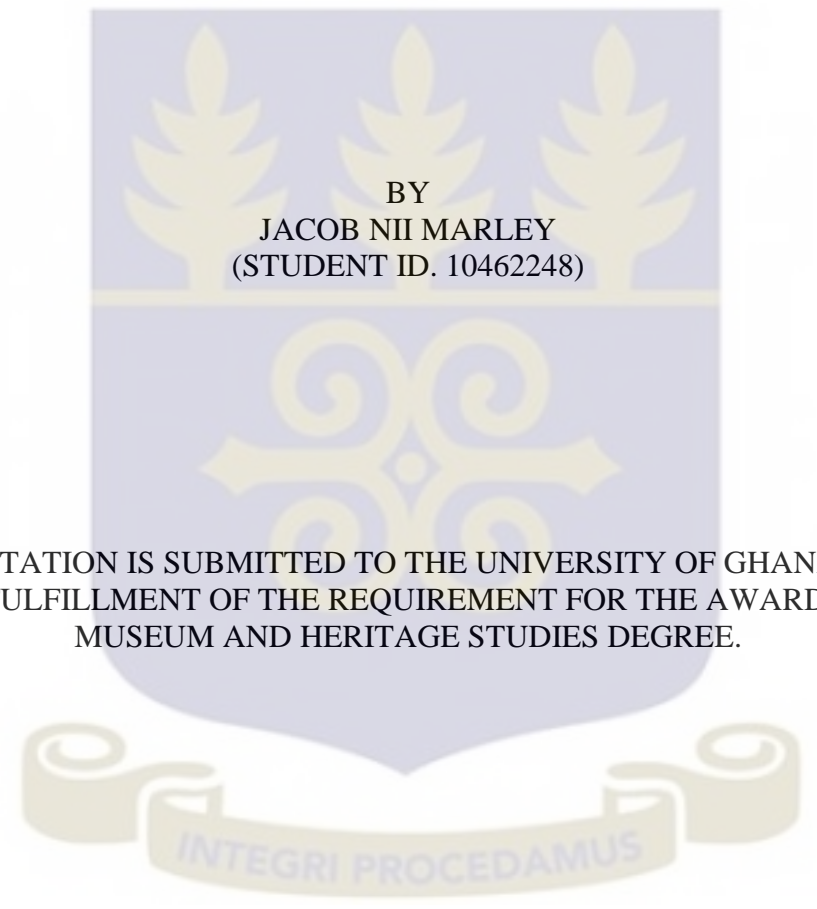


KPA MUSIC AS A MEDIUM OF SOCIAL RESISTANCE AMONG THE LA

The crest of the University of Ghana is a shield-shaped emblem. The top half is light blue with three golden laurel branches. The bottom half is light purple with a golden ornate scrollwork design. Below the shield is a golden ribbon with the Latin motto 'INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS'.

BY
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(STUDENT ID. 10462248)

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MA IN
MUSEUM AND HERITAGE STUDIES DEGREE.

OCTOBER, 2019

DECLARATION

I Jacob Nii Marley author of this dissertation hereby declare that, with the exception of specific references cited, the work presented here is the result of my own research, carried out under supervision after a series of fieldwork from January to September, 2019.

Jacob Nii Marley

(Student)

Signature

Date

Prof. Kodzo Gavua

(Supervisor)

Signature

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and in memory of my late father Mr. E. A. Marley.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give thanks to the Almighty God for granting me the grace and strength to successfully carry out this research. I also express appreciation to the Improving African Futures Using Lessons from the Past (IAfF) project and Canadian SSHRC for the scholarship which supported my study.

My profound gratitude and appreciation go to Prof. Kodzo Gavua, my supervisor, for his genuine interest, counselling and contribution of ideas toward the success of this research. Many thanks to Dr. Wazi Apoh, Dr. David Abrampah and all Faculty at the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies for their encouragements and sharing of ideas to enrich my work.

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Members of the La *Amlaku* and La Homowo planning committee were very supportive in providing me with information for the research and I thank them all for the valuable time they spent with me on countless occasions. Last but not least, I would like to extend my appreciation to Mrs. Janet Amegbor and my entire family in recognition of their undying support and confidence in me at all times.

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ABSTRACT

The lyrics of traditional music are an information source usually neglected in the study of cultures, yet, they hold an important part of oral history. This study examines the contexts and lyrics of a traditional music and dance form called *Kpa shimo*, which is performed by the people of La during their annual festival – Homowo. *Kpa* is the only type of music that is permitted during the festival in La. Some literary sources present the Homowo festival as a generic series of ceremonies among the Ga of Ghana. However, this is not the case, as there is diversity in how the festival is commemorated in the various Ga communities. Despite the attempts of some scholars to document and interpret the different elements of the festival, much attention has not been given to *Kpa shimo* tradition that is exclusive to the people of La and Teshi, a Ga speaking community which emerged out of La. Almost all existing literary sources that investigate *Kpa shimo* are based on a Teshi perspective. There is hence, no proper study of the tradition from the perspective of La people, who claim to be the originators.

Drawing on information gathered from the La community, including data provided by community leaders and from literary sources, the study explores *Kpa shimo*, including the lyrics of selected *kpa* songs as a medium of social protest and resistance among the La and clarifies some generalizations about Homowo.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Research Background

Music is loved and enjoyed by different people given its pleasantness in hearing and therapeutic benefits among other benefits. Traditions of music are valued for their cultural significance and benefits to society and they may attain heritage status through identification and acceptance by members of contemporary societies, who may preserve them for future generations, be it on a local, regional, national or international level (Howard 2003: 136). Music provides an important voice especially in situations where other expressive actions are forbidden or inadequate (Impey 2008: para 3). In Ghana, musical traditions are a significant part of ceremonies (Anquandah 2010: para 1). They are key in festivals and chief instalments among others and they bear strong connotations of identity. The annual festival of the Ga people, Homowo, is not any different. Exclusive to La and Teshi, two of six sub-groups that constitute Ga, Homowo features a special music and dance form, *Kpa*, whose performance is referred to as *kpa shimo*. Research on aspects of Ga musical tradition (Akwetteh 2017; Amakye-Boateng 2017; Marshall 2014) has not yet focused on the *kpa shimo* among La people. The focus has been on *kpa shimo* in Teshi (Akwetteh 2017; Marshall 2014; Osabu-kle 2008). According to the La, however, the *Kpa shimo* tradition originated from their community and diffused to Teshi (Akwetteh 2017: 46).

This research, therefore, examines the contexts and contents of *Kpa* as performed among the La. It samples the lyrics of different categories of this music for their social and cultural significance and attempts to demonstrate how *Kpa* songs are employed as media of social protest and resistance in La.

1.1 Research Aim and Objectives

This study seeks to document and analyse *kpa* songs of the La in order to provide insights into the role of these songs in social protest and resistance. It will attempt to address the following objectives:

- a. Documentation of different categories of *kpa* songs and the contexts in which they are performed
- b. Analysis of the lyrics of these songs for their meanings and significance
- c. Definition of variables that influence the use of *Kpa* songs in social protest and resistance

The collection and documentation of songs were guided by the following questions.

- a. What is the character of *kpa* and its performance?
- b. Who composes the songs?
- c. Who performs them?
- d. When and where is it practiced?
- e. In what ways are *kpa* songs used in social resistance?
- f. What is the significance of *kpa* performance in La Homowo?

1.2 Intellectual Underpinnings

Resistance is a complex social phenomenon which covers a wide range of actions. There are divergent views and theories of resistance and this makes it challenging to establish a clear-cut definition (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013: 1). Amid disagreements on the nature of resistance, however, there is a common understanding that it is an oppositional action which can be either public or disguised (Hollander & Einwohner 2004; Lilja, Baaz, Schulz & Vinthagen 2017; Scott 1989; Vinthagen & Johansson 2013). Hollander and Einwohner (2004: 538) define action in this

context as the idea that resistance is not a quality or state of being, but an active practice which is done in opposition, a degree of deviance against what is regarded as unjust or unscrupulous. There may be dissenting definitions, however, this research shares the view that, resistance could be either subtle or extreme in form so long as the baseline is an action of opposition. On the extreme, resistance may be in the form of riots and demonstrations. In its subtle form, resistance may be through paintings and the use of music, as well as “symbolic negations such as sarcasm, slander, cursing, withdrawal, and even cringing silence” (Margie & Huseca 2018: 24).

People may resist for various reasons – against ideas, decisions, plans or actions – which may either be social, cultural, political, economic or a combination of these depending on the context (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). Resistance can thus be fuelled by the need to fight for survival or to register displeasures in an attempt to seek or prevent change. Its related activities may include singing of songs which are embedded with lyrics of opposition. The use of irony, sarcasm and hyperbole among others in songs to draw attention to society’s ills and criticize perpetrators, may be referred to as ‘everyday resistance’, a type of concealed resistance (Scott, 1989). Lilja, et al. (2017: 42) describe everyday resistance as oppositional acts that are not as dramatic and visible as riots, demonstrations and other similar collective confrontational expressions. In everyday resistance, the key characteristic is the 'pervasive use of disguise' to conceal oppositional actions (Scott 1989: 54). Hence, the research draws from this concept in the view that, the public performance of *Kpa* music is one of the ways in which people of La express opposition to what they regard as unscrupulous acts or behaviour.

Randall (2017: para 3) argues that, music is an effective non-violent weapon of resistance used in several counties to express disapprovals and call people to action. Music is also an ideal vehicle of resistance due to its surface appearance as an innocent form of entertainment (Neuman 2008:

10). It has for years, been used to speak to issues of world concern such as colonialism, racism, slavery, war and corruption. Musicians such as Lucky Dube and Bob Marley through Reggae music have stood in opposition against mental slavery, war, racism and ethnocentrism with songs like *Get Up, Stand Up, Redemption Song, Revolution, Different Colours* and *Together as One*. According to Ncube (2017: para 6), Lucky Dube's music found a place in criticizing the oppressive National Party government, hence, some of his songs were banned because of their political position with *Rastas Never Die* as an example.

Musicians of other genres in Ghana also recognize the need to harness the power of music in its potential for social reformation (Obeng, 2015). Barima Sidney, Sarkodie, Obuor and A-Plus have made their marks in hiplife music and are known for the use of thought-provoking expressions in socio-political commentary which highlight topical issues of national concern. Obeng (2015: 1) asserts that highlife music has been a powerful medium of communication in expressing the thoughts and concerns of Ghanaians. As reggae, highlife and other genres of music are used to express oppositions in various contexts, *kpa* music is a medium of achieving the same effect in the La community.

1.3 Research Methods and Techniques

A qualitative method that combined techniques of Ethnography and Visual Anthropology was adopted during the process of data collection and documentation. The research also relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Written information on La and the entire Ga group was consulted at the preliminary stages of this work to inform on different aspects of La culture. Relevant books, journals, articles, Master thesis and PhD thesis were referred to from libraries and

online sources in this regard. Publications on resistance studies, heritage and music were also consulted and this informed the intellectual underpinnings of the study.

1.4 Information from Literary Sources

Some authors who have written about the Ga people attempt to look at Ga culture homogeneously and disregard the uniqueness in traditions of the individual traditional areas. In some cases, the accounts are limited to particular Ga groups yet are presented as if generic. Information on Homowo, which focuses on Ga-Mashi, is presented by Quartey-Papafio (1919) for example as pertaining to all Ga groups.

1.5 Research Sample and Techniques

The research covered people of the La traditional area. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify members of local groups associated with *kpa* as key informants. The researcher broadened the sample of informants through snowballing which exposed other informants such as members of the La Traditional Council, La Homowo planning committee and members of the La general public. In all, two focus group discussions and twelve interviews were held. The researcher gathered oral data using one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. Informal and semi-formal interviewing were used because the researcher found them useful in establishing rapport and facilitating conversations with informants. The interviews often started with informal conversations that explored the subject in a general manner. This made room for more information and perspectives that may not have been considered by the researcher. A semi-formal style was usually adopted in the middle of conversations to streamline them. Pre-set questions such as what is *Kpa shimo*? how and why is it performed? where is it performed and in which contexts? were used to guide conversations. The focus group discussions made use of semi-formal interviews with

pre-set questions that focused on the composers of *kpa* music, how it is composed, who performs it, how it is performed, the role and significance of *kpa* performances among the La and how come *Kpa shimo* tradition is exclusive to La and Teshi.



Figure 1.0: The researcher (on the right) conducting an interview with a member of the *Amlaku*.
(Source: Jacob Nii Marley 2019)

The researcher participated during a performance by the La community's official group of *Kpa* singers who double as rite performers - the *Amlaku*, in order to observe the context of *Kpa shimo* and activities of the group. This also enabled the researcher to document new *Kpa* songs. A Zoom H4n Pro Handy Recorder and Tecno Camon 11 smartphone were used to record songs during interviews, focus group discussions and during the *Kpa* performance by the *Amlaku*. The audio records gave the researcher the ability to playback songs and listen carefully for understanding and

transcription. Also, studio records of some *Kpa* groups in La were collected as additional data for transcription and study.

