, eventually took up his music exploits. They are currently among the most celebrated artistes of the contemporary times.

D.11. YAKUBU GOWAN (Simpa/Neo-Traditional Artiste): The *Gowan of Ginggaani* is the most celebrated neo-traditional Simpa artiste in the history of Dagbon. He eventually published some albums produced by Nana Gazor. However, most of his recordings, just as the late Fuseini Tia, are open-air live performances, which fans and audiences freely made in those times.

D.12. The Late PRINCE ALI (Highlife Artiste): Died about some six years ago and was most popular in Tamale for just one album. He was among the few artistes who pioneered popular music just before the clear emergence of the contemporary popular industry of today. He played with the

Uppers International band, and eventually joined the official band of the Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS) of Ghana based in Accra.

D.13. ALIBEELA (Neo-Traditional Artiste): He improvised a simple set of drums and bells to make his music. Singing and narrating popular folk stories of the Dagomba tradition. He survived the contemporary popular music times, and eventually published at least two studio albums. Although, just like Tia and Gowan, most of his popular recordings were free open-air, by fans and audiences.

D.14. SULE BAWA (Highlife Artiste): Published only one album in the late 1990s and became very popular in Tamale then. He came home from Accra, to promote his music on radio. He was very successful at that, although he never released any more albums.

D.15. RAS KIMONO (Reggae Artiste): A Nigerian reggae star whose songs especially “*Under Pressure*” became very popular in Ghana in the middle 1990s. He played several concerts in Ghana, and Tamale eventually got its share of him, in January 2011, at the Tamale Sports Stadium.

D.16. ROCKY DAWUNI (Reggae Artiste): An international reggae star basing in Los Angeles, USA. His father was chief of Bunbong’naayili, a village near Yendi, the traditional capital of the Dagbon state. He grew up in the south of Ghana. Rocky launched his career in the middle 1990s, and has published about five studio albums since then.

D.17. BLAKK RASTA (Reggae Artiste): Born Abubakar Ahmed, he launched his music career in the year 2000, and has published about ten studio albums since then. He is currently the presenter of a reggae program (Taxi Driver) on Hitz FM 103.9 in Accra.

D.18. SARKODIE (Hiplife Artiste): A very prominent Hiplife artiste based in Tema, known to have won many awards, from the Ghana Music Awards to the BET Awards in the USA. He has published one album so far and a lot of singles and mix-tapes.

D.19. SAMINI (Hiplife/Reggae/Dancehall Artiste): Born and raised in Accra, with Dagaati family roots in the Upper West Region of Ghana. He launched his career through features on the songs of various artistes, and has eventually published at least three albums of his own and many other singles.

D.20. MOHAMMED ALIDU (Afro Pop/Neo-Traditional Artiste): Based in the state of California in the USA, Alidu has published one album so far and performs very regularly across the United States. He is from a home of traditional drum historians (Lunsi) in Tamale. He is the founder of the Bizung School of Music for children in Tamale.

D.21. ATONGO ZIMBA AND THE AFRICAN SHOWBOYS (Kolgo/Neo-Traditional Artiste): One of the very early neo-traditional artistes to attain national acclaim in Ghana, with his Kolgo. He featured in the songs of some prominent artistes in the early 1990s, and he is very widely travelled. Atongo has published about three albums, one of which was on the Holland based Hippo Records label. He also lived and played in the UK for a couple of years.

D.22. KING AYISOBA (Kolgo/Neo-Traditional Artiste): A household name in Ghana for his award winning song *"I want to see you my father"*. He calls himself the King of Kolgo music from Bongo-Suoin in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Ayisoba has published some two albums and is currently touring Europe in performance.

D.23. RAS KALIMU (Reggae Artiste): Now based in the Bronx, in New York, USA. Kalimu grew up in Tamale. He has published two albums. He occasionally visits and plays at home in Tamale, but most of his career efforts are in the United States.

D.24. BAWA ABUDU (Reggae Artiste): A Germany based reggae star who sings mainly in the Hausa language. He has a few English and German songs, but most of the songs he has promoted and performed in Tamale are in Hausa. Abudu has currently published two albums.

D.25. R2Bs (Hiplife Artiste): The Vodafone Ghana Music Awards artiste of the year award winners took home seven awards in total from the VGMA. The duo hail from Dagbon but grew up in Tema. They have published two studio albums, and are currently on tour in the USA and Canada, just after playing a big concert at the Tamale Sports Stadium.

