

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Northern Ghana Contemporary Idioms of Music Making in Tamale

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we discuss the results of a survey study we conducted in the cosmopolitan city of Tamale on the local urban informal popular music industries we called the Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Northern Ghana. By means of music examples, we show how traditional African idioms of music-making creatively blend with cross-cultural and cross-musical components that stem from Africa, Afro-American, Bollywoodish and Western inspired idioms of music making. The aim of the survey study was to map the radius, location, and organization of the local informal popular urban music industries in and around Tamale, including its artists, stakeholders and various distribution channels. We conducted a survey research on the consumption of music in this city in both the digital idioms and the traditional idioms of music making and a survey on transformational processes, continuity and change in the traditional and contemporary idioms of music making in several Senior High Schools in and around Tamale. The paper starts with a small introduction on the dynamics of music making in the traditional and contemporary idioms in Dagbon society with the emphasis on the Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Tamale. The Dagbon Hiplife Zone is an intangible cultural in-betweenness where transformational processes are taking place. It is a mind-set where new musical idioms are developed. Traditional idioms of music making are blended and merged with contemporary idioms of music making. The fusion of traditional structural and cultural components into new idioms of music making is in Dagbon represented in “The Hiplife Zone”, an intangible liminal imaginary creative time space zone of cultural interaction. Music components coming from the traditional idiom interact with components coming from the local, regional and global contemporary idioms of music making. It is a mind-set of the young talented creative artists, working and exploring new ways, methods and ideas of making and creating music by interacting with each other on the level of the local informal music industry in Tamale. The concept of the “Northern Ghanaian Artists” as a cultural cosmopolitan identity for the local artists in Tamale is a very interesting phenomenon and a good example how cultural identities are blended, created and represented

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Background of the project in Dagbon

This project started as an archiving and documentation project (1999 – 2010) and aimed at documenting an endangered traditional music-dance culture of *Dagbon*. However, this project resulted in a comparative study on how key elements coming from the traditional African idioms of music making transforms, reflects, merges and continue to exist in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Ghana, a hybrid and local Ghanaian techno – pop and contemporary urban music culture in Tamale. The music and dance

culture was studied throughout the Northern Regions. We limited the documentation and archiving fieldwork to the traditional music-dance idioms of *Dagbon* and compared it with the contemporary urban idioms of music making in *Dagbon* culture. Knowledge on *Dagbon* musical culture and how key elements of embodied music interaction in the African idioms of music making can be understood true the study of cultural ambivalence, movement and expressive components. The bulk of the research comes from compared analysis we extracted from our field data in dialogue with the local informants, court musicians and key figure of the local music industry in *Dagbon* for feedback. The field data is archived at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren Belgium and at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon.



Map 1. Map of Northern Ghana showing *Dagbon* and the geographical scope the research area.

This research is setup in a bottom up longitudinal research model with a top down working hypothesis we extracted from our field data. In short called “The Grounded Theory”. Important in such a research setup is to uncover the underlying premises of the research design. The research is focused on transformational processes in musical idioms. Its aim is to contribute with important key factors and structural and cultural key components to the understanding of the dynamics of music making in *Dagbon* society and the cosmopolitan city of Tamale. In the past months we received various responses and feedback concerning my writings from local musicians and stake holders e.g. Sheriff Ghale, Latief Alhassan, and different colleagues in the fields of systematical musicology, ethnomusicology and cultural anthropology that we incorporated in our research design. Basically, the outcome of this research contributes with valuable knowledge about the understanding on how "man" as an individual, active member of a society and culture, as a creative artist, producer and consumer of arts, parent and fellow man, lives, participates, influences, adapt and deals with cultural transformational processes in an African urban context. Are cultural phenomena e.g. music-dance in fast-growing and changing African societies - as it currently occurs in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone-, similar to other fast-growing music- dance cultures in other parts of Africa. Do we see similarities, are there local differences and variations etc. We approach these research questions by placing various imaginary filters on the dynamic and thriving cosmopolitan urban music-dance culture in the Northern parts of Ghana, so we can look at it and approach it from different angles.

The main filter we use to work with is the theoretical paradigm of “Embodied Music Interaction”¹ [1], [2]. It is an imaginary theoretical concept and mind-set assuming that *Dagbon* music-dance has rational structural and cultural elements in the architectural structure of its music-dance and contains e.g. an oneness in combination with a movable one, contains both homeostasis and transitional states in its structural components, simultaneous superposition of both simple and duple meter structures in a grid, has elementary and double elementary pulse-lines interlocking with each other on the level of the grid. The theory assumes also that both metrical structures can be simultaneously perceived by its performers.

The second filter we use to approach our data is the phenomenon of "cultural ambivalence" and the simultaneous presence of duality in the perception of opposing cultural dimensions and socio-economic spaces in *Dagbon*. Another filter is the interaction

between the traditional and the contemporary idioms of music making, its representation, production, reproduction and distribution of digital music as digital media in the Hiplife Zone and the creation and representation of the cosmopolitan hybrid identity the “Northern Ghanaian Artist” in the Hiplife Zone. The concept of the Hiplife Zone derives directly and organically out of the fieldwork done in Tamale and is used by the Northern Artists to describe their own music-dance hybrid identities relating music-dance productions. The creation of the “Hiplife Zone” in Northern Ghana had to be done to distinguish the urban contemporary idioms of music making in the Northern Regions of Ghana from the Southern music-dance idioms of music making. The *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone contain the urban contemporary popular idioms of music making including the traditional idioms who creatively blended and transformed into these new hybrid idioms of music making. The term “The Hiplife Zone” stands on its own and has little connection with the local hip-hop variant called Hiplife music.

The *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone is an imaginary filter, a liminal time-space, an intangible cultural in-betweenness in which the traditional idioms of music making interact, transform and blend with new hybrid urban Afro- American, Western into a local urban Afro-pop idiom of music making. In short this is what we mean with the phenomenon “Hiplife Zone”. It is a time – space liminal transitional imaginary zone of cultural interaction, an intangible transitional zone of cultural in-betweenness. We look forward what the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone the next decade will produce on new music materials and how musicians working in this intangible zone will deal with these new challenges. In this article we present and discuss some of our result coming directly out of our field data.

1 Introduction to the dynamics of music making in *Dagbon* society

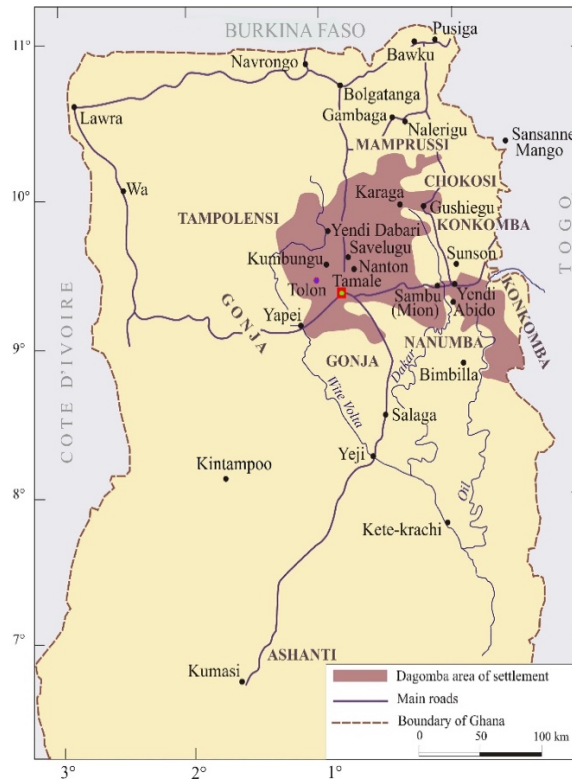
1.0 *Dagbon* music and dance culture

Dagbon, is the land and the traditional state of the Dagomba people in contemporary Ghana, and is situated in the Sudan Savannah Belt of the Northern Region in Ghana. Its traditional culture and way of living is in symbioses with social, religious and traditional political structures of each *Dagbon* community, strictly controlled by an institution of traditional customs towards cultural production and music and dance performances enforced, promoted by the king the *Ya Na* and the various local chiefs, and a huge council of elders at the different local courts. It is a complex and well organized dynamic -mainly agricultural-traditional society in economic expansion and in a mode of a great transition towards urbanization, globalization and more individualism.

The administrative and commercial Centre of the Northern Region is Tamale, whereas the traditional cultural capital is Yendi, the city where the king, (or *Ya Na*) reigns over *Dagbon*. The language spoken is *Dagbani*, which is a Gur - language. *Dagbon* was a feudal state and the society is still subdivided into “The Royals” (the aristocracy or chiefs with their offspring, the *nabih*); “The Commoners” (or local people, called *tarimba* or *Dagbanbabba*), and “The *Tindana*” (the original inhabitants of the Northern territory and the custodians of the land) and “*Tindana bihi*” (the offspring of the *tindana*) [3]. Due to urbanization and associated developments in Tamale, we identified settlements of new groups of people that we call “the *urban class*” who are the newcomers in the city or urban townspeople [4]. In the *Dagbani* lexicon [5] there is now word for the phenomenon music-making. Dagombas divide music-making in (*yila*), singing, songs; (*waa*) dance, and (*baanga*) a poet and story-teller, a traditional singers and musicians, as well as the musical instruments or musicians who play these musical instruments e.g. a *lunga*, (a closed double skinned hourglass-shaped drums) or a tom-tom beater; a *gonje*, (a one string fiddle) or a traditional fiddler. *Dagbon* has a rich cultural heritage of music-dance performances in the traditional idiom of music making. Music-making in *Dagbon* is subdivided into four main categories e.g.: The traditional idioms of music-making, the contemporary urban idioms of music-making, the ritual- sacral idioms of music-making and the idioms of festival music-dance.