A visual documentation of the *Amlaku Kpa* performance and its context was done, as this can provide a basis for analysing and interpreting the meaning of the music (Pink 2007). Through this documentation, the material associations of the performance and the people involved were visually captured and illustrated in the dissertation. Still and motion photography were integral techniques for this. For the still photographs, Nikon D3300 and Nikon D3100 digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) cameras were used because of their ability to produce high quality images from 14 to 24 megapixels. These were paired with a 35mm lens which allowed the camera to cover a wide-angle and capture the performance and its associations. A 55-200mm lens was also used for its ability to zoom into subjects and objects with relevance to the performance. For the audio-visual documentation, a Canon XF100 Professional Camcorder was primarily used in combination with the Nikon D3300 DSLR camera.

Following protocol, the researcher had to do a self-introduction and present a general overview of the research and its aims to informants and seek their consents before recording interviews or discussions. It was also necessary to seek permission from the authorities in charge of the traditional function where the *Kpa* performance took place prior to photographing and video recording. This was granted but with the requirement that, the researcher had to follow the custom of being barefooted in the performance space.

1.6 Research Challenges and Mitigations

Undertaking this research was not without issues. The researcher during planning, was aware of some possible challenges that could be encountered, hence, thought of possible solutions. For

instance, the main celebration of Homowo in La was to take place in August 2019 but waiting till that period before collecting data on *kpa* and its contexts would have delayed this work. Data collection therefore started at the beginning of the year so that the experience and observations made during the festival would confirm or support what had been gathered. However, later in July, there was news that the festival had to be called off and this brought about another ritual performance - *Nanekpa-mormor*, this was new to the researcher, hence, it required extra time on field to collect data. Another challenge faced was the low quality of some audio records. These included some of the performance recordings and studio records collected. The problem with audio recordings from the ceremony was with noise from the crowd. It overshadowed some of the vocals, hence, it was difficult to get some song lyrics during playback for analysis. Some of the studio records collected were also of low quality and were therefore impossible to listen to, understand and transcribe.

1.7 Significance of Research

The need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage is a crucial issue of world concern (UNESCO 2003). The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizes that, identification, documentation and research are integral measures to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003: 4). In this light, the research would contribute towards safeguarding *kpa* performance as an important part of La cultural heritage. It would also enrich the pool of knowledge on Ga traditional music at large, while providing an in-depth understanding of the contexts, interpretations and significance of *kpa* songs among La people. Even though the relevance of traditional music is usually overlooked in anthropological research, the lyrics of songs sometimes memorize significant parts of oral history. The use of such information in this research would therefore advocate for a reconsideration of musical traditions as a potent source of

information on community history. The ethnographic film produced from this research (Appendix II), would serve as a resource for comparative ethnology with similar musical traditions in Ghana and other parts of the world. It would also be a source of reference to the people of La, in that, the type of *Kpa* performance documented is very rare. According to oral account, the performance was last witnessed over three decades ago and this preceded the enstoolment of Nii Kpobi Tettey Tsuru III - the recent paramount chief of La. The period of this research however coincided with his unfortunate demise and the ethnographic film captures the *Kpa* performance, *Nanekpa-mormor*, a ritual associated with the loss.

1.8 Organization of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter Two presents information on the La people and their Homowo festival. It talks about their settlement history, social and political organization, belief system and annual festival. Chapter Three focuses on *kpa* music. The chapter explores the contexts and performances of *Kpa* among the La. It looks at the various categories of the music, modes of composition, costume and musical instruments, and gender relation among *Kpa* singing groups. Also, samples of selected *kpa* lyrics are presented and discussed in this chapter to interrogate their roles, significance and identify characteristics of disguised resistance. Chapter Four summarizes the research and it draws conclusions based on the findings. It also makes recommendations for possible further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LA AND THEIR HOMOWO FESTIVAL

2.0 The Study Area

La also known as Labadi, a corrupted version of the original name, is a settlement located between Osu and Teshi in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The name Labadi is an English corruption that suggests that the people of La are bad. This corruption takes root from a history of resistance by the people of La against European domination when almost all surrounding towns had been successfully invaded (Kotey 2003). Reindorf (1895: 338) records that the La town suffered bombardment by the British on September 13, 1854, however, the people of La did not give in. Kotey (2003) identifies La-dzwaaha and Nkran Madu hills as two locations which suffered the bombardment and this is evidenced by the cannon balls stored in the *Lakpa* shrine.

Presently, La is the capital of La Dade-Kotopon Municipal Assembly (LaDMA) which covers an area of about 360sq km (LaDMA n.d.: para. 2). The settlement itself however, spans an area of approximately 6.16 km² and it is located on longitude 5.56° N and latitude 0.16° W (Google Earth, n.d.). La is represented symbolically by the red cockerel and a sculpture of this can be found at the town centre (fig. 2.0). The red cockerel goes with the motto *Wuo gbee, La gbee* which means La wakes up before the cock crows. Associated with this symbology is an oral history of La victories in war because they rose early at dawn when their enemies were still asleep and invaded their territory.

Nonetheless, the identity of La people cannot be discussed without their language. Their language forms part of a branch of Niger-Congo language family called Kwa (Dakubu 1972) which is also spoken by Adangbe groups like Krobo, Shai, Ada and Ningo. The Language of the La, Teshi,

Nungua, Tema, Osu and Ga-Mashie is Ga whiles that of the Adangbe groups is Dangbe, together referred to as Ga-Dangbe because of their close relations.

2.1 Settlement History of La

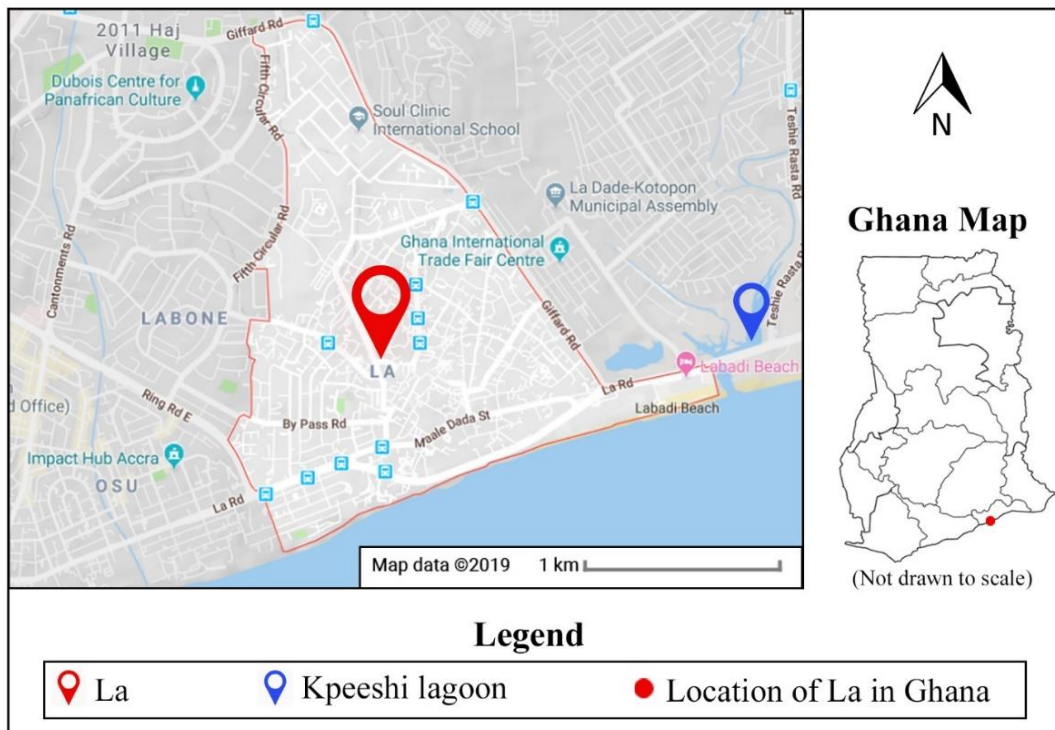
The chronology in settlement history of La people is one which is shrouded with inconsistencies from oral accounts, written sources and archaeology (Anquandah 1979, 1978; Boachie-Ansah, 2006; Burton 1874; Bruce-Myers 1928; Marshall 2014; Odotei 2013; Osabu-kle 2008; Ozanne 1962; Reindorf 1895). One of such settlement histories is associated with their nickname - La Bone with Bone also spelt as Bonny, Bonney or Bonnie. The historical accounts suggest that some La families came from Bonny (Marshall 2014; Odotei 2013; Osabu-kle 2008; Bruce-Myers 1928; Reindorf 1895). This is an island in southern Nigeria which is located along a tributary of the River Niger. From Bonny, the La people are said to have followed the other Ga groups - Ga-Mashi and Nungua, to the coast. Despite this settlement history claim, some La people could have joined or left the group at different points in time and from different places. Included in a list of locations that La people are said to have once settled are Aneho in Togo and Laterh, Nanso, Berekuso (Ajangote hill), Ladoku and Ayawaso in Ghana (see Map 2.1) of which they still have descendant groups living at some of these sites. According to Bruce-Myers (1928: 168), there was once a land dispute between one Kwaku Damaar and a Korle Priest at Nanso. In providing evidence of land ownership, a rib from a sacrificed elephant was presented by a farmer – Kofi Annum. This was retrieved from an old altar used by the Ga during their years at Nanso from where they moved to Ayawaso (Bruce-Myers 1928: 168). Ozanne (1962) dates Ladoku (an abandoned La settlement) to be probably 13th Century based on evidence from archaeological excavation from which distinctive pottery were recovered. Excavations by Anquandah, however, uncovered

Cherekecherete ware which dates the Ladoku settlement to between fourteenth and sixteenth centuries (Boachie-Ansah 2006: 55-57).

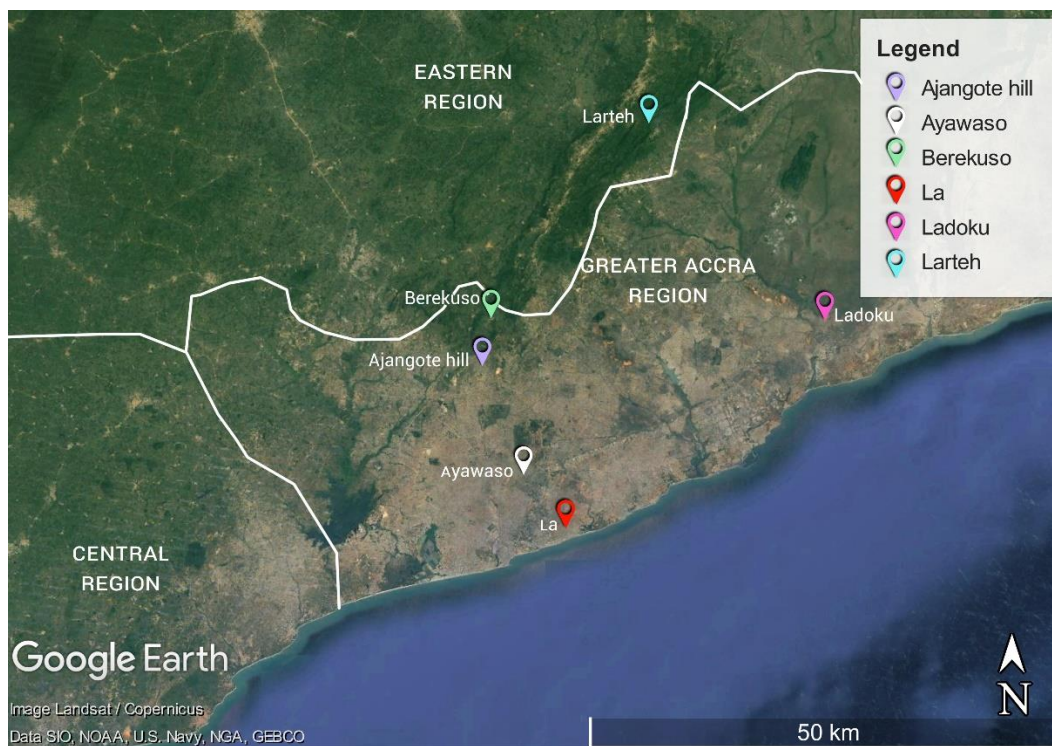
The La and the entire Ga group have been involved in several feuds with other groups like the Akwamu during their settlements in the Accra plains (Rømer 2000). Burton (1874: 456) and Odotei (2013) suggest that the La people who came from Ladoku had been involved in feuds with their neighbours - the Shai, and this inferably accounted for their abandonment of Ladoku. The people of Teshi according to multiple sources (Akwetteh 2017: 27-30; Bruce-Myers 1928: 171; Osabu-kle 2008: 9), broke away from La under the leadership of Nii Okai Nmashi.



