

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**PERFORMANCE AESTHETICS OF THE KLAMA DANCE  
OF GBUGBLA (PRAMPAM), GHANA**

**ARISTEDES NARH HARGOE**

**2017**

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University of Cape Coast

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**GBUGBLA (PRAMPARAM), GHANA**

**BY**

**ARISTEDES NARH HARGOE**

Thesis submitted to the Department of Music and Dance of the Faculty of Arts,  
College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy degree in  
Ethnomusicology.

**JULY, 2017**

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Name: Aristedes Narh Hargoe

Signature:..... Date:.....

### SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Name: Dr. Florian Carl

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Signature..... Date.....

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the performance aesthetics of *Klama* as a movement system of the Dangme people of Gbugbla (Prampram). I observe that *Klama* as a movement system, integrates the core manifestations of *Klama* (music, dance, medicine/healing and performance) into a complete epistemological system for the purpose of enculturation, entertainment and revival of the culture. As a body of knowledge, *Klama* has embedded within it philosophical, socio-political, religious and aesthetic dimensions. *Klama* is also believed to reflect the cosmic structural composition here in the temporal world. Therefore, when mediums begin to manifest their tutelary spirits and commence their dance in the temporal world, it is indeed the cosmic beings who are performing themselves into being through music, dance, and ritual drama. Through ethnographic participant observation and interviews, I discovered that *Klama* connotes four thematic conceptual frames. These are *Klama* as *Baa/Tsupa* (herbal medicine/healing), *Lami* (songs), *Doo* (dance) and *Fiemi* (performance). To this end, a combination of three theoretical perspectives has been used to analyze this work. Drewal's performance perspective of repetition as a form of engendering creativity has been the main theoretical framework used to explain the performance processes and conventions. Gyekye's aesthetic perspective that explains that beyond the functional and symbolic roles of African art forms, they can be contemplated upon from the purely aesthetic viewpoint has been used to explore the aesthetic sensibilities of the Dangmes of Gbugbla. Finally, Peirce's semiotic theory enables us to understand the diverse meanings employed in the usage of props, costumes, make-up and body adornments.

## KEY WORDS

Aesthetics

Gbugbla (Prampram)

Gender roles in religious dance

Klama religious dance

Performance

Semiotics

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

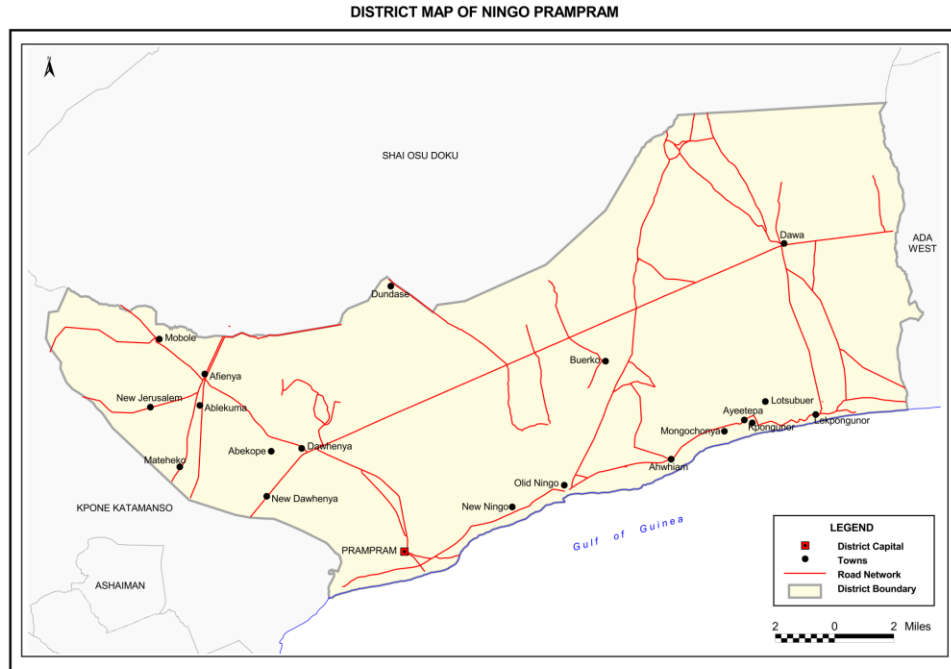
This dissertation is an ethnographic study of the performance aesthetics of *Klama* religious dance of the Dangmes of Gbugbla commonly called Prampram in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The dissertation also explores *Klama* performances with its laden gender stereotypes where mediums tend to be mostly females with their male counterparts performing roles such as priests, musicians and administrators of shrines.

The study is geared towards understanding and appreciating *Klama* religious dance from the performance aesthetic perspective having discovered that the dance aspect which deals with movements, costumes, props, make up etc. that informs the aesthetic sensibilities of the researched community are clearly absent from existing literature on *Klama*.

*Klama* as an integrated performance phenomenon involves music, dance, drama, props, costume and the “informed audience” (Dortey, 2012). All these elements come together in *Klama* performance as part of the annual *Kple* festival of the people. Movement, which reflects not just the somatic, but the people’s ethos, moral, mental and emotional response as well as beliefs and values (Sklar, 1991), has become critical to this study. *Klama* performance is a crucial part of Dangme/Gbugbla ritual processes. It is a reflection of the society’s worldview and aesthetic values but above all, it is aimed at the re-enactment of the community’s histories for the purpose of social integration and revival.

## 1.1 Background

Prampram is a subdivision of the Dangme speaking people who are part of the larger patrilineal Ga-Dangme stock. Migration accounts indicate that they, at some time, settled in *Same* in modern day Nigeria (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). They then journeyed through Benin, Togo and finally Ghana. The rest of the Ga migrated down to the coast and settled along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea. Part of the Dangmes are found in the Eastern Region of Ghana and this include the *Krobo*, which is a corruption of the name *Klono*. The natives of *Klo* refer to themselves in the plural as *Kloli* and *Klono* in the singular respectively (Amettier, 1989, Hugo, 1993). The missionaries who settled in the Eastern regional parts of the country, were unable to pronounce *Klono*. They therefore corrupted the name and this has come to be the accepted written name of the people. The rest of the Dangme communities located in the Eastern region are the *Shai*, *Dodowa*, and *Osudoku*. *Gbugbla* which has also been corrupted into *Prampram*, *Nugo*, now *Ningo*, and finally *Ada* are located along the coastlines of the Gulf of Guinea together with the Ga communities (figure 1).



**Figure 1 A map of Ningo-Prampram. Picture taken from Population and Housing Census: District Analytical Report of Ningo- Prampram (Service, 2014).**

## 1.2 What is *Klama*?

The meaning of *Klama* has been concealed in several metaphors. *Klama*, within the Dangme social structure is an all-encompassing institution which regulates the social, political, cultural, economic and spiritual facets of the Dangme persona. *Klama* dance, which is the most visible in Dangme culture as a movement form because of its integrative performance capacity, provides a lens that defines the histories and philosophies of the Dangme persona within the human and the cosmic realm. The priests and priestesses believe through the dance, they attune themselves and live in harmony with the cosmic powers (Adinku, 1994). *Klama*, which is fundamentally a musical form (Nketia, 1958) finds its expressions through movements. It is this visible form that embodies the culture of the people.

As a religious performance phenomenon, *Klama* practice aids the ‘*susuma*’ (soul) of the Dangme persona (represented by the medium) to transcend into the realm of the ancestors for the purpose of communion (Botchway, 2006). Within this frame of understanding, I argue that *Klama* could be related to the Ewe notion of *Aklama* which is a reference made to “a personal guardian spirit, conceived of by some as “inside a person” and by others as “outside the self” (Geurts, 2002). I agree with this linkage because of the relationship the Dangmes enjoyed with their Ewe brothers and sisters during their migration (chapter 2). Also for the fact that *Aklama* and *Klama* both deal with the metaphysical beings inhabiting the individual as well as outside of that same body. The *Klama* phenomenon is an embodiment of the total worldview of the Dangmes. Coplan (1972) maintains that, *Klama* contains Dangme aesthetic theory, values and cosmology. Botchway in his dissertation (2006) posits that *Klama* is the “*twi ke kla*” meaning the ‘heart’ and ‘soul’ of the Dangmes. This statement sums up what the phenomenon means to the people. It is without doubt that the heart is the hub of life and without it, man is just a mass of flesh, blood and bones. At conception, the heart is the first organ to develop in order to keep a fetus alive. The same heart is the last to stop beating to bring the life of a person to an end. Biological science explains the basic function of the heart as the organ that pumps blood mixed with nutrients and oxygen around the various parts of the human body. This blood moves through the veins and the arteries. Lack of adequate supply of blood to any part of the body renders that part paralyzed and dysfunctional. In the same vein, the essence or ideology of *Klama*, is implemented by a team of ritual officers (symbolizing, the heart) and mediums or adherents who have devoted their lives

to be the conduits through which the essence of *Klama* is propagated. Therefore, if any of these important functionaries, default in function, the entire socio-politico-cultural as well as religious phenomenon of *Klama* becomes dysfunctional and subsequently brings imbalance in the metaphysical and physical realms.

The ‘soul’ (*kla*), on the other hand, is the seat of life. The soul is a sacrosanct entity that is concerned with destiny and the very being or personality of a person. Field (1961) notes that, “every person has a *kla*. Incubating eggs have *kla*...If the *kla* leaves the body, life departs”. In other words, the *kla* of a person is the life force that keeps him alive. Kropp Dakubu (2009) in her Ga dictionary provides two meanings to the word *Kla/Kra*. She postulates first that *Kra*, is “plant”. Her usage of *Kra* to mean ‘plant’ is well situated in this discourse. Plant symbolizes life, and at the same time growth and/or development. *Klama* which has *baa* (leaf/herbs) or *tsupa* (medicinal) aspects, interfaces well with the symbolism of the soul being referred to as plant. This is because, Ga-Dangme belief systems sees the soul as an entity that grows and develops at the same time the human body grows and develops. Moreso, when a Dangme person falls sick, it is to plant medicine that adepts turn to. According to Botchway (2006), when a person falls sick in the indigenous culture, several *Klama* rhythms and songs are performed. The particular rhythm and song that stirs the soul of the ailing person, also has embedded within it, the herbal formulae that will cure him/her.

Kropp Dakubu’s second definition of *Kla/kra* is, “Soul, aspect of the human person that is believed to join God after death”. Therefore, the soul as the seat of life, that gives a person his/her being, is in line with the notion of

*Klama* being the life force that gives the religious performance, its eminence. This definition corroborates Fields assertion that the soul is that which departs the living body after death. Therefore, the symbolic use of ‘*Twɛ kɛ Kla*’ by Botchway, succinctly conveys the prominence to which the Dangme esteem the performance of *Klama*. In this thesis, I argue that to the Dangme, *Klama* means the very life force that drives the people. This is because *Klama* encapsulates the underlying ideological foundation upon which the entire community’s cosmology revolves. This cosmology is hinged on four thematic frames that is *Klama* as *lami* (songs/music), *Klama* as *tsupa* (herbal medicine), *Klama* as *fiɛmi* (play/performance) and *Klama* as *doo* (dance). I contend that the dance, which is an integral part of *Klama fiɛmi* (performance), is an overt activity that showcases the culture of the Dangmes to the outside world. The socio-cultural and political structure, medicine, beliefs in what constitutes illness, wellness, entertainment and rituals concerning economics i.e. when to fish, farm and when not to, for the sake of replenishment etc. are all enshrined in *Klama*. This relates to the polytheistic nature of *Klama* worship system, with specific deities in charge of every facet of their life. All these deities and philosophies are embodied in the dance.

*Klama* can also be looked at from the etymological sense by splitting the word into two to read *Kla* (soul) and *ma* (corn/cassava dough). This split when merged and looked at from both Ga and Dangme perspectives would simply mean soul food in one breathe. This is because, the migratory account of the Ga-Dangmes indicate that at a point, one group of the Ga subgroups (Ga Mashie) had to leave their *ma* (corn dough) in their haste to migrate from their settlement at night (Henderson- Quartey, 2001). *Ma* or corn dough is used in the



preparation of several dishes but *Banku* or *Kenkey*; staple corn food of the Ga-Dangme group is the most popular. Here, *ma* is metaphorically used to mean something that is essential or of a necessity to the livelihood of the people. Therefore, *Kla ma/ Klama*, in essence, is the very thing (life force) that sustains the Dangmes.

A single *Klama* performance is a conglomerate of the mindset of the people. Dangmes believe *Klama* performance links the ethereal to the temporal worlds and vice versa and as such, it is an integral part of Dangme socio-religious life. Oh! Nii Sowah, an astute dancer, choreographer and scholar concisely captures this in his quotations of Ampofo Duodu (a pioneer dancer, lecturer and founding member of the Ghana Dance Ensemble). He says, “he/she who dies without dancing has not lived”. This statement reinforces the fact that dance permeates every aspect of the African’s life. From birth, through to death, dance is used as a conduit to celebrate each moment. Everyone is expected to actively participate in these communal activities because according to Oh! Nii, when we dance, we resurrect and celebrate our ancestors as well as our humanity. The dance also bridges the gap between the living and the dead, as a result, there is continuity of life through to the after world. Therefore, when a person fails to participate in any of these dance sessions in celebration of the life force that drives the community, it places that individual in a certain light and this person is classified by Botchway (2006) as *Oje ogbla nɔ* (off balance). Therefore, that person is classified as sick and not in synch with life; the force that drives the people. This study thus, explores *Klama* from the dance performance lens in order to unravel the aesthetics within the performance that speaks to the issues above.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This dissertation questions the manifestations of *Klama* as well as its aesthetic dimensions as a performance phenomenon. Further to this, the research questions the gendered dimensions of *Klama* performance phenomenon and the roles music, dance, costume and props play in the ritual performance.

### **1.4 Aims /Objectives**

This study generally aims at examining *Klama* dance as a performance aesthetic phenomenon of the people of Gbugbla in order to appreciate how *Klama* movement system integrates its various genres into a complete knowledge system for the purpose of enculturation and preservation of the culture of the people. Furthermore, the study analyzes the concept of *Klama* and its gendered dimensions as well as scrutinizes the mutual interplay of dance, music, and costume within the ritual performances and aims at theorizing, based on the findings of the research, that besides the integrated nature of African performance arts, there are four thematic lenses through which African religious practices can be examined that is; music, dance, medicinal and performance.

### **1.5 Related Literature, Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

In this thesis, I explore the performance aesthetics of *Klama* as a movement system of the Dangme people of Prampram. I observe that the *Klama* movement system harmonizes all the manifestations of *Klama* into a complete epistemological system for the purpose of preservation, socialization and entertainment. However, this movement system has not received the desired

attention hence leaving a huge scholarly lacuna. It is this gap that this thesis aims at bridging.

Dance movement as a form of knowledge system is in a state of constant flux. This is worsened by the fact that its agent of acquisition and transmission is the human body. It is true that dance movements have survived generations and will continue to, but it is also true that movements have undergone tremendous transformations from one agent to the another. This is based on the agent's knowledge and understanding of the movement forms and the meanings these agents bring to bear on that particular movement system. Gradually, the quality and finesse employed in these movement performances are changing. Interest in this religious art form is also waning due to forces of change such as Christian and Islamic religions, emigration in search of economic empowerment as well as the advancement in new media technology (Nicholls, 1998). These are drawing the attention of the youth from some of the indigenous practices. There is therefore the need for these indigenous knowledge systems to be harnessed and preserved through documentation.

I have discovered that very little work has been done in the area of writing about *Klama* as a dance or movement performance phenomenon. Although there is some scholarship on *Klama*, the phenomenon has been studied from the musical perspective with leading scholars such as Nketia (1958) writing on the *Organisation of Music in Adangme (sic) Society*, and Accam (1966), writing on *Adangme (sic) vocabularies, including a Klama vocabulary*, and (Accam, 1967) *Klama songs and chants*.

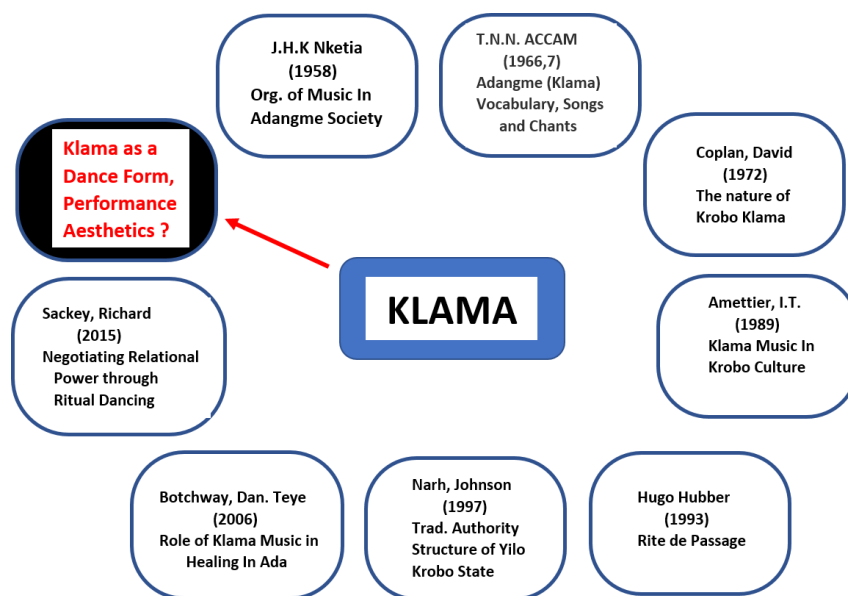
From the social lens, Coplan (1972) studied *the nature of Krobo Klama*, while Ametier (1989) also wrote on *Klama music in Krobo culture*. Huber

(1993) spoke about *The Krobo: Traditional, social and religious life of a west African people* and Narh (1997), researched on the *Traditional authority structure of Yilo Krobo state*.

Botchway (2006) examined the therapeutic perspective studying the role of music in healing. All these researchers have addressed *Klama* from diverse perspectives in tandem with the focus of their studies. There is however a huge scholarly lacuna in relation to the treatment of the aesthetic components of the dance/movement performance. The closest and most recent work which was completed on the subject of dance was by Sackey (2015), a native of Gbugbla. His work explored relational power negotiations through the performance of *Klama*. His focus was on the three topmost “*Wetso*” (clans) within the Gbugbla clan structure i.e. *Kle*, *Anewe* and *Osheku* and how they complement each other in the performance of *Klama*. Sackey argues that settlement in Gbugbla was in the order described above followed by many other clans. The first settlers being *Kle* were led by the *Lalue Wo* (mother of the deities in Gbugbla) and subsequently became the spiritual leader of the town. Later due to marriage, war and political leadership, the second settlers (*Anewe*) became the quarter where Kings were installed. They were led by *Digble* (Father of the deities in Gbugbla). The third clan which is *Osheku We* were led spiritually by *Tataabo* who was a go between for the prince of *Anewe* and the princess of *Lalue*. Hence, earning the third rank in the order of importance. What I find problematic with this narrative is how *Digble* became part of this triangulation. According to my investigations, *Anewe* were led by two deities i.e. *Osabu* and *Okumi*. Although it is a known fact that *Digble* is the father to all the deities, *Digble* belonged to *Olowe* who are divided into three sub families of *Akuble*, *Akublebi* and

*Samantua*. It is therefore difficult to reconcile this puzzle. However, it is within the dance performance that this political and other complex relational powers are negotiated.

*Klama* dance performance does not only legitimize or give credibility to the celebration. It also aids in unravelling the worldview and laying overtly, the philosophical and aesthetic underpinnings of the character of the people. These are embodied in the integrated performance of *Klama*. It is within this integrated performance frame that the aesthetics of the dance movements speak to the varied components of *Klama*. This study therefore, seeks to bridge this gapping scholarly gap (see fig. 2).



**Figure 2 A diagrammatic presentation of the problem statement.**

Dance scholars like Sklar (2001) have explained the correlation between movement knowledge and cultural knowledge. Dixon-Stowell (1988), informs us that Chuck Davies, a choreographer of the African- American Dance theatre, notes that in order to understand the culture of a people, their dance must be studied. These arguments reveal that dance, reflects the aesthetic values (Coplan

1972, Sklar 1991) as well as social sentiments of the people. Therefore, if movement is so vital in indigenous knowledge system, why neglect it?

I argue in this thesis that people do not just move the way they do. To a large extent, their movements reflect their cultural history. The way a person moves symbolically expresses his philosophy, experience and gives insight into his culture and status etc. Adinku (1994) clearly illustrates that the manner of restricted, elegant and majestic movements of a king (monarch), bearing in mind his regalia, cannot be compared with the simple, swift and agile movements executed by a priest in a shrine. Therefore, understanding *Klama* as a movement system means understanding the aesthetic world view of the people, hence the motive for the thesis.

According to Gyekye (2003), aesthetics within the African purview is judged based on its functional, symbolic and purely aesthetic properties. The rationale for Gyekye's position is that most writers of aesthetics claim African art forms are 'functional and symbolic' as against the European held conception of "art for art's sake". Gyekye (2003:127) opines that,

The distinction that is often drawn between African and European art is that while the latter is purely aesthetic the former is functional and symbolic and empty of the purely aesthetic element. This distinction is definitely incorrect, for in African art production and appreciation equal value is placed on functionality, symbolism, and the purely aesthetic."

Therefore, "dance performance is evaluated by reference to the aesthetic qualities of body movements and style and to the significance of the movements" (ibid: 128) executed. Indeed, the African's worldview of art and the sensation of beauty is a bit different. It is functional and symbolic but even in these forms, there is the ability to appreciate movements for its own sake. In the same manner, art objects, in the forms of props used in worship, body

adornments and make up, costume colors and above all, the quality of language used in appraising performances, have inherent aesthetic qualities which transcends the utilitarian function referred to as “art-for-life’s sake” (Jegede, 1993). Thus, in this dissertation, the definition of aesthetics is linked to the amalgam of skill employed in movement execution, observation of performance etiquettes and diverse forms of performance appraisals by audience members. Also, embedded in this definition is the use of costumes, props, music, and the art employed in the application of make-ups and body adornments.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework**

This thesis, is a performance study of *Klama* religious dance of the Dangme people of Gbugbla. In this thesis, I am using a combination of the concepts of performance (Drewal, 1992), aesthetics (Gyekye, 2003) and Peirce’s theory of semiotics (Turino, 2014) to analyze my work. The rationale behind these combinations are that, in any performance scenario, all the three elements of performance, aesthetics and semiotics are likely to be present. Therefore, these perspectives will aid in explaining *Klama* performance phenomenon to facilitate our understanding of this religious art form.

## **1.7 The concept of performance**

The concept or field of performance has a broad expanse. Authorities have argued out what constitutes performance from diverse viewpoints theorizing that even everyday life activities including mode of speaking can be performed. (Austin, 2010; Bauman, 1975). Drewal (1992) on the other hand theorizes that repetition is a way of understanding the transformational capacity of performance practice. Drewal argues that since repetition is another form of

re-performance (representation) of an earlier activity, movements, gestures and expressions never serve the same purpose twice. She argues further that essentially, audience members never appreciate a performance in the same way even if they are the same people. Therefore, it is in repetition that creativity is engendered. In subjecting *Klama* religious dance performance to Drewals theory of repetition, it is evidently clear that each time the dance is re-performed, creativity is engendered. It is therefore through this creativity that the people's aesthetic sensibilities are laid overt for the purposes of safeguarding, socialization, entertainment and the advancement of the transformational role of *Klama* dance in worship.

In line with Drewals (1992) theory, Richard Schechner (1982, 2003), one of the major proponents of performance studies, denotes performance as “restored behavior” or behavior twice behaved i.e. behavior never-for-the-first-time-performed. Thus, in *Klama* ritual art form, ritual processes, songs sung and movements executed by mediums are indeed a restoration of ancient ritual behaviors. In line with *Klama* as a performance art form, Goldberg (2006) defines performance as “live art by artists”. She seeks to draw attention to the notion of the “real”, and “liveness” where emphasis is placed on the artist and the usage of his/her body as a tool for conveying varied forms of cultural or historical knowledge in a live presentation as represented in *Klama*. Thus, in performance, the art and the artist is one and the same, affirming the notion of the ‘real’. Harding (2002:3), in agreement with Goldberg declares us that;

in performance, ...the art is produced in *the self of the artist*, and the entity thus produced each time is defined temporally ‘*in vivo*’, produced in and by the performer as both artist and art object. It is seen and heard through presence, voice and movement and its temporary existence verified by the presence of the spectators. The quality of its temporality



is physical, embodied in the performer, and *only* in the performer, and because of its immateriality outside of the performer, it is rendered *forever ephemeral*, existing only *for as long as the performer performs*.

I agree with the above statement because performance is at the same time the embodiment of the artwork and the artist. In performance, the presentation is made to an audience who, depending on the exigencies of the moment, are able to interact in the cause of the presentation. Like *Klama*, the audience in performance, play a crucial role in endorsing the quality and liveness of the performance. For instance, the audience in *Klama* are able to interject in the cause of the performance through metacommunicative means in the form of shouts of affirmation or otherwise. Sometimes they (audiences) engage in active participation in the performance such as dancing, clapping or singing. This is due to the fact that they have witnessed repeatedly this annual performance and are abreast with the performance etiquettes, norms, movement aesthetics and the socially approved standards required of each component in the total performance. They are therefore very critical in appraising the performance and are quick to pass judgment as to the direction of the performance. Due to the enormity of their experience with the phenomenon, Nii- Dortei (2012) refers to such as “culturally-informed audience”.

In dealing with the ‘art’ component of performance, besides its ‘liveness’, Goldberg (2006) talks about works of art as a carrier of aesthetic dimensions. These dimensions are the observable features that one sees in the cause of presentation hence, art objects in the forms of costumes (color and nature), props, make-up and body adornments informs the aesthetic judgements and understanding of *Klama*.

## 1.8 The concept of aesthetics

The concept of aesthetics, was coined in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Alexander Baumgarten, to signify experiencing of sensory awareness through perception of natural phenomenon (Adinku, 1994). The concept has been used to explain the perception of beauty as it exists in nature. Besides the beauty found in nature, man-made activities such as poetry, dance, music, painting etc. which largely falls under arts have been accepted as having aesthetic qualities.