The traditional idiom of music-making is very prominent at the court of the *Ya Na* and promoted by the local chiefs at the various local courts in the urbanised towns and villages. There are ritual idioms of music and dance-making linked to the shrines of *tindana* (the local earth priest and their offspring) and the different intracultural musical family clans in *Dagbon*. The urban popular idioms of music-making are represented in the “*Dagbon* Hiplife Zone” an imaginary zone in the contemporary urban idiom and the *Dagbon* entertainment industries. Annual festival music-dance e.g. Damba festival, *Kunyuri Chugu* and the *Chimshi Chugu* festivals are public performances which are linked to both traditional and ritual idioms of music-making.

Dagbon is a good example of a place that is in full expansion and involved in a large transition of cultural transformation in the Sudan Savannah Belt. *Dagbon* is a place which is in a state of a great transition towards cultural globalization through the introduction and implementation of new applied technologies concerning the digital production, reproduction, distribution and consumption of local popular music forms, as well as the rise of new African techno-pop genres and cyber based audiences.



Map 2. Map of Ghana showing *Dagbon* and the geographical scope the research area.

Tamale is a multicultural cosmopolitan city and has a mixed population, due to urbanization and associated cultural and economic developments [6], [7]. The main ethnicity represented in Tamale are the Dagbomba, but there are also settlements of Hausa, Zambarma, Akan, Bono, Mamprusi, Frafra and Kassena. Each community has its own local chief with elders including its traditional musicians practices.

The Hausa Zongo bands are ensembles of traditional Hausa musicians. Tamale has a population of c.a. 360.000ⁱⁱ people [8]. Tamale is one of the fastest growing African Metropolitan cities located at a crossroad in the heart of the Sudan Savanna Belt and functions as a central gateway for regional, national and international transport systems to Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Ivory Coast, Southern Ghana (e.g. Kumasi and Accra), and the major towns and local villages in the Northern Region such as Tolon, Savelugu, Karaga, WaleWale, Navrongo and Bolgatanga.

Tamale has an international airport and a multi-purpose stadium [9],[10] where regional and international music concerts are taking place and entertainment for the youth is performed [11]. In addition to its socio-economic aspects, Tamale is also the seat of UDS, the University of Development Studies Campus Tamale [12].



Map 3. Map of Tamale Central showing the main roads to the local towns, quarters, divisions and sections of the city. Tamale is a conglomerate of small villages and urbanised towns located on a cross-road. Google maps 2018.

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Northern Ghana Contemporary Idioms of Music Making in Tamale

The city functions as the cradle for cultural transformational processes and hybridization processes in music-dance e.g. Hiplife, a local Ghanaian techno-pop [13]. Tamale functions as a distribution gate for the urban popular culture industry in *Dagbon* [14], [15]. It is the place where the local traditional culture meets and merges with the global digital culture industry.

Consequently, the traditional idioms of music making merges and mixes with other types of music coming from the contemporary idioms of music making in an imaginary zone we described as “The Hiplife Zone” [7], [9], [14], [15]. On the one hand, we have the traditional idioms of music making that clashes, interact and transform with the contemporary cultural idioms. These cultural transformational processes of pre-emption create a local dynamic in the city that is quite unique for this region. In the middle of the above photo selection we see two young *lunsi* market drummers alongside a local Hiplife artists within the same experienced urban space but in a different experienced time-space. It is an intangible cultural in-betweenness in a liminal transitional state of a transforming cultural merging into new glocal cosmopolitan hybrid identities of music making.

The basic transformation is that from an earlier agrarian society where the extended families unit was used as the basis model, to an Afro American - Western urbanized nucleus society model. The different cultural transformation processes that are currently going on are related to globalization, urbanization, and digitalization its arts and information. This creates new expansions, challenges and dynamics within these “New Hidden Cities”, like Tamale in the Northern Region, Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The younger generations prefer a Western society nucleus model over the traditional African model of the extended family unit; or better stated: the new model is a reflection of the Western family nucleus model, in practice there are all kinds of variation within the nucleus.

In these new environments, an individual’s behavior will be partly determined by the cultural conditioning that took place in his youth. However, human beings have abilities to deviate from this and respond in ways that are new, creative, destructive or unexpected. The essence here is that culture is a dynamic learned system that is in a constant state of resonance and flux. We describe phenomenon like liminal space/subaltern position of some of the musicians and the performers within the dominant cultural sphere of the *Dagbon* communities and the consciousness of an emerging hybrid cosmopolitan identity among its performers and audience. This new urban music scene is influenced by various interactions of the surrounding traditional and modern music cultures. We describe how these transformation processes took place and how they establish a new urban music scene linked with a “pop identity”.

The new “hybrid cosmopolitan identity” is linked with the different music styles found in the city. It’s subculture appearance can be described as “*Neo tribes*”, which is in a mode of a great transition, a liminal space and can be described as an emerging identity. This hybrid identity is located within a liminal space of transition which is on the one hand bound on traditional Dagomba customs within the tolerance values of this traditional *Dagbon* culture and Afro-American Western influents identity. The tolerance of the dominant Dagomba culture and the demarche of the globalization discourse lies at the basis of this new hybrid cosmopolitan identity as an in-betweenness of two liminal zones, the traditional - and the contemporary identity.

The demarche of cultural hybridism and its globalization discourse in Tamale is linked to a young dynamic music business and its artists. It is interesting to note that the dichotomies and cultural ambivalence e.g. “the traditional idioms of music making and the contemporary idioms of music making ” and “continuity and change” in this part of Africa has its own creative interpretation.



Photo 1. The above selection photos shows a variety of cultural aspects concerning glocalization and cultural ambivalence in the metropolitan city of Tamale. Tamale October 2018.

The production, reproduction and distribution of music-dance in this multicultural urban space is characterized by applied digital technologies e.g. the mobile phone industries and mobile internet providers, online music providers, applied multimedia productions e.g. The Northern Ghana Entertainment Awards in cooperation with Smile Multimedia Agency etc., [16] and intercultural transformational processes coming from the traditional African idioms of music making merged and mixed with elements coming from the contemporary urban digital idioms of music making into a digital art from they describe as the “New School of Contemporary Hiplife in Northern Ghana” represented and embodied in the cosmopolitan identity of the “Northern Ghanaian Artist” in Ghana e.g. Maccasio, Fancy Gadam, Sherifa Gunu, Deensi, Mohammed Alidu, Umar Janda and Abu Sadiq as “The Northern Ghanaian Artists”.ⁱⁱⁱ

The term covers both traditional and contemporary idioms. The concept of the “Northern Ghanaian Artist” is in use in Tamale. The creation of the music identity the “Northern Ghanaian Artist” by the contemporary artists in Tamale is a very interesting cosmopolitan phenomenon and a good example how cultural identities are blended, created and represented in cyberspace e.g. digital online radio stations, social network platforms, social media and local online advertisements.

1.1 Culture as a mental program

In this study we approach “culture” as a dynamic phenomenon and a “collective mental programming” and a learned system of behaviour. “It is the collective mental programming that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people apart from those of others” [17]. Human beings are social individuals that live in communities that may be part of larger social groups called societies. A society is a group of people who conceive of themselves as distinct from other groups. All human groups develop complex systems of ideas, feelings and survival strategies, cultural and subcultural identities. There are approximately 4000 cultures on earth with their diversity of cultural production and expressive forms of arts, including music and dance of a group of people. According to the anthropologists Clifford Geertz, culture is not a set of abstract ideas in people’s minds. It is the sum of social interaction that has already taken place. Yet the traditional definition is quite different. Culture is “whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members” [18].

Culture can be defined as a learned system of symbols, beliefs, concepts of time, feelings, language, values, norms, division of labour and rules of living. It is a way of organizing live of a particular group. Cultural programming of an individual is done during the early childhood years by the parents and the family and later on by the regular educational systems, neighbourhood, the street, friends, the youth association, jobs and labour, the residential community where a person grows up.

1.2 Idioms of music making in *Dagbon* society

West Africa, where cultural change is prominent and manifested in a transformation that affects a traditional idioms of music making in the context of rapid globalisation and urban development. We thereby identify key elements related to embodied interaction with music, and the cultural change that affects this interaction, showing that several elements of the traditional music-dance idioms are playing an important role in the ongoing cultural transformational processes.