Figure 2.0: Statue of the red cockerel. (Source: Jacob Nii Marley 2019)



Map 2.0: Location of the study area. (Google Map data 2019)



Map 2.1: Distribution of historic La settlement sites in Ghana. (Google Earth data 2019)

2.2 Social and Political Organization of La

The La town is made up of several divisions known as *akutsei*. These include *Leeshi*, *Abafum*, *Kwei*, *Agbawe*, *Klanaa*, *Abese*, *Nmatii* and *Jrasee*. Each of these divisions comprises a set of patrilinear homesteads – *Wei* (*We* singular) whose members claim a common ancestor. For instance, *Wulormor* Oko is known to have established seven patrilinear homesteads and this presently constitutes the Kwei division. Each division has a chief, *mantse*, who is responsible for the area and all the divisional chiefs are allegiant to a paramount chief known as La *mantse*. The villages of La and other small settlements in the interior are all headed by *Akwaashontse*. Apart from chiefs, there are other community leaders who manage smaller groups based on their communal obligations or professions. For instance, the community of fisherfolks in La is headed by the *Woleiatse* and the community of farmers is also led by the *Okwafoatse*. Individuals who form part of the La militia – *Asafoatsemei* operate under a captain known as *Shipi* who also operates under the *Akwaashontse*. As a governing body in the La community, there is a group of leaders and community members who together form the La Traditional Council. This Council is made up of a presiding member– *Dzaasetse*, the paramount chief, an assistant to the paramount chief – *Shikeetele*, divisional chiefs, *Akwaashontse*, religious rite performers – *Amlaku*, head of communications and public relations - *Mankralo* and patrilinear family heads – *Weku nukpai*, with supporting representatives from the various homesteads. Historically, the institutions of chieftaincy and *Asafo* were non-existent in Ga culture until the end of fifteenth century (Stride & Ifeka, 1971). These systems were adopted from the Akan during La settlement on the Accra plains where there was an increasing need for a more centralized system of governance and military. The militia group - *Asafoatsemei*, was created to lead the La people in times of battle, protect the villages against slave raiders, and also protect land territories from encroachment. Aside these, the La militia is instrumental in enforcing law and order during La traditional ceremonies and they

provide physical protection to the chiefs. Spiritual protection is the duty of La spiritualists – *Agbaafoi* who are headed by *Agbaafoiatse*. He is also responsible for protecting the *Lakpa* priest during performances and hence, always accompanies him. The office of *Lakpa* priest which is historically the highest in hierarchical leadership of La people, lost some of its authority with the separation of powers (introduction of chieftaincy institution). The socio-political and spiritual responsibilities of La leadership have ever since been split between these two offices – the paramount chief and the *Lakpa* priest respectively.

2.3 System of Belief

The people of La have a polytheistic indigenous system of belief. They believe in and worship several deities with *Lakpa* being the principal of all. Other deities include *Koolo*, *Akotia*, *Osabu*, *Nyongmotsaa*, *Tsaade*, and *Ayuile*. The people also believe in the existence and potency of spirits residing in living things, heavenly bodies and natural features such as the sun, lagoons and mountains. All these together with the *Lakpa* are known as *dzemanwondzi* which mean the deities of nature and everyday life. *Osabu* for instance is known as a deity of the sky and controls rain. *Tsaade* is a deity of fertility and *Kpeeshi* (a lagoon deity, see Map 2.0) is the deity of the lagoon marking the geographical border between La and Teshi. The *Kpeeshi* deity according to informants, is a war goddess who has the ability to drain the powers of any supernatural object or being that moves across or comes into contact with it.

Dzemanwondzi are conceived as intermediaries between humans and an almighty supreme being – *Ataa-Naa Nyonmo*. The combination of *Ataa* and *Naa* signifies the duality of this being with *Ataa* as masculine and *Naa* as feminine. *Nyonmo* on the other hand means God who is also referred to as *Maawu* or addressed by an attribute *Ofe* which means “greater than all”. Aside *Ataa-Naa*

Nyonmo and the *dzemanwondzi*, other supernatural beings which are also worshiped but are of a lower status and can be owned by individuals are known as *wondzi* (*won* singular). These may be in the form of shrines or charms which can be used for personal benefits and to cause spiritual harm to people. *Dzemanwondzi* and *wondzi* are believed to have the power to possess human mediums who become priests (*wulomeii*) and priestesses (*wonyee*). All households have priests and priestesses who mediate between the people, their ancestors and the divisional deity(ies). The various households are associated with one or more shrines by virtue of the division they belong to. Some deities are linked to others as parent and offspring or husband and wife hence, being allegiant to an offspring often requires allegiance to the parent deity. Thus, some households have more than one shrine. As a popular saying goes, there are ninety-nine shrines in La. This however is not to be taken literally but rather suggestive of the numerous shrines and deities in La (Quarcoo, 1967: 7).

Although indigenous religious practices are popular, there are Christians, Muslims and followers of other religions among the La. La was not occupied by Europeans like other Ga towns such as Osu and Ga-Mashi, however, the impact of missionary activities was felt and this accounts for the spread of Christianity in the settlement. Early churches in La like the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches introduced western formal education through schools. Apart from Christianity and the indigenous traditional religion, Islam was also introduced to La by immigrants, traders and probably missionaries from the northern regions of Ghana and other countries in West Africa. Some of these immigrants and traders assumed Ga identity after staying in La for long periods and intermarrying the locals. However, names like Fussen in La may be traced to a northern origin.

2.4 Homowo

There are generic elements of Ga culture such as the language which is common, and special food usually prepared as part of Ga annual celebration - Homowo. Despite these, there is diversity in how Homowo is commemorated in the various traditional areas. Some factors that influenced the diversity include the differences in historical events experienced by the various Ga groups. Few scholars (Akwetteh 2017; Marshall 2014) have written about the Homowo festival and acknowledge the exclusiveness of some traditional activities. For instance, Marshall (2014) recognizes that *Tsesefaa* and *Tsesebumor* which happen from a Sunday to a Saturday during the main Homowo celebration, is customary to Teshi but not to La. This is also the period for *Kpa shimo* in Teshi and there is a vibrant performance of *Kpa-son-kpa* through the town. *Kpa shimo* and *shakamor* in Teshi however are all borrowed cultural practices from La (Akwetteh 2017).

Homowo is an annual festival celebrated by the Ga. Oral accounts indicate that, the festival is celebrated to ridicule hunger and the name possibly derives from a corruption of a Ga phrase which means 'hooting at hunger' - *homo yiwamo*. The festival commemorates a historical event of famine suffered by the Ga. In response to prayers and following directions from the deities, the people were blessed with a bountiful harvest. A special meal, *kpokpoi* (fig. 2.1) which is made of fermented corn and served with soup prepared with a fish that is rarely caught, *tsile*. This meal is prepared annually to celebrate the abundance of food. Some of this food is carried through the town and sprinkled at shrines, on the streets and at family houses. It is done in representation of feasting with the deities and ancestors and also to symbolize the abundance of food. The festivities also include a time of fasting and prayers by priests and priestesses who are known in Ga as *Wulomei* and *Wonyee* respectively. Prayers, referred to as *nkpai yeli* (see Fig. 2.2), are offered to the deities and ancestors of the La people.



Figure 2.1: A bowl of *Kpokpoi* for sprinkling.

(Source: Mutombo ([@MutomboDaPoet](https://twitter.com/MutomboDaPoet) on twitter) 2017)



Figure 2.2: *Lakpa* priest (Numo Yemo Obroni VII) offering libation with support from other priests.
(Source: Jacob Nii Marley 2019)

Homowo is usually celebrated between the months of May and September in succession among the various Ga groups and marks the beginning of another year (Odotei 2013). The celebration of Homowo starts with Nungua since they are believed to have settled at their present location earlier than other Ga groups (Osabu-kle 2008). The Nungua are followed by Ga-Mashie and the celebration ends with Teshi as the youngest group to have settled. The celebration of Homowo brings together inhabitants of Ga villages from the hinterlands such as Berekuso in Ghana and Aneho in Togo who are both connected to the La group. These visitors stay with their kinsmen throughout the Homowo period (Odotei 2013). The festival is celebrated to unite community members and promote peace through conflict resolution.

2.4.1 Pre-Homowo Activities

In La, as narrated by informants, Homowo begins with a series of activities several months ahead of the main celebrations and this could start in May. The pre-Homowo activities include cleansing of brooms which is known as *Bloiahejuu*. This is done because the La people presume that there is filth in the community hence the need for cleansing. In May, a cleansing exercise is performed by priests of shrines in the various quarters of La - *Lakpa*, *Koolo* and *Nyomnotsaa*, *Naade*, *Blamo*, *Akotia* and *Osabu*, *Sakumo*, *Klan*, and *Kpeshie* and *Dzobu*. Following this activity is the pacification of shrine stones, *Wontedramo*, preparation of venues for the main Homowo activities, *Shibaa*, and the sowing of millet, *Nmaa dumo*.

During the millet sowing ritual, the *Lakpa* priest picks up a special hoe and embarks on a particular route in the division where his shrine is located. This is replicated by the priests of *Osabu*, *Akotia*, *Koolo*, *Nyongmotsaa* and *Naa Yoomo*, who also embark on their own routes. Each of the priests imitates the act of bush clearing along their paths with the hoes, and they are accompanied with *kpa* songs by the *Amlaku*. Upon covering their jurisdictions, the *Nyongmotsaa* priest and *Koolo* priest meet in front of the La market (*bukoenshi*); *Osabu*, *Naa Yoomo* and the *Lakpa* priest meet at the *Naa Yoomo* shrine; *Lakpa* priest again meets with *Akotia* priest at *Lakpa* shrine. When each team meets, the priests perform the *kpa* dance and embrace each other to indicate that there is peace and love among the various divisions of the La community. This traditional activity marks a ban on separate in La and it is not usually included in the *Nmaa dumo* custom of other Ga traditional areas where the sowing of millet simply marks the ban on noise making.

Three weeks after the sowing of millet, there is a harvest and this is called *Nmaa faa*. The time between sowing and harvesting of millet before Homowo, is a period of fasting and abstinence from sex by La priests and priestesses. The result of the harvest is interpreted by the *Lakpa* priest

to foretell the abundance or scarcity of food in the coming year. The harvest also marks the break of fast among priests and priestesses for that period and it is followed by celebration of a yam festival, *Yele yeli*. This starts at *Afrimi* in the *Abese* quarter and continues through *Agbawe*, *Kowe*, *Aneho* and then La villages (classified as *Kosee*).

The final pre-Homowo activity in La is a special fishing expedition, *Nsho bulemo*, where fishermen of La bring fish to their head, the *woleiatse*. to customarily send them off to sea for the seasonal catch. The send-off ritual begins on a Tuesday, the sacred day of the sea deity, with the fishermen being sent to the *Lakpa* shrine at dusk. The *Lakpa* priest then offers libation to seek protection for them against any misfortune at sea and to bring them good omen. He further gives them consecrated water, *dudornu*, to carry along for their sailing journey and then escorts the fishermen and their head to the seashore where many people usually wait to witness the final send-off. Between 3pm to 4pm on the following Thursday, the traditional leaders who performed the customary send-off would gather at the seashore and welcome the fishermen upon return. Among the La, only fishermen from *Abese* and *Leeshi* (*Apantse We*) are selected to embark on this expedition, and they usually fish towards the east and west respectively. Upon their return, they reunite and raise a piece of calico, *klala*, to indicate that all went well and the fishing was a success. This makes the awaiting crowd cheer in joy. Once the fishermen dock on shore, the *woleiatse* approaches the canoes to peek and take one fish from each of them. The fish is taken to a hut known as *Bonso-gbatsue-naa* (a hut for sharks) where a consecrated young female virgin, adorned with calico, and a special herb - *nyanyira*, carries the two fishes in a basin. The *Woleiatse* stands at the hut and offers a special libation to plead for life, blessing and abundance of food and fish for the people of La and the entire country. The female virgin is accompanied by the *Amlaku* who sing

a special ritual song as they head towards the house of the chief fisherman. The chief fisherman offers another libation for all gathered upon arrival. The *Nsho bulemo* ritual is finalized at the *Lakpa* shrine where the two fish are used for the final rite. The female virgin who carried and delivered the fish is compensated with a piece of high-quality cloth by the *Lakpa* priest and sent off. This ends the pre-Homowo activities in La.