The concept of aesthetics according Gyekye (2003) takes its root from the Western notion of ‘art for its sake’. This notion is indeed the direct translation of the Greek word “aithesis”, a nineteenth century notion in which the pure beauty of art is experienced.

According to Betty Redfern (1983), dances that fall outside the category of art such as ritual dances are not accepted and considered under the concept of aesthetics because their purpose and nature is towards performing a functional role of appeasing a god. Therefore, for a work of art to be accepted under the concept of aesthetics, its creation and purpose must be solely for perceiving and contemplation upon for its own sake. It is at this point that Gyekye’s African notion of aesthetics goes contrary with the western concept of ‘art for art’s sake’. According to Gyekye (2003), although it is true that African art forms perform functional and symbolic roles within the social process, “equal value is placed on functionality, symbolism and the purely aesthetic”. It is within the functional mode of performance that one is able to delineate symbolic components of a dance in order to see clearly the beauty and quality of the movements executed. I am of the opinion that even within the functional mode of dance performances, there is adequate opportunity to

appreciate dance performance for its own sake judging from the dexterity with which mediums perform their movements (Gyekye, 2003). I therefore concur with Gyekye's stand that within the realm of African art, and in this case *Klama* religious dance, the performance seeks to encapsulate the world view of the Dangmes. The continual performance of *Klama* serve the purpose of reviving, renewing and reaffirming ties between the cosmic forces and the temporal world. It is therefore within this performance mode that beauty, as found within dance performance, speaks to the aesthetic values, that is what is real to the Dangmes, their ethics and their forms of expressions. I emphasize therefore that the ideals expressed in *Klama* song texts find its expression through the intricate movements executed by mediums during the performance of *Klama* dance.

Additionally, to the above, the Western approach to art appreciation within the African scope seems to fall flat due to conceptualization challenges of what arts and aesthetics actually mean to the African. Contemporary scholars like Dele Jegede (Jegede, 1993) among others have argued that African art forms transcends the utilitarian functions thus, imbricating beautifully both the contemplative and functional features to serve diverse ends concurrently. Therefore, African art forms seeks to express the notion of "art for life's sake" as an all-encompassing idea as opposed to "art for arts sake" which when dealt with beyond the surface, communicates deeper underlying messages. This holds true for *Klama* because its performance does not only serve the functional purpose of ritualized worship, meant to unite the people with its attendant moral values, but also furthers the aesthetic pleasure of entertaining the society in general. The quotidian spatial organization, arrangement of material objects, the manner in which mediums, quasi- mediums (trainee mediums), attendants,

musician and audience members go about their activities all carry inherent aesthetic qualities (Saito, 2001).

The study of ethnomusicology aims at examining the role of music in indigenous cultural systems. This provides an avenue to also appreciate the aesthetic values, ideas, dimensions, principles and behaviors of people. This form of appreciation stems from what pertains within the cultural context of the society in relation to their music and dance (Nketia, 2005). This is because deeply embedded within the music of the people are their concept of reality, value system and ethos. American anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler (1969) is calling for “ways of thinking about art” where art should mean “the cultural forms that result from creative processes which manipulate movement, sound or materials”. This suggestion points directly to the performance of music and dance within indigenous societies. These performances come with visual and movement aspects that involve the use of costume, props, gestures and orderly presentations of movements. It is within this context that she claims, society expresses their sense of beauty. According to ethnomusicology scholar Nketia (2005), a performance that lacks these visual accents is ideally not perceived as beautiful because music and dance are appreciated not only in terms of its apparent surface structures but more strictly on the affective impact it makes through such structures or the intensity of feeling it generates.

The aesthetics in the performance of *Klama* therefore manifests in the forms of movement structure and what it communicates as well as music structure and the textual devices employed in its rendition. Also, costume color codes and styles employed in its construction, props and their significance, make-ups, ornaments, performance spaces and the dramatic nature in which the

entire performance is rendered lays overt the idea of the ‘beautiful’. These aesthetic components are what this thesis analyzes within the three stages of *Klama* performance i.e. pre-possession, possession and post-possession.

### 1.9 Peirce theory of semiotics

*Klama* dance performance is embedded in multi-layered coded expressions through dance movements, priestesses’ costumes, make-ups/ body adornments, props, drum appellations and song texts. As a result, there is the need for a theory that will aid the interpretation of these multi-layered performance phenomenon. Semiotics, which is the science of signs in human society, provides a significant impact on conventional approaches to the analysis of body movements and communication system, (Ajayi, 1998:185). Therefore, Peirce’s semiotics becomes a handy framework within which *Klama* dance can be better understood. According to Turino, “Peirce’s theory of signs was primarily a foundation for understanding human perception, experience, and thought, that is, to understanding people’s processes of being in-the-world—the focus of phenomenology” (Turino, 2012a). Therefore, facial expressions, gestures, use of space, posture, and movement genres which are non-verbal arts within the dance structure of *Klama*, communicate the philosophies of the various deities. *Klama* ideals, whether communicated through the intricacies of dance movements, through song texts or ritual performances, are laden with culturally specific instructions from among the society’s own linguistic resources concerning how to interpret what is being performed (Bauman, 1975).

Pierce theory of semiotics has been organized into three major groups which he refers to as Trichotomies. Each trichotomy has three components. The

first trichotomy, made up of components such as qualisign, sinsign and legisign, deals with the characteristics, quality or nature of a sign. The second trichotomy which includes icon, index and symbol, indicates the relationship between a sign and an object (what the sign represents). The final trichotomy which involves rheme, dicent and argument explains how a sign is interpreted.

The connectors which fall within Peirce trichotomy two i.e. icon, index, and symbol will be the set of explanatory tools I will use to analyze this project. Turino explains icons as the connections between signs and objects and indicates that their identification is from the perceivers perspective therefore one is socialized to observe certain perceived qualities that give the indication of that sign. Index or indices on the other hand furthers our understanding of the relationship between signs and objects this time through repetitions. The perceiver, who is the focus here, has experienced this relationship so often that his/her understanding of the phenomenon has become automatic. He/she has therefore accepted the phenomenon experienced as the truth or fact thus allowing the phenomenon to become part of the person's conception of reality. Thus, upon seeing a fully costumed priestess walking briskly with ankle bells jiggling as she moves along, any culturally informed Dangme should be able to instantly decipher that there is a public worship performance afoot and as a result, the priestess is making her way there. Indices also have metonymic functions in which a part is used to represent a whole. Likewise, certain props, movement ideas and rhythms can represent the nature of certain deities.

The third connection which is symbol, is the third way of connecting signs and objects. It is the least understood concept of all Peirce's concepts. This is because it is mostly used in scholarly writings, thinking and teaching. Its

understanding is dependent on three features that must be present i.e. linguistic definitions, social agreement or convention and general acceptability before a phenomenon can be accepted as a symbol.

In essence this thesis is identifying icons within the tradition of *Klama* performance, pointing to its indexical meaning and interpreting it from the insider's perspective as well as documenting it in order to add to the ongoing scholarly discourse on performance aesthetics. It is anticipated that semiotic theory will help to decode the multi-layered nature of *Klama* and the motive behind the movements of mediums.

## **1.10 Methodology**

This study is predominantly qualitative in approach and employs ethnographic participant observation and interviews in the gathering of primary data. Primary data is also supported by secondary data sources such as academic papers on *Klama* and other religious (ritual) dances, and relevant journals.

### **1.10.1 Participant- Observation**

The Ga-Dangme speaking people are paternal in lineage. This means that children trace their ancestry through the father's line. Gbugbla or Prampram is no exception. I trace my ancestry (paternally) to *Nugo*. Prampram is my maternal hometown. In any case, both *Nugo* and Gbugbla are in the same political constituency of Ningo-Prampram with the administrative head located in Prampram.

I was born in Prampram to a Christian family with my father being an Anglican Clergyman. Despite my Christian background, I was able to observe activities of priestesses during *Klama* performances due to the proximity of their

activities to our place of abode. I took advantage of my maternal relationship to my cousin, Nii Martey, who is the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* (priest) of *Dibɔ* shrine to get close to the *Klama* performance. This included some high religious office holders within the hierarchy and with permission, recorded majority of the ritual performance activities both on video and audio. This was meant to aid understanding and meaning generation of what *Klama* meant and commemorate to the people of Gbugbla.

Before entering the field, I discussed my intentions with my mother. She in turn officially informed my cousin, Nii Martey, of my research intent. I therefore called him and scheduled a preliminary meeting. This was to explain to him and to express my wish to conduct indebt study of the *Klama* phenomenon and to officially ask permission to record the performances. He in turn took me to *Kpalɔ Tseyayo* Mensah, who is the voice of the deities and as such superintends during the performance of *Klama*. In his presence, the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* introduced me as his younger brother who is studying at the University and as such, wishes to come and learn *Klama Kusum* (tradition or rituals) as well as document it. He therefore gave permission by performing a libation prayer, asking permission from the deities and ancestors, to permit him to reveal or hand over the knowledge of the people to me. A date was therefore set to commence initial interviews. About three sessions of interview was conducted before the commencement of the *Kple* annual festival rites.

Through my maternal family ties, I have been privileged to get closer to some priestesses like *Tsawe*, *Oshanɛ*, and *Osabu* and the performance tradition to observe closely and actually take active part in the music performance. In relation to the music performance, I engaged myself in the playing of the



bamboo or stick clappers. What I was unable to do was to join in the singing because I did not know the text of the songs. I therefore managed with humming while the experts sang the texts.

Right from the beginning of the ceremonies at night to mark the official commencement of the ritual processes, all the way to the final rites of expiation by dipping the sacred *Kple mi* (Kple drum) into the sea, I have been there to capture the experiences, emotions and reactions of the people. At the beginning, I felt like an alien, holding the camera and trying to capture everything that I saw. On few occasions, I met with hostilities but time and consistency of presence smoothed the relationship. I must admit, I have never gotten this close to the performance till this fieldwork took off.

### **1.10.2 Interviews and focus group discussions**

I used the purposive sampling technique in this study to purposefully choose key functionaries who have institutional memory of the performance, ritual processes, and who are knowledgeable in *Klama* affairs. This is because they are the gate keepers to this tradition. I therefore, interviewed them to elicit primary information (data) and to prevent being misinformed. Such key functionaries included the *Kpalɔ* (mouthpiece of the deities), *Digblɛ* and *Tsawe Labiahi* (priest assistants), *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* (priest), and *Tsawe, Oshanɛ, and Osabu wɔyihɪ* (priestesses).

I also interviewed *dadefoi* (master musicians) as well as selected ‘informed audiences’ (Nii-Dortey, 2012; Kariamu, 1998: 213) such as Sarah Korkor Padi who is a *mawa yoo* (handler) of *Lalue* priestess. This was to gain indigenous knowledge from the emic perspective on the meanings, philosophies, ideologies, thoughts and perceptions that undergird the

performance of *Klama*. As a native of the tradition, I employed my knowledge of language, protocol and relation to key leadership to achieve this purpose.

For the purpose of validation of claims, I used focus group discussions in order to crosscheck some of the facts. I invited my cousin who is the *Dibɔ wɔnɔ* to be present at certain discussions for the purpose of correcting incorrect submissions.

In addition to the purposive sampling technique, I used semi-structured interview as research instrument for my primary data gathering. This form of interview was ideal because of its flexibility to have guiding questions with the free will to ask follow up questions when necessary. All these cautious steps were taken with reference to Madison's (2005) argument that, the critical ethnographer must use the resources, skills and privileges available to him/her to make accessible information by penetrating borders and confines in order to project the voiceless voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach.

### **1.11 Significance of Study**

The study aims at deepening the understanding of Dangme performance aesthetics, cosmology, worldview and movement appreciation through the lens of *Klama*. The study will also be a significant addition to existing scholarship on Anthropology of Dance, and one of a kind that focuses on in-depth analysis of *Klama* as a performance aesthetic or movement system conducted so far in Gbugbla. Furthermore, it will become the converging point for other art forms such as costume and props of diverse nature. This will engender multidisciplinary study on the interrelationships of the arts.

## CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DANGMES

### 2.1 Introduction

Although the main purpose of this thesis is to analyze the performance aesthetics of *Klama* dance of the people of Gbugbla, the study will never be complete without interrogating or providing a working knowledge of the people. In this chapter, I will take a historical look at the migratory accounts of the Dangmes, skewing the scope to reflect the people of Prampram, a corrupted pronunciation of their indigenous name Gbugbla. Due to the fact that *Klama* performance encompasses the worldview of the Dangmes, a cursory look at the people from the social, political, and religious lenses will provide information that reveals the true construct of the people. This will support the assertion that *Klama*, which is the foremost amongst other music and dance performance traditions of the *Gbugbla*, is the core art form (*twi kɛ kla*) that holds both the cosmic and the corporeal worlds together in a delicate balance. Furthermore, this chapter will aid our understanding of the fact that this performance art form contributes to the ignition of the aesthetic sensibilities of the people.

As a young boy growing up in Prampram's coastal town, my siblings and I were prevented from going close to the sea unlike our other compatriots. The slightest indication of sea sand or traces of salt residue left as a result of dried sea water on our bodies meant an encounter with the sea and that warranted one form of sanction or the other. Having lived to see the sea as a foe because of the countless number of drowning stories we have heard, yet knowing that that very sea is the community's major source of fish protein gives me a mixed reaction whenever I get close to this water body.

Questioning the rationale behind this strict ‘don’t go to the seaside’ order from my protective parents, I wonder whether the erstwhile imposing presence of Fort Vernon, which now is a pale shadow of itself, reminds the people of their encounter with their slave masters. Interrogating the correlation between the two-syllable indigenous name *Gbugbla* to that of the English name *Prampram*, I remember the stories my late father tells us. Stories of the sudden arrival of the slave ships to our shores as he heard from his father. Their purpose was to trade in goods with the people but later turned into trade in humans. The presence of the Fort as their trade post reminds the people of that encounter. The onomatopoeic sudden arrival of the ship and the unpleasant encounter with them gave way to the name *Gbugbla*. The name was a mouthful for the European traders. Their attempt to pronounce it gave birth to *Prampram*. An attempt to find a written account of the meaning, *Gbugbla*, has proved futile leaving diverse unconfirmed oral accounts of the meaning of the name.

Besides the pale shadow of itself, Fort Vernon, is an outstanding edifice with its out post as the very first Police station in the history of the Gold Coast now Ghana. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census report on the Ningo- Prampram district (Service, 2014), the Police station was built in 1486 by the European Traders. Contrary to that claim is the inscription found on the frontage of the Police Station which indicates that the Police Station (see fig. 3) was the first to be built by the Danes in 1814 by Sgt. Moxon J.K. Yeboah. The discrepancy here is resolved by a posts on the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board’s webpage and that of Ghana-net.com (Board, 2016; Ghana-net.com, 2016) that indicates that;

Fort Vernon, Prampram - The fishing community of Prampram, in the Greater Accra Region, is home to the ruins of Fort Vernon. A small

English trading fort, Fort Vernon was built in 1742, out of some of the cheapest materials – rough stones and swish. It was abandoned approximately in 1816, after the abolishment of Trans Atlantic slave trade, during the war with France whence it fell into ruins (sic).

By the revelations above, it is therefore possible that it was within the period of the ruins of Fort Vernon that the said Sgt. Moxon J.K. Yeboah constructed the Police station during the occupancy of the Fort by the Danes.



**Figure 3** Picture of the first Police Station in Ghana built by the Danes.  
*Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.*

## 2.2 Location and people of Gbugbla

Prampram is a town located about 25 miles (or 40 km) North-East of Accra, the country's capital town. Prampram lies  $5^{\circ}42'0''$  N and  $0^{\circ}7'0''$  E in DMS (Degrees Minutes Seconds) or 5.7 and 0.116667 (in decimal degrees) (“Prampram,” 2016). The town falls within the Ningo- Prampram district. This new constituency was carved out of the erstwhile Dangme West district into two distinct districts for easier administrative purposes i.e Shai Osudoku and Ningo- Prampram districts by the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462). Ghana Statistical Service data from the 2010 Population and Housing Census (Service, 2014:1) informs us that;

Ningo-Prampram district covers a total land area of about 622.2 square kilometers. The district is located about 15 km to the east of Tema and about 40 km from Accra, the capital of Ghana. The district is bounded

in the north by Shai-Osudoku district, south by the Gulf of Guinea, in the east by the Ada East district and to the west by Kpone-Katamanso district. The district's proximity to Tema and Accra makes it easy for community members to have access to many social facilities and infrastructure, such as, good roads, water, hospitals and electricity. The district also serves as a dormitory for workers in many industries in Tema and Accra metropolis.

Prampram is a coastal community with a coastline stretching to about 37km. The main occupation of the adult male close to the sea is fishing and the females engage in the sale of fish products in diverse forms. Besides fishing, others engage in canoe carving and petty trading. According to the Population and Housing Census Data of 2010 (Service, 2014), Prampram has about 90% arable land good for agricultural production. As a result, the people engage in small to medium scale farming of maize, cassava, banana and vegetables as well as raising of livestock.

The population of the Ningo-Prampram district according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, is 70,923 representing 1.8 percent of the region's total population. Males constitute 47.3 percent and females represent 52.7 percent.

### **2.3 The difference between *Klama* and *Kple***

The difference between *Klama* and *Kple* lies in the deities associated and the rhythmic performances accorded the deities by the musicians. Deities such as *Yoomle*, *Oshany*, *Okumi*, *Osabu*, *Meedoku Aye*, *Baate*, *Adee* and *Adeeke* etc. are strictly *Klama* deities and they perform to *Me* music or rhythm whilst *Kple* deities such as *Owufu*, *Aboanu*, etc. perform to *Kple* music. According to *Dibo Wɔnɔ* Nii Martey, there are however some deities (*Baate*, *Tsawe* etc.) who in rare cases respond to both *Klama* and *Kple* music. Some *Klama* and *Kple* gods are so diffused one could find them (*Ayiku* and *Nadu*) located in Ga

communities and vice-versa as found in Teshie (Field, 1961:74). *Klama* performances have been categorized into six major subdivisions (Ametier 1989:16-19; Botchway 2006:32) among the Dangme subgroups. These are; (a) *Olikpɔ/Ohikpɔ* - a *Klama* dance style with a kind of hop without lifting the feet off the ground but with shoulders raised. This is followed by (b) *Hae/Jawalesayo*, a *Klama* music form associated with girl's initiation into womanhood. (c) *Ha* is a processional song performed for initiates (*dipoyii*) as they journey to the sacred stream for cleansing and also to and from the *dipo* sacred *Tekpete* rock rites. (d) *Luo* on the other hand consist of a body of solemn songs performed for initiates upon their return from *Tekpete* with the hair on their head shaved. The songs remind the initiates of the memory of their ancestors. (e) *Klamagu* follows as a general purpose *Klama* which is performed on all occasions. The last is (f) *Agbaa*. This is associated with herbal medicinal practice, occultism and mysticism. Songs performed makes reference to spirits, deities and special herbal formulas and charms.

I have realized that Ametier and Botchway, in line with their music orientation and focus for their thesis, have categorized *Klama* into six subcategories as stated above. As an addition, I have discovered a seventh category which is *Klama wɔ fiemi*. This category deals with the dance performance aspect of *Klama* that is characterized by possession/trance.

Ametier (1989), explains that *Klama* is used in every sphere within the life cycle of the Dangme with the exception of death. According to him, death is seen as negative, unclean and damaging and for that matter has no place within *Klama* because *Klama* is considered holy and clean. However, the only moment *Klama* is performed at a funeral is when a priest or priestess passes on. The basis

for such an exception is that the priests or priestesses are revered for their devoutness and constant contact with the holy deities. Therefore, a *Klama* performance in their honor, at a time of death, is the most appropriate farewell to accord them since it is in line with celebration of sacredness.

## 2.4 Worship

*Klama* is a communal worship performance form for Dangmes just as *Kple* is for the Ga. *Kple* is the worship of aboriginal gods that are believed to inhabit rivers, lagoons, groves, stones etc. *Kple* deities are worshiped in similar fashion to that of *Klama* among the seven principal towns of the Ga i.e. Ga Mashie, Osu, Labadi, Teshie, Nungua, Tema and Kpone (Field, 1961). Coincidentally, both *Kple* and *Klama* are performed by the Dangmes of Gbugbla (Prampram), the community where this research is being conducted. This may be due to the close affinity these communities share in the form of belonging to one large Ga-Dangme language stock with its origin from the *Kwa* language group (Dortey, 2012). According to Nii Dortey (Personal communications on June 14, 2016), Gbugbla happens to be located at the converging point of the Ga language and the beginning of the Dangme. As a result, Kpone which is a corrupted form of *Kpoɲunɔ* (on top of a hill), originally Dangme, is caught up in the language crossroad hence the people speak a mixture of Ga and Dangme. *Klama* music like that of *Kple* is sung in the defunct Obutu language. Other affinities according to Nii -Dortey (2012:36) is the practice of naming offsprings in an order that reflects the family/household they belong to as well as the practice of circumcising male children on the eighth day after birth among others. Both Gbugbla and the seven Ga communities are found



along the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. Gbugbla known in present day as Prampram is the next coastal community after Kpone to the east.

M. J. Field (1961), one of the foremost ethnographers to document *Kple* in all the Ga communities, argues that the Ga communities believe in gods and not fetish and therefore have neither fetish priests nor priestesses. What rather is believed in and worshiped are gods. She translates gods as a *Wɔŋ* which by her definition is “anything that can work but not be seen”. Contrary to this claim, Henderson- Quartey, (2001) asserts that *won* are earth spirits which people personally propitiate for their personal gains or to the disadvantage of their rivals. The Ga-Dangmes venerate/worship *Dzemawɔŋ* to which Field claims, is “a powerful type of intelligent *Wɔŋ*” who “walks about the world and the towns”. According to Field, *Dzemawɔŋ* transliterates as *Dze= world, ma= town,* and *wɔŋ= anything that can work but not be seen* . (Field, 1961:4). These definitions might be due to the fact that Field is not a Ga and might not have the linguistic power to adequately explain what the natives meant when they refer to *Wɔŋ* or *Wɔ* and *Dzemawɔŋ/Dzemawɔ* (Ga/Dangme respectively). According to Nii Martey *Dibɔ*, who is the *Wɔnɔ* (priest) in charge of the *Dibɔ Wɔ*, a “*Wɔ*” is a supernatural benevolent spirit-being who have the people who serve him at heart and mediates between them and the supreme being *Maawu/Mawu Okpledzey*, that is the all-encompassing God that covers the entire universe. A *Dzemawɔ* therefore, is this same supernatural benevolent spirit- being that inhabits natural bodies such as rivers, grooves, mountains, trees etc. According to Nii Martey *Dibɔ*, these beings cannot be summoned to do evil or hurt anyone. They follow natural order of rewarding the good and punishing the bad by their

judgement. Henderson- Quartey's (2001:57) definition falls in tandem with Nii Martey *Dibɔ* when he state that *Jemawoji* are;

messengers of God, whose spirits are believed to reside in earthly features. Deities such as *Sakumofio* (Accra), *Kole* (Accra), *Osu Klote* (Osu), *Sakumo* (Tema), are worshipped in lakes and rivers; *Gbobu* (Nungua), in a hallowed grove; *Nai* and *Trotroe* (Accra) are spirits in the sea.

Henderson- Quartey (2001) continues to compare *Jemawoji* (pl.) to spirits of nature. He relates them to the angels that appeared to Moses, Abraham, Joshua and other Israelite leaders. According to Henderson- Quartey, the Ga do not relate to God directly because of the belief that God is everywhere and too powerful and as such building an accommodation to house him is impossible. Hence, it is proper to approach him through his messengers. I lean toward this school of thought because, throughout my formative years, I have been socialized in this ideology. Through this research, I have discovered that in cases where there are disputes, thefts or situations that need divine intervention for the truth to be declared, the issue is brought before these deities for divine adjudication. It has proven countless times that those who stand right in the case are always vindicated. In this thesis, I shall use 'gods, deities, tutelary spirits, divine beings' interchangeably to refer to the pantheons worshipped in *Klama*.

In *Klama* performance progressions, worshipers (audience) are often very critical in their appraisals due to the fact that they are knowledgeable and well informed about the *Klama* social processes. They tend to appreciate the act in diverse ways. These informed audience (Dortey, 2012) intermittently interject the performance with a volley of comments to show their appreciation or otherwise of the performance of the mediums. Some of these comments which will be analyzed later indicate the standard of performance expected from

a medium. Through the songs chanted by the mediums and its attendant dance movements, communication between the deities and the temporal world are effected.

## 2.5 The Dance

The aesthetics of *Klama* performance is observed in the dance. This is as a result of the composite or eclectic nature of this worship performance art form. The dance performance has the propensity of adding on, other art forms in its quest to fully express the world view of the worshippers. Consequently, aspects such as costume, make-up/ body adornments, props, music and drama become allies of this art form. *Klama* dance is communal in nature. This is because it engenders a sense of community. This sense of community is directly related to the body's multi-capacity for learning and communication (Norris, 2001) through interaction with other bodies. It is strengthened by the fact that the body has multiple ways of knowledge acquisition sometimes through physical movements and emotions. *Klama* dance which is performed in a religious context, is based on the collective belief of the people. In the same religious context, it makes room for performers and audience to interact. This is expressed in the manner in which audience members who are culturally informed about the principles of the dance interact through movement forms with the mediums on the dance floor.

Dance is a collaborative art form that combines body movements, music, dramatization, visual arts (props), and costume. It is a complex cultural system that engages the manipulation of the body and other expressive means to transmit indigenous cultural knowledge. It is for these reasons that this research analyzes the aesthetics of *Klama* dance to enable a holistic understanding and

appreciation of this performance phenomenon as a cultural system. *Klama* is both verbal and non-verbal, comprising the performative aspects such as songs, chants, and greeting formulas.