Music making in *Dagbon* consist of different music-dance idioms. The traditional idiom of music-dance making and the contemporary popular urban idiom of music making [4]. Both idioms interact with each other in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone. A music-dance idiom itself is a characteristic mode of expression of a particular culture [19], [20] and are characterized by key elements that contributes to the development and sustenance of a particular music-dance culture. A music-dance idiom can be imagined as a basket filled with accepted music-cultural aspects that meet the expectations of a group of musicians, dancers, performers working within a specific music-dance idiom.

Among these accepted music-cultural components are e.g. aesthetic aspects that musicians can select when performing music-dance, the use of an idiomatic music vocabulary, the particular language used, the lyrical use of proverbs, the performance practice, the selection of musical instruments and timbres and the creation of music identities e.g. Northern Ghanaian Artist. *Dagbon* is a place which is in a state of a great transition towards cultural globalization through the implementations of new technologies concerning the digital production, reproduction, distribution and consumption of local popular music, as well as the rise of new African techno-pop genres and cyber based audiences. The music-dance selected for this study comes from the traditional idiom of music making and not from the contemporary idioms we named the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Ghana. Elements of the traditional musical culture of *Dagbon* are changing and which cultural and musical aspects continue to exist in the urban space is one of the main questions in this research. The latter is well-represented in the city of Tamale. We focus on the local music industry, the informal and local music markets, music identity and identifies in music, the existing of club cultures and subcultures, “Neo tribes” and neo-tribalism in *Dagbon*, from the viewpoint of a postcolonial discourse. A cultural transformational process implies a change in cultural production and expressive forms of art, including music and dance, of a group of people. A culture can thereby be defined as a system of symbols, beliefs, concept of time, feelings, language, values, norms, labor and rules; in short it is a way of organizing live of a particular group of people. Inside a culture, the formation of an individual is mostly done during the early childhood years by the parents and family, and later on by the neighborhood, the street, friends, the youth association, job and labor, the residential community where a person grows up. Accordingly, growing

up in the *Dagbon* society, a rural space, with traditional institutions and an agricultural way of living, will be rather different than growing up in a cosmopolitan urbanized space. Nevertheless, individuals who are culturally formed in this society can still function and flourish in a society whose cultural environment is rapidly changing. Individuals are adaptive to other individuals that have been culturally formed in different ways, perhaps in another culture, or in a transformed culture. Therefore, an urban place that evolved from the traditional rural place would be a place where individuals have to adapt their traditional cultural codes and habits to the new cultural codes and habits.

1.3 Traditional idioms of music making

The traditional idiom of music making in *Dagbon* is institutionalized by the *Ya Na* at the moment *Anno* 2019, *Ya Na* Abukari II at the court in Yendi and by several provincial chiefs in the urbanized towns and local chiefs in the villages. According to traditional customs in *Dagbon*, the traditional idiom of music making forms part of a cultural system embodied by an institution of traditional chiefs and elders which are the main sponsors, organisers and promoters of that music-dance idiom.

The traditional idiom of music making is in *Dagbon* institutionalized. It is an aggregate of mutually related common features shared by this particular musical culture and has been characterized by the following key components: Cultural agreements on the place and time of performance practice, the function of music-dance in society, the call and response singing style and choral organization, the use of particular drum rhythms and drum riddles, solo performances and ensembles, the lyrical use of proverbs and the use of traditional musical instruments.

Some other common features of *Dagbon* music are the African hemiola style [21], “The Intensity Factor” [22], homeostasis and transitional states in the drum accompaniment and the ability to embody rhythmic complexity in dance movements. Indeed, bodily movement in *Dagbon music* is a key component to “hearing” the music [23], [24]. The traditional idiom of music-dance in *Dagbon* also allows variations, transformations and changes over time [4]. The institutionalisation of traditional music-dance in *Dagbon* is not further explained here in this paper. In short, that is material for another paper and has been extensively discussed and published by other scholars please see: [25],[26],[27],[28],[29],[30],[31],[32],[33].

Each of these works describes in depth particular key components of the traditional idioms of music making in *Dagbon* society.

1.4 Contemporary idioms of music making

A very good example of such a Post - Colonial hybrid cultural transformation, - which is used as a cultural programming of the youth-, is the phenomenon “hip-hop music” and its local variant Hiplife. The introduction and the promoting of the Hip-Hop culture by the music industry is a fact. Hip-hop is an urban musical culture that emerged as a world wide cultural phenomenon. It is sung in the local languages and has an especially the lyrical use of words has a direct impact on the cultural and social behavior and the formations of a cultural identity of the youth culture. It has such an impact that we can speak of a mental programming of a global youth culture through the use of hip-hop music that is transformed into a local hip-hop music. Local Hip-hop in Ghana is called Hiplife. It is a term that we use to identify an intangible liminal zone where these new transformations of the urban idioms take place. “The Hiplife Zone” that we here propose is much larger than just the local hip-hop music and dance scene in Tamale, this includes aspects of cultural transformation of local culture in the community into a more individualized urban society. This includes the promoting of urban fashion, the use of urban propaganda and media, the creation of urban hybrid identities such as the local Hiplife music styles which are linked to the phenomenon of DJ’s. The urban music and local dance clubs setup and sponsored by the music industry coming from the southern parts of Ghana etc. Contemporary idioms of music making in *Dagbon* are represented in “The Hiplife Zone”, an intangible liminal imaginary creative zone were music components coming from the traditional idiom of music making interact with components coming from the local, regional and global contemporary idioms of music making. It is a mind-set of the young talented creative artists working and exploring new ways, methods and ideas of making and creating music by interacting with each other on the level of the local informal music industry in Tamale. By so doing creating and adding new electronic timbres and transforming musical and cultural components and materials coming from the traditional idiom with *e.g.* samples, voice vocoders, filters etc. into the local music-dance culture and club cultures in *Dagbon*. This transformation zone - where all these creative cultural transformational processes are taking place in the local informal music business -, is liminal and temporal in character, but forms the heart beat and core of the informal music industry in Tamale.

By so doing creating and adding new electronic timbres and transforming musical and cultural components and materials coming from the traditional idiom with *e.g.* samples, voice vocoders, filters etc. into the local music-dance culture and club cultures in *Dagbon*. It is located in the local home studio’s setup by the local artists, the various compact bedroom recordings, the help of the local radio stations and radio presenters, in and around the metropolitan city of Tamale. The music-dance which comes out of these unique Hiplife Zone is digital, hybrid in its origin and mainly found in cyberspace. This zone is imaginary in the sense that it is defined by a mind-set and by activities of musicians, such as ways of performing, of organizing the local informal music industry, and the markets. It is not a specific locality, although Tamale is a centre. In this “Hiplife Zone,” the

composition of new urban popular songs often happens at home, and recordings are mostly realized in music studios in the southern parts of Ghana.



Photo 2. A representation of the Northern Ghanaian Artist as a cultural identity in the traditional idioms of music making in *Dagbon*.

2 The organisation of the music industry in Tamale

2.1 The music industry in Tamale

Tamale functions as an economic driving force in Northern Ghana where economic and cultural transformational processes are taking place. It is the location where the ‘traditional economic institutions’ e.g. the local informal small scale markets and uncontrolled local market systems meet and clash with the formal global institutionalised economy of banking systems. The local informal way of life meets – clashes and merges with the world of the global institutionalised commodities, taxes and wages. Local informal markets are based on small scale business, self-regulated systems, different forms of reciprocity and the redistribution of goods [6], [14]. For the study on transformational processes in music-dance we made a distinction between local, regional and global transformational processes [7].

We approach cultural transformational processes as multidimensional dynamic processes in time, place and space. The music industry in Tamale is undergoing a huge transformation [7] in the way of production, digital distribution and consumption by streaming music e.g. online radio stations [34],[35]. Music as a streaming digital commodity has become mobile in Tamale and *Dagbon* in general. The self-regulated informal music business, small video and music shops, street markets and road vendors, roaming in Tamale with audio music cassettes and CD, which was during the period 2010-2013 at its pick. This informal local music industry has actually completely vanished and disappeared for the naked eye, but is not vanished for the insiders.

The local informal street markets and street vendors are still there but their goods and commodities are transformed into a new industry. It has given a new way and road to new entertainment industries linked to the introduction of new advanced multimedia technologies we call the mobile phone industries e.g. streaming of music via Facebook, YouTube, iTunes and the several online radio stations e.g. Zaa Radio and Radio Tamale. Tamale is since the introduction of electricity during the late 80’s and the introduction and application of multimedia technologies during the last 20 years in a technological and economic expansion, a great socio-cultural transition towards urbanization, globalization and individualism. These cultural transformational processes are nowadays not only present in the socio-cultural space in Tamale but also in the production and reproduction of digital music/dance. Elements coming from the traditional idiom of music making are transformed, and digitally processed with new elements of local and foreign music into contemporary art forms such as contemporary Highlife and local Hiplife music. The Tamale artist faces a number of challenges in the area of marketing and promotion. They have little access to the national television and broadcasting stations. There are copyright violations and piracy. There are widespread demands for payola. There is a lack of auxiliary human resource, in the form of managers, public relations officers, legal support, promoters, and lobbyists, for the young but dynamic music industry in Tamale [15].