2.4.2 Main Homowo Activities

The activities of La Homowo are numerous and include rituals of seasonal greetings and observation of day of the dead. For the purpose of this study, the focus would be on the traditional activities directly connected to the *kpa* performance. The La Homowo is celebrated during a period of ban on noise making - *Gbemlilaa* or *Kpooo-ke-diooo*. This is a customary practice of keeping the La community serene. It begins in the pre-Homowo period during the ritual of millet sowing. No form of noise making - clapping, whistling or the loud play of musical instruments and recorded music, is allowed during this period. Indulging in any of these is a punishable offence and may attract the wrath of the *Asafoi* and other community members. Places in the La community such as churches and bars usually known for loud music are accordingly served letters of precaution from the traditional council. Despite the ban on noise making, the singing and playing of recorded *Kpa* songs are permitted. This is the period when groups of the La general public are often found parading the streets to perform the *kpa* dance and music. The music is also popular at drinking bars, public events and on the community radio station, Latenu. It is abominable for anyone to curse or summon a person to any deity during this period in La. Such an act would attract a penalty and require pacification.

CHAPTER THREE

KPA MUSIC AND SELECT LYRICS

3.0 *Kpa* Music

Kpa refers to the type of Ga traditional music performed during Homowo by the people of La and *Teshi*. In La, the music may be freely performed in public, played on radio, at bars and at social gatherings during the period of the customary ban on noisemaking. Outside this period, it is unacceptable to perform or play in public especially if the songs are satirical. *Kpa* songs can nevertheless be performed in the form of dirge during the funeral rites of a La community leader such as a chief, priest/priestess, a member of the *Amlaku* or a *kpa* singing group.

3.1 *Kpa Shimo*

Kpa in Ga language literally means cord or connection and *shimo* on the other hand, refers to the action of pounding or stomping. *Kpa* is also the name of a special drum which represents the principal deity of La (*Lakpa*) and it is also the name given to the rhythm of the drum. Based on information gathered from one-on-one interviews and a focus group discussion, the *Kpa* drum is publicly displayed once in a year and it is used during a grand *kpa* performance called *Kpa sorlemor*. This performance usually takes place on a Wednesday which is the sacred day of La principal deity. During the performance, the *kpa* drum is played alongside two other drums, one of which represents a spiritual wife to *Lakpa* (*Koolo*) and the other representing his linguist (*Akotia*). Each drum is played by a designated member of the *Amlaku*, while the rest of the group sing in call and response style. According to an informant, the *Amlaku* members from *Leeshi* division play the *Akotia* drum, and those from the *Abafum* division play the *Koolo* drum while the *Lakpa* drum is played by those from the *Jrasee* division. The arrangement is in accordance with the divisions in which each deity's shrine is located. The singing is led by the *Amlakuatse* with

two or more supporting cantors. In tune with the music, the *Lakpa* priest with his priestesses perform a special ritual dance which involves foot stomping (see Fig. 3.1) and symbolic arm movements (see Fig. 3.2). In this dance, as interpreted by a participant, dragging of the arm backwards symbolizes an embracement of goodwill while the arm movement away is to ward off bad omen.

The origin of the *kpa* dance can be traced to a story of migration by the people of La. The oral accounts intimate that, some La predecessors at a point in time during their movement from Ladoku, after being defeated by the Shai, realized they had left behind the *Lakpa* gong-gong (Marshall 2014: 41). Upon reaching a river called Nsaki, they came across a monkey dancing to *kpa* rhythm, the people hence began imitating the movement of the monkey until they were able to perform the dance without their gong-gong. The performance of this dance and music type is what is referred to as *Kpa shimo* and it is performed each year during La and Teshi Homowo.

The tradition in La, however, differs from that of Teshi contrary to some generalized assertions in written literature (Quartey-Papafio 1919; Reindorf 1895). *Kpa* music among the La can be grouped into two categories based on their composers. There is the La community's official group of rite performers who double as traditional musicians and are called the *Amlaku*. There are also groups of musicians from the La general public who compose and perform *Kpa* songs and for the purpose of this research would be classified as *Kpa laloi*. Members of the *Amlaku* are also known as custodians of La tradition and their songs often recount history and traditions. The music by *Kpa laloi* on the other hand are usually inspired by the *Amlaku* songs but they often differ in terms of subject matter and language used.

In addition, *Amlaku* songs (also known as *Amlaku-akpa*) usually accompany some performances of religious rituals in the community and their lyrics recount historical events in praise of the La principal deity - *Lakpa*. These songs are mainly performed in an ancient version of the Ga language and the lyrics of the songs are often characterized by allegory. Music of the *Kpa laloi* variation may be used to expose and shame culprits of social vices and power abuse in the La community. This is known to the La people as *Kpa-son-kpa*. These songs are satirical and often include comedy and exaggerations that narrate and comment on vices by community members and leaders. They also recount unscrupulous activities that happened or were alleged to have happen during the year and went 'unnoticed'. This form of music is supposed to invoke a spirit of community building, targets societal issues to expose, rebuke, shame and discourage vices in the community. The language of music as inferred from Merriam (1964: 187), provides freedom of expression where deep-seated feelings which may not be permissibly verbalized in public. Through *Kpa-son-kpa* and other variants of the music, the La public is able to freely talk about issues which are usually considered sensitive because of their political attachments. The study of lyrics from these songs is hence a viable way of understanding this culture in La and the motivate behind the practice (Merriam 1964: 187).

The members of the *Amlaku* have a special coordinated dressing for their activities and this distinguishes them from other leaders of the La community. For instance, the wrists of priests and chiefs are usually adorned with special white beads known as *aflin* which is an indicator of their leadership position (see Fig. 2.2). The *Amlaku* on the other hand, can be identified during *kpa* performances by their variation of handwoven hats called *sonfai* (see Fig. 3.0). The performance of *kpa* by the *Amlaku* during La Homowo is observed in three main ceremonies, these are; *Kpa-fio-kplekemor*, *Kpa-nkpa-kplekemor* and *Kpa sorlemor*, and in some instances, *Nanekpa-mormor*

The general La public however, has its own version of the performance. Unlike that of the *Amlaku*, this version requires no specific time or occasion during the Homowo period. Also, because they do not have access to the sacred drums, they sing in acapella following a *kpa* rhythm and sometimes imitate the sounds of the drums by using planks. This use of planks in place of drums is known as *nmonmolo kpa*. When the ban on noisemaking is lifted, it brings a close to all singing and playing of *kpa* records in the La township. To this effect, anyone who is caught publicly singing or playing records of satirical songs outside the period may be summoned to a chief's palace or to a law court.



Figure 3.0: Two members of the Amlaku with their special hats on. (Source: Jacob Nii Marley 2019)



Figure 3.1: Numo Yemo Obron VII performing the *kpa* dance. (Source: Jacob Nii Marley 2019)



Figure 3.2: Ataa priestess performing a hand gesture of the *kpa* dance. (Source: Jacob Nii Marley 2019)

3.1.1 *Kpa-fio-kplekemor*

This is a customary rehearsal of *Kpa* performance which is held at *Blaamor-naa* in Abese, one of the divisions of La. The *Amlaku* and other traditional leaders engage in *Kpa* music and dance performances through the night as a rehearsal towards a grand ceremony, *Kpa Sorlemor*. During this custom which is on a Monday evening, all traditional leaders and the La public gather at the venue to witness the performance of the *Amlaku*. The *Lakpa* priest offers libation as part of the rituals for the night. This is followed by a performance by the *Amlaku* and it ushers the chiefs and other leaders into performing the dance. A successful execution of this is interpreted by the La people as a sign of good omen for the town. The gathering then moves to the *Lakpa* shrine (*Kpa We*) and it is accompanied by the performance of a *kpa* song, the lyrics are as follows:

Ke omanyeha La m3
Give victory to the people of La
Ke omanyeha La m3 loo
Give victory to the people of La
Omanyeha ji wor nor
For victory is ours

Ke omanyeha La m3
Give victory to the people of La
Ogbo omanyeha ni wor ke ban3
A champion's victory is what we bring
Ke omanyeha La m3
Give victory to the people of La
Ke omanyeha La m3 loo
Give victory to the people of La
Omanyeha ji wor nor
For victory is ours.

This is a song of celebration to indicate that the ceremony was successful and it concludes the activity of *Kpa-fio-kplekemor* in La Homowo. The next Monday is when the preparation of *kpokpoi*, the festive dish, begins. It is also another meeting time for a *kpa* performance that is known as *Kpa-nkpa-kplekemor*.

3.1.2 *Kpa-nkpa-kplekemor*

On this day, a Monday, La citizens keep wake throughout the night to cheer up the women in preparation of *kpokpoi*. The meal preparation is a complex one and usually lasts overnight. During the day, there is a customary street parade in the town with vehicles and this usually starts around 4pm when a lot of people are at home. It is a day when La descendant groups from far and near travel to the town to embrace the celebration with tokens of their harvests. They include people from Oyarifa, Amranhia, Teiman, Abokobi and Adenta among other places who usually arrive each in a spectacular uniform of colourful fabric to distinguish themselves from other groups (see Fig. 3.3). Informants claim that, participating groups previously gathered at a site called *Sraha* (a tower) to adorn themselves in special clothing. They then performed a customary parade (usually in wooden cars known as *tso-lorle* and taxis) around the tower before heading to La. The vehicles are usually loaded with baskets full of harvested crops for the celebration amid colourful apparels and singing of *kpa* songs. Presently, the customary parade is what is replicated on the streets of La. Taxis, pickups and other vehicles usually get fully loaded with La people and are driven with their horns blowing through the streets as people cheer them on.

At about 4pm, people gather along the streets to welcome and embrace their guests and later in the evening at 6pm, a traditional entourage is sent to welcome participants from Berekuso (a settlement said to be located at the foot of Ajangote hill, north-west of Abokobi). This activity is considered to be a ritual of community bonding called *tsakpa* and it is based on the oral history that, Berekuso was one of the places that people of La stayed for a long period of time before moving to their present location. Hence, it is considered as a second home to the La principal deity and this is commemorated in a *Kpa* song which emphasizes that Ajangote was the settlement founded from Bonne (see Appendix II, 07:21mins – 09:51mins).

The awaiting and welcoming of people from Berekuso who are known in La as *Gblebii*, begins in the town centre at *La-dzwaaha* which is presently known as Olympia. This particular group is expected to bring vital customary items – corn, consecrated water, palm wine and palm fruits - to be used at *Kpa We*. The *Gblebii* are led by their priest *Osorfo* who is also known as an *Akotia* priest. After welcoming them, they are accompanied to the *Lakpa* shrine, *Kpa We*, by the entourage, singing *kpa* songs. The *Lakpa* priest receives them with a customary offering of libation and offers them drinks. The items brought are then received and consecrated for use in performing *Lakpa* rituals, including the preparation of *kpokpoi*. The preparation to *Blaamor-naa* for this ceremony usually features the priestesses, with *Asafoiastemei* queued up on both sides of the *Lakpa* priest who walks in the middle. As a custom, no one is allowed to approach the *Lakpa* priest from behind, hence, the arrangement is done in this manner for the *Asafoiatsemei* to keep people away. The procession moves to *Blaamor-naa* on foot while singing, and prayers are offered upon arrival. Following this, the *Amlaku* begin their performance and invite all leaders to take turns in dancing, starting with the *Lakpa* priest.

After the dance performances, a *kpa* song is raised to summon a spiritual daughter of *Lakpa* (*Ayuile*). This song is believed to invite the deity so *Lakpa* can be ushered in to deliver his message to La people. The principal deity's message usually entails the year's account of rights and wrongs and it is usually in the form of proverbs spoken in what seems to be an archaic language. The language is not commonly understood hence, requires an interpreter such as the *Amlakuatse*. The *Ayuile* song is repeated seven times, upon which each of the deities - *Ayuile*, *Osabu*, and *Akotia*, descend to possess their priestesses. Accompanied by the *Agbaafoiatse*, some *Amlaku* members and *Asafoiastemei*, the possessed priestesses make three trips to a sacred grove - *Larsey koo naa* - where the principal deity is said to descend in a room. The human medium of the *Lakpa* deity is

the Ataa priestess. According to informants, once possessed, the priestess never exits the room through the door but the window. Upon exit, she meets with the other possessed priestesses on their third trip and together process to *Blaamor-naa*. They are accompanied by the *Agbaafoi*, *Amlaku* and *Asafoiastemei* who continually sing for them. At the arrival of *Lakpa* at *Blaamor-naa*, all other deities possess their respective priestesses. At this juncture, the *Lakpa* deity delivers messages for three new *kpa* songs to the *Amlakuatse* through the *Akotia*-possessed priestess. The messages are repeated to the *Amlaku* by their leader each time the *Akotia* priestess speaks. These are instantly composed into *kpa* songs and sang out loud for the approval of *Lakpa* to confirm if the message had been properly translated. If not, the possessed priestess keeps repeating the same line of information until it is properly captured by the *Amlaku*. After this, there is a silent period during which the deity delivers his message to all who are gathered. These all happen at dawn and by morning, the gathering makes its way back to *Kpa We* while singing “*ke omanyeha La m3*” (transcribed on page 28). Another libation is offered here to end the overnight activity and the guest participants – *Gblebii* are then sent to their place of accommodation – *Kone Adu We* - where they stay for the rest of the Homowo festival.