The basic reason why a medium and a socially informed audience will, without any hesitation, jump quickly unto the dance floor and interactively perform at the strike of a rhythm, is premised on the ideological understanding of this social process. The *Klama* social process is embedded in this song “*waado ne wawɔ yi ne nawa*”. This song phrase is interpreted as ‘let us dance in order that our deities may have life’. Consequently, whenever a *Klama* or *Me* deity begins to perform at the strike of the *Me* rhythm, the general purpose is to reinvigorate the divine beings. It is noteworthy that through the art of dance, the pantheon of deities is brought into the domain of the temporal world to interact by manifesting themselves through their chosen mediums. *Klama* dance can also be seen as highly metaphysical because the mediums who are largely seen as performers are driven by metaphysical, otherworldly beings. Their presence in the mediums empowers them to move or perform the way they do. In fact, the metaphysical beings actually perform themselves or their nature into being by using the bodies of the mediums (Drewal, 1992). It is through this performance that people are able to relate with the deities and appreciate who they are.

Through the lens of *Klama*, there is the realization that in African performances, one is likely to encounter one duality of a sort. The dualities play complimentary roles thus enhancing the total appreciation of life. That is to say that any serious event has a lighter or humorous aspect that coexist in that activity. This is because it is believed that both good and bad exist in tandem

with the course of life and one cannot be too serious all the time just in the same way one cannot be overly happy throughout. This belief is captured succinctly by two Dangme indigenous sayings thus; ‘*okɔ bɔɔ, o fli bɔɔ*’, (you bite a bit, you blow air over it a bit) and ‘*gbɔkwɛ kɛ mɔtu nɛ nyiɛ*’ (literally, night and day go hand-in-hand). These juxtapositions underscore the dualities that are ever present in African performance scenes. For example, in *Klama* performances, there are deities who are jesters by nature and their activities tend to liven the otherwise serious atmosphere through the creation of humor seen as a parody of a kind (Drewal, 1992). There are yet again audience members whose dance movements are comical yet they are able to fit into the tenets of the performance.

All the issues raised above find their expression in the music and dance performances. Therefore, in probing the dance in order to understand it further, the study finds answers to questions such as (a) what goes into the movement training of priestesses. (b) What meanings are ascribed to those movements? (c) What are the standard techniques of movement performance (d) how does one relate to the music in performance (e) what indigenous theories are used to appraise the performance (f) what are the performance protocols that need to be observed? Answers to these questions will deepen the understanding of the philosophies underpinning movements, performance etiquettes and the nature of appraisal in *Klama* dance. This will facilitate to a large extent the appreciation of the aesthetic sensibilities of the people of Gbugbla with regards to movement performance.

## 2.6 Kpalɔ

Within the *Klama* performance realm, there is always the need for an adept who is gifted and trained to hear, understand and respond to the

deities/gods when they mount the mediums and desires to communicate with the community. The language of the gods is difficult to decipher hence the need for this adept. This adept is called *Kpalɔ* in Dangme and *Olaayi* in Ga. He is the voice of the deities. Through him, the coded complex esoteric language of the deities is translated and made known to the people. He also responds to every song sung by the diverse deities who mount each medium. In the Gbugbla dialect, *kpa* means to blow (such as in blowing a trumpet) or make noise and *lɔ* is the person who does the blowing activity. Therefore, *Kpalɔ* is the one who makes known or amplifies the voice of the deities. In effect, he is the crier or figuratively the amplifier of the voice of the gods. He is the officiant and principal cantor in *Klama* performances. Without him, there will be no performance. His special seat is slightly raised above everyone else, a sign to indicate his authority. He regulates the entire performance by encouraging the musicians to give off their best as well as pleads with deities to make their performances brief in order to make room for others to perform. He has the mandate to temporarily pause proceedings to correct anomalies or admonish someone whose unruly behavior is impacting negatively on the performance. His great sense of humor enlivens the performance and propels the worship activity from one level of excitement to the next. He commands the respect of the deities and the populace as a whole. He has institutional memory of all rites performed and examines *ɔkomfuas* before they are finally initiated.

The *Kpalɔ* is part of a group of adepts referred to as the *Agbaa bi* in Dangme and *Agbafoi* in Ga. These are the religious council of elders whose duties are to oversee the day-to-day religious, medicinal, spiritual and socio-cultural affairs of the community. The *Agbaa bi* are selected based on their

indebt institutional knowledge of Dangme tradition, *Klama* praxis as well as their moral and social standing vis a vis indigenous standards. These group of people are so powerful, they are endowed with mystic powers that could enable them sense danger instinctively and organize rituals to avert them. They have been trained extensively in herbal medicine and use this knowledge to heal and defend the community. Field records three sub-groups of *Agbaa bi* namely the *Kple Agbafoi*, *Me Agbafoi* and *Akɔɛ Agbafoi* (Field, 1961:42). This research reports of just one group. Their roles encompass all the three areas stipulated by Field. They form the *Me Agbaa bi*. This is because the *Klama* phenomenon under discussion belongs to the *Me* class of spirit beings. The head for this group in Gbugbla at the time of this research is *Kpalɔ Teye Mensah Nyavɔ* (figure 4). He is ably supported by the *Nadu wɔnɔ* who is the priest in charge of the *Nadu* shrine. Sometimes, he is the second to pour libation for communal ceremonies to commence after the *Lalue labia* who is the Chief priest has paved the way through his libation.



**Figure 4** *Kpalɔ Teye Mensah Nyavɔ* (left) and *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ Nii Martey* (right). Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

In an interview with *Kpalɔ* Teye Mensah (personal communications on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016), during my fieldwork, he enumerates past predecessors within the Upper and Lower Prampram halves of the community and cites only one female, *Kpalɔ Kpagonye Meeley*, who has been able to break through the ranks to attain this social height (see table 1). According to *Kpalɔ* Teye Mensah, she was a warrior who moved and acted like a man and could manipulate the maskettery with dexterity. She died without a child. This affirms the general notion that Prampram runs a patri-clan system hence there is continuous male dominance within the structures with little to no room for women to function.

**Table 1 Showing the past and present Kpalihɔ in Prampram.**

<i>Kpalɔ</i>	<i>Wetso</i> (Clan)
<b>LOWER TOWN</b>	
Aluwe Kpakplaba	Okle Wem
Okotseɛ Budu	Ayiku Wem
Larteytseɛ Kojo	Oshannɛ Wem
Larteytseɛ (Tsewayo) Narteh	Ayiku Wem
Lamleytseɛ Kojo	Otsɔmɔɔ Wem
<b>UPPER TOWN PRAMPARAM</b>	
Kɔkɔtseɛ Akufo	Kletsokunya
Narkitseɛ Datsimu	Kletsokunya
Akitseɛ Yobo	Okɔwem
Teye Juku (he trained current <i>Kpalɔ</i> )	Ablewankɔ
Teye Mensah Nyavɔ (Current <i>Kpalɔ</i> )	Tsawenya

The *Agbaa bi* form the court in charge of settling disputes among *wɔyiii* (singular *wɔyoo*), *wɔnɔhi* (singular *wɔnɔ*) and any challenge that may arise in relation to the spiritual wellbeing of the community. They rally to perform rituals to avert any unforeseen catastrophe or magical spell that may befall the



community and perform rituals to cleanse the community of those infirmities. In my fieldwork, I was fortunate to have chanced upon one of such rituals. This was to fine the spirit of the dead Paramount chief and appease the gods for his unruly behavior. It was narrated that during the Chief's reign, he brought about divisions among the various principal households by not consulting properly before taking decisions. As a result, after his death, his spirit being was summoned and fined a large white cow which was slaughtered in order to reunify the households and restore order in the town.

## 2.7 Manifestations of *Klama*

I am of the resolve that *Klama* among the Dangmes is the life force that guides the fundamental existence of the people. This existence has been captured in four basic performative terminologies by the people. This reflects four major cardinal contexts within which *Klama* exists. These performative terminologies are *lami* (music/ songs), *baa/tsupa* (medicine), *doo* (dance), and *fiemi* (play/performance). The performative terminologies are often expressed as *wa laa Klama* (we sing *Klama*), *wa doo Klama* (we dance *Klama*), *wa fiεε Klama* (we play/ perform *Klama*) and *Klamaa baa yi/tsupa yi* (*Klama* is leaf/ herbs or medicine).

One fundamental question that arises in the face of *Klama* categorization is the question of the difference between Ametier's (1989) six *Klama* subgrouping which is supported by Botchway (2006) and the four-category structure my ethnographic study has gathered among the Dangmes of Gbugbla. Critically examining Ametier's structure, I come to the realization that a lot of his groups are tilted towards his musical orientation. The subgroupings of

*Hae/Jawalesayo, Ha, and Luo*, which deal with music relating to Dipo initiation ceremonies, all belong to my first category of *Lami* (music). His subgroup of *Ohikpɔ/Olikpɔ* and *Klamagu* which focuses on dance styles belong to my second category of *Doo*. Within this category, I have added *Klama wɔ fiemi* which deals specifically with possession/trance fits. Ametier’s final subgroup *Agbaa* which deals with mystic and herbal knowledge comes under my third category of *Tsupa peemi* which is medicine making. This leaves my final category of *fiemi* which is performance oriented. This category contends that, within the larger African performance context, it is within the performance mode and for that matter, dance performance, that all the other thematic components are brought together in a single activity (see table 2).

**Table 2 Comprehensive categorization of Klama conceptual frames.**

<i>Lami</i> (Music)	<i>Tsupa peemi</i> (Medicine making)	<i>Doo</i> (Dance)	<i>Fiemi</i> (Performance)
<i>Hae, Jawalesayo, Ha, Luo</i>	<i>Agbaa</i>	<i>Olikpɔ, Ohikpɔ, Klamagu, Klama wɔ fiemi</i> (new)	An amalgamation of music, dance, medicine, ritual drama, costume, props, make-up, body adornments

I therefore, posit that this four-conceptual construts/categorization/manifestation of *Klama* is more comprehensive in nature, in comparison with Ametier’s, and allows for other types of activities related to *Klama* to find their bearing. I am therefore arguing that this new structure has a more universal application taking a critical look at religious

dance forms on the African continent. I am of the opinion that most, if not all African religious dance forms, have four manifestations. These are the music, dance, medicinal/healing and performance aspects. Mention can be made of voodoo, Shamanism, Mask dances etc.

## 2.8 *Klama kɛ baa aloo tsupa peemi* (Klama as herbs or medicine)

Investigation conducted revealed that Dangmes classify *Klama* as *baa*. *Baa* simply means a leaf or leaves and subsequently means herb(s) or herbal medicine. This signify the medicinal aspect of *Klama*. *Tsupa peemi* (medicine making) explains the use to which *baa* is put. Botchway's (2006:75), investigation on the role of music in healing among the Dangmes of Ada reveal that "the leaves, flowers, stems, berries and roots of herbs have been used to prevent, relieve and treat illness and these contain a variety of chemicals that act upon the body exerting powerful effects". Ametier (1989:36-7) also reveals further that;

Each herb has at least a secret name which forms part of the secret and sacred formulas. It is further emphasized that every herb of medicinal value has many names, some as many as seven. The potency of any herb is enhanced when the secret appellation is pronounced or sung and the right formula followed. The sprinkling of dry white-clay (*nyuɔ*) on a herb before plucking it is one aspect of the formulas.

Medicine making comes in assorted forms and for varying purposes. *Agbaa bi* and specialized priests and priestesses use different parts of plants and different ways to treat a plethora of ailments. Sometimes, the leaves, stems, backs, roots or a combination of two or more or in addition to other plants. The medicine prepared also come in diverse forms either in paste-like manner, juiced, powdered or chewed. Sometimes, it is burnt for the smoke to ward off evil or drunk, inserted etc.

Botchway (2006) continues that songs are used to diagnose and prescribe medication to ailing people. This healing act is closely related to the conceptual frame of *Klama* that deals with *lami* because the *agbaa bi*, who are adepts in medicine, mysticism and occultism, use songs to diagnose ailments to which its appropriate medicine is prescribed. In this process, several songs are sung to which the ailing person does not react. The song that succeeds in stirring the spirit being of the ailing person has its equivalent herbal formula. It is this formula that is used in healing. This revelation goes to buttress the point that the *agbaa* adepts are an essential part of the Dangme culture who seek to restore ailing members, both psychologically and somatically, back to their active happy lives. Without such, the cosmos of the people will be imbalanced.

## 2.9 *Klama kɛ lami (Klama as songs/singing)*

Besides the link to which *Klama* songs have with healing, *Klama* songs can be performed in isolation. *Klama* songs are embedded with diverse socio-politico-cultural and economic issues therefore, when society is fraught with challenges, specific *Klama* songs are evoked to express sentiments or provide an answer to the situation. *Klama* songs can be performed as a past time activity. *Klama* is also performed at every point of the life cycle activity. There are specific songs to mark the birth and naming or outdoor of a baby. Other song texts mark the transition from childhood to adulthood during initiation ceremonies. Marriage rites are infused with *Klama* songs from beginning till end, thus educating young couples on acceptable behavior and expectations of society. *Klama* is however, not performed during funerals except at the funerals of priests and priestesses, *wɔnɔhi*, *wɔyii* and *labiahi* (Amettier, 1989:20). The rationale behind this assertion is that, priests and priestesses' bodies have been

sanctified by the deities who manifest themselves through them. Therefore, their constant contact or encounter with the divine beings render the mediums pure. Consequently, since *Klama* is a holy performance activity, its performance for these religious figures are indeed justified. Coplan, (1972:11) maintains that *Klama*;

songs contain virtually the entire oral tradition of the Adangmes including legends, folk stories, expressions of social and religious values, jokes, institutionalized abuse, prayer formulae, biographical sketches, instruction for proper performance of customary rites, aesthetic theory and values, proverbial wisdom, herbal medicine, Adangme cosmology and commentary on the practice of klama itself.

Thus, *Klama* songs encapsulate the entire worldview of the Dangmes. In performing *Klama* as a singing activity, there is no drum musical accompaniment. *Dupo* initiation ceremonies are also without the accompaniment of drums rhythms. However, instruments such as *to* (gourd rattle) and bamboo or stick clappers as well as hand clapping, accompany such songs. In fact, there are large corpus of *Klama* songs which are sung only through the inspiration of deities (Dortey, 2012). I can relate to this statement because I witnessed one similar event in my preliminary investigations when an *Oshany* (deity) medium agreed to sing about four *Klama* songs for me, but as she started singing, she got carried away into the realm of possession and started singing beyond the agreed songs until she came back to her human self and had to forcefully end the singing by walking out. In every performance, different corpuses of songs are performed only when a *woyoo* (medium) is mounted by a deity. Sometimes this happens when possession occurs in isolation. It is worth noting however, that in whatever way *Klama* is performed, it is not devoid of its epiphenomenal body movements either by the hand, arms, head, legs or the

entire body in response to the sentiments evoked by the songs. All these movements that come as a result of the singing, exhibit the aesthetic ideals of the Dangme persona.

### 2.10 *Klama doo* (*Klama* as dance)

The next manifestation of *Klama* is the aspect that deals with the dance (*doo*). The word *doo* depending on inflections and where emphasis is placed, can mean dance in general or an instruction to dance. *Klama* dance, like many other African dance movement forms, are complex and multi-layered. A single movement performance engages the head and neck, torso, arms and fingers, lower torso, with the legs and feet moving along different paths. This invariably indicates that every part of the body responds to different rhythms (Thompson, 1973). This makes movement encoding a bit challenging, however for the purpose of this thesis project, I will attempt encoding a few of *Klama* dance movements (*Okpli*, *Ablamita* and *Gbokle*) in the subsequent chapters. Movements in *Klama* performance includes an embodiment of movement aspects of customary behavior in the forms of different procedures/mannerisms of greetings, hunting, fishing, (Yartey, 2013) as well as symbolic movements depicting the nature of a particular deity along with other sentiments that the performer exhibits within the dance performance. The dance performance comes along with it, moments of improvisation according to the dexterity of the performer. In *Klama doo*, reference is made to the body carriage and movements executed to fit the particular rhythm the deity/medium is performing to. *Klama* dance movements are a complex combination of rapid, sprightly and dexterous foot works. Besides the foot works, there exist gestural movements executed with the hands, arms and head. The frame of the body depending on the nature

of the movement, goes into undulating, contract and release, leaning forward or backwards in the performance process. The body frame also provides support so that the ancillary movements performed by the other body parts can be executed.

In *Klama* movement structure, there are short movements that require the performer to dance in place. Travelling movements on the other hand either takes the performer only a few steps away from the instrumentalists or requires the performer to use the entire performance space and sometimes beyond. Movements that go beyond the performance space gets the medium to either go and sit on her deities' *otutu*, which is the mound erected at the entrance to shrines, or go into her shrine which is supposed to be close to the performance arena and back.

*Klama* is performed one medium at a time. A medium may however be accompanied by her colleagues who serve the same deity or by other mediums present as a form of support for the performer. The purpose, though is to provide support and lay emphasis on the meaning of the song, it also engenders bonding. Travelling movements in *Klama* can be in the form of (a) rapid shuffling of feet across the performance arena, (b) step and hops and (c) vigorous stamping of feet alternatively (*Okpli*) among others. This will be analyzed later in the sixth chapter of this study.

### **2.11 *Klama fiemi* (Performance)**

Although the *lami* (songs) aspects of *Klama* can be performed alone without dancing to it, the dancing aspect of *Klama* cannot be executed without the aid of instrumental accompaniment. Keil, as cited by Agawu (2003) evinces

that there is no single word in any African language to refer to music despite the fact that there are several words to mean songs/singing. Therefore, when mention is made of *lami* (songs), music in the form of instrumental accompaniment is equally implied contextually.

In the context of *Klama* as *doo*, movement execution is performed in tandem with the provision of instrumental music and singing. The presence of these elements gradually metamorphoses the dance from mere movement execution into performance where the integrated elements of performance comes to play such as, music, dance, costume, props, venue and the audience. It is within this frame that the performative phrase *doo fiemi* is activated. It is also within this frame of performance that the aesthetic components of the dance asserts itself. These are performance etiquettes, quality and symbolic nature of movements executed, time, context of performance, performance area, and spatial organization.

*Klama* dance consist of two main types i.e. *Klamagu* (Ametier, 1989; Botchway, 2006) which is the general purpose *Klama* meant to entertain without possession and the serious *Klama wo fiemi* where deities are invoked to manifest themselves. In both contexts, the performance etiquette is different, movements executed reflects the particular deity present. Costumes are used to differentiate the nature and power of deities as well as their hierarchy. Props usage lays emphasis on the nature and symbol of deities as well as what they embody. The performance stage (space) is also transformed into a hallowed site where there is strict adherence to performance etiquette or protocol in diverse forms. Example of such etiquettes are (a) no one is permitted to walk across the performance arena with footwear of any kind (b) no one crosses a medium while



performing, (c) no one touches a medium to either adjust her ornaments or clean her face without gently touching the mediums knee or leg before seeking her consent. (d) any ordinary citizen who wishes to perform while a medium is in charge must seek her consent by gently touching her knee with two hands or gently brushing her dress. The medium in turn raises her two fore fingers in the form of a V. This gesture is a sign of approval.

For the purpose of clarity in identifying and understanding the interchanging personalities/agents acting in *Klama* performance, it is expedient to explain the differences. A medium, in this thesis is an initiated person who has gone through the training to become a *wɔyoo* that is “wife” of a deity. When she/he is inhabited by her/his deity, she/he then becomes a possessed/deified medium or the embodiment of the deity, hence the deity. Until the possession is attained, he/she is just a medium. A “quasi-medium” on the other hand is a trainee medium who is undergoing the processes of becoming a priest/priestess or a full medium.

In *Klama*, a key aesthetic aspect of the performance is the respect accorded to the parent deities i.e. *Lalue* (mother) and *Digble* (father) upon their arrival at the performance stage. All possessed/deified mediums form a queue and wait for their turn to perform. Younger possessed mediums tend to arrive first, hence commence the performance followed by senior possessed mediums. Sometimes too, performance is dependent on the deity that is first to manifest or possess a medium. If in the course of the performance, a senior possessed medium arrives, she joins the queue. It is at the discretion of the deified medium in the queue to allow the senior colleague to take her place. Sometimes, senior deified mediums bully their way through causing confusion and a

misunderstanding between them. When in the course of the performance, the parent deities/possessed mediums arrive, everyone makes room for them. *Lalue* (mother), tends to lead the way. She is ushered into the performance arena by shouts of appellation, bowing to her as well as gently stroking or brushing her dress in an act of showing reverence and admiration. *Lalue* is mostly flanked throughout her performance by her 'children'. Her movements, no matter the age of the medium, is gentle and reflects the dignified position she embodies.

It is the amalgam of these aesthetic diversities within one single performance that this study lays overt emphasizing that the performance mode subsumes all the cardinal ethnographic elements i.e. *lami*, *tsupa/baa*, and *doo* thereby creating one spectacle of an activity.

## **2.12 *Klama* instrumental resources**

*Klama* dance forms are never performed in isolation without songs or instrumental accompaniment as is the case of *Klama* singing. When the Dangme talks about *domi* (dancing), it definitely involves actively, the provision of music because within the Dangme conceptual frame, dance is never performed in isolation without the accompaniment of instrumental music. *Klama* instrumental music is seldom performed alone for its own sake. This is because the instruments are the voices of the deities therefore, playing them means sanctioning the presence of the divine spirits. A search through the literature has not revealed that *Klama* instrumental music can be presented as a whole performance. It is believed that at any point that the drums are played, it is a sanction to the deities to manifest hence drums are played with respect to a performance that demands the presence of the deities. On rare occasions when

*Klama* is performed without general possession, such as in *Klamagu*, the deities are being either cleansed or taken outside such as occurs during *tekomi* (taking of stones/ calendar determination), *wɔhe adumi* (bathing for the deities) or *huemi yami* (entering into the grove) even though it is still characterized by brief moments of possession/trance (chapter 5).

The role of the drum in communicating complex messages cannot be overemphasized (Nketia, 1989). Before a *Klama* performance takes place, a lone instrumentalist intones clearly, a rhythm informing everyone to make his/her way to the performance venue. It is believed this call actually induces possession among some of the mediums because before some of the mediums arrive at the performance venue, they have already been mounted by their deities. There are some other mediums who get possessed as the performance progresses. This lone player continues playing his call until a sizeable quorum is formed with ritual officiants in attendance.

In *Klama* performance, the music is provided on instruments such as the *Gle* (2), *Mie gaga* or *Osrabaŋ* and *Oklema* (figure 5). The master drum is the *Mie gaga* (long slender drum) or otherwise known as *Osrabaŋ*. It is played with small curved sticks (*puno*) that produce a low distinct sound. The *Mie gaga* or *Osrabaŋ* is supported by the *Gle* which is relatively bigger with a louder voice. The *Gle* is played with the hand and sometimes with sticks. The last supporting drum is the *Oklema* which is played all the time with sticks. It is the smallest member of the ensemble. There is also the use of clappers made out of cut pieces of bamboo, gourd rattle and metal gongs (*gugɔ*).



**Figure 5** The *Klama* instrumental resources featuring from closest to the farthest *Glɛ (2) miɛ gaga* or *Osrabaŋ* and *Oklema*. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

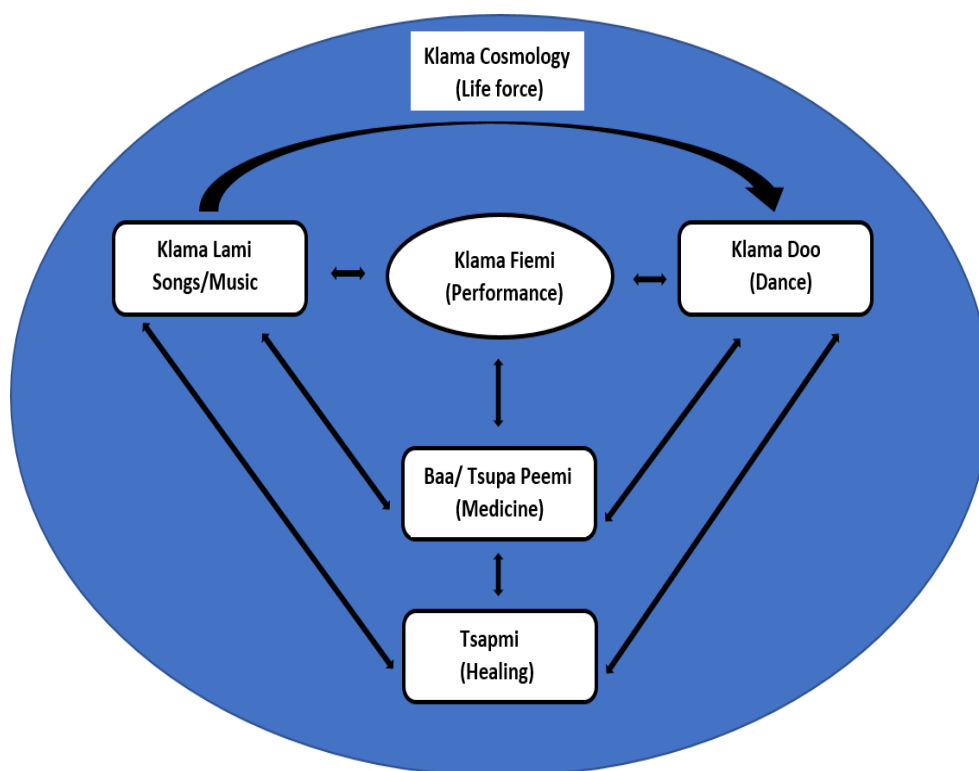
### **2.13 Interrelations of the conceptual frames of *Klama***

The intricate interrelated ways in which the concept of *Klama* is woven speaks to the cosmology of Dangmes. Herzfeld (2001) speaks of cosmology in relation to “our place in the universe”. By extension, cosmology relates to the way a group of people couch their understanding of the universe and how their religious or cultural practices fit into the operations of the universe. Ossio as cited by Herzfeld (2001:199) talks of three kinds of information which is given pre-eminence in the study of cosmology. According to him,

First, the oral or written narratives, which are considered as myths; second, the rituals, which are generally perceived as the enactments of those myths; and third, the visual representations of those myths either in architecture or in iconography”.

*Klama* abounds in the performance of oral narratives mostly in the form of songs. These songs simply talk about the history, social processes, aesthetic perspectives of the people and medicinal properties or herbs. In the cause of these ritual performances, the visual elements in the form of costume, props,

musical instruments and ritual items which bring out the aesthetics within the performance are made overt. *Klama* performance, according to the ethnographic evidence gathered in the field, is the amalgam of *Klama Lami*, *Doo*, *Baa/Tsupa*, and *Fiemi* (see fig. 6). These aspects of the people’s life together constitute the conception of ‘their place in the universe’ hence their cosmology.