Photo 3. Life concerts in the Tamale metropolitan city. Above: The Savannah Echoes Band with the famous guitar player Prince Mahama during the Abu Sadiq 20 years anniversary concert. Below: The local hiplife group Deensi. Tamale October 2018.

2.2 The Hiplife Zone: Developing contemporary idioms of music making

Tamale functions as an urban platform and distribution gate for the popular culture industry in the Northern Region of Ghana [4], [6]. It is the cradle of the contemporary urban popular idioms of music making in *Dagbon*. It is the place where the local traditional culture meets and merges with the global digital culture industries, and where the traditional form of music making fuses and mixes with the contemporary idioms^{iv} of music making in an imaginary zone we called “The Hiplife Zone”[7]. The *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone is a dynamical intangible liminal zone of cultural change, a cultural in-betweenness, a transitional dimension that symbolizes an imaginary third space between the traditional and the contemporary resulting from the emergence of a popular culture industry in Tamale. The hiplife zone is where the different forms of fast moving cultural transitions are taking place and where tensions tend to dissolve towards a stable state which generates new styles. Some of the features of the Highlife Zone in Tamale include cultural ambivalence, and the formation of a cosmopolitan identity.



Photo 4. A representation of the traditional cultural idioms of the Northern Ghanaian Artist in the contemporary idioms of music making. Left: Kawastone. Middle: Sherifa Gunu. Right: Sheriff Ghale.

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone

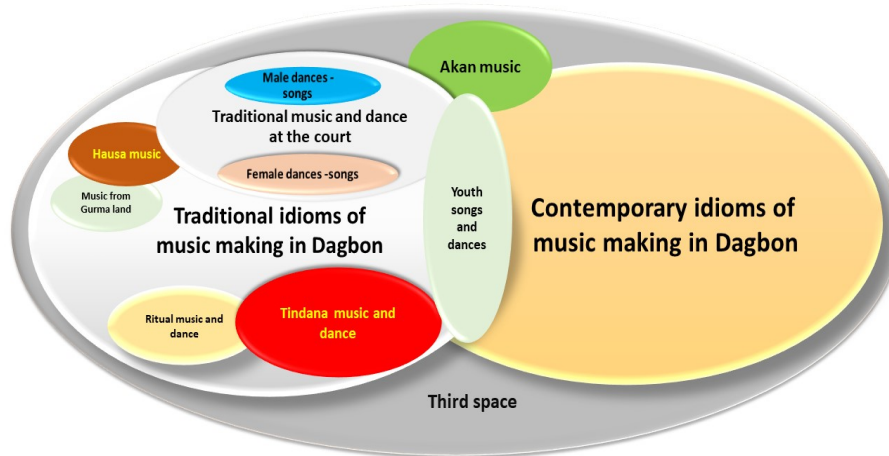


Figure 1. A representation of the “The Dagbon Hiplife Zone” in Tamale.

2.3 Hybridity and Postcolonial Studies

The emphasis on hybridity in postcolonial studies is much indebted to the arguments of Homi Bhabha and demands that musical traditions be examined as mixtures and fusions of styles rather than being analysed in search of ‘authentic’ features, unadulterated by the impact of globalization or a former colonizing presence [36]. In ‘The Location of Culture’, Homi Bhabha points out that cultural hybridity and the formation of a post-colonial identity lies in a liminal zone, a transitional zone of cultural in-betweenness [37]. Edward Said, describes in his work “Orientalism” that the world has become readily accessible in the electronic age.

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone

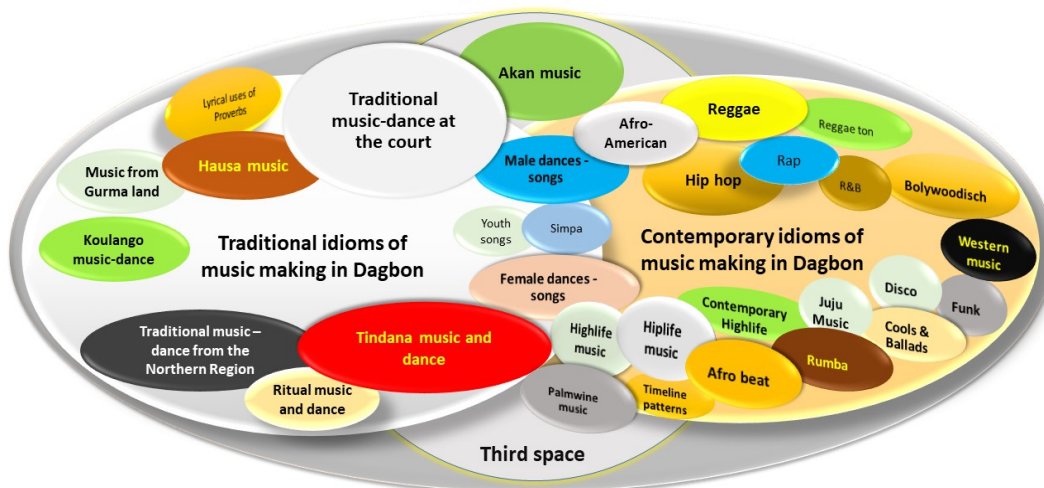


Figure 2. A representation of the “The Dagbon Hiplife Zone” in Tamale as a transitional and dynamical cultural space.

One aspect of the electronic postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the orient is viewed. Television, movies and all the new media's resources have forced information into tired and more a standardized moulds [38]. The “Hiplife zone” lies in the interstices of these new cultural transformations and goes hand in hand with the construction of new cultural identities our, 'neo-tribes' and could be defined as the intangible in-betweenness of music making, as something which inter-est, which lies between the different idioms of music making , - musician, dancers, actors, performers and their cultural backgrounds-, and therefore can relate and bind them together in an imaginary common ground, an intangible time-space of music making. The third space or in-between 'inter - est' is an intangible time - space zone, because it is open to all cultural interpretation and cultural interaction between musical performers. It is unpredictable as to " who" the ' the musicians, actors, performers ' may be, what subject of transformations will take place and position he or she may take up, and how

and when these musical transformation might emerge to make a claim of recognition in the new idiom of music making that may be individual or collective. The liminal space of cultural in-betweenness where all these transformations are taken place, is a tolerance zone of cultural and musical interactions. It is an imaginary space, based on a mix of cultural values, customs and habits of the music and dance performances in that culture including musical agreements, aesthetical values of the music and dance performances and the cultural expectations of the local people. The intersection in the above figure two is the in-betweenness of which Bhabha speaks and is a liminal zone of cultural change in which the cultural transformations taking place. However, this is a theoretical example. In reality, cultural interactions between cultures are much more complex. In a cosmopolitan city like Tamale, the *Dagbon* music and dance culture is the dominant musical culture, but the different other cultures that are present in the city contribute to the richness of the city and the cultural dynamics of exchange in the Hiplife Zone. With the traditional idioms we assume the passing on of values and norms.

These surviving values and norms of a group or society have been transferred from one generation to another within a certain liminal zone (liminal praxis) of tolerance values: the transfer from person to person, from generation to generation, first orally and then also in representation or writing form, of cultural goods and nowadays represented the different digital formats.

Norms and values that sustain a certain constant tradition across different generations and which are maintained by the current generation and accepted as standard within this dynamic culture are considered to be a traditionally inspired society. Bhabha developed his concept of hybridity from literary and cultural theory to describe the construction of culture and identity within the conditions of colonial antagonism and unfairness [37], [39]. The third space that we described with the term "The Hiplife Zone" in Tamale is a way to connect the different cultural spheres. It is a way to describe productive processes of change between cultures. This Hiplife Zone is an ambivalent dynamical time space where the cultural meaning and representation does not have a fundamental unity or stability [37].

The Hiplife Zone in Tamale is an unstable transitional zone. In reality, the space creates an imaginary mind-set for transformational place that can be seen as a lubricant between different cultures. Important for this research is not to identify the authenticity of the different key components that contributes to the fusion and cultural mix in the Hiplife Zone in Tamale, but which rich mix of music styles as a result of transformational processes are created from the different cultural interactions. In this study we are not only interested in the cultural authenticity of *Dagbon* music-dance and the different traditional elements and aspects that contributes to the creation and further development of the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone, but we are in particular interested in the development of new idioms of music making. Which key elements and factors contribute to the development of new music genres, music styles. Which music identities are generated from this intracultural interaction of fusion and cultural in-betweenness, cultural temporality and exchange between the different music idioms present in Tamale.

2.4 The Northern Ghanaian Artist as cultural identity

The creation of the identity that we call the Northern Ghanaian Artist^v which is part of a cosmopolitan youth sub-culture. The emergence of new musical club-cultures^{vi} in many parts of the world that are related to popular music have been noted by other researchers. Some researchers call these sub-cultures "*Neo-Tribes*" [41], [42], [4]. The concept of the Northern Ghanaian Artist as a cultural cosmopolitan identity by artists in Tamale is a very interesting phenomenon and a good example how cultural identities are blended, created and represented in cyberspace e.g. digital online radio stations, social network platforms, social media and local advertisements. The conceptualization of the Northern Ghanaian Artist as a cosmopolitan figure and *Neo-Tribes* as sub-cultures in Tamale is a theoretical direction and position and an important intervention in the understanding of African popular music circulation and Ghanaian popular culture in the Northern Region of Ghana.