On Tuesday morning, every household exhibits its prepared festive dish which is *kpokpoi*, with its accompaniments. The traditional leaders of each division and heads of *Wei* sprinkle some of this food at the shrines and on the streets within areas of their jurisdictions. This custom starts with the *Lakpa* priest and which is followed by the *Borte mantse* (another name for the paramount chief). After these two, other traditional leaders and family heads may sprinkle as well. The grand performance of *kpa* in La happens the next day which is a Wednesday, popularly known as Homowo Wednesday. This ceremony is called *Kpa sorlemor* and it is the most anticipated

performance of *kpa* music and dance. It features chiefs from other Ga traditional areas and from Aneho in Togo, many people from various towns and cities come to La to witness this.



Figure 3.3: Arrival of a group of priestesses dressed in uniform apparel at La Kpa-tso-shishi. (Source: Jacob Nii Marley 2019)

3.1.3 *Kpa Sorlemor*

This is the last ceremony of *Kpa* performance in La Homowo and it is described as the “horn of the festival” because it is the climax activity. Therefore, the outcome of this ceremony determines the success of La Homowo celebration. The ceremony starts from sunrise to midday where it breaks for an intersecting custom called *Shakamor*.

The *Kpa sorlemor* performance takes place in an open compound known as *Kpa-tso-shishi* and it is located at the entrance of the *Lakpa* shrine. The *Amlaku* dresses up in a special traditional uniform and are distinguished by a handwoven hat called *sonfai*. The chiefs, priests, and *Asafoiatsemei* all have their versions of hats which distinguish them from each other in the crowd. On this day, the three special drums are brought out, one after the other and they are played by the

Amlaku along the singing of *kpa* songs. The first performance by the *Amlaku* however is without the drums and is intended to mourn the dead. For this, the singing is done in a low tone as compared to the usual loud singing. This type of *kpa* song is referred to as *sisajin-akpa*. Similar to the two other *kpa* performance ceremonies, *Kpa sorlemor* features the dancing of the *Lakpa* priest with his priestesses. The La paramount chief, divisional chiefs and some guest dignitaries are also invited to the performance grounds for the *kpa* dance. This is usually accompanied by supporting entourages including their wives and linguists.

As part of the customary activities, the ceremony involves visitation to a sacred grove *Won-koo-naa* by the *Lakpa* priest who the *Agbaafoiatse* accompanies and protects supposedly from all spiritual attacks and negative forces. Singing and drumming by the *Amlaku* goes on throughout the trip to the sacred grove with the *Lakpa* priest and *Agbaafoiatse* dancing side-by-side. An extract of one of the accompanying *kpa* songs is as follows:

Atseeor mor gna ee
Someone's wife can be called
Ke otse mor gna ee
But when you call someone's wife
Ashinor egnlegnle
And the beads rattle
Awoor nyormor ee
There is a price to pay
Awoor nyormor ee
There is a price to pay
Ashinor egnlegnle ke otse mor gna ee
When you call someone's wife and the beads rattle
Awoor nyormor ee
There is a price to pay

The song is a precaution against adultery, which is an offensive act among the people of La. As part of Ga culture, the waists of females are usually adorned with beads for the purposes of beautification and enhancement of body curves in their midsection. The line from the song “and

the beads rattle” is used in a proverbial sense to indicate the sound that beads make around a lady’s waist when engaged in sexual activities. The rattling beads further mean that offenders would be exposed. The expression in the song “there is a price to pay” is a way of telling the people of La that offenders would account for their actions. At the entrance of the grove, the *Agbaafoiatse* stays behind while the *Lakpa* priest goes in alone to perform a religious ritual. The trip from the performance ground to the grove is repeated three times and upon the safe exit of *Lakpa* priest from the grove on the third time, a song of praise is raised by the *Amlaku*. In an instance where the *Lakpa* priest fails to come out of the grove during a trip, the *Agbaafoiatse* is said to have failed at his job of protecting him. His coming out signifies the success of the ritual and this is called *Lakpa ekpee yoo*. In celebration, all the people at the performance ground are entreated to exchange gentle hugs. The activity of exchanging hugs is known as *shakamor*. It is also a period of break from the main ceremony, during which the *Amlaku* and dignitaries usually rest. The La community youth on the other hand, usually take advantage of the break to parade the streets and perform their version of *kpa shimo*. At about 3pm, the *Amlaku* resume the main ceremony with drumming and singing and the dancing is open to the general public. The performance comes to an end by 6pm when all the singing and drumming stops.

3.1.4 Nanekpa-mormor

This is a type of *kpa shimo* which is performed in La in an instance where there is a prevailing issue halting the annual celebration. This may happen in the event of a significant loss such as the demise of a traditional leader which requires some rites to be performed before the festival can be celebrated. One of the characteristics that distinguish this from the usual *kpa shimo* on Homowo Wednesday is that, the three drums are neither brought to public nor played. The regular singing

and dancing go on but are very brief and barely last for an hour. The ceremony also features the dancing of the *Lakpa* priest with his wives only, rather than chiefs and other leaders also taking turns. In commemoration of Homowo Wednesday at La, *Nanekpa-mormor* is performed. This paves way for the festival to be celebrated in the next year. Without performing this, Homowo is not to be celebrated in La for a period of seven consecutive years.

3.2 Categorizations of *Kpa* Music

Kpa music of the La can be broadly classified into two types based on the composers. These include *kpa* composed and performed by the La *Amlaku*; known as *Amlaku-akpa* and often described as *kpa* of the nobility. The other is *kpa* composed and performed by groups of the La general public known as *Kpa-laloi-akpa*. Notwithstanding these two categories, *kpa* music may be further classified under several variants based on their functions. These may include songs of praise, lampooning, and songs to mourn the dead. The songs of praise are referred to as *Yijiemor-kpa*. This may be performed by groups of the general public to praise select personalities for their positive contributions in development and charitable activities. The performance of this in public may also be done amid jogging. As *Kpa-laloi* parade the streets and houses of the personalities in their songs, the performers are offered drinks and cash by those they sing about. Per custom, the select personalities are obliged to offer the group a bottle of liquor (Schnapp) and some cash in appreciation of their recognition.

Amlaku-akpa may also serve the purpose of praise but in difference, it is used in praise of deities rather than human personalities, hence it can best be described as religious praise. The *Amlaku* sings songs of praises to exalt the *Lakpa* deity during performances. Some of these songs are memories of battles and talk about how powerful and smart *Lakpa* is at thwarting the enemies of

La. The songs recount historical events such as the battle of Katamanso (also known as battle of Dodowa) in 1826. The last two lines of the song state that;

Mi ke bo yaa kpe ye katamanso
I am going to meet you at Katamanso
Ke afi bo agbajaa, mi ke bo yaa kpe ye katamanso
If you say you have a warrior's band around your waist,
I am going to meet you at Katamanso
Kaa je mi atsine.
Do not doubt my prowess.

This part of the song is about the spiritual fortification which is guaranteed when one has the support of *Lakpa*. The song is hence a memory of the people's victorious battle in praise of the principal deity and how it made them fearless and gave them power against their enemies.

As a public general misconception in Ghana, *kpa* songs are just known as songs of lampoon. This is however, only one type of the music and it is usually performed by singing groups of the general public. The groups use these songs which are called *Kpa-son-kpa* (also known as *Ayeleakpa*) during the period of Homowo to expose and shame community members or groups who have been allegedly involved in socially unacceptable practices such as theft, adultery, murder and cheating among others. The lampooning is not limited to ordinary community members, it often targets community leaders such as chiefs and priests noted for wrong doings within the year. Similar to the performance of praise songs, singing groups parade the streets and houses of personalities who are mentioned in their songs. By custom, the personalities being lampooned are obliged to offer the groups liquor and money as a symbol of apology for their ills and to indicate that they would not repeat their wrongs in the future. However, some personalities may choose to ignore the groups contrary to the custom and others may go to the extent of fighting the singers. In retaliation, the groups may choose to sing the lampoons of those particular personalities every time they parade the town throughout the Homowo period. In a worst scenario, studio recordings of the songs are

made and they are widely distributed in the town. It is hence, possible to hear such songs on radio, at social gatherings or drinking bars during the La Homowo. The songs of lampoon are however, not always centred on personalities. They sometimes critique behaviours which are socially unacceptable in La and some of these include homosexuality, adultery, fraud, murder and drug abuse. The performances by the general public are hence, not the only lampoon songs, some songs of the *Amlaku* also speak against such behaviours and practices even though they may be concealed in proverbs.

Another type of *Kpa* music is known to be used in mourning the dead. The *Amlaku* version of this is called *Sisajinakpa* and this is used in paying respect and seeking peace for the dead. It is usually performed at the beginning of *Kpa-sorlemor* ceremony to remember departed souls and ask for them, a peaceful place among the ancestors. The lyrics of this song are kept secret by the *Amlaku*, and the performance is solemn without drumming. The general public's version of *Kpa* songs in mourning the dead also differs from that of the *Amlaku*. This version is usually performed for members of the singing group who pass on. The lyrics usually recount a biography of the individual and it highlights his/her notable contributions as an active member of the group and of La community.

3.3 Mode of composition

Groups of the general public are the composers of *Kpa-laloi-akpa*. The groups that parade the streets with dancing and the singing during Homowo are usually made up of male and female youth. Those composed and performed by adults are often in the form of audio records which can be purchased on compact discs (CDs). According to an informant who has been a composer for over twenty-five years, the songs can be composed and learnt by a small group of about three

members, away from the La town and taught to others when the ban on noisemaking in La begins. This is to ensure that no other person gets to know about the song and who it talks about. The song composition is inspired by remarkable events or issues that transpired in the community within the course of that year. Allegations may be raised in songs against any member of the La community disregarding his or her leadership status. Such allegations are however usually based on eyewitness accounts or inferred from facts. This hence requires the skill of constructive criticism, language use and an in-depth knowledge of La history. The song lyrics are therefore gathered overtime from multiple sources and may require the expertise of Ga language masters.

3.4 Costume and Musical Instruments

The performance of *kpa* music and dance features a distinction in costumes between the *Amlaku* and singing groups of the general public. The *Amlaku* is known for its uniform wearing of *sonfai* which is exclusive to them. Those in the group who double as priests, are distinct with a reddish-brown and double white stripes version of the hats. The versions of *sonfai* used by chiefs and the *Lakpa* priest are different from each other and they are characterised by more complex designs as compared to that of the *Amlaku*. Also, all *kpa* performances by the *Amlaku* are usually done barefooted and this is a requirement during the use of sacred spaces. The hands and necks of the group members are additionally adorned with beads which also help set them apart in their physical appearance. The three drums which represent *Lakpa*, *Akotia* and *Koolo* deities, are played using drum sticks and these are usually the only musical instruments used in the performance of *kpa* music by the *Amlaku*. In description, the *Lakpa* drum is said to be the tallest and very narrow with the *Akotia* drum being the smallest in height and width and the *Koolo* as the widest but of medium

height among the three drums. The dressing of the *Amlaku* and use of drums is not the same as the general public singing groups.

People of the general public may dress as clowns or in other comical ways during parades. This style of costume performs two main functions; it conceals the identities of resisters and also incites humour. For instance, some men put on wig caps, heavy makeup and carry female handbags while others put on oversized spectacles with face paintings. Members of the groups however do not necessarily dress in uniform when they set out to parade the streets and houses of personalities. Also, unlike the *Amlaku*, the groups that engage in this version of *kpa shimo* are not required to be barefooted. Usually, no musical instruments are used for the street parades due to the ban on noisemaking in the town. The tempo of the song is often guided by the foot stomps of the *kpa* dance.

3.5 Gender Relations

As part of the responsibilities of the *Amlaku* in La, they are required to perform religious rituals for the town and this include visitation to sacred spaces. Human blood is not permissible in the sacred spaces because it is regarded as unclean. This makes it impossible for females to be part of the group due to their natural phenomenon of menstruation during reproductive stage. Based on this, women are not recruited to the *Amlaku* which therefore is an all-male group. This however does not mean that the *Amlaku* does not relate with females in the execution of its responsibilities. It must be noted that, the songs which are received by the *Amlaku* each Homowo, are birthed through *Lakpa*'s medium of communication – a female, who is the Ataa priestess. Furthermore, the *Amlaku* perform for priestess likewise priests to dance during *Kpa sorlemor*.

With regard to *kpa* groups of the general public, females are active participants in its performance. It is very common to hear the performance of *kpa* songs led by male vocalists; however, females usually play key role as backing vocalists and sometimes add-lip between choruses. In some singing groups, the team of backing vocalists is made up of only females while in other groups, there is a mix of females and males. Also, during street parades, females are not left out as they equally participate in singing and dancing as part of groups. *Kpa shimo* by groups of the general public is hence, not as gender restrictive compared to the *Amlaku*.

3.6 Sample Song Lyrics

For the purpose of understanding *kpa* songs; what they mean and what how they are used in society among the La, a sample of three songs were selected from audio recordings which were collected during fieldwork.