**Figure 6** *Klama* cosmology showing the key conceptual components and its interrelations. Designed by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

#### 2.14 Klama lami ke tsupa peemi (Klama songs and medicine)

The *Lami* as explained above is a corpus of songs which reflects the various aspects of the transitional life of the Dangme persona. *Lami* though refers to singing, is in every way related to and works hand-in-hand with *Baa/Tsupa peemi* (medicine making). The diagnosis, identification, fetching of herbs, preparation and administration of the *Tsupa* is deeply engraved in *Lami*.

*Tsupa peemi* is therefore dependent on *Lami* for instructions to enable its efficacy. It must be noted however that in the singing of *Klama*, one experiences *Tsami* (healing) of a sort. Mention can be made of music's ability to calm nerves, heal emotionally disturbed people and psychologically bring a balance of a sort to emotionally challenged persons (Gouk, 2000). This marks the interrelations between music and healing. Just as singing gives instruction to preparation of tangible medicine, there is the intangible or reversal healing that goes on while performing songs alone. It is against this background that Agawu (2003) posits that "music making is tied to the spiritual and ethical wellbeing" of a person and the community as a whole. By this claim, Agawu seeks to link music making, which has a bearing on the belief system of the people, to the people's ability to trust in the healing process and the substances used in engendering healing.

### **2.15 Klama lami kɛ doo (Klama songs and dance)**

*Lami* has an immense influence on *doo* for the simple reason that unlike *Lami* that can be performed alone, *doo* cannot boast of same. *Doo* which is movement oriented primarily, is spoken off with both instrumental accompaniment and the singing of *Klama lami* because "drumming and dancing never takes place without singing" (Agawu, 2003:10). *Lami* dictates the particular rhythm to be played, the nature of movement to be performed to and the meaning to be expressed. *Klama doo* on the other hand though gives full expression to *lami*, it does not greatly influence *lami*. In the performance of *lami* on its own however, there are epiphenomenal movements that accompany the rendition of the songs in the form of hands, arms, head, and slight movement of the body. These movements further lay emphasis on the ideas expressed in the

*lami*. The performance of both *doo* and *lami* also have psychosomatic healing properties. This is the effect music and dance has on the mind and body at the same time. Dancing engenders the feel-good factor about ourselves. This is due to the production of endorphins which are chemical compounds produced by the brain which when released, enables the feeling of euphoria and enhances the general state of wellbeing and serves as the body's natural painkillers (“Exercise and Endorphins,” 2008).

Dance aids in the breaking of all inhibitions during performances. It enables people to enter into each other's space thereby permitting group interaction, recognition and acceptance. Judith Hanna (2006:203) observes that;

The pleasant stimulus of touch in social interaction triggers the release of the powerful peptide hormone oxytocin, which originates in the hypothalamus deep within the brain. Oxytocin does more than create a psychological bond that appears to ward off some of the physical as well as psychological ill effects of stress. It also lowers the blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol levels for up to several weeks, exerting a calming influence.

I agree with this observation. The reason being that *Klama* makes room for both mediums and audience members to interact and perform together. This enhances the bond between the ethereal and corporeal beings. Dance as a physical activity also aids the participants to exercise themselves thereby keeping their weight in check. This might have accounted for the presence of the aged mediums on the dancing arena still performing as vigorously as the younger mediums.

## 2.16 *Klama doo, tsupa peemi kɛ tsami* (*Klama* dance, medicine and healing)

*Tsupa peemi* has to do with the tangible herbal preparation and the intangible role songs and instruments play in the diagnostic processes. These combined acts sometimes come with possession in order to connect to the spirit being of the ailing person. The ailing person therefore reacts to the particular music that connects with him. Similar experience can be cited in Friedson's work where Prophet healers of Malawi go into trance and dance to vigorous music provided them in order to go about their healing processes (Friedson, 1996). I therefore draw similar influence on *Tsupa peemi* through *doo fiemi* (dance performance). Moreover, it is an established fact that there is a close link between healing (*Tsami*) and dancing. Scholars like Judith Lynn Hanna (2006), and Paul Spencer (1985) have given varied accounts of how dancing provide intangible healing and aid in bringing about a balance of a sort both in body and mind (psycho-soma).

Dance, as a physical activity, has several health benefits. Dancing exercises the body totally by working on the heart, joints and muscles. Dancing induces hormones in the body that makes one feel good about himself/herself as well as aiding in combating pain. Dancing is also known to aid in checking sleep disorder. Due to the provision of adequate blood and oxygen to the brain, memory is improved and general promotion of health is attained (Hanna, 2006). It is believed that the feet contain the nerve endings in the human body therefore, dancing is a great way of stimulating all these nerves in a single activity. The stimulating impact is even greater when dancing with the bare feet. In *Klama* dancing, the mediums dance with their bare feet because whichever arena a



performance is held, the venue automatically is transformed into a sacred place for such purpose.

### **2.17 *Klama doo fiemi* (*Klama* movement performance)**

*Klama fiemi* (performance) is one single act that seeks to bring all the other components of *Klama* together. It is through the dance performance that the aesthetics of the people are made overt. Through the movement aesthetics, one is able to observe performance conventions/etiquettes and movement aspects of customary behavior (Yartey, 2013). The usage of diverse props and costumes also reflect the nature and hierarchy of the pantheon of deities in Gbugbla. *Klama doo fiemi* is the most visible act of the culture of the Dangmes. Its performance brings everyone together in worship. Through the dance, the spiritual realm is brought closer to the temporal world for the purpose of communion, renewal of faith and allegiance with the deities as well as keeping the constant interaction between the ancestors, deities and the living population ongoing. *Klama doo fiemi* is therefore the pivot, the driving force that keeps the Dangme culture alive.

Non-performance of *Klama* for one reason or the other is fraught with both spiritual and physical challenges. When this happens, it throws the community out of balance '*je enle nɔ*' as Botchway (2006) posits. There is a slight dialectical difference between the *Ada* and *Gbugbla* Dangme languages. Botchway uses "*je gbla nɔ*" (*Ada*) whiles I use "*je enle nɔ*" (*Gbugbla*). Within the Dangme conception of illness, a person is considered sick when that person is out of synch i.e. off balance '*je enle nɔ*' with the community or the cosmos. Restoring the person to balance '*ba enle nɔ*' occurs through *Klama*. Also, any

form of behavior which is not acceptable, hence at variance with societal norms and sanctions, can come under the concept of '*je enle no*'.

*Klama* performance allows for the feeling of *communitas*, a social bonding of a sort that exist among performers and audience members during worship ceremonies. In this context, the presence of structure i.e. socio-political rank is cast aside and this makes room for deities to interact and perform concurrently with the temporal world thereby promoting unity and comradery amongst all. In *Klama* performances, there is the gradual shift through three different phases before a medium attains full manifestation. These are the corporeal, semi corporeal/ethereal and finally the ethereal phase. By these phases, mediums at the beginning of performances are fully in the physical realm. At the commencement of the performances, when possession/trance is envisaged, mediums gradually shift into the realm of semi-physical and semi-ethereal. At the attainment of full possession, they then transcend into the ethereal mode. Therefore, at the end of every performance also, the reversal is experienced.

I argue in this thesis that just as *Klama* has four conceptual components which comprise of music, dance, healing and performance, there is the probability that most African religious dance phenomena have equal compositions. Emphasis is placed on the performance component as the aspect that keeps the entire system welded together due to its performative and overt ability of showcasing the culture or tradition of the group to the outside world. Therefore, my four-religious performance conceptual frame could have a universal application.

## 2.18 Socio-cultural structure

Prampram is a community that run a patriclan system. Therefore, the people trace their genealogy through a common ancestor from the father's lineage (Odotei, 1991). As a result, in the traditional governance system, ascension to a throne or inheritance is through the father's line by a son. Ascension is also reliant on a rotational system where governance rotates among certain quarters and one must wait for his turn in order to inherit. Male children born into the family are circumcised immediately within the period of two weeks to one month depending on the health status of the child. Female progenies, when they attain a puberty age of 12 years onwards, are camped for a period of about two weeks in preparation for their *Dupo* initiation although some girls are initiated at very tender ages. Etymologically, the word *Dupo* as used by the Dangmes of *Gbugbla*, comes from two words put together i.e *Du* which means bath and *po* which is a corrupted form of *po* which stands for anointing or smearing the body with oil. Hence *Dupo* seeks to explain the total transformation that maidens go through both psychologically and physically. This is an act meant to cleanse the young women and convert them from their childhood behaviors and transform them into responsible female adults who embody the true ideals of the Dangme culture. With the interaction of non-natives who tried to popularize the ceremony, the word *Dupo* through constant usage got corrupted into *Dipo*. This has come to be the common usage but the indigenes still refer to the initiation activity as *Dupo*.

The initiation period which was scaled down from a period of three years in the past gradually to two weeks was due to changes in cultural practices and the exigencies of the modern society. *Dupo* initiation ceremony was intended to

serve as a form of training given to young female adults who have experienced their first menarche. This training seeks to guard the virginity of the young women as well as inculcate in them, the ideals of a true Dangme woman within the society. This is the essentialist aspects of the culture. Adjaye (1999), however in his essay, “Dangerous Crossroads: Liminality and Contested Meaning in Krobo (Ghana) Dipo Girls’ Initiation”, holds a contrary view to the essentialist perspective to which I lend my support. He argues that several factors such as scheduling of initiation, hegemonic expansion from Christianity, modernization, urbanization and economic forces have militated against dipo initiation thus, reducing the duration to a matter of days as afore mentioned. As a result, the girls do not benefit from the training process as is required. Also, the girls, out of convenience are hurriedly taken through the initiation process even at infantile stages. This then contests and undermines the assertion that the initiation is meant for girls of puberty (youthful) age, a perception held strongly by the culture bearers.

*Ashimi* is another type of initiation practiced in *Gbugbla*. Although similar in intent and process, costume and accessory usage brings about the difference. *Dupo* initiates are identified by their costume which is a red long loin cloth (*subue*) held in place by a mass of beads. Besides these, a nicely scented herbal preparation called *Klobɔ* (akin to myrrh) artistically adorns the body of the initiates to display the aesthetic dynamics of the people. The *Klobɔ* emit sweet fragrance on the initiates, hence enhancing their confidence and making them look presentable. On the other hand, *Ashimi* initiates wrap their loins with white calico cloth and are adorned across their torso and head with inflated intestines of goats whiles their entire bodies are anointed with oil to

give the ladies a glowing appeal. One marked difference between *Dupo* and *Ashimi* (see fig. 7) can be seen in the singing that accompany this social process. *Dupo* music performance is anchored in *Klama* that is why it is often referred to as *Hae* or *Klama hae* but *Ashimi* has no such linkage. *Dupo* initiation ceremony is practiced in *Gbugbla* by *Kle Tsokunya*, *Osu wem*, and *Ablewankor*. *Ashimi*, on the other hand, is practiced by *Olowe*, *Anewe*, and *Tsawenya* clans respectively. Here, attention is focused on *Dupo* because it is borne in *Klama* which in essence is the life force that keeps the community of the *Gbugbla* in constant evolution.



**Figure 7** Picture of *Dupo* initiates in red loincloth and *Ashimi* girls in white wrapped cloth with goat intestines adorning their bodies and head. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

*Dupo* initiates, when camped, are taken through some form of traditional tutelage in housekeeping, act of personal and environmental cleanliness as well as the art of cooking. Childbirth techniques, folklore and oral history are also passed on to these young maidens with the hope of molding them to become ambassadors of their culture. Each day within the period of camping, there are unique memorable activities to mark them. The *hae* dance, which envelops all the ideals of womanhood and give expression to the teachings received during the camping, is taught to the initiates every now and then. They are made to practice it over and over again because it is one singular activity that serve as

an adhesive, gluing every bit of the training together and presenting it to the general public. The ability of the initiates to perform the dance creditably proves that the girls have been well trained. Unfortunately, critical judgements on the cognitive and social abilities of an initiate is passed based on an initiates ability to execute the three basic movement sequences of the *Klama hae* dance.

The first movement taught at the camp is the *tsi tsi*. This dance movement is a travelling movement. The movement aims at inculcating in the initiate the essence of taking a moment to pause and reflect soberly on strides one make in life. Its performance demands that the initiates take longer strides of five basic steps commencing with the right foot as the leading foot. These five basic steps are counted within three measures of 1 and 2 and 3. The body, in performance, is held erect and the right hand is raised up with the fingers rolled into a fist. The elbow of the right hand is supported and held in place in front of the dancing body by the palm of the left hand. In this posture, the dancer takes the basic steps counted in three measures as explained above then a pause is observed by stopping. The dancer then begins again in similar fashion. This movement comes in two variations. The first variation is what has been explained. In the second variation, the body carriage and the feet movements are the same. The difference is observed only in the carriage of the arms as the two arms are raised alternatively and both lowered on the third count which also marks the pause.

The second movement sequence is known as the *hae yoo* but is pronounced *haa yoo*. This movement seeks to exhibit the ideals of a typical Dangme woman. In this performance, the dancer embodies grace, elegance and roundedness in appearance as well as soft but carefully ordered steps. These

movement ideals lay overt, the aesthetic dimensions required of a typical Dangme woman. The movement is executed with a shuffle in place of the feet at a time. The dancer turns around slowly to display her charm and elegance. The knees are bent every now and then in response to the lowering of the arms as they move gracefully up and down. The arms appear rounded in shape with the head slightly bent to the left and right with the aim of admiring the body and how it moves. The dancer may also decide to pace up the movements in order to move around the dancing arena.

The third and final movement sequence is the *kleleketε*. The social import of this movement is to cast whatever has happened in the past away and look forward with hope to what is yet to come while making the best of the moment. The movement begins with the transfer of weight onto the left leg while the right foot rises onto the ball of the foot and lowers the heel flat on the ground. The left leg takes its turn to repeat the movement executed on the right foot. In this way, the body sways from left to the right. The frame of the body is just a bit tilted forward to embody the Africanist aesthetic of a torso slightly bent forward and the knees in a relaxed position. At any point in time, where a foot rises onto the ball, the arms move backward with the elbow leading into an angular pose. The arms are thrust forward when the heels are lowered down. This movement is not a traveling movement and requires that the body should be in one place.

These three movement sequences capture the aesthetic essence of the Dangme womanhood. In all these movement sequences, emphasis is laid on the carriage of the arm and the swaying of the head in admiration of the body. It is in the carriage of the arms that grace and elegance are portrayed.

At the end of the camping, the initiates are finally out doored and adorned in indigenous clothing. This includes assorted neck, wrist, arm, waist, calf and anklet beads. The young women are then made to dance in public to indigenous music provided by women through the playing of the *to* (gourd rattle) and clappers made of split bamboo sticks. It is important to note that the organization of the *Dupo* as well as its musical and dancing aspects are handled solely by women because it is *yiihi anihi* that is to say 'women things'. After the public out dooring event, all encapsulated within the *Klama hae* singing and dancing frame, the young ladies are paraded through the streets. Short visits are made to homes of family and friends to show them off as women who have gone through the customary procedure of attaining the right age of marriage. For the young ones who are not matured enough, it behooves on the parents to continue in the guiding process until a responsible man officially shows up to express his intentions of marrying them. Currently after initiation, the young ladies continue with their education until they have attained the highest standard of education their parents could possibly get them to before they get married.

The debate on this form of cultural practice is whether it has not outlived its usefulness as critics of the cultural phenomenon claim the practice encourages pre-marital affairs. At the tender age of 12 years onwards, girls are made to undergo initiation rites. Ethnographic evidence gathered in this research indicates that even at much younger age of about four to five years, girls are being initiated. The explanations adduced for the early initiation of these girls are due to financial challenges as a lot of financial resources are channeled into the purchase of choice beads, cloths and other accessories needed to set the girls up during and after the initiations. As a result, parents might decide to initiate



all their female children at once to cut down the cost of initiating them one after the other. The challenge with sexual promiscuity has been a phenomenon bedeviling every society. It is an age-old problem that is not peculiar to the Dangme society. It is the duty of every member of society to protect and guide children and to imbibe in them sound moral education. This education, commences right from the nuclear family with parents leading the course. Failure of parents to live up to expectation due to negligence and broken homes will degenerate into the challenges we are facing with breakdown of morality leading to pre-marital sexual escapades being indulged in by children. The Akans and the Ewes of Ghana have their *Bragorɔ* and *Gbɔtowɔwɔ* respectively. These are aimed at safeguarding the traditional forms of informal training provided young female members of the community aimed at transforming them into responsible adults. Marijke Steegstra (2005) in her book, *Dipo and the Politics of Culture in Ghana*, enumerates the ideals of *Dipo* and the challenges society is leveling on the practice to cripple it from serving its purpose. She admits some of the challenges but states that some of these cultural practices can be modified to serve the interest of the nation as a whole. What is a society without a culture that seeks to guide, protect and direct its younger generation on the path mapped out? Its result is akin to letting everyone choose his or her own way. The outcome will be devastating.

On the political scene, Prampram runs a traditional system of governance with a paramount chieftaincy located at Prampram although Ningo traditional area also has its own paramountcy. The paramount chieftaincy exists in addition to the District Assembly system of administration, an offshoot of the Local Government system to aid the central government to bring about

development. History has it that Ga-Dangmes used to have spiritual leaders in the form of *Wulɔmɛi* or *Wɔnɔhi* (Traditional priests in Ga and Dangme respectively) (Odotei, 1991). This form of leadership was modeled to reflect the theocratic system that the Israelites practiced having claimed they migrated from Israel. This theocracy changed after their encounter with the Akwamu (sub Akan community) who were ruled by chiefs and kings and also led them into war. This encounter was part of the migratory stories of the Ga- Dangmes. The Akan system of governance where their kings led them to war became a model the Ga-Dangmes wanted to emulate. The Prampram paramountcy covers towns like *Prampram, Dawhenya, Afiyanya, Mɔbɔlɛ, Mataheko, Ablekuma, and Otɛbleku*.

### **2.19 Migration accounts**

The Dangme's are part of the larger Ga-Dangme stock. They can be located in two regions in Ghana that is the Eastern and the Greater Accra regions. In the Eastern region, sub-groups like Kloli (Krobos), Shai (Sɛ), Osudoku (Dodowa) have a huge presence while Gbugbla (Prampram), Nugo (Ningo), and Ada are located in the Greater Accra region along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea with their Ga brothers and sisters. Oral literature and scholarship have claimed that the Ga-Dangme stock once settled at Sameh/ Same North East of Nigeria (Henderson- Quartey, 2001) and located at a place between two rivers (Mate Korle, 1955). The PHC 2010 (Service, 2014) census also document the fact that the Dangmes claim to have settled at a place known as Sameh in modern day Nigeria. This migratory account is corroborated by Botchway (2006). Ametier (1989) who conducted in-depth research, cited authorities like Carl Reindorf, J.K. Teye, Enoch Azu, K. B. Dickson etc. and copious oral literature in the form of songs that made reference to the Ga- Dangmes place of

origin but could not exactly locate whether Sameh was actually located in Nigeria or Niger. It is believed though that the Ga-Dangme's claim Sameh as their ancestral home but its exact location has been a bone of contention. Hugo Huber (1993), cites the migratory route as was recorded in N. A. A. Azu's "*Adangbe (Adangme) History*" as migrating from "Sameh, an Island situated on the South West of River *Ogun* adjoining *Ladah* and *Dahome* to *Lolovor...*". Afterwards, the Krobos went their way.

Besides Sameh's controversy, all accounts agree on the onward movement from Nigeria (Ile- Ife) through Benin (Dahomey) to Togo at varied points in time. In Togo, together with the Ewes, they were met with hostilities from King Agorkoli at (n)ηṛṣie. Due to Agorkoli's tyrannical nature and governance, the people had to escape in a dramatic fashion to continue their journey (Ametier, 1989). The migration continued through to the crossing of the Volta River at its most shallow part but unfortunately, one of the leaders fell into the river and was consumed by crocodiles, so history has it that till date, priests in Krobo do not drink water from the Volta river. This meant drinking their brothers blood (Ametier, 1989). After the Volta crossing, the group settled at a place known as *Lɔlɔvɔ* which is translated as "brotherly love is finished", an Ewe saying. It was at this place that mistrust and lack of understanding as well as familiarity bred contempt and led to a huge conflict which occasioned the great separation that saw the Krobos move into the Eastern region to inhabit the *Kloyo* or *Klowem* (Krobo mountain) being led by two warriors in two groups (Ametier, 1989; Botchway, 2006).

Etymologically, *Kloyo* simply means the Klo woman/mother. In Dangme, a mountain is referred to as *Yoku*. In the sense in which the people of

Klo refer to their mountain (*Kloyo, Klowem* i.e *Klo house* or simply *Yo*), it is meant to create the impression that the mountain is a personification of an ideal woman/ mother who provides shelter and protection to her children in times of difficulty. History has it that it was difficult for enemies to climb unto the mountain to attack the Krobos when they were inhabiting the mountain. In fact, it is said that the Krobos gathered and pelted their enemies with rocks from the top of the mountain as well as the committing of other forms of atrocities until they were expelled by the British Colonial government for those misdeeds in 1892 (Hugo, 1993). The rest of the Dangme group moved down southwards to inhabit their current places of abode.

Having said all these, Prampram currently is fast becoming a cosmopolitan town because of its close proximity to Tema and Accra. With good road access to the two cities, people whose work places are located in the two nearby cities prefer the serene and peaceful environment that Prampram provides and choose to settle there. Prampram, as *Wɔnɔ Tsutsu Dapo* in an interview claims, is being inhabited by Dangmes and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. He claims the arrival of Dangme indigenes from other sub-groups came with their cultural practices and fused it with that of the people of Gbugbla hence the two types of initiation ceremonies performed in Prampram for young girls that is *Dupo* and *Ashimi*. In agreement, the PHC 2010 (Service, 2014) also cites Ewe, Hausa, Asante, Fantes etc. among others that have come from different backgrounds to settle in the town.

## **2.20 Traditional religious practice in Gbugbla**

The phenomenon of the religiosity of the African has been discussed severally by scholars (Gyekye, 2003; Mbiti, 1969; Opoku, 1978). This is

because many of African's approach towards their religion come along with some sort of passion. Thus, those Africans are passionate about their religion to the extent that it affects every sphere of their lives. Such can be said of the life cycle events (birth, naming ceremonies, initiations, marriage, taking titles, old age, death, after life), work situations (clearing, planting, pruning, harvesting, storage, consumption), communal engagements etc. Reading discourses from academics such as Kwame Gyekye (2003), Kofi Asare Opoku (1978), and J. S. Mbiti (1969), amongst others, one cannot help but get the sense of an African who is the embodiment of his religion and is engrossed in it to the extent that he cannot do anything without recourse to his religion. I therefore, agree with Gyekye when he postulates that "in the traditional African society there are no atheists or agnostics". This position explains the notion that the African believes in one form of religion or the other because he sees himself as a created being and as such must give honor to the being that created him. A popular Dangme maxim has it that "*noko tsɔwe jukwe mawu*" that is to say no one teaches the African child who or where God is. The child is definitely bound to discover God, who is the supreme being, by himself and at that point of discovery, he will evolve the appropriate way of worshipping him. Gyekye (2003:5) sums this thought by declaring that "traditional African religion is, thus, a natural religion, independent of revelation".

A town as transforming into a cosmopolitan community as Gbugbla definitely abounds with multi religious faiths. The topmost three according to the PHC 2010 census demographics (Service, 2014:32) are Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Religion. Christianity which has the largest following had 86.1%. The breakdown is as follows; Pentecostal/charismatic Christians are

53.4%, protestants (Anglican, Lutheran, etc.) 17.5%, Catholic 3.4% and others 11.8%. The second highest which is Islam had 4.1 % presence in Gbugbla, and Traditional religion where the focus of this thesis lie had 2.1 % of the general population practicing the faith. Although the traditional religious practice is the least within the category, its functional activities tend to give Gbugbla the sort of publicity it is enjoying in relation to intangible cultural heritage. The traditional religious practice is tied to the traditional authority or political structure of the community which enjoy a strong support or recognition from the central government through the local governance system. Hence every cultural activity is engineered by the traditional religious people. Mention can be made of the *Dupo* initiation ceremony, the *Klama /Kple* religious festival as well as the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival which is celebrated by the entire Ga-Dangme group to mark the end to a period of hunger and famine they suffered as part of their migration. All these landmark activities are deeply linked with the traditional religious practices of the people and it is these traditional religious practitioners who have the institutional memory as to when and how to perform any of the societies religious or social celebrations.

Kwame Gyekye (2003:4) opines in his book *African Cultural Values: An introduction* that;

one cannot detach oneself from the religion of the community, for to do so would be to isolate from the group and to disrupt one's sense of communal membership and security and lose much of the meaning of life... religious life, then, is not an individual but a communal affair, woven into the culture of the people.

In support of this opinion, Kofi Asare Opoku (Opoku, 1978:1) writes that "it should be apparent, then, that to understand Africa and its peoples, the influence of religion on their lives must first be fully appreciated". Therefore,

in order to appreciate the aesthetics of *Klama* religious dance performance, one needs to understand the structure of the *Klama* deities of the Dangmes of Gbugbla and their relations to the “*Wetsohi*” (singular *Wetso*) i.e clans. It is the knowledge of this structure that enables deep understanding and appreciation of the direct link the dance movements and its attendant aesthetic dimensions have with the esoteric and the corporeal human world. “*Wetsohi*” as used above comes from the root word “*We*” which means house or lineage (Hugo, 1993; Kropp Dakubu, 2009; Odotei, 1991). “*Tso*” on the other hand stands for tree. Therefore, strictly speaking, “*Wetso*” stands for “family tree” i.e the patrilineal kinship group from which every indigenous community member claim descendency. Hugo Huber (1993) argues forcefully that the usage of clan does not quite paint the vivid picture that *Wetso* seeks to imprint on our minds. According to him (Huber), a “sub- tribe” is a more adequate designation although the usage of clan can be a matter of definition.