The term "Northern Ghanaian Artist" [43] derives from a selection of interviews we conducted in Savelugu in 2010 and a series of online conversations we had during the period 2010 – 2018 with the music journalist Abdul-Latif Alhassan from Tamale on the representation and music identity of the local artists as Northern Ghanaian Artist. The term covers both traditional and contemporary idioms. We made a survey research in October 2018 in Tamale with 990 participants and among several other possibilities the term "Northern Ghanaian Artist" came out with most of the marks. The creation of the cosmopolitan identity e.g. the Northern Ghanaian Artist by the local artists in Tamale is an interesting phenomenon and a good example how cultural identities are blended, created and represented in cyberspace e.g. digital online radio stations, social network platforms, social media and local advertisements.

2.5 Distribution of digital music in cyberspace

Music distribution in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone is now in the digital public and the digital controlled domain. One can thus speak about the phenomenon of "the mobile digital music library" provided and controlled by regional and international institutions of telecommunication and internet providers e.g. Vodafone, MTN, Airtel-Tigo, and Globacom, a Nigerian multinational telecommunication company".



Photo 5. A representation of the Northern Ghanaian Artist as a cosmopolitan cultural identity in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone.

These “controlled” digital domains of music production and reproduction are part of new globalisation discourse and are challenges for the “Northern Ghanaian Artists in *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Ghana”. The representation of the traditional idiom of music making in the contemporary idioms of the music making, the cultural industries in Tamale anno 2018 are in a great transition. These are some of the key components that contribute to the creation and development of the different postcolonial music identities in *Dagbon*. Mobile communication is all over the place. The digital music platforms contribute to urban pop identities are ubiquitous: Spotify, YouTube, iTunes, Myspace etc.

The local artists respond to these new digital phenomena of virtual communities by providing their own local popular music online and in so doing provides a cyberspace that helps foster the identity of the “Northern Ghanaian Artist”.

Cyberspace artists create virtual music fan clubs, followers and indeed ‘cyber tribes’ that forms part of the rapid ongoing cultural and digital transition in *Dagbon*. So far our results shows that the digitalisation and online music distribution in *Dagbon* has taken a whole new level and is transformed into a digital idiom of music making. Its distribution has become hit and individual artist based.

The online cyberspace fan clubs accentuates that cyberspace identities of the local artists is very important to them, even more than the lyrics/proverbs and meaning of the song [43].

Figure 3, is a representation of the online music distribution in cyberspace. It represents a section of the distribution of digital online music streaming in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in cyberspace.

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Cyberspace

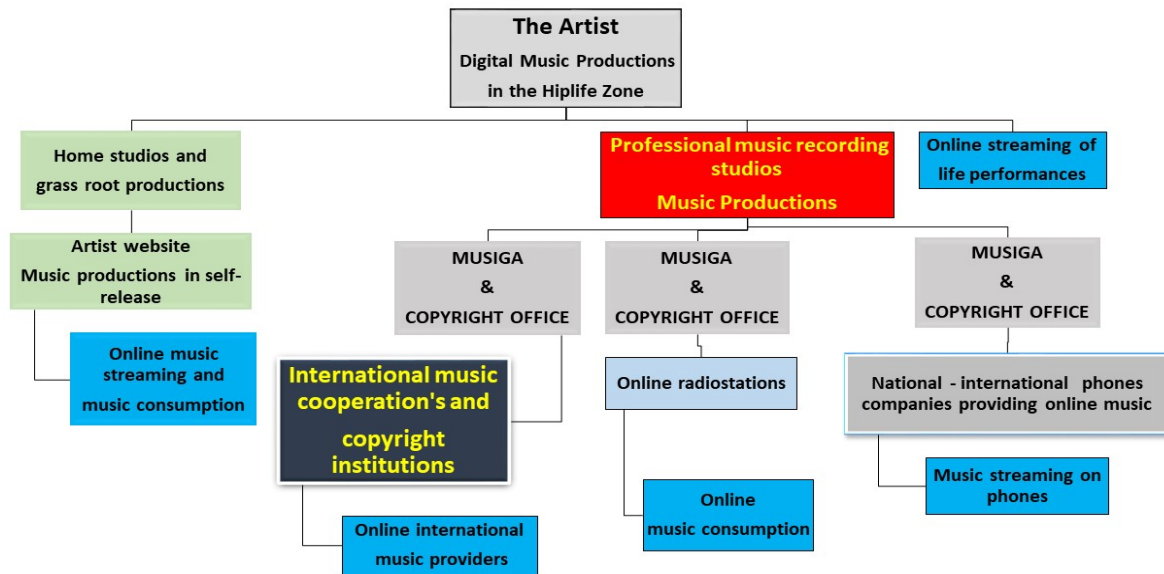


Figure 3. A representation of the digital music distribution channels and online music streaming in cyberspace.

2.6 MUSIGA and the music industry in Tamale

MUSIGA is the national Union of Musicians in Ghana [44]. The Tamale branch is located at the back of the cultural centre in Tamale and is a place where artists, musicians and performers come together to discuss different topics concerning the music industries with each other. Every Saturday morning there is a weekly meeting from 10.00 to 12.00. The meetings are organized and coordinated by the chair at the moment *anno* 2018 represented by the artists Abu Sadiq. MUSIGA is actually trying to be an open platform for and run by the local artists such as himself *e.g.* Abu Sadiq, Sheriff Ghale, Ahmed Adam, Samini etc. It offers administrative support and fulfils various functions within the local formal and informal music industry in Tamale and in Northern Ghana. Some of its function is the challenge of distributing royalties to the local musicians. The payment of royalties is a big challenge and discussion point at the moment in Tamale among the active musicians in the entertainment industries [45]. MUSIGA Tamale organizes peace concerts for the local people in the Tamale Metropolitan city because of the hidden chieftaincy dispute in *Dagbon*.

The indigenous people are extremely adept and conversant with the use of music streaming and cyber space identities in social media because of the mobile phones, iPhones and smartphones which are part of their urban post-colonial new cultural identity. The virtual world has been connected to the daily life in Tamale. The world of social media and the entertainment industries and is part of the daily life in *Dagbon*. Social platforms *e.g.* WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, are providing a roadmap, a digital platform to the often ignored minority groups of the indigenous people and offers a voice to speak and shear their ideas and opinion among the social network there are attached to. Can the subaltern speak? [46] is very good example of a theoretical discourse on the right to speak and be heard. In her study Spivak concludes that minority and subaltern groups in India do not have the opportunity to speak for themselves because of the controlled top-down feudal cast systems.

Cyberspace has now become a new phenomenon that fosters new communities and cyber tribalism. Northern Ghanaian techno-pop culture of contemporary music making lies in an imaginary space, a liminal transitional zone of cultural in-betweenness, where cultural transformational processes and artistic processes are taken place. As long the digital domain of music making in *Dagbon* is linked with local social media platforms, local social networks and online music fan clubs and cyber tribalism, local online music radio stations, their voices, freedom of speech and online self-releases of music productions, writings and cultural identities will be embodied in the digital domain. So far the local grass root self-release digital music productions stays under the radar for the international copyright laws, multinational music ownership companies and online media and entertainment distribution channels. The huge sociological and economic impact/cultural effects these great digital transformation has at the moment in Tamale helps on the one hand establishing the dynamic young talented entertainments industries and in general the contemporary idioms of music making beyond the *Dagbon* boundaries in the Northern Region of Ghana. The digital media and distribution channels opens new road and way of distributing and performing music outside the Tamale metropolitan city. On the other hand the absence of live performances in combination with good acoustical live performance venues in Tamale and in the Northern Regions of Ghana makes it very difficult to organise - on a large scale- live

concerts. For all these reasons live bands and live band performances - in the contemporary idiom of music making in and around Tamale- are very scarce. It involves good management and organisational skills to promote, and organise a live band performance in the city. Most of the hiplife artists when performing are mining or use backtrack recordings played by MJ's and DJ's.



Photo 6. A poster of a peace concert organized by MUSIGA Tamale and Smile Multimedia Agency at the Tamale Jubilee Park during the eve of the previous elections in 2016.