3.6.1 Sample 1

Eejwa wor man, mantse njwa wor man, Nii mee
Eejwa wor man, mantse njwa wor man
Nii mer, Naa mer
Eejwa wor man, La mantse njwa wor man
Lerrlen Tettey Kpobie,
Ni ato le lumor afi nyungba-enyor ke ajwer mun n3, ebule wor man
Wor La kusum feemor
Jee worjamor ni, ekoor le ake wonjamor ni, berr eke njwa wor man
Lerrlen en3 baa ba
Ke baaa fee, Kone tsulu ke ba
en3 baa ba
ke baaa fee, ofili jato keba
Kone tsulu ajentue
ni eyaato lumor kutubor ke anible sonn, no hewor eyato julor
ke otsor kutubor tsornee
oduur looflor ywielor
Lerrlen
sasaku ni eyako legon manjw3 keba
aaoo nii m3
mantse keba eee, naa mantse julor
agbene wor man jwetrii ni ahoor fee

*enine yemlin
wor man shikpon ni ahoor fee
Tetty Kpobi nine ye mlin
Trade Fair serr shikpon
ke Aguizei shikpon ni ahoor fee enine y3mli
agbene blema Ajangote
ke katamanso, oyibi gber, ke fafraha fee, egonti ma nor
woryinor obrantai
ny3 mormora nyehe eee, Borte mantse ngbewor
agbene mantse ni ayieor
jee n3ke ayieor le, Maale Dada yi nor
blema mantse ni ayieor
jee neke ayieor le, mantse anyetei yinor
Tetty Kpobi ogbonu3
ke eshe kusun bee, ni efeor le abekuamli, lapka hi no*

*jeme awole asenta
obao, awole asenta, obao
Kwei mantse nbule La man
Eeen... Tetty Kpobi njwa La man
Ny3s33 kusun niafee fee
Mantse kpeserr
Nyi33 afile3 kusun niafee fee
Tetty Kpobi kpeserr
Lerrlen Wotedramo,
Ni adraa y3 La fee, epkes33 keba
Lerrlen alomi joormor
Hu nakai noor nohu ekpese keba
Yemo Obroni
Yemo Obroni eteshi ewoleeee, ni ebo le korkor
Agbene Kpa-nkpa-kplekemor kplekemor
Naa le ke esweta yen ke eblema kaki ko ni ekeba jen
Blema shia ko niama
Ke emli yei Lakpaaa, am3to shormor googa eter be ameke mele
Mantse korkie niewoe
Ni eyaloo shormoor fee aabum
Lerrlen
Tsetse Ofoli Bonney La m3eee fee ye koo naa
Lerrlen eBlaamor-naa sheepe
Ni kooryorn tsake eee ke shamor shala
Lerrlen en3ha Bonney manbii
fee naakp3 amerhe
shikiteele na le
eyooo le koraaa, hergbele/ hiashishwemor sane
Lakpa priest ke le ake*

*Papa wo firi hin? Na woho aborn saaa ke shamor shala, Tettey Lakpa hin no
Ke jer no ser
Ni aba fee kusun fee ni aba gbenaa*

*Tettey Kpobi tswa shier
Ke one, ke two, single seven, thirty-seven eee eetse loto
Mantse olooto eee
Eetse loto
Mantse ogboonu oo
Eetse loto
Ke norniji enyor
Ke a,b,d,e,f,g eeha mumor, worlele mumor halor
Mantse olootooo
Eeha mumor, worlele mumor halor*

Sample 1 (English rendition, Author)

He is tearing down our township; the chief is putting our town in desolation (calling on our men)
He is tearing down our township; the chief is putting our town in desolation (calling on our women)

Truly this Tettey Kpobi

Who was enstooled about twenty-four years ago, has put our town in desolation

Our La customary practices

Are not fetish customs, but he sees them as such, and this tarnishes our customs as a people

Truly, every happening

And mishaps are caused by this light-skinned fellow called Kone

Every happening

And mishaps are caused by this albino fellow

Kone the light-skinned moron

Due to his mischief and greed, he ended up installing a thief

When you set up mischievous traps

You only attract lousy birds

Truly,

This is brought upon us by an uneducated fellow

Calling on our men and women

We are doomed by the chief, we are doomed by this thief

Now the selling of all the treasures of our land

Were transacted by him

The selling of all our lands

Were transacted by this Tettey Kpobi

Plots of lands behind the Trade Fair Centre

And others at Aguizei were all sold with his consent

Also, the selling of ancestral lands at Ajangote,

Katamanso, Oyibi, and Fafraha were all endorsed by him

Our young men and women of today

Let us come together, for this chief fellow is killing us

Now his chiefly reign

Is not right, in comparison to the reigns of his predecessors (Maale Dada and Mantse Anyetei)

Asenta! (Call)

Oba! (response)

The Kwei chief is abusing the La town

Yes...! Tettey Kpobi is breaking apart La

This Tettey Kpobi fellow

When it comes to customary practices, he always gets it wrong, even in this era

And he is notorious for this reason

This Kwei chief is really tearing down the La township

Yes, Tettey Kpobi is putting La township in desolation

For all the recent and past year's customs that were performed

The chief was late in attendance

Truly, for all the customary shrine-stone cleansing

Performed in La, he was late in attendance

Truly, for the customary blessing of minerals

His attendance was again poor

Yemo Obron – the *Lakpa* priest

Stood up to the chief and cautioned him about his behaviour

Now for the customary *Kpa-nkpa-kplekemor* performance

He emerged dressed in his white sweater and his old khaki pants

Inside an ancient abode

Are plus-size women, awaiting him with their line-up of urinal containers

Rushing in his khaki pants,

He crushed into the containers which were full of urine

Truly

In the eyes of our fore-fathers and the La people, it was a disgusting sight

Truly, upon his arrival at *Blaamor-naa* (the customary grounds),

The pungent stench of urine caused a change in atmosphere

Truly this made the people of Bone

Perplexed at the sight and smell of him

Even the shikiteete could not recognize him

The scene was a mixture of embarrassment and disgraceful

The *Lakpa* priest could not help but ask, where did you come from mister?

And why are you carrying the stench of urine around? This is disgusting to *Lakpa*

After this occurrence

The rest of the customs were fully performed

When Tettey Kpobi was asked to perform the closing ritual,

all he could manage was; one, two, single seven, thirty-seven

Such a dunce chief, he is staking a lotto

Secondly, he started stammering out sounds a, b, d, e, f, g

Although he was clearly not a stammer

Such a dunce chief

He is suddenly stammering, but we know he is not a stammer

Discussion - Sample 1

From the lyrics, a chief is alleged to have put the La township in desolation. The song begins by referring to how the chief was putting the town in desolation with his socially unacceptable behavior and actions. The leader of the song calls on the attention of La general public – *Nii mei* (men of the town) and *Naa mei* (women of the town) - and then explicitly mentions the name of the chief who is ridiculed in various instances of the song together with one person probably responsible for his installation as chief.

The song is performed in a call and response style with the leader calling out lines which are responded to in chorus by the rest of the group. Some of the lines are repeated several times to draw emphasis on the message they carry or to grab the listener's attention for the next line. The backing vocalists which comprise male and female singers (inferring from the voices), seem to take cues from the leader as to which lines to repeat and when. The leader, a male vocalist, occasionally add-lips between repeated lines to further highlight the key message in it. Often, he says the same thing in different ways and this demonstrates his language skills. This is also sometimes done by other members of the group in the form of background commentary to support allegations made in the lines. The use of pure vocals with no musical instruments, hand claps or finger snaps while maintaining a steady tempo, makes the harmony of the singing - mainly tenor, alto, and soprano - audible and very pleasant to listen to. The song is mainly in Ga language and it features some borrowed English words, nonetheless, Twi language can also be traced in some few lines. The use of multiple languages here falls in line with the assertion of Nketia (1958: 27) that, Ga songs are sometimes characterized by a mixture of other languages with the Akan language being the commonest. In highlighting messages or attempting to add humor to songs, some composers prefer to use other languages rather than the local.

From the use of proverbial phrases, hyperbole, humor, and allusions to ridicule the personalities and their alleged unscrupulous activities, this song can be classified as a song of lampoon hence, an example of *kpa-son-kpa* or *Ayeleakpa* Classification. Agovi (1995) in his analysis of similar satirical songs, *avudwene*, in Nzema annual festival, Kundum, suggest the songs are a means of social commentary which are significant in evaluating society and tradition on an annual basis. Homowo and Kundum are not the only festivals in Ghana where satirical songs are used in a similar fashion, the Golob festival of the Talensi people (at Tongo) and the Apoo festival of Techiman people (Asihene, 1980), also have their versions of ceremonial satirical songs.

The concealment of the composer identity as a key characteristic of everyday resistance can be identified in this song. The identity of the group is kept anonymous throughout the song and this is contrary to the regular style of *kpa* music that is sung by groups of the La general public. Usually, the name of the composer – either an individual or group - is mentioned at the beginning of the song in the form of an introduction or embedded in other parts of the song. This is done to identify and credit the composer or performers. Choosing to not take credit however, allowed the group to conceal their identity. Furthermore, the pervasive use of allusion can be identified in the song by the use of proverbs, hyperbole and non-Ga languages - to criticize appalling characters of the select personalities:

“Lerrlen en3 baa ba
Truly, every happening
(Ke baaa fee, Kone tsulu ke ba)
and mishaps are caused by this light-skinned fellow called Kone
en3 baa ba
Every happening
(ke baaa fee, ofili jato keba)
and mishaps are caused by this albino fellow
Kone tsulu ajentue
Kone the light-skinned moron
(ni eyaato lumor, kutubor ke anible sonn no hewor eyato julor)
Due to his mischief and greediness, he ended up installing a thief

ke otsor kutubor tsornee
When you set up mischievous traps
(*oduur looflor ywielor*)
you only attract lousy birds”

The above lines attempt to make fun of the complexion of one light skinned man called Kone, as an albino. It goes on to blame him to be the cause of all problems that the La people were going through in the song. The subsequent lines further describe Kone with the demeaning characteristics of mischief and greed, which are said to have caused him to enstool a person of unacceptable calibre. This is further emphasized with the proverb ‘when you set up mischievous traps, you attract lousy birds’. The song hence, stands against the socially unacceptable behaviours of Kone and the chief. It opposes the chief’s assertion of La tradition as fetish, hence depriving the people of enjoying what they value as part of their heritage - the Homowo festival and indigenous system of belief and practices. The chief’s late attendance to ceremonies and his poor facilitation of religious rituals as highlighted in the song, are also captured as causing distortion to La tradition. Again, the chief is accused of misusing his office to sell La properties, mainly pieces of land, for his selfish gains. The song advocates for all youth of La to mobilize themselves against the “Borte chief”. The use of Borte in that line, is an indirect reference to the same chief in question. By referring to La previous chiefs (Maale Dada and Mantse Anyetei) and their reigns, the song infers that the contemporary reign was deficient of so many wrongs. The call *Asenta!* and response *Oba!* are used to grab attention for a major statement:

The Kwei chief is abusing the La town
Yes...! Tettey Kpobi is breaking La apart

To support the allegation in the above lines, several instances are recounted to narrate the chief’s mischievous character and how it disgraced La according to the song. In one instance, he is said to have inappropriately dressed in an old-fashioned style for a traditional ceremony. The lines in

continuation, ridicule him to have ended up in a pool of urine on his way to *Blaamor-naa*, the venue for *Kpa-nkpa-kplekemor*. Upon his arrival, the stench from the urine at the ceremonial ground is said to have caused the disgust of the *Lakpa* priest:

(Papa wo firi hin? Na woho aborn saaa ke shamor shala, Tettey Lakpa hin no)
where did you come from mister?
and why are you carrying the stench of urine around? *Lakpa* disgusts this.

His inappropriate dressing and how he was addressed by the *Lakpa* priest, can be interpreted as a ridicule in which the switch to Twi language by the priest is meant to invoke humour. In reality, the *Lakpa* priest and the chief are all regarded as custodians of the Ga language; hence, they are required to speak Ga during all traditional ceremonies. It is therefore highly unlikely for the priest to speak Twi to the chief and in the manner suggested by those lines. The use of hyperbole can also be identified in various lines of the song. For instance, in places where the composer wished to put emphasis on particular messages:

Tettey Kpobi tswa shier
When Tettey Kpobi was asked to perform the closing ritual,
(Ke one, ke two, single seven, thirty-seven eee etse loto)
all he could manage was; one, two, single seven, thirty-seven
Mantse olooto eee, etse loto
Such a dunce chief, he is staking a lotto

By the use of over exaggerations, the first two lines are meant to emphasize the message in the third line that, the chief is dunce. It is a way of saying that Tettey Kpobi was not abreast with the ritual that he was called to perform so he gambled his way out by giving a lengthy speech instead. The song is an oppositional campaign against the chief - Tettey Kpobi, because of his alleged socially unacceptable calibre. In different instances, the song uses disguises in the form of proverbs, metaphor, hyperbole and satire to construct a criticism of the select personalities. This may be translated as a call for reformation by the La general public as the songs advocates for the youth to mobilize themselves in support for the fight.