In delineating the *Wetso* structure of the people of Gbugbla, I must acknowledge the immense work done by Sackey (2015) whose Master’s thesis explored how power is negotiated among mediums on the performance arena. His work unearthed 16 *Wetsohi* (clans). Ethnographic evidence available proved that there were far more *Wetsohi* that he was not able to discover. This thesis as a result of in-depth work has discovered 10 additional *Wetsohi* to augment what has been reported earlier. The total number now stand at 26. Gbugbla is divided into two large communities i.e. Upper town and Lower town with Lower town being the closest to the sea. Therefore, a clear distinction is made as to where a deity belongs. It must be noted that each clan has a specific socio-political role to perform in relation to governance and the performance of *Klama* religious

ceremonies. This is linked to the cosmic structure within the supernatural realm and this informs how certain ceremonies are to be performed since the two are interwoven as explained previously. Each *Wetso* therefore has its own deity that it worships. The table (3) below shows the 26 clans in no particular order.



**Table 3 Clans and their socio-political roles in Gbugbla traditional system.**

Wetso	Socio-political Roles	Deities Associated
<b>Upper Town</b>		
Anewe	King makers i.e Chiefs, Queenmothers, Lalue Naa in Lalue Pie. Mutuo- a woman who serves the Lalue pie all her life time	Osabu, Okumi
Ablewa Nko	Asafoatse, Asafoanye, Shipi, Otsaame for Jaase, Lalue Naa, Dupo Wɔnɔ	Lalue
Kle Abɔdo	Mankralo	Owufu, Aaboanu
Obonu We	Mankralo	Owufu, Aaboanu
Akuble We/ Olowe	Wetso Tse	Baate, Oshanj (Dibo), Digble, Mɛɛdoku Ayɛ
Osu We	Aflaja Tse	Nadu, Ahulu ɲmasaakwa, Aɲmɔ
Kle Tsokunya	Lalue Labia, Asafoatse	Yoomle, Magbie Tsawe, Ayiku Damlanɲmɔ
Divie We	Divie We Wɔnɔ	Abɔdo
Tsawenya	Numlɔ Kpanyɔ, Digble Wɔnɔ	Tsawe, Aderɲ
Akublebi We/ Olowe	Numlɔ Kpanyɔ, Digble Se trolɔ (woman)	Baate, Oshanj (Dibo), Digble, Mɛɛdoku Ayɛ
Samantua We/ Olowe	Digble Se trolɔ (woman), Tekɔmi Nyu Trolɔ.	Baate, Oshanj (Dibo), Digble, Mɛɛdoku Ayɛ
Adiku We	Asafoatse	Zezerɲ Tsawe
Kle Osu We		Abɔdo, Owufu, Aaboanu
Nazerɲ	Asafoatse, Wɔnɔ	Asamanuwa, Klamɔ
<b>Lower Town</b>		
Adimli We	Asafoatse, Otsaame, Wɔnɔ	Atiawo, Yomleyo (Abɔdo), Adimli Wɔ
Okle We	Wonya Mantse	Se Wɔ ne yaa pam
Wonya Obonu We	Lalue Naa, Shipi	Lalue
Amaga We		Nugo Tsawe
Aklama We/ Wonya Anewe	Extension of Anewe (Mantse)	Osabu, Okumi
Akrɔbɔso We	Asafoatse	
Anumansa We	Wɔnɔ	Ahulu ɲmasakwa, Aɲmɔ
Wonya Ayiku We	Otsaame	Ayiku Wɔ
Otsɔmɔɔ We	Lalue Naa	Lalue Wɔ
Agbazo We	Wooli Atse (Wɔnɔ)	Agbazo, Tsaako (Abɔdo)
Kujlagbe We		
Osheku We	Woo (sea) Wɔnɔ	Osheku, Tataabo

## 2.21 The interrelationship between the traditional political and religious hierarchies

There is always a symbiotic relationship between the institution of traditional political system and that of the religious hierarchical system within the traditional societal realm. Generally, in Africa, traditional political leaders are installed by their religious counterparts and invested with the political authority they require to function. Upon their investiture, their personhood becomes sacred and they in turn become religious leaders as is the case in Nungua and Tema communities (Dortey, 2012). They hence perform dual roles.

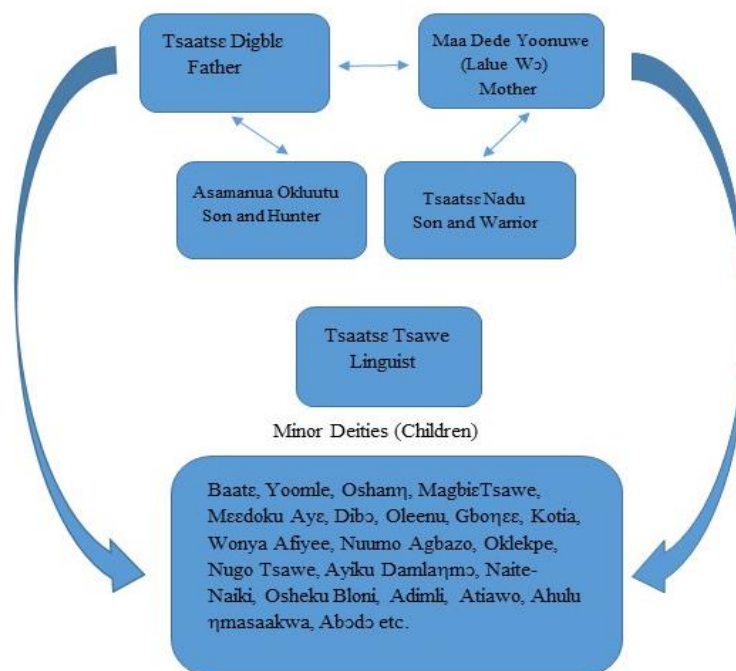
Asare Opoku (1978:13) cites that;

The *Oni* of Ife is thus a divine ruler and as a ruler to the first king of Yorubaland, he is also the spiritual head of the Yoruba people and, consequently, the head of all the priests in Ile-Ife. So sacred is the office of the *Oni* that although a human being, he has often in the past been regarded as an *Orisha* (a divinity).

In Gbugbla, traditional political leadership are selected from the *Wetso* system in a rotational order. This means that all eligible quarter which qualifies to elect a leader of a sort will have to wait for their turn before they produce a leader. There is no way a particular quarter can jump the queue. A clear case can be cited in the selection process of the Gbugbla Paramount chief. The eligible clan is *Anewe* but the qualified quarters are two, that is Upper town quarter and Lower town quarter. The kingship rotates between them. As at the time of this research, the kingship was in the Upper town ruling house but unfortunately, the king died so the mandate is being passed unto the Lower town ruling house. Within the same frame, Queen mothership, *Lalue Naa* (a queen-like figure within the shrine), *Mutuo* (this is a woman who has devoted herself to the sole service of the shrine) etc. are also selected from this same *Anewe* clan. Other

political positions are appointed in similar manner from different clans. Here, I must emphasize that, it is within the *Wetso* or clan system that both political and religious leadership are selected as found in the table above. After a king or chief has been installed, he in turn become a religious person and is required to perform certain religious functions. So, in the performance of *Klama* ritual activities, both the political and religious authorities are required to perform certain functions as prescribed by the tradition. Other key political offices like the *Otsaame*, *Asafoatsɛ*, *Mankralo*, *Jaase*, *Wɔnɔ* etc. are also selected based on this same rotational system among the various *Wetsohi*.

Within the traditional religious realm, medium's rank and the function ascribed to them are dependent on the religious structure as shown in the diagram below (fig. 8). The diagram has the father of the deities as *Tsaatsɛ Digblɛ*. He is the oldest of the deities and is housed in the *Digblɛ Piɛ*. By the title *Tsaatsɛ*, his position as grandfather of the deities is established. He is believed to be the deity of the second group of Dangme settlers to Gbugbla. His role as the father of the deities in relation to the patrilineal system run by the Dangmes perhaps makes it possible to commence annual rites from his shrine.



**Figure 8 Klama deity structure. Designed by Aristedes Narh Hargoe**

The *Digble Piɛ* has numerous *Gbatsu* being housed within it. *Piɛ* is a Dangme term used to describe an enclosure or a fence surrounding a property which serve as a form of defense or protection against attack meant to destroy what is within that enclosure. The word is also figuratively used to mean protection or preservation. *Gbatsu* is made up of two distinct words which are *Gba* and *Tsu*. *Gba* according to Kropp Dakubu's Ga dictionary, (2009) means to *tell, divulge or talk about* whiles *tsu* means *room, building, or house*. Therefore, *Gbatsu* simply means a room or building for telling or divulging spiritual information. Within each *Gbatsu* are a number of deities which are called up to perform specific functions.

After *Tsaatse Digble* comes *Maa Dede Yoonue* who is the *Lalue Wɔ*. She is the mother of the deities and the most powerful of all the deities. She also

has her *Piε* with *Gbatsu's* in it. *Lalue paa* is the name of the river in which the *Lalue Jemawɔ* (deity) inhabits. Therefore, the *Lalue Wɔ* is a river deity, but a shrine has been built for her so that she can live amongst her children. She is also believed to be the deity that led the first group of Dangme settlers to Gbugbla (Sackey, 2015). Although she is married to *Tsaatse Digble*, she still maintains her primus status within the cosmic realm. As a result of her marriage to *Tsaatse Digble*, the institution of marriage is held in high regards within the general Dangme polity. The two parent deities have principal mediums that serve and represent them during ritual performances. The next ranking deity after *Tsaatse Digble* and *Maa Yoonue* is *Asamanua*. He is a son to the parent deities and is a hunter by profession. *Asamanua* shares rank with *Tsaatse Nadu* who is a son and a warrior. The title *Tsaatse* which means grandfather is used to qualify a deity to indicate the sort of respect the people have for him. After these two come the deity that serve as linguist to the parent deities. He is *Tsaatse Tsawe*.

Below *Tsawe* are the smaller deities including personal gods purchased by individuals for their own purpose. This cosmic hierarchical structure gives in indication of what transpires in the temporal world of the Dangmes. The position of the two parent deities are represented by the paramount King and Queen. The warrior and hunter sons reflect the military/ defense wings of the community represented by the *Asafo* companies with their leaders as the *Asafoatseme*. The linguist serves as the intermediary between the people and the monarchy because in the traditional system, no one speaks directly to the King except through the linguist. The rationale is that the linguist who is trained in the art of polite speaking is able to rephrase statements that are not in good

context and make it presentable to the King in order to avert sanctions that may arise out of this impolite addressing. The linguist, the warrior leaders and the monarchy in addition to a few elders, constitute the traditional council. Through this council, they formulate policies to govern the community and such is the case within the cosmic realm where the parent deities, their warrior sons and *Tsawe* as their linguist constitute the council with the rest of the other deities as members of the cosmic realm. In the course of my ethnographic field work, I have come to learn that the population of the gods/deities in Gbugbla number far above one hundred though its exact number is not known (personal communications May 3, 2010) as compared to the known 99 gods of the people of *Nungua* in the Greater Accra Region or the 77 gods of the people of *Ogua* in the Central Region of Ghana.

During the annual *Klama* religious dance performance celebrations, one is able to identify the hierarchies and nature of the deities through the nature of their costumes and the respect shown to each other. The mediums who represent the deities in the temporal world become the means through which communication/ information is relayed to the people from the deities or ancestors. These communications can either be in verbal form through esoteric language which is only decipherable by adepts or through the singing of *Klama* esoteric songs. The non-verbal form of communication, which is in the form of dance movements are also potent means of conveying whose tutelary spirit wanted to depart after hours of performing during a worship ceremony (fig. 9). The *ɔkomfua* indicated this by pointing her left index finger at the wrist of her right hand before walking out.



**Figure 9 An *ɔkomfua* whose tutelary spirit is communicating departure during a worship ceremony. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.**

In *Klama* religious dance performances, movement gestures often convey varied forms of information. Marion Kilson (1971), argues that these communications which are conveyed via the deified mediums in the form of dance movements, actually commence from the spiritual realm before they are made manifest by the deified mediums in the temporal world. Hence when we see the deified mediums perform in the temporal world, it is in fact the deities/gods who have commenced the dance in the ethereal and we are experiencing the effects. I see this as highly speculative knowing that there is no way of testing the verity of this assertion. I however share a different opinion on this claim. My point of departure lies in the fact that ritual scholars (Drewal, 1992; Friedson, 2009) use words like “mount” and “possess” or “possession” to explain the fact that when deities mount or possess their mediums, they take over the identity of the mediums body and “dance themselves into existence” (Friedson, 2009:40). Thus, in possession, deities perform their nature, character, form and purpose. So rather than experiencing the aftermath or repercussions of the performance of the spirit beings, we actually experience them. Therefore,

the spirits/deities reveal themselves to the mortal world through their movements.

There is a direct link between the structure of the pantheons and that of the socio-political authority structure and this manifests itself on the dance arena. This is tied to the fact that the Dangme persona is a dancing being because it is through the dance that complex cultural knowledge is transmitted and received between the deified mediums and the general populace who witness this phenomenon. There is therefore a direct link between the dance performance phenomenon and the aesthetic dimensions of the Dangme cosmology. This is brought to bear in the form of symbolic movement executions that reflect movement aspects of customary behavior which deals with the appropriate manner of greeting superiors (older males and females), contemporaries, and a gathered group etc. Also, included in the customary behavior is the manner of shaking hands when possessed and otherwise. Other aesthetic dimensions of the Dangme persona within *Klama* are the use of costumes of diverse color, nature and make worn by mediums when not possessed or anticipating possession and when possessed as well as quasi-mediums (trainee mediums). Also, insignias of office that reflect the nature of deities, ornaments that speak to positions or ranks, assorted priceless beads that reflect the cultural wealth of the people as well as the practice of walking on the bare feet by priests and priestesses. This lays emphasis on the fact the earth is a sacred ground as experienced by Moses near the burning bush in the Bible (Exodus 3:1-5). All these reveal the aesthetic world view of the Dangmes.



## 2.22 The Confusion

Oral history backed by scholarship, has it that the Ga had traditional priests as their spiritual/secular leaders (Odotei, 1991) which is modeled after the Jewish theocracy. Later events changed the administrative structure from priests to kings due to the enormity of the work of the *Wulɔmɛi* (priests) who had to engage in secular matters much to the neglect of spiritual attention required by the *Jemawojii* (lineage gods). The priests therefore had to designate other people to handle the secular demands for them. These designated people were referenced as *Mantsemɛi* that is Kings or literally, owners of the land (Odotei, 1991). This administrative idea was borrowed from the Akans in general and Akwamus to be specific. The Akwamus became vassals of the Ga and in 1677, a war broke out between them. The Ga experienced defeat in 1680 and were ruled by the Akwamus up until 1730 when the Ga managed to defeat them with support from the Dangme, Akwapim and Akyem (Odotei, 1991). This borrowed culture of secular leadership empowered Ga kings to begin administering authority over their communities thereby usurping the powers of the priests. The priest's authority, on the other hand, asserts itself when religious matters becomes imminent.

In Prampram, there are two most important deities i.e *Digblɛ* and *Lalue* (father and mother gods/deities respectively). If Sackey's (2015) narration is anything to go by, then it stands to mean that the first settlers in *Gbugbla* are associated with *Lalue* and the second with *Digblɛ*. Marriage led to the reversal of positions or administrative roles which are linked with ownership of lands. This phenomenon is explained in relation to the marriage of a prince from the second settlers camp under *Digblɛ*, to a maiden associated with the first settlers

under *Lalue*. The prince, leading the people to war, brought about victory. The prince then was enstooled to become a chief hence taking administrative charge of the area. As a result of this, traditional authority has been conferred on the *Anewe* quarter who worship the *Digblɛ* deity and its conglomerate of deity's whiles *Lalue* maintain the spiritual over-lordship. Now in Prampram, there is a paramount chief who is politically the leader of the community. This has placed him as the administrator therefore invested with authority over lands within the jurisdiction. In the religious realm, the traditional priests hold superior authority. These two authorities skillfully negotiate their powers during annual ritual worship performances. Each has a specific role to play to complement the others in order to bring peace within the community. On the occasion when one refuses to perform his role, the celebration will be fraught with challenges and this will engender chaos and anarchy within the cosmic and temporal worlds. These power negotiations are sometimes contracted during the performance of *Klama*, and *Wɔhedumi* (cleansing/ washing of the deities) ceremonies. The *Lalue Labia* who is officially designated as the chief priest superintends at these salient activities.

With the above established, the difficulty I am experiencing with the title *Labia*, and its correspondent responsibilities as a Ga- Dangme indigene, is that a *Labia*, is supposed to be an acolyte to a person with much superior authority. This superior authority is the *Wɔnɔ* (a substantive priest). It is only in the absence of the *Wɔnɔ*, that a *Labia* takes charge. The confusion here is the rationale behind the *Lalue Labia* acting as chief priest? Is it that the substantive person, *Lalue Wɔnɔ*, has passed on and there has not been any replacement hence his role? Might it also be that in Gbugbla, the office of the chief priest is

known as *Labia*? Interestingly, the title *Labia* is prefixed by *Lalue* which is identified with the mother of the deities. Does it mean that the *Lalue Wɔyoo* (priestess) is the substantive high priest and the *Labia* is assisting her? If this is so, does it mean that she has succumbed to the patrician system where male chauvinism characterizes authority? Does it also mean that even in the cosmic/religious realm, the *Lalue wɔyoo* is playing second fiddle to a man? Or might it be that the *Lalue Wɔyoo*, as mother to all the deities, has delegated part of her office to the *Labia*, so she can concentrate on more substantive spiritual exigencies? In another sense, can it be that the mandate of the *Lalue Labia* is as a result of the substantive *Wɔnɔ* being incapacitated in some way or has passed on and there has not been a replacement but the office is being run by the assistant who is the *Labia*?

Over a period of time, I reckon that if this is not remedied, succession to that office might degenerate into conflict more especially if the *Labia* is able to train someone from his lineage to serve the deity and maintain the office. In an interview secured with another *Labia*, who is acting in the stead of a substantive *Wɔnɔ* (due to death), he confided in me and intimated that people tend to abscond from being elected as *Wɔnɔ*. This is because the office does not come with great financial benefits despite the fact that one is accorded with the full respect as the spiritual leader of a quarter's deity and is consulted for spiritual guidance on sacred matters. Another looming danger with *Labia*'s operating in the full capacity of *Wɔnɔ* without a substantive person being elected can be cited at the shrine of the *Tsaatse Nadu* where the *Labia* is also acting in the stead of a substantive *Wɔnɔ*. By his (*Tsaatse Nadu*) acting position, he has succeeded as acolyte to the *Kpalɔ* who is the head of the *Agbaa bi* who are the supreme

council members endowed with deep knowledge of secrets to both herbal medicinal formulas and mystical powers. One can imagine the extent of the conflict or harm that may arise when a substantive person is later elected and the acting will have to vacate the post for the incoming leader after years of service and acquisition of deep esoteric knowledge and power.

These seemingly harmless, undocumented rotational systems for election of leadership both within the religious and traditional governance structure and the lackadaisical nonchalant approach to the replacement of qualified persons to a substantive position has been the source of conflicts within the larger Ga- Dangme polity. I am of the opinion that traditional and religious authorities within the Ga-Dangme organization must wake up to their responsibilities and act decisively to avert some of these potential conflicts that might erupt and cause harm to the system before it does happen.

This confusing phenomenon requires further study to unravel some of the deep-seated challenges within the religious hierarchical structure and to question the status quo in Gbugbla. This area still remains unsearched and I will recommend other ethnographers to consider this line of research although it is an avenue I will consider for future ethnographic work.

### **2.23 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a historical overview of the people of Gbugbla. The chapter clearly outlines their geographical location and providing some statistics and events that occasioned their migration from *Sameh* in Nigeria especially, to their current place of habitation. Since the ethnographer is an indigene of the town, he has also explained his position within the ethnography indicating how his position is strategic to the harnessing of

indigenous cultural knowledge towards the advancement of meaning creation that reflects the aesthetic sensibilities of the people of Gbugbla. Through the social, political and cultural activities observed through the lens of *Klama* religious dance, one is able to clearly postulate that *Klama* performance is one single activity that serves as a life force and encapsulates the world view of the people of Gbugbla.

It is within the framework of *Klama* performance that one experiences the multifaceted aesthetic dimensions of the people. Also, through their movement aspects of cultural behavior, be it within their socio-cultural activities experienced through the performance of *Klama hae (Dupo/ Dipo)* or through the religious sphere, where worship and communion are effected through the *Klama* religious dance performances.

The chapter also discussed the migratory accounts, religious and political structure of the community and its interrelations, thereby enhancing understanding of the link the cosmic world has with its physical parallel. With this overview, well established, the next chapter will attempt to provide a systematized or chronological order of activities that leads to the selection and training of priests or priestesses in Gbugbla as well as the roles gender plays during *Klama* performances.

## CHAPTER THREE: SELECTION, TRAINING AND COMMISSIONING OF PRIESTESSES AND ITS GENDERED DIMENSIONS.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused towards examining systematically the processual stages that mediums go through as per the demands of custom in order to qualify as fully trained priestesses. The process which manifests in three stages will be analyzed as such. The first stage being the divine selection, is followed by the training phase and finally, the commissioning. It is at the commissioning stage that a medium, having been encultured, is declared to be of service to her deity.

This section of the thesis, which deals with the training regimen of mediums, has become incumbent in order to understand and appreciate the aesthetics of the performance of mediums. As is the practice, whenever there is a vacancy or a tutelary spirit deems it fit to take on ‘a new wife’ (another medium), the spirit or deity reserves the right to select any medium within his/her affiliation he/she so pleases to serve him/her. That selected person will lose his/her identity to the deity, hence, mediums are known and referred to indexically by the names of their deities. Index or indices are the connectivity or relationship between a sign and its object which in this situation, the medium is the sign and at the same time the representation of the spirit being. An index is a feature of Peirce’s second aspect of Trichotomy two (*icon, index, symbol*) in his theory of semiotics. This aspect of the theory fits in here perfectly because mediums embody their deities and as vessels, they represent as well as are used to prosecute the agenda of the deities. Therefore, their personhood stands for

the deity which explains why they respond to the names of their deities. The senior medium of the deity *Tsaatse Tsawe* is referred to simply as *Tsawe*. Sometimes the title *Tsaatse* which means grandfather is affixed. *Tsaatse Tsawe* is a trainer of quasi-mediums who have been divinely chosen only by the *Tsaawe* deity. She also happens to be the wife of the *Agbaabi atse* who is the *Kpalɔ* of Gbugbla (refer to chapter 1). It is expected that at the end of this chapter, there will be in-depth exposition on processes of cultural knowledge transmission of both tangible and intangible nature.

Kinesthetic knowledge transmission speaks to the physical transmission of movement knowledge within *Klama* praxis from movement adepts to *ɔkomfuas* (quasi-mediums). Germane questions such as (a) what goes into the movement training of priestesses? (b) What meanings are ascribed to those movements? (c) What are the standard techniques of movement performance? (d) How does one relate to the music in performance? (e) What indigenous theories are used to appraise a performance and finally? (f) What are the performance protocols that need to be observed advances our understanding of the *Klama* movement system? Within this system, aesthetic sensibilities and movement philosophies embedded in the dance furthers our understanding of the performance. The chapter also interrogates the gender dimensions that exist within *Klama* performance system. This covers areas such as roles played by women and men in *Klama* performance eg. mediums, musicians, handlers, priests etc. The chapter will also attempt answering why gender roles remain the status quo and not otherwise. The objective for this chapter is to enable the reader to appreciate the integrated training regimen that mediums go through and the worth of tangible and intangible cultural as well as medicinal knowledge

they acquire through their training. Therefore, when a priest/priestess steps onto the performance arena to perform, one would appreciate the mass of knowledge and experience that she embodies which invariably makes her a repository of her culture. It is therefore, out of this integrated cultural knowledge that she draws her performance aesthetics when she performs on the stage.

### **3.2 Divine selection**

From the second chapter, we learn that every *Wetso* (clan) has a deity associated with it. Therefore, before a person is selected by any deity, that person must have an affinity to that particular deity in one way or the other. A person can be selected by either her maternal or paternal tutelary deities. This selection is occasioned either through the fact that there is vacancy in the shrine and the deity wants a replacement or perhaps the deity wants a new medium to attend to any of his numerous needs. The criterion for selection is fundamentally on lineage bases. Any medium to be selected must have any of her parents directly serving that deity or her ancestors might have served that deity prior to her birth. The justification for using the masculine gender for deities, in this thesis, is that with the exception of two deities that are females, the rest are all males.

In similar manner, I use the feminine gender for mediums because with the exception of just one male medium as at the time of this research, the rest are also females. Therefore, when the male deities seize their mediums who happens to be females, it is conceived off as a form of natural union or marriage hence the usage of the indigenous terminology *yoo kpeemi* literally meaning ‘woman meeting’ (marriage or wedding). The mediums who become the wives



of the spirit beings are then referenced with the terminology *wɔyoo*, meaning a deity's wife. Similar conceptualization exists within the traditional religious practice of the Ewe's of Ghana and Benin where mediums are referred to as *trosi* that is wife of the gods (Geurts, 2002). When a tutelary spirit decides to take on a new wife, this divine selection manifests in diverse ways. Common ways of manifestation of a call to serve a deity include direct seizure during a worship period or remotely while the person is going about her business. Sometimes also, the seizure occurs in dreams. According to *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ*, some seizures result in a sudden unusual behavior of the person. This demands an isolation and the performance of rituals to diagnose the cause of the behavior. The likely diagnoses of some of these strange behaviors can happen to be a call of a particular deity to service. Another form of manifesting a call is through constant illness in one form or the other. These forms of sicknesses become persistent for as long as it takes to diagnose that it's a divine call to service. In agreement, Geurts (2002 :177) emphasizes that;

if the ancestors will were not honored, if a person's destiny (se) were ignored or opposed, then disruptions, imbalances, and sickness would commandeer or confiscate (possess) the person's being.