On the other hand the live performances of traditional music and dance at the local level is well represented. On the other hand there is a slide change by the entertainment industries toward the promotion of live bands performances in Tamale For all these reasons we hypothesises and assume that *anno* 2018, the music consumption in the contemporary idioms of music making in Tamale is digital and most of the time online, meaning streaming of music by phones. The mobile phone industries are linked with cyberspace artists and cyberspace tribalism. They provide, distribute and promoted the online entertainment industries e.g. online radio stations, online music providers, online social media etc. The access to “Wi-Fi” has become an obvious phenomenon linked to the urban cosmopolitan identity of the youth in this city. The globalisation of the digital music industries has brought new ways and challenges to distribute music and digital art in the age of digital production and reproduction. What will bring the future for the Northern Ghanaian Artist when the consumption of music in the entertainment industries in Tamale are implemented and absorbed by large multinational cooperation’s owning music networks? What will bring the future when also these unique small sale grassroots cultural productions falls into the hands of private institutions? Which social and economic effect would it create when the local informal music industry in Tamale goes online streaming music? Who are the new captains, stakeholders and investors in the new digital cultural industries in Tamale? Between 2010-2018 the local music industry Tamale is transformed from selling physical music e.g. audiocassettes, compact discs and compiled digital formats into the age of online music streaming in combination with the introduction of contemporary live band performances.

2.7 Attitude of *Dagbon* chiefs towards popular music in Tamale

Nowadays *anno* 2018, there is a change towards the production, distribution, organization and promotion of the contemporary popular urban idioms of music making in *Dagbon*. As part of their traditional customs and obligations, traditional chiefs in *Dagbon* are more concerned about land issues and the development of their community, and the promotion and sponsoring of the traditional music and dance. The *Dagbon* aristocracy of chiefs have given the organization and promotion of the popular entertainment music industry in *Dagbon* in the hands of a new type of chiefs. Among this new chiefs are the chief of entertainment [47], the local youth leaders, *zaachinima*, popular musicians and dancehall artists e.g. Samini was enskinned by the late

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Northern Ghana Contemporary Idioms of Music Making in Tamale

Tamale *Dakpema Naa* Alhaji Mohammed Alhassan Dawuni as *Yila Naa* meaning, ‘King of Music’[48]. Stonebwoy was given a *kambonsi* title, *sapahini*, meaning “Dancehall Warrior” [49].

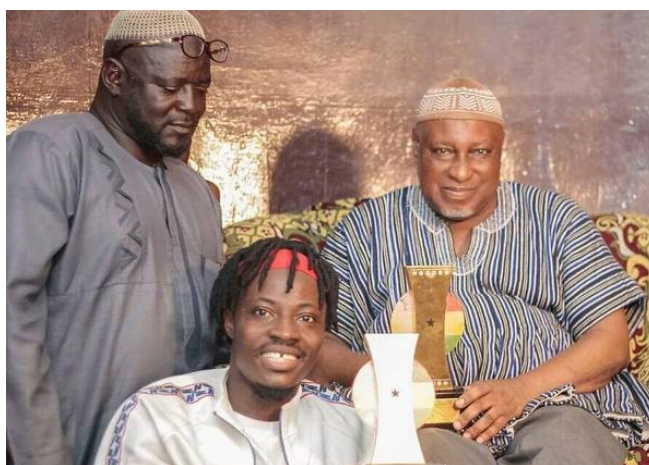


Photo 7. Seated: The late Tamale *Dakpema Dawuni* Alhassan with the famous Hiplife artist Fancy Gadam holding the Vodafone Ghana Music Awards, April 2018.

At the moment *anno* 2018, a whole transformation is taking place in the field of the different functions and obligations local chiefs and sub chiefs occupy in the dynamics of the local music industry in Tamale. On the one hand, we could notice a change of celebrities and local artists *e.g.* local rappers and hiplife artistes, local film stars and models from the fashion industries and stylist who are involved as role models in the local communities here in Tamale. Local celebrities are involved in social and educational projects which will create in a second phase local jobs for the poor and school dropouts in the city. These initiatives will elevate the youth and prepare them to strive economic and social goals and achievements. Through the messages of their music and dance, Northern Ghanaian Artists *e.g.* Umar Janda, Abu Sadiq, Mohammed Alidu and Sherifa Gunu educate the youth on social issues concerning petty crimes, sexuality, gender and the huge refuse and sanitation challenges in the cosmopolitan city. The refuse and sanitation challenges is unfortunately linked to an outmoded (feudal) way of doing local politics and running a dynamic cosmopolitan city in this part of Africa. The local politics in Tamale are mixed with local tribalism concerning the outmoded old fashioned feudal “Yendi Skin Affair” between the two royal gates Aburu and Andani dominating and influencing the local politics by lining the extended family clans with the local and national political parties. Local chiefs are linked to the two royal gates, gates are linked to political parties, local assemblyman and district assemblies are linked to the two royal gates. The collection of domestic refuse and the maintenance of the public sanitation facilities in the city of Tamale is a jurisdiction of the district assembly [43], [50]. If an area in town is linked to a certain royal gate and therefore linked to a political party but the assemblyman and local MP belong to another gate and in turn to another political party the results would be that the services from the district assembly to that community will be reduced to the strict minimum. These are just some of the urbanization challenges linked to the music industry research the city of Tamale is facing at the moment. There is a demand from the youth and the young talented artists and celebrities working in the city towards more transparency from the local politicians for the music industry [43], [50]. The outcome so far between the local artists and the local politicians is a dialogue for social change and youth development. It is a project and initiative towards the development of the youth in Tamale [43]. The city policy and local politics in Tamale are deeply rooted in the *Dagbon* traditional customs of local chieftaincy *e.g.* the “Yendi Skin Affair” which in turn is linked to local tribalism, favoritism and ethnicity. The citizens and inhabitants of nowadays Tamale *e.g.* the urban class, are multi-cultural and has little connection with this dispute. Traditional ruling and customs in *Dagbon* are institutionalised and embodied in The *Dagbon* Traditional Council, a solid institution of elders (and a handful elite of backbenchers), advising and controlling the local, regional and paramount chiefs. The Tamale Music Questionnaire results shows that the present population in Tamale and especially its youth is now longer interested in, and tired of the “Yendi Skin Affair”. It is experienced by the youth as an anti-development tool, against the development of the Northern Regions in contemporary Ghana. Unfortunately the issue is still around in *Dagbon*. Our results and conclusions goes into the direction of a controlling mechanisms for the masses. The phenomenon ‘fear’ linked with the division and disruption of the extended family structures is a very powerful mechanism for controlling the masses. The invention of the Aburu and Andani royal gates by the elite *Dagbon* aristocracy: *e.g.* *Na* Andani and his brother *Na* Aburu - which started as a result of a polygamous way of living and lifestyle by the *Dagbon* aristocracy-, is a very good example and practical application of the Hegelian dialects: *e.g.* thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. It shows how a small elite of *Dagbon* aristocracy is still in power over its citizens in the age of globalisation and digital reproduction, *anno* 2018. Our results shows that Tamale has a brilliant young talented local music industry with a multi-cultural cosmopolitan identity. If Tamale really has the desire to go global with its

entertainment industries than the city should give fresh air for the to develop of a *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Tamale. This Hiplife Zone should be in symbiosis with its traditional rulers and in dialogue with its stakeholders. This *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone could be forum and platform for cultural exchange embodied in the *Dagbon* traditional and contemporary idioms of music making and develop for its local artists. At the moment there is a dialogue for peace and development between the two royal gates. We hope that the music industry and its talented artists in Tamale can make a positive contribution to this peace dialogue [51].

2.8 Challenges and some results on the Tamale Music

The Tamale music questionnaire 2008-2010 is a systematic random sample we took during the period July- August 2008 and 2010, with 990 participants in the Tamale cosmopolitan city. The survey was manly focused on the consumption of music in Tamale. However there is a section in the survey that deals with the extended family structures and the livelihood of men in Tamale. Our results are choking even for the local people who helped me to realise this survey. The survey shows that only 4% of the population in Tamale has access to a private toilet that is the category of the self-contained houses. The majority of the population is using public sanitation facilities. This is hard data and a huge challenge for the upcoming young and talented generation.

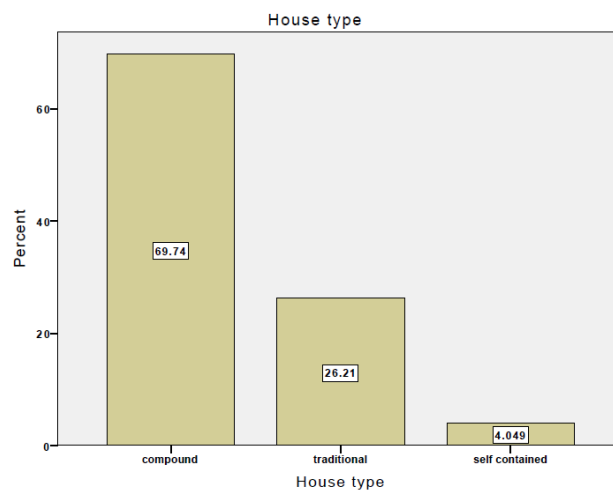


Figure 4. Some results of the Tamale music questionnaire 2008-2010. It is a bar chart with three categories of types of houses that occur frequently in the city of Tamale.