3.6.2 Sample 2

*Yijiemor sale eeei, yijiemor sale, Nii me
Yijiemor sale eee, yijiemor sale
Nii me, naa me
Yijiemor sale eee, yijiemor sale
Nuumo Yemo Obronu
Ni ebabor morden ye LaKpa We
Nii Lakpawulormor
Ni ebabor morden ye LaKpa We
workee tsutsu brema
jee neke Kpa We yoor, wor niime, naame ayinor
Kobla wulormor bee amlie
hu nakai noor, teitei soor ni akema tsu ji norni worle
workee nakai bee amlie
asuuu kane ye LaKpa We
nakai bee amlie
asuuu kane, lantre, osornor worle
workee Kojo Sardine
Le ba ma blogi tsue, tiafi ke mosee ye LaKpa We, ni eke kane womli
leelee keje no serr
Asako Kpa We don, La me le no
keje no serr
Asako Kpa We, majiantsemei le no*

*Workee Agbonu bee amlie, Asaaa
Rambo beeamlie, asaaa,
Nuumo Solo bee amlie, Asaaa koraa, Kpa We mash keke
Agbene Tettey Lakpa
Egbatsue yiten fee ndu ye Kpa We
Nuumo Yemo Obronu, ulormor azontoe
Eba saa Kpa We fee ke emlin jele
Mala, keji nye yaakai
wor gboenaa fee ba tsor tungo
keji nyeyaakaie
won kooe norfee bayi ke boorla
Nuumo Yemo Obronu
ji berrma ketetsi ni eteshi ewono
Agbene Ako Soomeni
Ke boorla lorlee ni akefa shishi
Lerrle ameloo jwei aahuu
Ehiii gbi ete koraa, gbi ejwe soorn dani akefa shishi*

*Ni won kooe enaa wallue
eyele asamaan ke emlin jele
agbene kpa tsoe nshie*

*hu nakai noor, Sakumor ke gbatsue yiten fee shidaa sale
Okankani Boafo, wulormor azontoe
ebasaa Kpa We fee ke workooenaa fee won daleshi, Mafia ndaleshi*

*onipa yebia orse ayeyioo, yeyi woayeoo ewor nia woaye nti ooo, Yemo Obronni oo
onipa yebia orse ayeyioo, yeyi woayeoo ewor nia woaye nti oo*

*Yemo Obronni norni ofee nee
okewa La fee, won da bo shi
norni ofeenee
okewa La fee, won da bo shi*

*onipa yebia orse ayeyioo, yeyi woayeoo ewor nia woaye nti ooo, Yemo Obronni oo
onipa yebia orse ayeyioo, yeyi woayeoo ewor nia woaye nti oo*

*Yemo Obronni norni ofee nee
okewa La fee, won da bo shi
norni ofeenee
okewa La fee, won da bo shi
agbene shikiteelee
ke mankralo, mantse, ke akutsei atsemei fee afee nakai
aaoo nii me, naa me
afee nakai ee koni noryaa aba La
agbene koni noryaa aba La, norni yoor mina, magba nye fee
yijiemor sale ee, yijiemor sale.*

Sample 2 (English rendition, Author)

He deserves praise, he deserves praise
Yemo Obronni
Who has done so well in the *Lakpa* shrine house
The La priest of royalty
Who has done so well in the *Lakpa* shrine house
As we all can tell, from the old days,
This is not what the shrine house looked like, during the days of our fore-fathers
During the priestly reign of Kobla,
Also, as we remember, the fence around the shrine house was of stone
During those days,
There was no electrically generated light in the La community
During those days
There was no electricity, we only used lanterns as source of light
This fellow called Kojo Sardine
Came to build a brick wall in replacement of the stones at the shrine house;
He also built toilets and bathrooms and introduced electrically generated light
Truly thereafter,
There has not been any further development at the shrine house,

as known to the people and chiefs of La
Also, since the times of Agbonu, Rambo, and Elder Solo,
There have not been any renovations at all, and the town is just as it was
Hence, there was a major leakage in the roof of the shrine house
This old man, Yemo Obron
Has come to renovate the shrine house in its entirety
If our memory serves us right,
All our compounds became refuse dumps
This old man, Yemo Obron
Was the hero who arose with a solution
Also, this fellow called Ako Someni,
provided garbage trucks to transport the refuse heap
Truly the refuse was tackled for days
it took about three to four days to completely clear the compounds
The fence around our sacred grove
was cleaned in its entirety
Again, the ceremonial grounds of *Kpa-tso-shishi*
was all tidied up and the roof leakages fixed,
thus, he is worthy of praise
Katankani Bofo, the helper
has renovated the whole of *Lakpa* shrine and its ceremonial grounds
We are thanking him, Mafia thanks him

A person's good deeds deserve praise,
We are praising you for all that you have done, Yemo Obron
Yemo Obron, your handiworks have helped the whole of La
We therefore thank you

Yemo Obron, your handiworks have helped the whole of La
Therefore, we thank you
Now we beseech our chiefs, priests, and all traditional leaders
to emulate such exemplary works
Calling on our kinsmen,
Let us all follow suit to promote growth and development in La
Just to help us move forward as a people,
this is what I have on my heart and lips to foretell
He deserves praise, he deserves praise

Discussion - Sample 2

Similar to sample 1, the performance of this song is a call and response and repetition of lines are made to emphasize key sentences. In terms of the singing, it is also done without musical instruments, giving clarity to the harmony created by various parts - tenor, alto, and soprano. Here

again, inferring from the voices, the team consist of male and female backing vocalists with a male as cantor. Ga language is primarily used in the song but a few lines are in Twi. The use Twi language here is however, for the purpose of key message emphasis rather than an introduction of humour as observed in Sample 1. In contrast to the nature of the song in Sample 1, these lyrics do not make use of any satirical elements – proverbs or hyperbole, in expressions. The song is of praise and hence does not need to be concealed in anyway as it may have been in the case of a resistance song. The main import of the song is that, various members of the La community have contributed to development in different ways and it should be exemplary to all, especially to the community leaders. The subjects of praise in this song are select members of the La community, hence, the song can be classified as *yijiemorkpa*.

The song's lyrics offer praises to select personalities of the La community even though Yemo Obronu (*Lakpa* priest) is the main subject here. It serves the purpose of memorializing La community history, by the acknowledgement of community members for their notable contributions. For instance, aside the *Lakpa* priest, Kojo Sardine and Ako Someni are also acknowledged in the song for the various services rendered to the community. The song presents a timeline in which the shrine house did not receive any maintenance or renovation even though needed. It mentioned different reigns such as those of Agbonu, Rambo, and Nuumo Solo in which no renovation was done and this gives an idea of how long the building had been neglected. Numo Yemo Obronu is praised to be the hero who rose up to the occasion and performed the needed maintenance of the building. Aside this, he is also noted in the song for other contributions such as championing a fight against dumping of refuse at one of the sacred groves known as *Won koo* and the clearing of rubbish in the area around the *Lakpa* shrine. He is also praised for fixing the

leaking roofs at the Sakumo shrine and *Lakpa* shrine. He is described in the lyrics by many good qualities; as a brave man, a helper and a dancing priest with a flair of contemporary style (Azonto). In this song, the singing group seem to care less about concealing their identity, they mention the group's name as Mafia and take credit for thanking Yemo Obronon on his good deeds.

ebasaa Kpa We fee ke workooenaa fee,
He has come to fix *Kpa We* and the sacred grove,
won daleshi, Mafia ndaleshi
we thank him, Mafia thanks.

Also, the use of Twi language in the song highlights the key message. In listening to the performance, the dynamics of the music changed with an increase in harmony when it got to the lines;

onipa yebia orse ayeyioo, yeyi woayeoo ewor nia woaye nti ooo, Yemo Obronon oo
A person's good deeds deserve praise, we are praising you for what you have done, Yemo Obronon
onipa yebia orse ayeyioo, yeyi woayeoo ewor nia woaye nti oo
A person's good deeds deserve praise, we are praising you for what you have done.

The main message of the song, is that, when a person performs a good deed, he or she deserves praise and that is why Yemo Obronon is being praised in the song. Based on this line, the continuation of the song advocates for Yemo Obronon's contributions as exemplary and beseech the *Shiketeele, Mankralo*, paramount chief and divisional chiefs to all follow suit in contributing to the development of La.

3.6.3 Sample 3

Wor musun sha wor eee, naa wor musun sha wor, Dade ooo
wor musun sha wor eee, wor musun sha wor, Mafia mantse ee
mala berrma Osajifo
ornim adi tserer, nyansafo yen bu nu abe koraa, tatwalor wulu
wor kerr Osa Wansama
ebatswa ta saan yer La man
mala Osa, Dade Agboer
ebafa La he manjii atsemei le no
La mantse, ele no

*Mankraloe, ele no
Shikiteelee, ke akutsei atsemei fee leno yer La
Nii Nai Ashiama
ke Abese Adornten, Mafia ke no shakin fee tatse wulu
mala keji nyer yaa kaier
Homowo ba bor wor ye La man
keji nye yaa kaier
afi yeli borwor yer wor man
wor keer merni he ejer
ke akutsei Kpao fee,
pesenminkuminya pesenminkuminya ame ke amer he nhi naa
ener ha Osa Osa Wansaman/, Dade Agbo
kele ateshi oshwaa, Ayi Kwei robortuer yato hengaa
Amer mormor oblantai
Ni worhe morbor afile ke emlijele
Ke jer no serr
Ni majiatsemei fee ke amerhe wo mlin
Agbene mgbene mgbene
La afile ba tsor afi ni wor mliye ojogbaan
Lerrler ener baa ba
Ke baaa fee, Osa dade ke ba
ener baa ba
Ke baaa fee, Laate Joshua ke ba
Nyerserer afileer ni ayeer
worke le fee ye, ke emlin jele
afileer ni ayeer
worke Osa dade ye, ke emlin jele
2015 afi ner
Wor naaa Dade, naakper sane
workeer beni wor yaa bier
akeer Dade eshi jein eee, awurerho sane
beni wor yaa bier
Osa Wansaman eshidun eee, musun shamor sane
leerleer nipa abe ye bi
wan be ye ni nyinaa, yaa wor jogbaan
agbene La obrantai
ke manjin atsemei fee yer nya amanier
La obrantai
ke manjin tsemei fee worna sane
leerleern
okropon wulu efa yer Bonney man awurerho sane
tsoko wulu eku yer La man, wor nine enyer shi
Dade heni otee nerr
wornaaabo doorn, wor musu mlin shawor
leerleern
wor serr ko ni abaa na ohehiamor yer La man*

*Nii mer, Naa mer
wor serr ko ni abaa na onitsumor yer Bonney kpeeshi
wor nda men ni sumoor bo
ke men ni nyeor bo feee, wor nda amershi
keji bodierntse ogbele
yerma wo dumirifa, dumirifa, dumirifa
yerma wo dumirifa, yaawor ojogbaan
keji adena gbe boer le
Tettey Lakpa, Koolo, ke Abese Afrimi feee abile sane, ni Jorbu ke Ashierle abile sane
Osa dade yaaba oo
yaabaa yaabaa
aoo nyiemei
wor musu mlin shawor
Nii merr,
wor musu mlin shawor eee, wor musun shawor
Dade Agboee
wor musu mlin shawor eee, wor musun shawor*

Sample 3 (English rendition, Author)

We are in panic and dismay; we are in panic and dismay, for our dear Dade
We are in panic and dismay; we are in panic and dismay, for the king of Mafia
I will sing of a redeemer
an intelligent mentor, a wiseman who does not need to be spoken to in proverbs
and a great warrior,
We refer to the spirit of our dear Osa Wansama
Who has been victorious in a lot of fights in the La township
We refer to the spirit of our dear Osa dade
Who has defended our La township and our leaders know this.
The La paramount chief knows this, the Mankralo knows this,
the Shiketele and all divisional chiefs of La knows this
He was a great warrior
for Nii Nai Ashiama, Abese - Adonten, Mafia, and No shaking
If all would remember, our yearly celebrations were deserted some time ago.
We say, how did this come about?
Due to selfishness, all the ten divisions were in conflict
And this made our dear Osa Wansama and Laryea Joshua, Ayikwei the robot
to rise up with a solution
They mobilized the La youth and put them to work
As a result, our sorrows ended as we celebrated the year in its entirety
Ever since, all leaders of the town have been encouraged to get involved
Today, the La yearly celebration has become a festival that is well celebrated
If this would have happened, or would not have happened,
It is because of Osa dade and Lartey Joshua
In the recent festival
We celebrated well with him
In the recent festival