Consequently, it is important for ritual experts to satisfy themselves that it is indeed a call to service and not just ordinary ailments their patients are suffering from. It is therefore essential to know that multiple sicknesses, disruptions and imbalances in one's social life as well as health status can be indexical of a divine call to service. This means that ritual agents operate at the level of index where the relationship between icons and indices point to the occurrence of a phenomenon and through cooccurrence or familiarity, they are able to decipher the signs and act accordingly. Therefore, when such a discovery

is made of a possible mediumship, another ritual is performed to identify the particular tutelary deity that is involved. Upon the discovery of the particular deity, a senior priestess of that deity is engaged to aid in training the neophyte/quasi-medium. On the appointed day to commence the training process, a brief ceremony is performed to entrust the neophyte into the care of the trainer. This neophyte at this point is referred to as *ɔkomfua*. This term is corroborated by Kropp- Dakubu (2009) who defines *okɔɲfowa* as a priest in training. The *ɔkomfua* is indigenously conceptualized as someone who has fallen ill and therefore is brought to a hospital, as it were, to be given medical attention. This is how the concept of training is conceived by the Dangmes of Gbugbla. As a result of this, the *ɔkomfua* (patient) needs to be admitted in order to commence the process of admission of medication.

*Nitomi* which literally means arrangement of things, figuratively refers to the purchase of items required for the performance of the ritual of entrusting the *ɔkomfua* into the care of her trainer to be skilled. These items include 2 fowls (red or white depending on the choice of the deity), powder, pomade, perfume, comb, sponge for bathing, indigenous chewing sponge, *sawiye* (a type of indigenous fibrous sponge used for cleaning beads) *busa* (beaten stem of either plantain or banana plant), lime/ lemon, etc. All these items, apart from the fowl, come in sets of four. The items are presented together with the *ɔkomfua*, at the shrine of the deity involved. At this moment, a short libation prayer is offered for the success of the ceremony. The *ɔkomfua* is wrapped with an ordinary piece of cloth around her waist. A fowl is then taken, passed round the head of the *ɔkomfua* in order to absolve any misfortune looming over her head. Here, metonymy is being expressed in movement form through the passing of the fowl

over the head of the *ɔkomfua* to represent her entire being and not just the head which sits on the body of the person. This movement expression is meant to cleanse and purify the *ɔkomfua*. According to *Tsawe*, at the touch of the fowl to the head of the *ɔkomfua*, the tutelary deity then manifests itself and this makes her react vigorously. This vigorous reaction of the *ɔkomfua* is indexical in semiotic terms because it indicates the presence of the spiritual being that inhabits her body. Afterwards, the fowl is slaughtered and the blood is made to drip on her. The fowl, when left on the ground, is expected to lie supine. This is indexical of a successful ceremony (Friedson, 2009). Anything short of this, means there has been a fault and another fowl will have to be slaughtered to remedy the challenge. If similar result of failure is recorded, then an egg will be used to re-order the process. This part of the ceremony is then sealed with the *ɔkomfua* being handed over to her ‘mother’ who will now be her trainer.

The *ɔkomfua* is immediately taken to the seaside to be ritually bathed. At the beach, she is bathed with ritually prepared herbs to protect her from evil spirits at her vulnerable state. Afterwards the *busa*, which is made from the beaten banana or plantain stem as well as sponge, are also used to bath her. Sea water is the first to be used, then followed by fresh water fetched from the sacred river at *blekesem*. Next comes the application of perfume, pomade and powders. The hair of the *ɔkomfua* is combed out and let loose according to custom and she is then brought back into the shrine. According to *Tsawe*, at the point of bathing, the spirit goes away only to return after the brief ceremony is over and the *ɔkomfua* is returning to the shrine. This cleansing act at the sea side is known as *Jwilamɔ*. This term has a connection to the Akan word “*dwareɛ*” which means bathing. *Jwilamɔ* therefore has a ritual connotation which is cleansing or

purification. This shows how diffused and interwoven some Ghanaian languages are. At the shrine, a white *Klala* which is a type of calico or linen will replace the ordinary cloth used to gird the waist of the *ɔkomfua*. A piece of the *Klala* is also attached to a half set of beads which is tied to her wrist known as *lakuku* or *nyoli kuku*. These are black and white beads that indicate that the wearer is a *Klama* pseudo-medium in training. Any culturally informed person upon seeing the *nyoli kuku* sign will immediately understand its indexical meaning. The difference between a *Klama* medium and that of a *Kple* medium is identified by the nature of the wrist beads they wear. A *Klama* medium wears a mixture of black and white beads made out of ivory or *adɔdi* pearl shell from the Volta river and special black, round hard seeds known as *ayiblibi* (Field, 1961). A *Kple* medium only wears the white Ivory or *adɔdi* pearl shell beads. The *Krobos*, in the absence of *ayiblibi* use the black seed of *lina lania* plant (Avotri, 2009).

*Klala bumi* is a *Klama* ritual term, which literally means covering with a piece of cloth, used to refer to the ceremony held to admit an *ɔkomfua* into training. This is symbolized in the replacement of the mediums normal cloth with a white *Klala* of the divine beings to personify purity, sacredness and chastity. At this point, the trainer of the *ɔkomfua* then determines the number of years she (*ɔkomfua*) will spend to complete her learning program. This normally ranges from 1-3 years depending on the learning rate of the *ɔkomfua*. The *ɔkomfua* then shakes the hands of everyone present to express her gratitude. The deity that has mounted her would have to be dispatched from her. This is termed *sɔlemi*. *Sɔlemi* in ordinary Dangme language usage means prayer or baptism. In *Klama* context, the word is used to demonstrate the act of affirming the ritual

takeover of the *ɔkomfua* by her tutelary spirit and praying the deity to depart from the host into his resting abode.

Subsequently, the term is used to explain the process of dispatching the divine spirits into their ethereal place of abode. The *ɔkomfua* who is now in a ritually excited state is made to sit in a chair and held firmly to get her to relax before water is sprinkled on her. The water in this situation is very important because it's effect on the medium at that critical moment engenders a reaction of a sort that aids in dispatching the deity. The *ɔkomfua*, after sending her divine deity away, then pulls herself together and bids farewell to her family as she remains in the custody of her trainer until she graduates.

### **3.3 Training**

From a critical perspective, *Klama* music and dance performances are reenactments of ancient historical epochs. These are evident in the song text, drum language, and the movements that serve as interpretation to the songs. The song texts, some of which are captured and preserved in ancient Obutu and Dangme texts can sometimes be a bit complex to comprehend. It is during performances that these ancient histories are clearly understood. It is also in the performance processes that these historical records/accounts are transmitted from one generation to another for the purposes of perpetuation of the tradition. Although it is common knowledge within the performance studies fraternity that each performance is unique, never to be like its previous enactment, every performance comes with slight variants of the previous one. These slight variations embody creativity. In the process of repeating performances, creativity is engendered and encouraged without altering the substance and

structure (Drewal, 1992; Schechner, 2003), consequently exposing the aesthetic responsiveness of the people. The continuous engendering of creativity which has occasioned the changes that have occurred within *Klama* performances and in the lives of the human agents over the years have been due to the exigencies of the time. This has elicited adjustments and readjustments in order to accommodate contemporary challenges that is aimed at making the worship relevant as well as a spectacle.

Robert Nicholls (1998) in his work “African Dance: Transition and Continuity” has lamented on the extent to which traditional African culture is being affected by agents of modernization such as education, mass media, religion etc. He continues further that critical social changes are leading to the decline of traditional customs that engender dance. The Dangmes of Gbugbla have had their fair encounter with such agents of change. One of such challenges is the conflict that ensued between the Prampram traditional religious worshippers and their Christian fraternity over the period on which ban on drumming and noise making was placed. This happened to be the same period in which the Christians were at the peak of their Easter celebrations. As a result, the traditional religious authorities, for the purpose of maintaining peace, had to readjust their calendar to accommodate their Christian siblings. Therefore, at the end of the Christian Easter celebrations, the traditional authorities could then commence their annual *Kple* festival ceremonies with the imposition of ban on drumming and noise making. The purpose for placing such ban is to allow for a period of silence in order for everyone to reflect soberly on activities of the past year in order to refocus for the future. It is also a moment allowed for reconciliation between aggrieved parties within the community for which

reason the society cannot become a unified force without those resolutions. The ban is very critical in the lives of the people because it gives the community, some moment to revive itself. It also affords leadership the opportunity to take stock and formulate policies that will propel the community forward. It is within these silent moments that communication with tutelary deities are effected effectively. There is therefore the connection between this frame of divine communication within a serene atmosphere and communication within the social space. More especially, in cases where conflict resolutions of a certain magnitude are effected at a period in the day which is considered most serene i.e. at dawn (Avorgbedor, 2000). It is believed that at dawn, the serenity that transpires is akin to what is experienced during the period of placing ban on noise making. At dawn, there is the belief in the presence of benevolent spirits that hover around homes within the community to receive petitions hence, showing of appreciation or gratitude or conflict resolution is most effective at this transitory period between night and day.

Another challenge that *Klama* performance encountered is the constant need to have to recreate a right atmosphere for the performance of certain rituals meant to take place in a grove. Due to the combined effects of urbanization and modernization that demands that social amenities such as roads, offices, houses etc. be constructed, ancient groves where wild herbs are fetched and used for medical and ritual purposes have had to give way thus, anytime specific rituals must be performed, ritual agents must cut tree branches and leaves to recreate those scenes.

It is remarkable to notice the manner in which *Klama* ritual processes has firmly embraced modernity. This is observed in the provision and use of

comfortable plastic chairs for audience members as well as mediums who are not performing to sit on and take part in the activity. These plastic chairs have come to replace the usage of wooden stools carved out of trees through the pouring of libation although some priestesses and quasi-mediums (mediums under training) do still sit on special wooden stools carved for them. The provision of water for refreshment in modern cooling containers, the provision and use of canopies for shelter from the sun to replace trees that serve the ecological interest and are deemed sacred and regarded as deities as well as the use of energy efficient electric bulbs as replacement for kerosene lamps are evidence of the dynamic nature of the Gbugbla society. It is interesting to note that despite the knowledge in herbs and herbal formulae, some mediums do attend hospitals for medical attention (Friedson, 1996). It is envisaged that in the near future, technology will be employed to enhance the sound output quality of performances as well as the capture and storing of performances for posterities sake.

Taking a critical look at the period spent in training of *ɔkomfuas*, one of my informants Sarah Korkor Padi, intimated to me that erstwhile, mediums spent as long as 7 years in training before they were initiated. This ensured that mediums were well versed with knowledge of herbs and the various ailments they cure. These mediums therefore became the medical physicians of their days. With current trend of proliferation of ultra-modern or cutting edge technology used in diagnosing, and administration of medication as well as the corpus of medicine for all sorts of diseases that can be purchased both as prescription and over the counter, the essence of these mediums within the context of medical administration has become almost a thing of the past. They



are rather now being consulted sparingly on spiritual dimensions to diseases known to have spiritual connotations or on aspects of diseases that cannot be treated with conventional medication in the hospitals. They are also consulted to use their medico-religious practices to address challenges of daily life (Friedson, 1996, 2009). These among others, have occasioned the reduction of the years spent in training hence adequate knowledge of herbs has been limited. Some mediums spend just a year while others go for 3 years. An example of mediums that spend a year in training are those that serve *Maa Lalue* who is the mother of the deities.

After the official entrusting ceremony of an *ɔkomfua* into the care of her trainer (mother) has come to an end, the second phase which is the enculturation process shifts into focus. This is the stage where the *ɔkomfua* learns all that there is to learn about her deity, the special day of her deity, her deity's rules and taboos among a host of other things. Most importantly, concerning this study, the *ɔkomfua* learns the dances and songs relating to her deity. She also learns about *baa* (leaves/herbs) which is the medicinal aspect of the training. The songs learnt of a deity and *baa* is what becomes the chant that the medium sings, which is responded to by musicians. This translates into the rhythm played for her to dance. Therefore, the songs determine the rhythm and the rhythm governs the dance movements that the medium performs to. Ethnographic evidence therefore proves that these interlinked knowledge web of songs exist and is at the disposal of every *wɔyoo*.

An interaction with *Tsaatse Tsawe*, indicate that there is a large corpus of herbal knowledge preserved in the form of songs to which every *ɔkomfua* is expected to learn. The willingness to teach an *ɔkomfua* depends on the

*ɔkomfua*'s ability to remain submissive, focused and loyal to her course. This character trait is corroborated by Sarah Korkor Padi, my informant who was once a *mawa yoo*, (a handler who assists mediums in diverse capacities during worship). She happens to be a *mawa yoo* to *Maa Lalue*. Sarah informs me that being submissive and of service to one's trainer is a prerequisite to being a successful priestess. This character trait endears the trainee to the trainer and enables the trainer to willingly teach the secrets of the deity as well as that of the necessary herbal knowledge one requires to know. She continues that most often, *ɔkomfua*'s become self-conceited, insubordinate and tend to rebel against their trainers, as a result, trainers also decide to withhold secrets from them until the *ɔkomfua*'s prove to be worthy of their trust. All things being equal, training in herbal knowledge begins with the process known as *baa tomi*. This literally means leaf arrangements. According to *Tsawe*, it is incumbent on an *ɔkomfua* to memorize the order in which herbs are presented to her. This is because, the attributes of the herbs are woven in songs and when the deities eventually mount, the deity will require or inspire mediums to sing in that order. As a result, any *baa* that is picked has a set string of other herbs associated with it. Herbal medicine preparations come in clusters because it is in these clusters that the full potency of the medication is harnessed due to the complementary strength of each herb. Aside the order in which herbal related songs are arranged, songs that relate to historical, social, aesthetics and a host of other genres are also ordered in similar fashion to enable quick recall, coherence of the stories and events.

In line with the focus of this thesis, that is to examine the performance aesthetics of the *Klama* dance of the Dangmes's of Gbugbla, it is unavoidable

to analyze the diverse aspects of movement acquisition modalities. This informs what is witnessed on the performance arena. These movement acquisition and performance related activities come under four thematic areas i. e. movement training of priestesses, meanings ascribed to movements, standard techniques of movement performance, and finally, performance appraisal and performance protocol. These areas encapsulate holistically, the essentials of the movement learning process and the cultural understanding that undergird the performances of *Klama* dance.

### **3.4 Movement training of priestesses.**

This section outlines the training procedures involved in aiding mediums under training to acquire the skill of movement performance or simply the art of dancing within the *Klama* dance performance context. Dances are always performed and understood within contexts. Therefore, for a medium to embody the required qualities of performance, she must be encultured in order to manifest the right movement characteristics demanded of her within the cultural context. In answering the question, what goes into the movement training of priestesses, I refer to R. Bailey and A. Pickard's (2010) work on *Body learning: Examining the process of skill learning*. In this work, Bailey and Pickard outline four hypotheses related to skill acquisition in dance (ballet). They contend that (a) skills are learned, (b) skills can be defined only in terms of success of achievement of a goal (c) the development of a skill requires practice and (d) skills have a history in the sense that they develop in some way over time. They sum all these by positing that "skillful performance can be understood within these theories as an expression of a set of trained, habituated, automatic responses in a specific context" (Bailey & Pickard, 2010:368-370).

What Bailey and Pickard are seeking to explain is that skill acquisition in any practical endeavor requires a certain amount of time invested into the practice in order to understand the rules governing the activity. Having acquired this embodied skill, one stands in a better position to eternalize or personify the act. Bailey and Pickard links this position with Pierre Bourdieu's habitus. They explain that;

habitus is a residue of a past, and shapes thought and perception, and therefore provides regularity and coherence to action. It consists of dispositions and competences acquired in structured social settings whose patterns and principles are incorporated as habitual ways of being. Once incorporated into the body, such patterns can be difficult to shake off (Bailey & Pickard, 2010:374).

The habitus hypothesis lays emphasis on constant practice of set routines to the extent that re-execution of those routines become automatic. This is the underlying principle behind the movement training of mediums hence, habitus resonates well with the movement acquisition frame of this study. To a large extent, the movement activities engaged in by mediums under training enables them to assimilate the required performance behavior. Constant practice therefore ensures the quick recall of movements. In performance, when the mind is unable to memorize a sequence, the body is able to recollect and perform that routine due to the presence of muscle memory acquired through daily engagement with that routine which is what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as habitus.

In some African indigenous societies, transmission of kinesthetic knowledge and other forms of cultural knowledge are made through observation and practice by the individual. In the cause of my fieldwork, I have observed and have been reliably informed by *Tsawe*, that, *ɔkomfuias* learn to dance, by following their trainers in the 'follow the leader' mode of movement learning.

This assertion is validated by Nketia and Sowah (Nketia, 1974; Sowah, 2012), referring to it as “learning through social experience”. This means that, each time there is a public worship, a quasi-medium always dances at the fringes imitating the movements of her trainer as well as other mediums. She also observes and imitates their movement mannerisms. According to Bame (1991), children in Africa learn how to dance in similar ways they learn to talk, that is, through listening to their elders and imitating what they hear. Therefore, in trailing behind their elders as well as watching from the fringes, *ɔkomfuas* learn to dance not as “unthinking mimics but as conscious learners” (Bame, 1991). As they imitate the movement sequences of their trainers, they do so not as a routine but as an opportunity to learn in order to fulfill their mandate as future ritual agents and members of the priestly class. Noland (2009) cites Marcel Mauss as having observed that the human body is the first vehicle society engages in order to express their values and perpetuate themselves.

Hence, the medium, as a ritual agent, must avail herself towards the learning and embodiment of all the movement characteristics that speak to her calling. Noland’s (2009) definition of embodiment and agency is apt towards explaining what happens to the body of the medium in training. She explains that;

embodiment is the process whereby collective behaviors and beliefs, acquired through acculturation, are rendered individual and “lived” at the level of the body ... agency... is the power to alter those acquired behaviors and beliefs for the purposes that may be reactive (resistant) or collaborative (innovative) in kind. (Noland, 2009:9)

These two definitions explain the fact that society perpetuates itself largely by passing on its culture which includes its behaviors onto another person through the physical training of the body. After the body, has undergone

this form of training, that person can then manipulate the body to resist as well as advance the course of that society. Therefore, the body of the *ɔkomfua*, in the sense of this thesis, has become a platform on which the Dangme/Gbugbla society writes its culture on. The medium then writes again (Noland, 2009) that culture back to society in the enactment and reenactment processes of the society's culture through *Klama* dance performances.

According to *Tsawe*, it is expedient for *ɔkomfuas* to learn all the dance movements of other deities. The reason being that a medium can be possessed by different deities at a time and one is expected to move to the desires of the deity that manifests at any given time. Also, she continues further, learning the movements of other deities enable a priestess to offer solidarity support when another deity is celebrating its feast day. *Tsawe* emphasizes that besides the above, it is important to learn all the dance movements in order to be versatile. *Dibo Wɔnɔ*, clarifies also that, there are a lot of tutelary spirits within a particular shrine who do not have mediums to manifest through. Those spirits therefore tend to mount any available medium from the shrine who performs on an occasion. He further reveals that when a new deity manifests itself, one realizes that the medium suddenly becomes tensed up, reacts vigorously by visibly shaking all over and this causes a brief change in the trend of songs being sung. This is because the new deity would like to perform to his/her own song.

The pantheons, I understand, make these sudden appearances with the intention of lending support to the other spirits in their celebrations. To the ritual experts, this iconic change is indexical of a different deity making its presence felt by taking over from another deity. The musicians and ritual experts who are aware of this phenomenon, respond swiftly to his song and the appropriate

rhythm is played by the musicians. The medium responds accordingly with the appropriate movement patterns. This indexical change of deities during a performance is seen by all but only a knowledgeable few really understand that vigorous shaking reaction. Due to the fact that there are very few worship and dancing moments within the calendar, *ɔkomfuas* go at great lengths to learn and master as many movements as they can. During *Klamagu* performance sessions, it is common to hear senior mediums instruct *ɔkomfuas* on the carriage of their hands, feet and the body in general, in order to embody the ideals of the dance. These are one of the available moments trainers take advantage of the presence of musicians, to give practical assistance to their trainees in order to sharpen their sense of listening and enhance their response to the diverse rhythms provided by the musicians. Most often too, senior mediums dance very close to their trainees to lend them support. Performance ideals taught to *ɔkomfuas* have aesthetic qualities embedded within it. These aesthetic qualities can be admired for its own sake devoid of its functional affinity with the worship of tutelary spirits as posited by Gyekye (2003). The dexterity of the movements executed, the agility and grace with which the body is carried and the composure of the performing mediums are a sight to behold. It is even more splendid witnessing the performance with the compliment of the diverse colorful costumes, props and body adornments indicating the nature of each governing deity. The remarkable aspect of such performances is the sight of senior possessed mediums who have advanced in age yet move with panache and the adroitness of a youth.

### 3.5 Movement aspect of customary behavior

As part of the dance training *ɔkomfuas* go through, they also learn movement aspects of customary behavior. This deals with culturally acceptable behavioral patterns that govern the day-to-day social interactions within the community. Notable among these customary behaviors is the manner in which greeting is performed. Yuriko Saito (2001) in his work “Everyday Aesthetics” concludes that day to day movement activities among others which he calls non-art activities, which in this case encapsulates customary behaviors, have embedded within them aesthetic properties. Therefore, it is this aesthetics that are inherent in greetings i.e the manner in which they are performed, that makes greetings very important in traditional Ghanaian societies. Greetings are a means of fostering and reinforcing cordiality in relationships. The manner in which greetings are performed can reveal the intentions of a person. As a traditional rule, greetings are always performed from the extreme right of a gathering to the left. In performing a greeting in that manner, the palm of the right hand of the performer is always exposed to the public. This symbolic show of an open palm, is to display clearly the clean intentions of the one offering the greeting. It is an affront to society to greet from the left to the right. Society conceives this as a slap and an indication of harboring an ulterior motive. This is because the palm is obscured from public view. A show of the palm in greeting from right to left is indexical of honesty, sincerity and a show of truthfulness and goodwill. In a discussion with Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah (Personal communications on January 12, 2017), he informs me that the pattern of greeting from right to left was taken from an ancient philosophy of the movement of the sun which rises from the east and settles in the west.



According to Sowah, this marks the beginning of birth and the end of life. This is symbolic of the life cycle. Movements performed from the left to the right are deemed as the path of death while that of the opposite is the path of life. Adinku (1994) also endorses this claim citing Judith Lynne Hanna that anti-clockwise and clockwise movements symbolize the path of life and death. According to Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah, activities such as traditional wearing of cloth, athletics, racing, the manner of circular dancing and a host of activities performed in a circle are always executed from right to left in contradiction to the path of the clock. This is because, it is the natural path of life. Within traditional Dangme society and by extension indigenous Ghanaian societies, there is a conscious emphasis on the usage of the right hand, whether in greeting, eating or gesticulating. Indigenous Ghanaian society abhors the use of the left hand; hence a left-handed person is never permitted to be king. This is not to infringe on the person's human rights but it is because of the philosophy of the usage of the left hand. In indigenous society, the left hand is used in 'washroom' business after visiting the ladies or gents, hence it is considered unclean. Therefore, the use of the left hand is considered negative in every sense. If it becomes necessary to use the left hand, a profuse apology must be rendered in advance. Traditional Ghanaian society conceptualizes greetings from right to left as the path of life because the one offering the greeting moves his right hand towards the hearts on the left. This is a sign of affection and warmth towards the people he/she is greeting. A reverse of this act indicates the path of death since the arm moves away from the heart. In the same manner, it is common to observe that all dances performed by mediums commence from the right and

ends on the left whether in circular or in linear manner. Therefore, for a medium to greet, all these customary conceptions are taken into consideration.

Further to the above, other factors considered in performing greetings include the age and sex of the person offering the greeting and that of the recipient. Also considered are the number of people present and the state of the medium. Greeting a colleague or colleagues does not demand much body gesture or protocol for a medium. A simple wave of the hand or verbal greeting or a combination is acceptable. In the case of greeting an elderly person, the sex of the person is taken into consideration. If the recipient of the greeting is an elderly female or male, the medium will approach the recipient, extend her right arm supported by the left hand holding the lower arm. At the same time, she offers her right arm in greeting, the medium squats briefly and stands up to indicate submission and obeisance to the elder. She then humbly requests for blessings, *ha manyé* that is “bestow blessing/goodwill”. The same greeting mannerism is offered to anyone who is in a position of authority. If there are a number of men or women seated together at one place, the medium may choose to greet all of them together by saying *tsemε* or *nyemε* or *tsemε ke nyemε nyε pεεε nyεε ha manyé*. This is to say ‘fathers or mothers or fathers and mothers please bestow blessings/goodwill’. On the other hand, she may also decide to greet them one person at a time by squatting and rising throughout. When a medium decides to greet en masse, she must stand in the middle, put the feet together, and in one motion cast the right hand from the right to encapsulate everyone present. The hand gesture ends to the left ending in a bend of the torso forward perpendicular to the ground and placing the right hand in the palm of

the left hand. The knees at this point are slightly bent. All these movement aspects of customary behavior are signs of humility and a show of obeisance.

A medium, however, when in a possessed state, may choose to greet individually from right to left without squatting to pay obeisance. Thus, there is a clear difference the aesthetics of a medium when not possessed and when possessed. What is noticeable is the vigorous slapping of the palm of the recipient (Friedson, 2009) followed by pronouncements of blessings *mohe manyé, oso manyé, omie manyé, oηuc oηuc*. At a gathering, a simple *nye he manyé* meaning “receive blessing/goodwill” is rendered. The bestowing of blessings this time round is from the deity who has taken over the identity of the medium. As a result, there is no reference to protocol. Those she cannot reach by hand, she raises both hands and shows them her palm and proclaims the blessings on them. According to Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah, the raising of the hand showing the palm to those one is unable to reach is very important and carries the same value as established above. For societies along the coast or water bodies, casting of the hand to symbolically reach those beyond physical contact follows the path of casting a fishing net which is from the right to left. This is an accepted form of greeting. On the other hand, if one is not in good terms with a member of a group, he/she may decide to greet en masse by raising the hand to show the palm. This is to avoid raising eye brows or the embarrassment of having to skip those persons who are not in the performers good books. This is one of the politics behind greetings.