The above right column represents the category of the self- contained and story building houses in Tamale. These category of houses have a private sanitation system. Families living in these categories of buildings are considered rich and belong to the upper class of the urban community in Tamale. The other two types of housing facilities, the traditional houses and the compound houses represent the largest group in the city. Families living in these house types in Tamale are using public sanitation facilities or sanitation systems used by a whole bock of compound houses. In the category of the traditional houses, the bath place - which is a shower-, is used as the main sanitation facility. The category of the traditional houses are for 26.2 % represented in the survey responses of the Tamale music questionnaire. The category of the compound house types are for 69% represented in the responses of the survey. This category represents in the Tamale cosmopolitan city the main domestic housing facility.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	traditional	259	26.2	26.2	26.2
	compound	689	69.6	69.7	96.0
	self contained	40	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	988	99.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.2		
Total		990	100.0		

Table 1. The above table shows a frequency table of the data extracted from the Tamale music questionnaire^{vii}, with the representation of the three house types that appear in the answers of the participants on the Tamale music questionnaire 2008 - 2010.



Photo 8. Umar Janda during a performance in Tamale at the Abu Sadiq 20 years anniversary concert. Tamale October 2018.

Tamale has many challenges towards hygienic sanitation facilities for its citizens. The city is an agglomerate of several urbanised villages that gradually merged and transformed into local urbanized towns and on its turn transformed into what we nowadays call the Tamale Metropolitan city. Structural sanitation facilities in the urbanized agglomerate like Tamale are not present in the urban planning of the city. On the one hand Tamale is built on solid rock and therefore it is always warmer in Tamale than in the surrounding villages. Because of the heat in combination with the lack of basic sanitation facilities for its inhabitants the city works as a greenhouse for bacteria and viruses. On the other hand drilling sanitation facilities in solid rock to construct private sanitation facilities takes the cost for the average family in Tamale in building a family house very high. At the moment *anno* 2018 there is a supporting campaign going on in cooperation with the local authorities promoted by the famous reggae artists Umar Janda to educate and encourage families when building houses to build proper sanitation facilities for their families [50]. We saw Umar Janda at work during a concert in Tamale. He performed as an invited solo artist and with the Savannah Echoes Band live at the Abu Sadiq 20 years anniversary concert. The *lunga*, a closed double skinned hour-glass – shaped pressure drums, that Umar Janda played in public, testifies that he is a tom-tom beater, a traditional drummer and praise singer, storyteller by origin and belongs to the traditional *lunsi* family.

The *bingmaa*, or traditionally woven smock, the *motalo*, the woven scarf and blue cloth under his left arm, and the *zupiligu*, a traditional hat, are part of the traditional identity and idiom of a *lunsi* tom-tom beater when performing in public. His cultural identity clearly shows the connection with local *Dagbon* tradition as a *lunsi* drummer. The *lunsi* performance started within the traditional idiom of music making *e.g.* traditional drumming with poetic praise singing. In the middle of the concert Umar Janda stopped to speak to the audience about the ongoing sanitation problems the city is currently experiencing. He narrated, educated and enlightened the people on several moral obligations. There he switched into the mode of speech drumming. After then, he transformed his performance into the contemporary idioms of music making *e.g.* reggae and contemporary highlife music. Here we can clearly speak of a music performance embodied within the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone of music making. Both idioms were present during the performance and were ongoing interchangeable interacting with each other. The phenomenon “cultural ambivalence”, where elements coming from the traditional idioms of music making are creatively blended with elements of the contemporary idioms of music making. This fusion of both musical idioms is a key component that contribute to the dynamics of music making in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Tamale. Music identities and identities in music from both idioms were blending and transforming simultaneously. These transformations of extra-cultural and intra-structural components took place at the same time in the same place and where invented and created on the spot.

3.0 Two case studies on the popular urban music industries in Tamale

3.1 Entertainment for social change and youth development

To conclude this paper we present briefly two grassroots initiatives that we came across during our last fieldwork in Tamale. The outcome and impact these two grassroots projects have for social development of the local community is not small. There are several similar initiators working in Tamale but after consultation with a few musicians such as Sheriff Ghale, - a brilliant musician, a local Malam and music teacher, holding a master degree in music from Legon University-, we found that these two grassroots projects stood out with their shoulders, not only for their considerable dedication and contribution they made for the local community here in Tamale, but also for the efforts they made to develop their small scale projects on a regional scale, as a result of which their project inspired and impregnated similar projects with new ideas. Their common theme is music in which they use this cultural phenomenon - belonging to the entertainment industries and the performing arts- for social change and youth development, by providing education and training programs for school dropouts and street children.

3.2 Smile Multimedia Agency

Smile Multimedia Agency is an event management company that acts as an open platform for the promotion, advertising and media training of local artists in Tamale [52]. Small grassroots initiatives *e.g.* Smile Multimedia Agency are filling the gap between the institutionalised Centres *e.g.* Tamale National Cultural Centre which is an institution linked to the Ghana Commission on Culture in Accra, focused on promoting local handicrafts than really the local performing arts. Smile Multimedia Agency promotes and manages sections of the local popular contemporary music industries, including live band performances local bands within the traditional and contemporary idioms of music making in and around the Tamale Cosmopolitan city. Smile Multimedia Agency has several artists and performing bands that they manage, promote and advertise, including the local Hiplife group Deensi, the local artists Abu Sadiq and Kawastone. Smile Multimedia Agency organizes the Northern Ghana Entertainment Awards [53], which is a event that celebrates the entertainment industry across the five Regions in Northern Ghana. With the Northern Ghana Entertainment Awards they are putting the Northern Ghanaian Artists on the map by pushing and encouraging to local music in and around Tamale.



Photo 9. Latief Alhassan and his Smile Multimedia Training Center. Tamale 2018.

With the Northern Ghana Entertainment awards they are bringing top notch entertainers, musicians, actors, media personalities, sportsmen and women, cross the five regions of the North. Those whom has contributed to the entertainment industries. They have been organizing this for the past four years. It has really pushed the entertainment industries far, projecting the image and the cultural identities of the entertainers in the performing arts in the Northern Region higher. The celebrities charity devolvement foundation [54] which is now broaden the scoop out of the entertainment industry and bringing top-notch personalities *e.g.* NGO's who are into social work and entrepreneurs together. The foundations brings these personalities -who has urn excellency in their work and service for the development in their community- together for social change in the community. They know from where they come that the five Regions in the North start as one of the poorest and underdeveloped area in the country [43],[50]. For all these reasons in order to get out of this situation, Smile Multimedia Agency think that the creation of the foundation for social development - which is a Non-Profit Organization, a NGO, contributes with a positive impact on the informal education of the youth towards social change. In order to sit down, they train their young people. Especially the school dropouts and the street children to get out of poverty. With the help of the foundation they were able to setup programs to train the youth here in Tamale in *e.g.* multimedia skills, radio presentations, entertainment and business skills.

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Northern Ghana Contemporary Idioms of Music Making in Tamale



Photo 10: A selection of images from the live performances in the Dagbon Hiplife Zone, during the Northern Entertainment Awards, 16 March 2019, organised by Smile Multimedia Agency. Live band: The Blues International Dance Band *Kunbosico* [56]. Tamale 2019.

The Northern Entertainment Awards [55] is an award promoting and celebrating the entertainment industries in the Northern Region of Ghana. Up left: Fadi Empreza, best rap video clip of the year. Middle: One Naira, best Northern Artists of the year. Up right: Abu Sadiq: Special guest: Bottom left: The Blues International Dance Band *Kunbosico* from Bolgatanga. Bottom middle: Badingu, best artist of the year from the Upper West Region.



Photo 11: Up left: A *gonje* student player. Middle up: Mohammed Alidu & Students of Bizung School. Up right: Ahmed Abdul-Samed & student

3.3 Bizung School of Music and Dance Tamale

The Bizung School of Music and Dance [57] is located at Norrip village, a town near the Tamale-Savelugu road, in the Tamale Cosmopolitan area. It is the hometown of Mohammed Alidu, who has been working with the Playing for Change Foundation and performing with the Playing for Band since 2009. Alidu is an international Afro soul artists with African reggae influence

who grew up in *Dagbon*. As a professional musician he migrated to the UK, then to Madagascar and later on to the USA. He is a descendant of a long line of talking drum chiefs known in *Dagbon* as the "Bizung" family and is linked to the *Namoo Naa yili*, the royal gate of tom-tom beaters in *Dagbon*. In his family's honour, this place of inspiration has aptly been named "The Bizung School of Music and Dance".

The school offers free of charge music and dance classes that are rooted in the *Dagbon* traditional idiom of music making. Children have a safe and nurturing environment in which to learn, as well as opportunities to share their cultural experience in the local community. Students learn how to compose songs, they learn how to play and perform these songs and make audio-visual recordings in their studio. All that under the direction of professional musicians and teachers. The aim of the foundation is to play music for social change [58]. The Bizung school has a music recording studio and a variety of musical instruments their students learn how to play. The music school is unique in its kind and contributes to the social and artistic development of the youth in Tamale. They focus on the traditional performing arts of music and dance and work closely together with local musicians e.g. Abu Sadiq, a local reggae artists, the *gonje* player Ahmed Abdul-Samed, and the famous electric guitar player Prince Mahama from the Savannah Echoes Band. Local musicians are invited to the school to teach practical skills of their instrument to the local students e.g. *gonje*, the *jinjelin*, the *lunga* and *gungon*.