We celebrated together with Osa dade
In this year 2015, to our shock,
there is no sight of Dade anywhere
When we asked, we were told Dade has passed on from the world.
We are in dismay, this is sorrowful.
Truly Dade, people come to make contributions,
but not to achieve it all, go rest in peace.
For this, the youth and chiefs of La, are in trouble.
Truly, a great eagle has departed from the Bonney township, this is sorrowful.
A great tree has fallen in La township, we are disadvantaged.
Dade, with your departure,
we shall not see you again, we are in sorrow.
Truly, someday,
your significance shall be recognized in the town of La,
The value of your works shall be recognized in Bonney township.
For those who love you and for those who hate you,
we thank them all.
If your death was of a natural cause,
then we wish you a peaceful rest, and may your soul be comforted
If your death was of a human cause,
Then may your perpetrator be answerable to *Lakpa, Koolo, Abese-Afirimi,*
Dzorbu and Ashieele
Osa dade, fare thee well
We are dismayed, we are in shock
Brothers and sisters
We are dismayed, we are in shock

Discussion - Sample 3

The song mourns a key member of the singing group who has passed on. It talks about his good deeds as an active member of society and his general impact in the La community. Following the usual performance style of call and response, this performance is in a cappella, with a team of backing vocalists – notably tenor and bass. Contrary to Sample 1 and Sample 2, this performance did not include any female voice (according to listening observation), the backup vocalists were all male as well as the lead vocalist. Repetitions are made in some particular lines to stress the message they carry. These lines are usually sung between three to four times on the call of the lead vocalist. For instance, the opening line;

Wor musun sha wor eee, naa wor musun sha wor, Dade ooo

We are in panic and dismay, we are in panic and dismay, for our dear Dade
wor musun sha wor eee, wor musun sha wor, Mafia mantse ee
We are in panic and dismay, we are in panic and dismay, for the king of Mafia
Mala berrma Osajifo
I will sing of a redeemer
ornim adi tserer, nyansafo yen bu nu abe koraa, tatwalor wulu
an intelligent mentor, a wiseman who does not need to be spoken to in proverbs
and a great warrior,

These songs are rendered about four times to emphasize the sorrow shared by the group and establish the identity of the personality being mourned. Similar to Sample 1, the lead vocalist ad-libs between the repeated lines but in contrast, he does not receive any affirming comments by backing vocalists. Even though the lyrics of this song are suggestive of a dirge, the performance follows the same steady tempo as Sample 1 and Sample 2. Here again, multi-language use is evident. The Ga language is primary but some key phrases, proverbs and lines are sung in Twi. This is also to throw light on key expressions. For instance;

Mala berrma Osajifo
I will sing of a redeemer
ornim adi tserer, nyansafo yen bu nu abe koraa
an intelligent mentor, a wiseman who does not need to be spoken to in proverbs
tatwalor wulu
and a great warrior

The first line of the song shows a transition from Ga to Twi language, with ‘Mala’ (I will sing) being Ga and the rest from ‘*berrma Osajifo*’ (a redeemer) being Twi. The second line contains what seems to be an irregular proverb which can be interpreted in two ways. There is a common proverbial expression in Ga and Twi that translates as “A word to the wise is in enough”. It means that, a wise person does not need to be given a lengthy speech or advised on more than one occasion. Because of his or her ability to comprehend indirect references, advice to him or her is usually in proverbs. This is also to say that, a fool does not need to be spoken to in proverbs. In the case of this song, however, the expression is “a wiseman who does not need to be spoken to in

proverbs”. This may be sarcastic when interpreted out of context. By taking into account the information given before and after the proverbial phrase, a better understanding can be established. Before the expression, there is a qualification in the previous line, “a redeemer” and in the line of the expression, “an intelligent mentor” and “a great warrior”. The expression is therefore to say that, Osa was a responsible person who was conscious and tactful in his actions, and hence, did not require advice. The reference to him as a warrior is not to be taken literally as one who had been engaged in armed battles but rather as one who was brave and experienced in advocating for reformation in La. The word “dade” in Ga means steel. Hence, by referring to Osa Wansama in the song as Osa dade, is to infer that Osa was a “man of steel”. This nickname could have been earned by him from his active involvement in the frontline of fights in La township. In the lines;

Wor musun sha wor eee, naa wor musun sha wor, Dade ooo
We are in panic and dismay, we are in panic and dismay, for our dear Dade
wor musun sha wor eee, wor musun sha wor, Mafia mantse ee
We are in panic and dismay, we are in panic and dismay, for the king of Mafia

Osa is recognized as leader of the Mafia singing group. The name “Mafia” is suggestive of a group of radical singers probably interested in advocating for socio-political change. Aside this, he is also acknowledged as a great warrior to the many groups he belonged to, including Nii Nai Ashiama (a patrilinear family house), Abese – Adonten (part of the Abese division of La) and No Shaking (a group of activists responsible for reinstating the celebration of Homowo in La). The song goes on to support the claim that Osa with the support of one Lartey Joshua, brought back to life Homowo in La after it was neglected for some time. The neglect was due to instability of leadership that was characterized by selfishness and conflict. A reference to ten divisions that engaged in conflict was made. The instability gave rise to further divisions as some groups wanted to separate from others. As at 2019, eight divisions were officially recognized in La according to the people. The song also provides a sense of time with the reference to 2015 when Osa died and

could not celebrate with Mafia as he did in the previous year. The Akan saying “*nipa abe ye bi, wan be ye ni nyinaa*” (people come to make contributions, but not to achieve it all) is used to express satisfaction about what Osa was able to contribute as a member of society. The vacuum created in La society by his death is acknowledged with analogies in the lines:

Okropon wulu efa yer Bonney man, awurerho sane
Truly, a great eagle has departed from the Bonney township, this is sorrowful.
tsoko wulu eku yer La man, wor nine enyer shi
A great tree has fallen in La township, we are disadvantaged.

The first line represents Osa as an eagle, in emphasis of his qualities as a strong person of great foresight. The reference to the falling of a great tree in line two, however, infers a cut in support and benefits enjoyed by different people who depended on him. The song ends with a summoning of deities to pass judgement on the culprits, if his death was an orchestration. This demonstrates the belief of La people in the potency of supernatural beings. It also shows the awareness of the song composer that, Osa’s deeds did not only attract well-wishers but also haters who could have possibly caused his death.

Sample 3 is therefore a variant of *kpa* music which mourns the dead. It however advocates for the replication of exemplary deeds by youth and leaders of the La community. The song also portrays the use of proverbs and analogies among La people.

3.7 Role and Significance of *Kpa* Songs

The findings of this research suggest that *Kpa* songs play various roles among the people of La. Contrary to the general misconception of it being just a lampoon instrument, *Kpa* songs are used in performances of religious rituals by means of praises, worship and incantations. This is typical of the *Amlakuakpa* category, the only music used in the performance of religious rituals during

Homowo in La. Some of the songs are meant to influence lifestyles and promote some values among the community members. Socially accepted values such as respect for all, fairness, community service and charity are encouraged through these songs while unacceptable behaviours like adultery, greed, selfishness, cheating, theft, corruption and injustice are condemned. This is done in the spirit of building a better community for all of La people.

Freedom of speech is key to the use of *Kpa-son-kpa*. Without censorship, this type of music allows members of the La public to freely voice out their concerns and opinions during the period of Homowo. Homowo may be seen as a shared heritage among La people, as its annual celebration brings together the community members to promote peace and unity. *Kpa shimo* is one way by which community members let out their grievances. The music allows the general public to critique leadership structures, groups and personalities within society. Through this, it opposes behaviours and ideologies which are considered socially unacceptable in La.

Performance of *kpa* songs may be considered to be a way by which people of La memorialize the past. Some of the songs refer to historic battles and engagements with other groups of people. For instance, the mentioning of Aguizei, Katamanso, Oyibi, Ajangote and Fafraha in Sample 1 suggests the extent of La territory in the past and possible settlement locations. Also, the mention of names like Maale Dada and Mantse Anyetei as some past paramount chiefs of La can help trace the lineages of royal families in La and this may be a contributing solution in resolving chieftaincy issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Summary

Music is a very powerful medium of communication, hence, its integration into ceremonies of various people such as the Ga. It conveys feelings and thoughts in a language of its own without much censorship compared to communication through speech. As an important assert of heritage, *Kpa* music as performed by the people of La and Teshi, is a platform for society to exercise freedom of speech. It empowers the general public to freely voice out their evaluations of society and this usually involves a critique of select personalities, groups and institutions of the community.

The aim of this study was to seek relationships that may be found between *kpa* songs of the La people in order to provide meaning and establish the music's role in social resistance in the La community. This was based on the understanding that, resistance is an act of opposition which can be either direct or disguised (Hollander & Einwohner 2004; Lilja, Baaz, Schulz & Vinthagen 2017; Scott 1989; Vinthagen & Johansson 2013). The study hence, borrowed from the concept of 'everyday resistance' whose key characteristic is the use of disguise such as satire to conceal actions of opposition (Scott 1989: 54).

4.1 Conclusions

This research started with an idea that *kpa shimo* is a Ga musical tradition in Homowo which is performed to expose and ridicule ills in society. Nevertheless, exploring the topic and examining the imports of selected song lyrics revealed that, this idea is a misconception to certain extents.

Kpa shimo is not limited to exposing or ridiculing society's ills and neither is it akin to Homowo in all Ga traditional areas.

The research findings suggest that satirical elements in *kpa* music conceal oppositional acts in street parading and singing by groups of the general public. This evinced in Sample 1 where hyperbole and proverbs were used in expressing opposition against socially unacceptable behaviours of select leaders which included a paramount chief. This demonstrates characteristics of everyday resistance hence, the role of *kpa* music as a vehicle of resistance in society.

Kpa songs are not necessarily meant to satirize personalities, groups or institutions in society, as Sample 2 of songs exemplify. The music can be categorized as religious, political and social. *Kpa-son-kpa* (also known as *ayeleakpa*) appears to be the only category of the music whose popular characteristic is lampooning authorities.

Also, the celebration of Homowo in Ga traditional areas is similar as far as the general concept of celebrating abundance of food is concerned. The individual Ga speaking groups however, share some differences in their celebrations rather than what seem to be generic accounts presented (example, Quartey-Papafio 1919; Reindorf 1895). In La, there is a ritual for the ban on noisemaking during pre-homowo activities which is called *Gbemlilaa* or *Kpoo-ke-dioo*. This is different from Teshi and other Ga traditional areas where the millet sowing ritual automatically implies a ban on noisemaking. The ritual of millet sowing is also performed by the people of La but does not necessarily imply the ban until the *Gbemlilaa* ritual is performed. In addition, the people of Teshi perform a whole week community cleansing activity known as *Tsesefaa* and *Tesebumor* with *Tsesefaa* referring to the beginning and *Tesebumor* as the end. This involves carrying a pot of consecrated water with herbs and walking around the entire town. As identified by

Akwetteh (2017) and Marshall (2014), this tradition is not of La but of Teshi. The people of La perform the cleansing ritual of *Bloiahejuu* which does not follow the same cleansing concept of *Tesefaa* and *Tsesebumor*.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on experience from the field during data collection and the presentation of these in the dissertation, the researcher recommends:

1. A combination of audio-visual media with writing when conducting research on or associated with material culture. This is to facilitate documentation, illustration and analysis.

Also, from the outcome of this study, the researcher identifies some knowledge gaps which when explored can yield results to facilitate better understanding and appreciation of the integration of satirical music in some Ghanaian festivals. In the light of this, the researcher recommends:

2. A cross-cultural study of *kpa* music and its performance between the people of La and the people of *Teshi*, to assess similarities and variations in the musical tradition and their impacts on society.
3. A comparative study between the *kpa-son-kpa* category of La and the satirical songs used in other Ghanaian festivals.

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APPENDIX I

Sample pre-set questions for interviews:

1. What is *kpa shimo*?
2. When and where is it practiced?
3. What is the significance of *kpa* songs to La Homowo and are they performed merely to expose ill in society?
4. Who composes the songs?
5. Who performs them?

Some spontaneous questions asked based on information provided by respondents during the interviews:

1. Who are the *Amlaku*?
2. What is their role in *kpa shimo*?
3. At what stage in Homowo celebration does *kpa shimo* take place?
4. How many times is the it performed?
5. Is the dance performed at a specific location?
6. Are all the *kpa shimo* ceremonies performed at the same location?
7. When do groups of the general public perform their songs?
8. Does it ever pose an interference with the *Amlaku*'s *kpa shimo*?
9. What is meant by *Bloiahejuu*?
10. What is *Nanekpa-mormor* and how does it differ from the regular *kpa* performance of the *Amlaku*?

APPENDIX II

Please find below a link to the ethnographic film (14mins in duration) produced as supplementary material for this research. The ceremony captured in this audio-visual documentation is a performance of *Kpa* music and dance by the people of La which took place on August 28, 2019 at La *Kpa-tso-shishi*.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hYMAkiToeA31xVkAzwC1vI2rp6a9j6Wc>