In Dangme customary behavior, when addressing an elderly person, it is expected that the head is slightly bent downwards to avoid as much as possible,

staring directly into the eyes of that elder. This shows respect and indicates that one is never at par with that elder as pertains among some tribes found in the northern parts of Ghana. This manner of showing respect to elders is fast changing as people prefer to look directly into the eyes of those they are talking with in order to ascertain whether they are telling the truth or otherwise. In performing a greeting, a possessed medium raises her head far above everyone else in order to avoid a direct gaze with a mortal. She therefore casts her eyes down to give the semblance of a seemingly closed eyes. This is also indexical of her status as a deity. In a possessed state, mediums use esoteric languages in conversation amongst themselves. The head is dominantly used in answering in the affirmative while the arms assist in gesticulations.

### **3.6 Meanings ascribed to movements**

Having spent some time in the field participating in and observing *Klama* performance activities, I have come to realize that meaning generation of movements performed by mediums are contextual. The meaning to movements performed by a medium is related to the deity that manifests. This is because each deity has its own movement characteristics that it displays in addition to general movements displayed with the aid of costumes and props. This is obviously dictated by the songs sung. A clear example is *Tsaatse Tsawe*. This male deity mounts women mediums and gets them to dress in long gown-like dresses with a hat that is tied with a scarf. Another scarf is tied to the neck and upper arms of the medium. *Tsawe's* sign or prop is the use of a miniature paddle used in propelling a canoe or a small boat. This is because the deity is a fisherman. His unique dance movements constitute re-enactments of paddling a canoe and the smooth cruising of a boat on the waves. He also dramatizes using

movements, the manner in which he calms the raging tempers of the ocean in turbulent times. Songs sung (see table 4) during his manifestations deal with the ocean, waves, seashore, plants that grow by the seaside, features found at the beach and the temperaments of the ocean. Examples of such songs are:

**Table 4 Example of songs sung by Tsawe Deity.**

<i>Klama</i> Songs	Meaning
<i>Tsawe, ije wooyi keba</i>	<i>Tsawe</i> , I have come from the sea
<i>Akɔfa oo, leji leɛ nine</i>	The paddle ( <i>Akɔfa</i> ) is the arm of the canoe
<i>Ajewoo ma, nebaa pue ɲe wonya</i>	Returning from the sea, we saw a plant at the shore
<i>Tsawe, ma gbɔle woo he ne ehe baa jɔ</i>	<i>Tsawe</i> , I will massage the waves to calm it

These songs inform the performance context of each deity. Therefore, each deity tells his/her own story as well as touts his/her capabilities with the songs that he/she sings. This is reinforced by the performance of appropriate movement indexes to illustrate or dramatize what is being communicated with the songs.

*Maa Yoomle*, as discussed in the previous chapters, is the second and last female deity in Gbugbla *Klama* circles. She does not wear a gown like *Tsawe*. She wears a skirt and bustier. She is known to have come from the forest. This accounts for her song text (see table 5) which speaks mostly about forest activities as well as herbs. She sings:

**Table 5 Example of songs sung by Yoomle Deity.**

<i>Klama Songs</i>	Meaning
<i>Yoomle, ije bɔmi nɛ bɔ pɛ huya</i>	I came from the forest and the forest gave way <i>huya</i>
<i>Yoomle, nɛsa juanɔ</i>	<i>Yoomle</i> who is fit for the performance arena

The songs above speak of the dramatic manner in which *Yoomle* makes appearances on the performance arena. She uses onomatopoeic words such as *huya* to create the imagery of her sudden appearance. She further boasts of her performance prowesses as the only deity with exceptional performance skills. In one of her songs, she laments of having been bound with chains on the wrists and legs and pleads to be released off the chains so she can go home. She sings thus: *Aagbɛ lee mojemɪ gaa nɛ maya weɔ*. This literally means ‘*Aagbɛ*, release me off my rings (chains) so I can go home’. *Yoomle*, through this enactment, informs us of her bondage, having been bound with chains. She therefore is calling on *Aagbɛ* who is represented by the *Kpalɔ* to come to her aid. *Yoomle* thus performs the “*gboklɛ*” dance movements by crossing her right hand over the left with the contact at the wrists whiles clenching her fist. She hands her arms to the *Kpalɔ* pleading with him to release her off the chains. The *Kpalɔ* therefore holds both arms and separates them. “*Gboklɛ*” means padlock. The aesthetics of the movement is synonymous to the labored movements of slaves as a result of being bound with chains. The word is also an onomatopoeia of the sound produced by the locking of padlocks used in ancient times to fasten chains on the bodies of slaves or prisoners. Similar onomatopoeia can be adduced to the sounds produced by the chains of slaves as they move about.

Another deity worth discussing is *Baatε*, known to be a tiger deity. This is evident in the vigorous nature of the movements she executes which includes the manipulation of the hand to imitate the paws of the tiger. The aesthetics of these movements depict a male deity whose medium wears a long gown like that of *Tsawe* but without the hat and scarves. At the peak of the mediums performance, she rids herself of any ornament that will hinder her movements. These include her neck beads as she imitates the fight sequence of the tiger chasing and pouncing on its prey. The movements performed become so vigorous, men will have to go to the mediums aid to restrain and calm her.

In *Klama* dance performances, other possessed mediums exhibit diverse indexical movement gestures that inform the audience of their nature. Mention can be made of *Tsaatsε Digble* whose indexical movement includes squatting very low and in that position, transferring or shifting the weight from the left onto the right rhythmically while extending his right hand out, shaking it and turning the hand inside out and back. This movement is performed moving backwards to index the fact that he is 'well endowed' as a man in his groins thus, carrying it is a bit challenging. So, he moves backwards in a gentle and graceful manner while gesticulating with the hand. According to Nii-Yartey (2013), an astute scholar and choreographer, gestures are rudiments of symbolism in an action-oriented human phenomenon which are regarded as integral components of dance in many African societies. He outlines random, mimicking and symbolic gestures as the three principal gestures that are visible in African dance forms. According to him, random gestures are made to emphasize or illustrate a point in the course of a speech while mimicking gestures are actions that create visual imagery of objects or ideas in the mind of

the observer. Finally, he opines that symbolic gestures tend to be more abstractive in manifestation and is the highest form of gesture within African dance symbolisms therefore (Nii- Yartey, 2013:418);

the meaning and functionality of many African dance forms are most often hidden in the context of their performance. To understand and appreciate the dance therefore, one must discern the symbolism of the occasion, the gestures, costumes and their colors, the lyrics of the accompanying songs, the drum patterns and of course, the dramatic experience of the occasion.

I am in total agreement with Nii-Yartey's assertions that gestural movements abound in African dance forms. These indexical movements explain further the context within which performances take place as well as the message being communicated. Thus, possessed mediums perform movements that are commensurate with the songs that they sing in order to project the esoteric meaning of their performance.

### **3.7 Standard techniques of movement performance**

Marcel Mauss in his much talked about work *Techniques of the body*, explains ways in which the human body is socialized to embody the ideals of a culture or as he puts it, "*from society to society, men know how to use their bodies.*" Noland (2009:28-9) explains further in her work that;

transmission of techniques of the body is an element of what Mauss calls "tradition" (SA, 371). The techniques themselves thus exist on several registers: they are chains of movement performed by individual bodies; they shape the bodies that perform them; and they play a role in a wider system of social organization, transmitting and embodying the laws of cultural tradition.

Techniques in movement acquisition demands a thorough knowledge of the basic movement blocks that form the structure of a dance. Besides the acquisition of the basic movements, it is important that a learner understands the philosophy behind the movements executed. According to Oh! Nii Kwei



Sowah (2012), knowledge of the context, history, the use of symbolic gestures and the need for the correct emotional input are vital in a performance. Acquisition of movements without requisite knowledge of these salient aspects tend to be just learning the mechanics of the movement. Each movement that is performed has a soul of its own and it is the soul of the movement that drives its performance. Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah (2012:125), cites La Meri who posits that;

it is not possible to work only on the physical techniques, for that way the dancer will be a shell, puppet, a mechanical master of movement. It is the motivating spirit behind a movement that makes it heart-stopping for the watcher [...]. The acolyte must study endlessly the background, history, religion and the many other facets of facts and philosophy that give birth to the dance he would manifest.

The approach to movement acquisition in *Klama*, is measured in an *ɔkomfuas* ability to study, assimilate and execute the basic movement structure as she/he observes from senior mediums. Possessing the quality of identifying details in movements and replicating these movements are a mark of a good performer. Since in the indigenous African movements transmission culture, movements are not taught like formal dance institutions would teach it, it is incumbent on the medium to possess the critical eye for detail, acquire, master and execute the right movements by learning from her trainer as well as other mediums during performances. The imitation should be as close to what everybody does as possible. Although, there is a window for everybody to improvise and personalize movements, *ɔkomfuas* are encouraged to clearly exhibit the fundamental movement structure of the dance. When this is not achieved, trainers or senior mediums perform close to the *ɔkomfuas* and offer them the needed help. *Klama* movement techniques are bourne in the dancers' carriage of the arms to communicate the dieties attributes. Besides this, high

level of concentration is required in order to maintain the integrity of possession from commencement till completion. Also, mediums ability to concentrate on movements being performed rather than scouting for approval from audience is put to test. Mediums are however required to possess or be nimble footed in order to accommodate the body for the performance of spritely or rapid movements.

It is a requirement for every *ɔkomfua* to clearly demonstrate mastery of rhythm and timing by not performing off the rhythm. Such off-rhythm performance attracts comments like *ashitun*. *Ashitun/Ashitiu* (Dangme and Ga respectively) according to Kropp Dakubu (2009) simply means making an error due to inattention or carelessness. Dangmes tend to believe that every person is born with the innate ability to respond accurately to music. Therefore, anyone who performs contrary to the rhytm is believed to have a defect with the sense of hearing hence the person's inability to identify a basic timeline. On the other hand, the person might be deemed as not paying close attention to the rhythm or is not listening critically. Thus, a medium's ability to decipher when to enter or exit a rhythmic frame is critical to the performance development of the medium. After having been described as an *ashitun*, the person is questioned whether she or he does not have 'ears'. "Hearing" a piece of music indigenously means critically listening and looking out for cues embedded therein. Such *ɔkomfuas* who go off rhythm might not have acquainted themselves well with the subtle cues embedded in the music. They are therefore offered assistance intermittently by their trainers. A good performer has a conglomerate sense of good approach to music and must be able to sing and move well to rhythm. An *ɔkomfua*, until she is initiated can only dance to the rhythm provided. She is

classified as *mumui* meaning, deafness. Deafness in this sense, is related to her inability to hear the voice of her deity. It is believed hearing is linked to speech, that is, one is able to speak or say something because that person is able to hear being spoken to. Therefore, without hearing the voice of the deities, an *ɔkomfua* is unable to respond. An *ɔkomfua* only receives her voice during initiation when the ears are ritually opened to identify the voice of her deity. It is at this ritual moment that she begins to sing. The songs she sings relates to attributes of her deity, knowledge of herbs, proverbs, historical facts and events, social commentary and general songs that give an indication of the societies aesthetic forms she has learnt during her training. Until an *ɔkomfua* is initiated, she dances but in silence.

### **3.8 Performance appraisal and performance protocol**

Although discussions on performance appraisal and protocol has been covered in the previous chapters, I will attempt a summary here to complete the answering of the questions posed at the beginning of the chapter with the aim of providing an exposition on indigenous knowledge transfer. *Klama* performance aesthetics includes the art of appraisals which are mostly carried out by the audience or spectators who troop to the performance venue to take part in the worship activity. When the dance meets their expectation, they let out an avalanche of metacommunicative terminologies. This is to express their appreciation of the performance. Common terminologies to hear are *ogbi ηɔɔ* which literally means ‘your voice is sweet’ or *onyami tsɔ* literally ‘your mouth is clear’. These expressive terminologies indicate the standard of clarity expected from a medium who is the voice of the spirits/deities. A medium is expected to communicate in a distinct and clear voice to be heard by all

therefore, when a medium sings, she is expected to articulate the text clearly. Also, the pitch of the voice should tower over the noise to the hearing of the gathering. The ability to meet such expectation attracts the comment *onyami tsɔ* that is to say, your utterance is clear. Then again, since the gods are singing and dancing gods (Adinku, 1994; Kilson, 1971), a medium must have a very good and powerful voice to declare the message of the gods. This also attracts the expression *ogbi ηɔ* (your voice is sweet). A singing voice that is not pleasant attracts silence or negative comments or murmurings among audience members. I must say however that both *ogbi ηɔ* (your voice is sweet) and *onyami tsɔ* (your mouth is clear) can be used interchangeably. In the same vein, dance appreciation beckons comments such as *Awushie oo*, *Ajo oo* etc. These expressions fall within the indigenous term *ligbi jemi*. The expressions are references made in relation to the feast days of the performing deities. It is believed that at the mention of the feast day of the deity, it energizes the deity to perform beyond expectations.

Therefore, when a performance is ongoing and anyone wishes to appreciate a medium/deity, he/she would have to go through the aesthetic protocols which consist of raising the index and the middle fingers to form a V sign. This sign indexes a good performance and an encouragement to the performer to continue in the same. This is known as *doo jemi* literally meaning 'dance removal'. This aesthetic gesture is a way of showing appreciation to the mediums for the high level of performance standard exhibited on the arena. Within *doo jemi* frame, an ordinary audience member can opt to dance for a medium by gently touching the knee of the medium with the two hands. The medium in turn will raise her two hands indicating the V signs and this also

indexes her approval for the audience member to dance in her stead. Another form of *doo jemi* is to either fan the medium with a piece of cloth or to paste money on the forehead or spray the performer with a perfume. All these are ways in which performances are appreciated within the Gbugbla *Klama* performance tradition. This mode of appreciation is also seen in other social performance spheres for example during the life cycle activities. An audience member who wishes to appreciate a medium or deity could also place money on the ground for her to step on or drop it over their head for their *mawa yii* i.e. handlers to pick it up. In respect of mediums who do not have *mawa yii*, those mediums after stepping on the money, pick it up and stick it in their hair. The indexical meaning or significance of mediums keeping their money in the hair is because the hair is an appendage of the head where the deities mount the mediums (Friedson, 2009). Furthermore, since the deities mount the head and all gifts presented belongs to them, it is right that those gifts be kept near their abode. The hair therefore becomes a receptacle for such gifts and in this case financial gifts. All these modes are ways of showing approval or appreciation for a good performance.

Performance aesthetic protocols are different for both mediums and audience members who may wish to perform. *Klama* is a communal dance. At the period of its performance, there is the suspension of structure and only the ritual officiant who happens to be the *Kpalɔ* takes control of proceedings. It is this classless threshold that Victor Turner theorizes as liminoid state (Hoover, 2004; Turner, 2010). This theory finds its root in Arnold Van Gennep's "liminal phase" of rites of passage where those undergoing the rites go through three phases of "separation, margin and aggregation". It is after they have been

reintegrated into society that they attain their new designation, but hitherto they neither were in their previous state nor in their new designation, what Turner classifies as betwixt and between. One must realize that it is also at the liminoid or liminal state that community members develop some form of social bonding. At this liminal structure-less state in ritual performances such as *Klama*, both ethereal and corporeal agents interact and co-exist. This is what Turner again theorizes as *communitas*. Therefore, during *Klama* worship performances, the liminal stage is the moment of full attainment of possession. In this state, an ordinary member may opt to perform with or in the stead of a medium. The aesthetic protocol for an audience member has been described above but that of a medium is different. The medium must queue up, and approach the *Kpalɔ* if this is her/his first appearance. She/he then greets the *kpalɔ* and *agbaa bi* and then proceeds with her opening song which identifies the particular deity making appearance on the performance arena. She then goes ahead to dance. When she finishes her dance, and wishes to leave and return in a short while, she will inform the *Kpalɔ* by saying *Imlɔwe mo se iya maba*. This literally means 'I am not deceiving you, but I am going to return'. The *Kpalɔ* then replies by singing *Iya maba Iya maba, ja ne adeɔ* which means 'I will be back in a polite manner of excusing one's self'. *Gbi tsakemi* is the indigenous terminology used to reference a deity's brief departure from the performance space.

*Gbi tsakemi* which literally means 'voice change' is characterized by a medium's change of costume, make up as well as props to reappear on the performance arena. The phrase *Gbi tsakemi* is used metonymically because *Gbi* (voice) stands for the spirit beings and its change could represent the change of deity. This is related to the fact that within a particular shrine, there are diverse

tutelar spirits that could manifest through a medium at a given performance. The voice is also one of the means through which the divine beings communicate. The communication is either through songs, verbal text (speech) or through proverbs captured in songs as transpired between the *Kpalɔ* and *Tsawe* (chapter 4) on the night *Tsawe* was celebrating its feast and was charged by the *Kpalɔ* to aid in persuading the youth to avail themselves to be tutored in the art of drumming. The change of the deity's voice is also characterized by change of costume. Perhaps the costumes reflect the identity or nature of the manifesting spirit or as *Dibɔ* explains, it is a festival or a moment of celebration and as such, the deities are apt to show participation in diverse spectacular attires in consonance with the joyous celebration as is experienced by all and sundry.

Upon the return of a medium from recess, she/he informs the *Kpalɔ* of her/his return by indicating that *Iya okɔ luu ni ikpale ba*. This also literally means 'I went all the way to *okɔ* but am back'. These departures and return phrases are a polite manner of pleading for a tutelary being to be permitted to exit in order to change his/her costume or for another spirit being to make appearance and interact with the people during communal worship. Although these spirit beings are powerful and have the authority to leave and return at will, they believe in decorum and appreciate mutual respect. One can therefore draw the conclusion that these spirit beings are living proof of social protocols in respect of polite behavior they require to be present in the community they superintend over. As the saying goes 'leadership by example'. The reference to *okɔ* points to the ancestral home of *Klama* deities. It is believed that when they leave the performance grounds, they go to their ancestral homes to change and return to the performance arena for further interaction. Their departure also

makes room for other colleague spirit beings present to have their moment with the temporal world. This show of comradery even among divine beings is a behavioral tendency that they (tutelar beings) expect the temporal world to exhibit.

### 3.9 Commissioning/ Initiation

This is the final stage of the liminal phase in the life of an *ɔkomfua* who has completed her priestly tutelage and has qualified to be graduated. At this point in time, her status is neither as it was previously when she was admitted nor can she be referred to as a full *wɔyoo*. Her final designation will be determined after the ceremony has come to an end and she has performed her first song and danced for the third time. In ritual ceremonies as this, Turner's three phase of liminality i.e "separation, margin and aggregation" is experienced. His idea of "separation", is evidence at the moment of the first seizure what I call the divine calling stage where the *ɔkomfua* is separated or set apart from her family and given out to be trained. The "margin" is the training process where the *ɔkomfua* is indoctrinated in knowledge of rules and regulations governing the call to priestess-hood. Also, included are knowledge about the particular deity she serves, knowledge of herbs or medicine, knowledge of kinesthesia etc. Having completed the marginal aspects of the liminal phase, the next stage becomes the set of activities performed to complete the cycle by re-integrating the *ɔkomfua* back into the society that she was taken from. The *ɔkomfua* will no longer be her former self but an entirely different persona due to the sort of training she has undergone. This is the "aggregation" phase of the liminal process.



The “aggregation” phase in *Klama* priestly training process is referred to as *Nya ŋaami*. This terminology has a medicinal application connotation in which medicine is administered by squeezing juices from mashed herbs unto the affected part of the body mostly in the ear, throat, nose, eyes etc. *Nya* means mouth and *ŋaami* is used to express the act of squeezing to produce a juice or liquid substance. In this context, the terminology is used as a metonym to represent the entire initiation process which reflects or explains the ritual act of opening a mediums voice and ears through herbal application. For a medium to be able to hear the voice of her deity, and proclaim the deity’s messages, her voice and ears must be opened through *nya ŋaami*. This is the essence of the ceremony. The ceremony commences in similar mode as the divine selection begun. At this point, the parents of the *ɔkomfua* are notified again about their wards graduation and *nitomi* (in specific items) is requested of them. The requested items this time are a bit elaborate and has financial implications. Ample time is given for advance preparations to be made. Some items such as beads of assorted kinds, dresses specific to the nature of the deity, props and ornaments commensurate of the deity, cloths that identify the family of the passing out medium etc. are purchased to make the ceremony a grand one.

Through my experience, during the ethnographic fieldwork, I have come to learn that, mediums are initiated on the feast days of their deities. Therefore, the final activity occurs on the specific day of the deity. Having secured all the necessary items needed, a week prior to the activity is scheduled to commence the process. This begins in the morning and follows the same order as the *klala bumi* ceremony described above. This includes the performance of ritual prayers and sacrificing of fowls followed by a procession to the sea side at a location

known as *blekesem*. This is the location of the holy stream. The water in this stream is the sacred water that is used in all ritual processes that demands the use of sacred water. This sacred water is the final water that is used to bath a medium after sea water has been applied. It is believed this sacred water repels evil spirits as well as people with evil intentions. After the ritual bathing, has been performed, the medium is led home into her deity's shrine to live with the deity for a week. This varies according to each deity/tutelar spirit. When the medium is in confinement, to be by the deity, she only leaves at awkward times to either take her bath or attend to nature's call. Food is served to her in the shrine on regular basis. In just about a day to the initiation ceremony, *niwomi* activity is performed. *Niwomi* which literally means wearing of things is a term used to describe the ritual adorning of initiates with beads. The ritual order commences with wearing of *nyoli/nyoli* which is the white ivory like beads mixed with black *tovi* beads (see fig. 10). This set of beads is used to differentiate a *Klama* medium from a *Kple* medium. Erstwhile in the absence of the *nyoli*, *adodi shells* are used. The essence of those beads is that, the white *nyoli/nyoli* beads signify purity and holiness which is the expectation of anyone being adorned with. The *tovi* beads which are gotten from the *Lina liana* plant seed or the *ayiblibi* plant, which is black in nature, implies the presence of evil and therefore it is a caution for the wearer to be careful not to fall prey to evil desires (Avotri, 2009:lviii). Thus, every *Klama* medium is being cautioned to be aware of the presence of good and evil in this world and is being prompted by the beads to always aim to do right.



**Figure 10** A picture of *Klama nyoli*. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

In adorning an initiate with beads for the first time, the *nyoli* is worn first on the wrists followed by *paapinya* (red bead), then *loogbli* (yellow bead), *koli* (blue bead) and finally *lɛɛ* (green bead). On the upper arms, two *koli* beads which are joined with two stones of *loogbli* (yellow bead) are worn. This is followed by two pair of any bead of choice to be worn on the calves. The final set of beads to be worn are at the ankles. The *nyoli* is worn first, followed by *koli* and *paapinya*. Some mediums wear ankle bells to give off metallic sounds as they walk or dance (see fig. 11 & 12). The bells provide additional rhythms to complement that of the musicians. Beads to be worn on the neck are given on the day of initiation after the ritual opening of voice, *nya ɲaami*, is performed to enable the medium to hear the voice of her/his deity and sing her/his songs. The initiate is also ritually fortified with herbal potions known as *baa yemi* (literally eating of herbs). According to *Tsawe*, the *ɔkomfua* is then finally given her neck beads which includes the *afli*, a type of specialized beads worn at the neck.

On the day a priest/priestess is initiated, the initiate is adorned with beautiful body designs made from *klobɔ* as well as perfumes. She is then shepherded and presented to the *kpalo* to perform her maiden song and dance. *Tsawe* further explains that the *ɔkomfua* is dressed in all white according to the dressing convention of priestesses. The significance of her white appearance is to echo or lay emphasis on the import that white elucidates, which is purity, innocence and a mark of chastity. The details of an initiate's first performance are described in chapter five.



**Figure 11** Initiated priestesses wearing their wrist, arm, calf and neck beads. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe



**Figure 12** Initiated priestesses wearing their anklets or ankle buzzers. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

### 3.10 Gendered dimensions

Issues of gender has become very topical and one cannot evade it in ritual ethnographic research work like *Klama*. It is a deep-seated issue that is present within indigenous societies. Gender is a construct of society with the sole purpose of defining roles specific to women and men according to their sex. This is where women are classified as the ‘weaker sex’ and their male counterparts as the stronger, as a result, roles are assigned based on some of these attributes. Drewal (1992:172) argues that “sex role divisions are as highly formalized and exclusive in the Yoruba practice of everyday life as they are in ritual”. This is true because the institution of *Klama* has such similar structures clearly practiced as a convention. The purpose of this discussion is to clearly examine the roles played by males and females within *Klama* performance structure in order to gain a clear understanding of the link between the *Klama* cosmos structure and that of the temporal societal structure.

Among the Dangme’s of Gbugbla, their conceptual frame of the cosmic structural composition, in relation to gendered roles, has a direct bearing on the social structure. Clearly, one would realize that with the exception of the only two female deities that exist among the host of *Klama* deities i.e. *Maa Dede Yoonue (lalue)* and *Agbabi Yoomle*, the rest are males. This therefore presents the ethereal world as a male dominant planetary with little to no space for females to operate. These structures have parallel representation in the corporeal world where men take charge of all activities related to the worship performances leaving very little space to females to function. Females within the corporeal structure only become mediums serving the interest of the deities as servants or mediums. Even at formal gatherings, especially at the clan level,

men tend to lead discussion while the women wait to be called upon where to offer contributions. The men tend to sit at one side, closer to the leadership of the meeting, and the women at the other. Information gathered from *Tsawe wɔyoo* indicate that priestesses by their designation as *wɔyii* mean that they are the wives of the deities they worship. Therefore, they are expected to play some sort of second fiddle role to their male compatriots. In playing their roles as wives of the deities, a priestess is expected to dress herself in her fineries on the feast day of her deity and wait on her deity husband to visit.

Thus, the priestess is not permitted to be by her mortal husband on her deity's feast day. This is because she must present herself clean and sacred for her spiritual husband. In probing, further about how priestesses perceive their deity husbands and what happens when the spiritual husband visits them, *Tsawe* clearly confesses that sometimes they appear as mortals possessing features like humans. *Tsawe* claims her deity husband is very fair and handsome and sometimes appear, driving a vehicle. She is then conveyed in the vehicle to an unknown destination to have fun. She was also quick to add that she sometimes perceives her deity husband in dreams. She unequivocally acknowledges that when they go out, they do everything that husbands and wives do including 'sleeping together'. Although prior to this interview, I have heard of tales that the deities 'sleep' with their mediums, I never believed until the interview confirmed it. The question therefore is what happens to the male mediums who serve deities who are also males and wait on them on the feast days of the deities? Similar questions can be asked of the female mediums whose deities are also females? According to Drewal (1992:185);

Men, in becoming possession priests, are therefore like women in their relationship to the deity; they are receptacles. Crossing gender boundaries, male priests cross-dress as women, and priestesses possessed by male deities select out forceful, direct dynamic movement qualities ordinarily associated with men.