D.26. QUEEN NUURA (Highlife Artiste): A Yendi based Highlife star with two albums to her credit. Her music is currently among the most featured songs on radio in Tamale.

D.27. MAMA RAMS (Highlife Artiste): She sings mainly in Dagbani and Mampruli but she is a Moshi/Mamprusi. Her music is among the most featured songs on radio in Tamale today. Rams

has published four albums now. She owns and manages one of the most prominent public address/sound systems in Tamale, *Raba Sounds*.

D.28. SISTER Z (Highlife Artiste): She is from Walewale but mostly based in Kumasi. Z has two albums to her credit, and her music is currently very prominent on radio in Tamale.

D.29. ABU MOHAMMED (Reggae Artiste): An Accra based freelance musician, and vocalist who played for many private bands, as lead and backing vocalist. Abu published only one album in the middle 1990s, which *Kojo Antwi* produced. They promoted it quite well on national television and radio in Tamale.

D.30. RAFIQ DACHAR (Reggae/Highlife Artiste): One of the pioneering artistes of Tamale, Rafiq eventually released two albums, and was a household name across northern Ghana for his famous song “*Jerigu pala saawari maana*”.

D.31. MALAIKA (Hiplife/Afro Pop Artiste): A Tema based artiste who runs his own studio, as an engineer. He released only one album, which he came to promote in Tamale in the middle 2000s. He has also collaborated with artistes and producers from the UK, to publish some singles.

D.32. YESU DAGOMBA (Hiplife Artiste): A Tema based Hiplife artiste, with his roots in Tamale. He has published one album, and a couple of new singles are currently on radio in Tamale.

D.33. SHABAN (Hiplife Artiste): A Junior High School (JHS) pupil recently discovered by P-Jay (an engineer and producer). Shaban released his first single in 2012, and he has subsequently published a full album.

D.34. FAWAL (Hiplife Artiste): Another JHS pupil, just like Shaban who also published a couple of singles and subsequently released his full album this year, 2013, on the record label of DJ Parara.

D.35. FATAWU ONE-ONE (Highlife Artiste): He has three albums to his credit.

D.36. TUBA DAGOMBA (Hiplife Artiste): With two albums to his credit, Tuba is popular in Tamale for his very energetic stage performances over the past ten years or so.

D.37. GORDON LARI (Reggae Artiste): One of the pioneering reggae artistes of Tamale. He released the first of his two albums in the very early 1990s. The biggest hit on that album was

“*Bulaa gbal’kablidali*”, which is still popular today. However, he never formally launched the second album, although released. Both albums were in English and Dagbani.

D.38. The Late MAURICE MAIGA (Taamaale/Neo-Traditional Artiste): A famous *Taamaale* artiste, from the Hausa Zongo in Tamale. Maurice released about three albums for the Tamale based Ransgreg Productions in the 1990s. He later became a morning show host on radio Justice (98.5 FM) in Tamale, which he continued to do until his sad demise.

D.39. LADY TALATA (Highlife Artiste): A famous female star from northern Ghana, but grew up in Accra. She played live band music from her teens and released her debut album in 1985. She published five studio albums.

D.40. The late ONIPA-NUA (Neo-Traditional Artiste): A blind singer and Ghanaian thumb pianist, who performed in the streets for decades until discovered and produced by *Faisal Helwani*. He died not long after his discovery sometime in 1990.

D.41. CHRISTY AZUMAH & the Uppers International (Highlife/Neo-Traditional Artiste): A famous female singer from the Upper East Region, who got an early band experience from the Ghana Police Dance Band in Tamale in the 1970s. She later migrated to the USA, where she lived and performed, until her reported demise in June 1999, after a long bout with cancer.

D.42. NAT AWUNI (Highlife Artiste): A lead singer for the *Gold Nuggets Band* in Accra through the 1990s. He is now a reverend minister and solely into gospel music.

D.43. ABUBAKARI KABA (Highlife Artiste): A popular singer on national television through the 1990s, hailing from Navrongo in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

D.44. AMOAHA AZANGE (Highlife/Calabash Player): A famous Fra-Fra calabash player and singer for Faisal Helwani’s *Basa-Basa Sounds*.