Among the contemporary musical instruments that is offered and taught to their students are the electrical guitar, bass guitar, keyboard, electric piano, trumpet and horns etc. The school teaches also dances coming from the *Dagbon* traditional idioms of music making to their students e.g. *bamaaya*, *takai*, *jera*, *damba*, *tora*, *luwa*. Some of their brilliant students compose their own songs. The song that we briefly introduce in this paper is called "Bohimmi Bangsim" meaning seek for knowledge.

It is a contemporary song developed out of the traditional idioms of music making and mixed with contemporary idioms of music but still rooted in the rich *Dagbon* music and dance tradition [57].

Bohimmi bangsim

Seek for knowledge

Chorus:1

Bohimmi bangsim yee Seek for knowledge x3

Bohimmi bangsim yoo Seek for knowledge

Stanza:1

Mma bia, bohimmi bangsim My brother, seek for knowledge

Ka di ti songya dahim sheli For it to help you one day

Bizung bihi ninya nimohi The children of Bizung, be serious

Kariti bori la bangsim I am in search of knowledge

Ayi bi bolim a ni ti di wahala If you don't seek for knowledge, you will suffer

Zung bee dalin sheli Either now or in the future

Chorus:2

Bohimmi bangsim yee Seek for knowledge

Bohimmi bangsim yoo Seek for knowledge

Bohimmi bangsim yee Seek for knowledge

Bohimmi bangsim yoo Seek for knowledge

Etc.

4.0 Preliminary conclusion

In this papers we presented our concept of the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Northern Ghana and showed with examples coming from fieldwork that this imaginary intangible liminal zone of cultural in-betweenness contributes with key factors to the dynamics of music making in *Dagbon* society.

The Dagbon Hiplife Zone in Northern Ghana Contemporary Idioms of Music Making in Tamale

We were very surprised when we last visited Tamale in October 2018 how the local informal music industry in Tamale has grown and was developed into a dynamic regional music industry. It has its own track and dynamics, with a cosmopolitan cultural identity different from the Southern idioms of music making of Ghana.

It is this rich mixtures of cultural ambivalence, the representation of the local in the global, internal and external, old and new, traditional and contemporary, secular and sacral, male and female that Tamale's popular music culture Hiplife was developed and continues to sustain as part of the dynamic African idioms of music making in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Ghana [6], [7]. In short, this was the setting for our fieldwork and it is the background for our understanding and interpretation of cultural transformational processes in *Dagbon* in the light of embodied interactions with music. We look forward what the next decade of musicians in Tamale will bring and how they will deal with all these new challenges and how they will develop new idioms of music making out of the rich *Dagbon* tradition.

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Appendix A

Table showing key elements of cultural transformational processes in the “*Dagbon* Hiplife Zone” in Tamale *anno* 2018.

TABLE 2. TABLE SHOWS STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL KEY COMPONENTS OF CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MUSIC IDIOMS IN THE DAGBON HIPLIFE ZONE IN TAMALE.

I Representation of the traditional idioms of music making into contemporary idioms		
1	Implementation of traditional timbres <i>e.g.</i> local instruments in the contemporary idiom	Traditional music instruments and timbres. Gangdu One Naira ft. Double Tee
2	The use of traditional vocal choral organization	Call and respond singing style: <i>Yo ma amang</i> Gaffachi ft Maccasio
3	The use of traditional melodic ostinato patterns.	Dagomba Dance by Deensi
4	The use of traditional drum beats, traditional ostinato patterns	<i>e.g. Bamaaya, tora, jera, takai</i> -drum beats. <i>Naa Gbewaa</i> by Sherifa Gunu
5	The lyrical use of local proverbs in the songs	<i>Zom Dabiem</i> by Choggu Boys ft Mama Rams
6	The use of traditional poetry in the songs	Oh Ghana by SKY Tamale Boy
7	The use of traditional cultural elements in the choreography	<i>Salamatu</i> by Sherifa Gunu
8	Elements of Northern fashion and design, Northern Identity in the video-clips	Dances coming from the traditional idiom of music making: Soli by Double Tee
II Representation of the foreign idioms of music making into the contemporary idioms of music Making in dagbon		
9	Songs using western music timbres mixed with local instruments	Western music instruments and timbres, sampler sound manipulated instruments and technology. Traditional instruments mixed with drum samples and rhythm section. Rap Lectures by Gaffachi
10	Songs using digital sound manipulation and electronic musical timbres.	The use of electronics, voice vocoders, drum samplers, digital timbre manipulation
11	The use of Western and Afro – American inspired vocal choral organization.	Close harmony, scattling, vertical polyphony, rap singing style. Local Dagbani proverbs translated into English mixed with Pidgin English, creolization and jabber talk. hip-hop rhymes. <i>No Puncher</i> by Maccasio ft Kawastone
12	The use of regional and foreign drum beats. Rhythmic ostinato patterns.	<i>E.g.</i> Akan timeline patterns, reggae ton Aisha by Deensi
13	Songs inspired by southern (Akan) and foreign cultural components	<i>E.g.</i> highlife, hip-hop, rap, rumba, gospel, reggae, foreign elements, foreign fashion etc.

14	Songs using foreign dance techniques in the video clips	Dances coming from other parts of Africa. Foreign dances, urban dances. Customer by Fancy Gadam ft. Patron king
15	Phraseology, timeline, speech rhythms	Drum riddles and the use of traditional drum language
16	Syncopated rhythms and polyrhythmic pattern	The song and local hit <i>Pam</i> by Abu Sadiq ft Ataacker
17	Modal chord system based on multipart melodic patterns	Dagbani Dance ft. Zongo Abongo by Ghetto Kumbé: <i>Kuraya Kuraya</i>
18	Western inspired tone systems and harmonization in combination with modal chords progressions	Fara by DJ Ojah
III Socio - cultural context of the songs		
19	Songs containing educative messages	<i>Pag Bee Doo</i> by Kawastone
20	Songs containing moral messages	Nzo Issah by Double Tee
21	Songs criticizing the local community. Protest songs	<i>Bikaritimi labi Tibinin Shelli</i> by Fancy Gadam
22	Praise songs	Nation Champion by Fancy Gadam
23	Work songs	<i>E.g.</i> songs like the ‘Driver’ phenomenon in Tamale. Work by Maccasio ft. Kofi <i>Kinaata</i>
24	Songs educating the youth about moral values concerning <i>Kaya yoo</i> , sexuality, prostitution etc.	A good example of such a song is “Azindo” from Abu Sadiq. <i>Early Child marriage</i> by 2sisters
25	Song promoting deviant behaviour in the lyrics and mixed languages	Long John by Maccasio
26	Songs concerning the daily and social life in Tamale	<i>Daadam</i> by Nandos ft Razyzy or Tamale Girls By King Fay
27	Songs promoting rational aspects	Africa by Sherifa Gunu
28	Songs concerning the Yendi Skin Affaire and chieftaincy problem.	Raptures ft Memunatu Ladi, Sheriff Ghale Shochira.
29	Songs promoting peace	Peace song by Lil K
30	Propaganda songs	Songs concerning local politics and religion. <i>Dagbon</i> politics by Fancy Gadam and <i>Wumpimi</i> by Don Sigli
31	Romantic songs, ballads, love stories	Love Don’t ask why by KKC
32	Songs discussing gender issues	Masculinity, femininity: Girl Child Education by 2Sisters

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- i For more information on the Embodied Music Interaction paradigm, please see the work of Marc Leman of IPEM, Institute for Psychoacoustics and Electronic Music, a research group focused on “Embodied Music Interaction” at the University of Ghent, Belgium.
 - ii Population census 2019. Source: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ghana-population/>
 - iii The term “Northern Ghanaian Artist” derives from a series of interviews we conducted in Savelugu in 2010 and a series of online conversations we had during the period 2010 – 2018 with the music journalist Abdul-Latif Alhassan from Tamale on the representation and music identities and identities in music of the local artists as “Northern Ghanaian Artist”. The term covers both traditional and contemporary idioms. The concept of the Northern Ghanaian Artist derived from these conversations and is in use in Tamale. The creation of the music identity the “Northern Ghanaian Artist” by the contemporary artists in Tamale is a very interesting cosmopolitan phenomenon and a good example how cultural identities are blended, created and represented in cyberspace *e.g.* digital online radio stations, social network platforms, social media and local online advertisements.
 - iv In appendix A of this article there is a table included, showing structural and cultural key components of cultural transformational processes contributing to the development of new musical idioms and the dynamics of music making in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone in Tamale.
 - v The “Northern Ghanaian Artist” is a name given by the local artists from the Northern Region of Ghana to identify the artists in the *Dagbon* Hiplife Zone.
 - vi The concept of “*Neo-Tribes*” is related to the new bonds and groupings accompanying fashions, ideals, slang and musical tastes that occur in Western urban societies despite their increasingly individualistic ethos.
 - vii The statistical analyses on the “Tamale Music Questionnaire” were done with the help of dr. Micheline Lesaffre of IPEM, University of Ghent, Department of Musicology.