By Drewals argument in the quote above, I come to the conclusion that mortals sometimes are inclined to alter their normal behavior in relation to their natural gender, to be of service to their tutelary spirits. One question that keeps lingering on in my mind in relation to deities and their supposed human wives is, exactly what is it with the human body of the woman that makes supernatural other-worldly beings fall in love with? This is in relation to the number of females that serve as wives to deities in Gbugbla and in other cults across Africa. Even when men commit atrocities and they are summoned before the spirit beings, in order for the culprits to atone for their sins, they must present a young female virgin to become the wife of the spirit beings as is the practice of *trɔkɔsi* among the Ewes of Ghana (Adjei, 2015; Geurts, 2002).

### **3.11 Gender dynamics in dance performance**

In performing gender into being as a social construct within the traditional African dance set up, there are qualities or standards that society has accepted as the norm when it comes to movement performance. These standards call for certain observable features to be present in both men and women. These observable features become what society deems as aesthetically pleasing. According to Adinku (1994), a dance performance by a woman should indicate feminine qualities such as graceful carriage of the arms and body. Also, a female should exhibit softness, curvy, roundedness, gentleness, elegance, and carefulness of movement execution. Anything short of these attract negative social comments such as *nasa ye petrepetre* which means her dance is jerky and

not fluent or *asa mmarima asa* that is to say “she dances like men” especially among the Akans of Ghana. Adinku continues that a typical male dancer on the other hand, should exhibit movement qualities such as angular, strong, robust, staccato, high energy, stamping, firm movements, vigorous and must be physical in appearance (Adinku, 1994). Contrary to such qualities, rebukes such as *asa te se obaa* that is to mean, he dances like a woman are visited on him. These Akan conceptualizations find a correlation in the Dangme cultural setting. An expression such as *edoo kaa nyumu kaa yoo* means “he dances like a man like a woman”. This correlates to the expression *Kojo besia* which translates as ‘man woman’ or possession or exhibiting male and female tendencies. *Kojo*, which is an Akan (Ghana) name of a male born on Monday and *besea* which stands for a woman, goes to index a male who is effeminate in his mannerisms or behaves like a woman. This is how any man who exhibits feminine aesthetic tendencies is referred to. Although his sexual preference as a homosexual is frowned upon by society, at the moment of performance, sexual preference is not an issue, but rather the quest to see gender stereotypic movement performances. Aesthetic judgments are therefore passed based on his body language and how he carries himself to perform. The same Dangme expression, *edoo kaa nyumu kaa yoo* can be said of ladies who also dance, possessing male qualities in their behavior popularly known as *Tom girls*.

In *Klama* performances, mediums cross gender boundaries (Drewal, 1992) in the sense that most of the deities are males but have mediums who are females. As a result, the priestesses tend to move in masculine fashion exhibiting movement qualities of men. Another factor that affect the movement quality of priestesses are the nature of the deities. By this, a priestess whose



deity is a fisherman will perform movements like a man on a fishing expedition. Similarly, a priestess whose deity is as ferocious as a tiger will exhibit movements qualities commensurate of the deity's nature. It is therefore, a bit challenging to streamline gender specific movement qualities as traditionally expected.

An instance is my observations made of *Akwesi*. He is a male medium, who is possessed by a male deity *Ardeŋ*, but costumes himself like a female. He always wears a braided hair like Drewal describes in Yoruba of "Aghemo priest Adie" who is "supposed to wear his hair plaited in female style throughout his life" (Drewal, 1992:177). *Akwesi* is effeminate in his hair style, and wears a skirt or raffia skirt to dance. His deity is a hunter so he tends to move like a hunter carrying his gun. On occasions when *Klamagu* is performed without possession, he will have to gird his waist with a cloth over his attire before he performs. The rationale behind this complex behavioral situation is that, because *Akwesi* has become a *wɔyoo*, he is bound to behave in the manner of a woman despite the fact that his tutelary spirit is a male. In his performances, although he exhibits male tendencies in the carriage of his gun, moving with the energy of a male, his hair and costume indexes femininity. He is therefore trapped at the threshold of maleness and femaleness with no clear destination. Perhaps the way out is because he is a *wɔyoo*, he might prefer to be identified with that since being a wife to a deity is what society per its construction, expects of him.

In *Klama* religious realm, men take up positions of authority and are seen at the helm of affairs. They tend to be the musicians and also take up positions like *kpalɔ*, *wɔnɔhi*, *labiahi*, *agbaabi atsemɛ*, *asafo atsemɛ* etc. They

generally see to the day to day running of shrines and preside in the performance of rituals. They also offer both physical and spiritual guidance within the traditional religious authority structure. On the other hand, it is their women or feminine counterparts that make the religion visible to the public. Women are mostly at the center of the performances. They cover every sphere of the activity. They are the intermediaries between the spirit world and the physical world. We hear the voice of the deities through them. Women embody and become symbols of the deities though sometimes, they become the deities themselves and are rightly addressed as such. When the mediums get possessed, it is other women in the form of *mawa yii* who are responsible for performing the bathing rituals linked to *gbi tsakemi* (change of voice) before re-costuming the mediums. They (*mawa yii*) assist possessed mediums in the cause of the performance by adjusting their costumes, beads, cleaning their sweats, going to the aid of mediums at the onset of possession, during and after possession. Women devote their lives to the service of deities who happen to be dominantly male.

Women are more susceptible to being selected as mediums compared to men because women are more focused and dedicated to the service of the deities than their male counterparts. According to Drewal (1992:172), “women are much more secretive and exclusive than men are. Women, however, do not seem to be as preoccupied with the idea of secrecy as are men, and in a curious way this makes women appear all the more secretive”. This is very true because at every point in the process of *Klama* religious worship, women are more visible than their male colleagues although the men perform supervisory or administrative roles. Women tend to have institutional memory and lead in the

performance of certain ritual. They also engage in the playing of clapper sticks as part of the ancillary entourage of the musicians.

### 3.12 Summary

This chapter has analyzed thoroughly the processual stages that mediums go through before they are initiated to become fully trained priestesses. The process discussed includes the three cardinal stages i.e. divine selection, the training phase and finally, the commissioning. It is at the commissioning stage that a medium is declared to be of service to her deity. This chapter, has been able to give an in-depth exposition on processes of knowledge transmission of both tangible and intangible nature with its associated aesthetic dynamics.

According to Sklar (2001), movement knowledge is cultural knowledge. Therefore, since kinesthetic knowledge transmission and performance has been the fulcrum of this thesis, in answering questions that relation to movement training of priestesses, insight has been provided on how culture writes its traditions on mediums and how mediums in turn perform the cultural text written on them. Therefore, when a priestess steps onto the performance stage to perform, one would appreciate the mass of knowledge and experience that she/he embodies. This invariably makes her/him a repository of the culture of the people. It is out of this integrated cultural knowledge that mediums draw their performance aesthetics when they perform on the performance stage. As a result of the worth of cultural knowledge priestesses embody, it predisposes women as knowledgeable in society hence the proverbial consultation of 'old ladies' in matters of grave importance where mind boggling issues crop up or there is a deadlock and there appears to be no way forward.

The chapter has also reviewed gender roles as is played out by women and men in *Klama* performance with the focus on why such roles remain the status quo and not otherwise. It is discovered that within the larger Dangme polity, the structural composition of the cosmic realm, has a direct bearing on what transpires within the temporal space. Therefore, since the *Klama* cosmic construction is male chauvinist bias, there is equivalent replication of such in the physical community with no change in sight.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE AUDIO AND VISUAL DYNAMICS OF KLAMA PERFORMANCE

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the audio (musical) as well as the visual dimensions of *Klama* performance. The analysis of the audio dimension is to reflect the dynamics of the soundscape of the performance as well as mode of transmission of this sonic art form. This will reveal the musical aesthetic awareness of the Gbugbla/Dangme polity. Besides the musical aspects, this chapter will explore the visual scopes of the performance. The purpose is to present to readers, the Dangme conception of beauty captured within the diverse costume usages and body adornments. These costumes come in assorted colors, nature and style applied in their construction. In analyzing this aspect, the thesis will link the style, nature and color to specific deities in order to draw the relationship between the costumes, and the deities they represent. This approach is significant because it reflects the aesthetic conception of the Dangme persona. Besides the costumes usage, the diverse forms of body adornments will be explained in the same frame.

### 4.2 Selection and training of the *Klama* musician

Going back to the first chapter, I explained the indigenous concept of what *doo* means to the Dangme. In Dangme language, like many African languages, there exist no one particular lexical word or concept that stands for music as exist in Western languages (Agawu, 2003; Gbolonyo, 2009). In Dangme conceptual thought, *doo fiemi* which in its simplistic form may mean dance performance, is a holistic integrated performance form that encapsulates

both instrumental music production and the interpretation given to those rhythms in movement forms. Thus, music and dance is seen as an integrated art form which cannot be separated consequently, it is captured by the phrase *doo fiemi*. The concept of *fiemi*, which means play, can be interpreted or understood by the act of striking the surface of the drum to produce sound. It may also mean the interactive performance processes in which cultural and aesthetic values are transmitted both consciously and unconsciously during communal activities. These include the performance of moonlit night game activities held for the entertainment of children and young adults after the day's work is done or during worship performances. These modes of performance engagements present an opportunity for young adults to interface with the sonic culture of the society through which their affective and rhythmic domains are informed. Continual participation in these musical performances most especially the worship aspect, prepares the male child to take on the reins of becoming either a *wɔnɔ* (priest/ritual agent) or a musician for the worship performance since only males are permitted to play the drum of the divine beings. The female on the other hand also has the inclination of becoming either a *wɔyoo* (priestess/ ritual agent) or *mawa yoo* (assistant to the medium).

The issue of who may become a *Klama* musician can partly be explained by the following narrative. This is a direct conversation between the *Kpalɔ* and *Tsaatse Tsawe* (a deity) at a vigil performance in the honor of *Tsawe*. I overheard this frank conversation with the deity when the *Kpalɔ* was making supplications to him (*Tsaatse Tsawe*) and the pantheons to assist in inspiring young males to give themselves to be trained as *Klama* musicians. The *Kpalɔ* addressed the deity thus:

<i>Kpalɔ: Nyɛɛ blɛ wahe oo,</i>	Yoo deities should protect us,
<i>nyɛɛ hla miɛ hiliɪ hawɔ.</i>	Look for musicians for us.
<i>Ohimɛ be.</i>	We don't have <i>Ohimɛ</i> .
<i>Ohimɛɔ nɛ nɛɛ ɔ,</i>	The <i>Ohimɛ</i> that we have,
<i>Apeewe ahe nimlihi kpakpa hi.</i>	Are not living up to expectations.
<i>Mooyɛ nɛ wa pueɔ shi</i>	Just see as we have gathered here
<i>Nɛ ohimɛ nɛ wakɛɛ je mɔtu aahu</i>	Awaiting the presence of <i>Ohimɛ</i> from morning
<i>Kɛbashi piɔ, nɛ wawo wahɛ kɛfɔ enɔ,</i>	Up till now, expecting that he will turn up
<i>Kɛ ebaanyɛ nɛ ewa Gbugbla maa</i>	And help the Gbugbla township
<i>Yɛnɔ nɛ eɲɛ peeye!</i>	Just see what he is doing!
<i>Ja wayɛ nɛ wayɛ.</i>	Unless we take a critical look at it.

Right after the *Kpalɔ* made his submission, *Tsawe* replied him with a *Klama* song which was heavily proverbial. *Tsawe* sang thus:

*Tsaatsɛ Tsawe: Naki nɔɔ doo pe lee, too otswi nɛ olɛ ɲaa*

In replying *Tsawe* after singing, the *Kpalɔ* said:

*Kpalɔ: Aa wɔɔ wa nɛ nyɛ de ye* Well, we are informing you.

Inquiries made into the meaning of the maxim revealed two dimensions. From adepts, I was told it has a surface meaning which is, '*Naki* my great dancer, be patient and learn how to raise *ɲaa*'. The deeper meaning to this proverb is explained thus, *ɲaa* which is a very difficult bird to care for. It is only raised through patience and tact and so the proverbial *Naki*, who is a first female born to a Dangme family, is being urged to be patient and approach challenges

with tact. Here, the *ηaa* is used metonymically to represent challenges people face daily and the need to cultivate patience in dealing with such seemingly difficult challenges. The *Naki* here, is also a metonym, referring to the *Kpalɔ* who is in charge of the band of musicians and by extension the officiant of the ceremony. His great leadership although is being acknowledged, he is being asked further to be more patient since they (deities) have heard his incessant complains. The *Kpalɔ* upon receiving this response then replies that he is only performing his duty by informing them (deities) about the predicament he finds himself in.

In reference to the conversation between the *Kpalɔ* and *Tsawe*, nothing else explains the whole idea of how some of these ritual performers/agents are selected for training and initiation than this little piece of conversation. It shows clearly that the deities are directly involved in selecting who plays what role in the worship process. The idea that they can be prayed to, goes further to explain that the deities are never left out of the decision-making processes concerning activities that relate to who qualifies to drum in the worship performances. There is also the instance where people have volunteered to be trained to assist with the performance. Could this volunteering be related to the inspiration of the divine beings or as a result of an individual's own conviction to offer himself to the service of the community? The issue of modes of transmission of indigenous musical knowledge is fraught with challenges as to its sustainability due to lack of codification or standardization as well as documentation. Through interviews and discussions with *Klama* ritual adepts, I have come to the conclusion that transfer of sacred *Klama* musical knowledge is purely based on the pragmatic approach to knowledge transfer.



### 4.3 Pragmatic approach to knowledge transfer

This approach to indigenous knowledge transfer from an expert to a learner or an apprentice is guided by a single phrase that states thus, “what I hear I forget, what I see I remember, but what I do I know (understand)” (Ogunrinade, 2014:54). From this quote, it is evident that pragmatic approaches to learning aids in the practical development of skills of an individual. This development is achieved through tapping into the perceptive, intuitive and the cognitive aspects of the trainees mental faculty (Ogunrinade, 2014). Practical approaches to learning, and in this instance, *Klama* sacred music, requires that the neophyte musician must be able to identify, organize and interpret the sonic patterns introduced to him within a short span of time. He must also develop the listening ear to understand the fundamental rhythmic pattern of the bell and know when to synch his instrument into the playing structure. He must also be observant enough to deduce the particular rhythmic requirement of a medium/deity by physically relating a medium to a particular rhythmic style.

#### 4.3.1 Instrumental knowledge acquisition through enculturation

According to *Dibɔ* Nii Martey, trainee musicians learn to play *Klama* musical instruments by being present during worship performances and critically listening to the music being performed over a period of time. According to him, this begins with males either making their intention of learning to drum clearly known to the *Kpalɔ* or assisting with the carriage of the drums to and from the worship grounds in order to secure a strategic place to observe the performances. Over a period of time, because of the person’s proximity to the performance, he tends to assimilate the rhythmic patterns

unconsciously. His first breakthrough will be the opportunity to play either the clappers or the least complex of the musical instruments. Most of the time, this occurs during *Klamagu* performances for the obvious reason of the entertaining mode of that performance. Playing the clappers makes a trainee an active performer and this begins his journey of becoming a *Klama* musician. Being there each time there is a performance enables the future *Klama* musician to familiarize himself with the nature of music production in relation to which musical instrument plays what rhythmic pattern and at what point in time of the performance is that musical instrument played.

I have therefore, discovered that, deities have their rhythmic preferences and this is informed by the choice of songs they sing. The rhythms vary as the performance progresses or as they ‘change their voices’. Through critical observation and listening to the patterns, the trainee musician is able to determine the rhythmic choices of any deity that manifests at a given time. Although more than one deity may manifest through a medium in a single performance, the musicians out of experience with such phenomenon, are able to respond appropriately in rhythmic terms to that deity. The neophyte musician takes advantage of some of these occurrences to inform his sensibilities. According to *Dibɔ* Nii Martey, instrumentalists are trained by being present during performances to learn by observing the playing techniques of their seniors. Through this process, the sonic susceptibilities of the new instrumentalist are being developed until he is given the chance to try his hands on playing the instrument. This process which comes along as a form of enculturation within the society risks the chance of being lost to another process called acculturation. Acculturation, which is the gradual process of cultural

change due to the presence or influence of other cultures in the face of globalization threatens how indigenous societies transmit their knowledge system to the younger generation (Morakeng, 2013). The question of what happens to the mode of transmission when the elders of the community who are at the helm of affairs pass on, possess a great threat to indigenous processes of cultural transmission (Morakeng, 2013). As a result, society must of necessity re-invent or align indigenous transmission methods to contemporary documentation trends in order to safeguard its tradition. This will therefore mean that, researchers must investigate such transmission modes and document those processes for later generations.

#### **4.3.2 Oral transfer of musical text**

*Dibɔ* Nii Martey explains that sometimes, the rhythmic patterns of *Klama* musical text are spoken orally to the neophyte musician in order for him to replicate it on the drums. This style of transmission of instrumental knowledge within the indigenous cultural system is very ephemeral although it enables the musician to know and clearly understand what exactly he is communicating to the divine beings or the general populace. The ephemerality of the text lasts for that moment that the instruction is going out to the learner. This is because the text is not documented. In addition to that, the textual tutorship is not a standard or laid down procedure for *Klama* musical tutorship.

Therefore, ephemerality of these transmission processes presents a great threat to *Klama* sacred musical knowledge. Sacred textual language of such musical phenomena must of necessity be documented. These sacred texts are coded messages of the divine beings that are constantly being performed and re-

performed and will continue to be performed over years to come. The challenge is that, since musicians are able to sometimes replicate rhythmic patterns by simply listening and reproducing, the transfer of the sacred text will gradually be lost to future generations. African drum rhythms are coded languages based on the tonal structure of the language of the people. Thus, if conscious efforts are not made to transfer or document those sacred codes, because musicians are able to replicate the drum rhythms, then a great treasure in the form of sacred drum text or divine message is lost forever. This looming challenge therefore demands that researchers must as of necessity take this up in order to safe guard sacred musical texts of religious performances.

#### **4.4 *Klama* instrumental performance structure**

*Klama* instrumental music performance is based on a call and response technique. This means that after the bell has established the basic time line, the master drum (drummer) plays a phrase (call) to which the rest of the instruments respond with appropriate phrases. Each instrument has its own *gbi* (voice) or language that it speaks in relation to the rhythmic pattern being performed at a given time. The *Klama* playing/performance style as explained in the first chapter is in two forms that is the *Klamagu* or the recreational type and the *Klama wo fiemi* which comes with possession. When the former, which is more relaxed and entertaining is being performed, the singing is led by the *Kpalɔ* solely. His choice of songs is informed by his quest to sing the praise songs of all the deities. He does this through his expert knowledge of the hierarchical order of the deities. The process commences with the father deity, *Digblɛ*, since it is his shrine that *Klamagu* is usually performed. The *Kpalɔ* begins with his opening renditions calling for a successful performance and asking for blessings

for all and sundry gathered as well as those who are unable to attend the performance. This song is performed in free rhythm and responded to in similar manner. Then begins his second song in similar fashion but upon ending it, the bell which keeps the fundamental timeline commences. With the commencement of the bell, the rest of the supporting instruments enter at their appropriate entry points. After singing for some time, the *Oslabaŋ* which is the master drum together with the *Gle*, end the music by playing the cue to the ending phrase and the rest respond appropriately. Thus, in (Ametier, 1989) *Klamagu* performances, the *Oslabaŋ* (master drum) together with the *Gle* take charge of providing the cue to the end of the music phrase. The justification for this joint cue provision is that the *Oslabaŋ* has a small playing area and the sticks, *puno*, (Ametier, 1989) used in playing is very small and bent. As a result, it generates a low pitch which is often difficult to hear. It is even worse when the ensemble is performing together and the choruses are being sung in addition to the enthusiastic audience members intermittent interjections with their comments. The *Gle* which is comparatively bigger and has a large playing area with much louder sonic output and played by hand therefore assists to signal the cue to end the music phrase.

Further to the roles played by the different musical instruments in signaling of cues, manifesting deities also determine which rhythm to be played and when to end the rhythm. Thus, until the deity/mediums ends a phrase, no one is permitted to end the music not even the *Kpalɔ* who wields so much power during performances. Although the *Kpalɔ* has the power to temporarily suspend performances to address issues that may crop up in the course of the performance, he does not have the mandate to signal an end to a performance

that has commenced. Therefore, the deity/medium that has begun her performance must necessarily end it. The signal to end a performance phrase, which lasts at most about 2-3 minutes for the longest variation and about 5 seconds for the shorter form, is a strong step on the right foot of the medium. The weight of the body is slightly displaced on it to indicate the cue and then finally a transfer of weight in similar manner to the left to bring the phrase to a final end. The neophyte musician who is constantly present, observes all these non-verbal forms of communication and this prepares him as he aspires to become a member of this prestigious group.

The role of the *Klama* musician, who through his skill at playing the instrument of the divine beings, enable the ethereal agents to come down to interact with the temporal world is a critical one. His refusal to play or absence on the performance stage, stalls the performance. I was fortunate to be present on one of such occasions when the master musician had to run a quick errand before the commencement of a performance. He miscalculated the errand activity and was therefore late. His absence stalled the performance because the ensemble must of necessity be duly constituted in order to represent the completeness or the agreement of the deities. It was when he finally appeared that the ceremony got underway.

#### **4.5 Interrelationship between musical instruments and social coherence**

In Africa, there are abundant musical instruments that are used on the continent for different purposes. Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah, in an interaction (personal communication on January 12, 2017) stated that in African societies, the meaning attached to musical instrumental ensemble goes beyond the mere

fact that they are used in providing pleasant rhythmic sounds to which members of the society dance to. He contends that the physical appearances of the instruments, the unique sonic identities of the individual members of the ensemble, represent the nature and character of individuals within a particular society. Each individual instrument gives off a particular sound which when combined with other instruments, leads to the production of harmonious sounds. Thus, human society is made up of diverse individuals with unique abilities which when harnessed can be used to the benefit of the general populace. Hence one must learn to tolerate the differences of others in order to coexist peacefully. In an unpublished paper, titled “Tolerance and the Construction of a National Identity – A Pictograph of Ghanaian Drum Ensembles” Sowah (2015:1) avers that;

The symbolism of drum ensembles in traditional society manifests the way of life of the family, which is a microcosm of nationhood. In our drum ensembles, each drum constitutes a unique voice in the family, specifically tuned for particular performances. In spite of the fact that each drum is of a different size and tone, they all contribute to a harmonious blending of sounds when in performance. This is mirrored in the traditional society, where life is communal and each member is expected to make his contribution to the wellbeing of the group; and in return he/she reaps the benefits of his participation.

I agree with the thought shared by Sowah because of the interdependent relationship that exist within African communities. It is therefore, important to understand that, within the African setting, the drums as well as other musical instruments perform more than the mere function of providing harmonious musical sounds for society to perform to. In fact, the instruments are a reflection of the nature of the individuals within that particular community and to a large extent, their relationship with the cosmic beings. It is also noteworthy that drums are sacred objects and this accounts for the reason why it is not

permissible for just anyone to own a musical instrument because all instruments are the collective property held in trust by either religious or political leaders.

#### **4.6 The transformational role of *Klama* musicians**

*Klama* musicians play a very important role during *Klama* performance activities. The presence of the ethereal beings in the temporal world depends on how well they negotiate their musical dexterity in consonance with their colleagues. This aids in enticing the divine beings to make themselves manifest through their mediums. Throughout my fieldwork, I have come to observe that there are occasions when *Klama* musicians play with so much passion that it triggers multiple manifestation of deities who otherwise would have remained dormant. This can be explained partly due to the fact that those deities are not directly related to particular worship activity or they have no particular medium to manifest through. It could also be that the music performance is not enchanting enough to attract them to manifest. This heightened state of spiritual ecstasy has the inclination of transforming an erstwhile calm and orderly worship performance into a frenzied but well-coordinated performance activity through the intensity of the music provided as espoused by Nketia (1988) in his work “The Intensity in African Music”.

Thus the *Klama* musician therefore, stands in a unique position to use his skill and agency (Noland, 2009) to either entice tutelary beings to manifest and perform or demotivate them from performing during communal worship occasions. This is attained through creative manipulation of the rhythmic structures in improvisational manner in order to bring about variety of a sort. This orchestrated variety, is largely due to cultural conditioning, learned body



techniques and embodiment of the basic principles guiding the rhythmic structures of the musical form (Noland, 2009). This is what Marcel Maus refers to as *habitus* (Bailey & Pickard, 2010). Knowing the worth of power the musicians wield, *Klama* musicians seize every opportunity to challenge themselves by responding appropriately to rhythmical questions posed to them by the master drummers or risk being humiliated as not performing creditably.

These improvisatory rhythmic dialogues do not only exist among musicians but also between the musicians and the mediums. This is because the musicians pose questions to the deities/mediums to prove themselves on the dance arena just as they internally question the competence of the musicians. Through these rhythmical negotiations with each other, there is the maintenance of “competitive interrelatedness”. This is important due to the close conceptual relationship between music and dance in Africa, being aware that dance gives expression to music (Drewal, 1992). The ability of both parties to rise to the occasion heightens the intensity (Nketia, 1988) of the performance and leads to the transformation and advancement of worship performances. When these crafty challenges affect the affective domain of audience members, it attracts comments that reveals the enjoyability or otherwise of a particular performance against a previous one. Accordingly, the role of the *Klama* musician is germane to the sustainability of the *Klama* worship process which has become the flagship activity which indexes the world view of not only the people of Gbugbla but the Dangmes in general.

#### **4.7 Visual dimensions of *Klama* performance**

This section of the chapter seeks to take a critical look at costume and body adornment patterns of mediums during *Klama* performances in order to

bring to the fore, the Dangme conception of beauty as it is expressed in the nature and style of costumes used during worship ceremony. The costume alone does not complete the symbolic art cycle without body adornments and the use of accessories such as beads, hair ornaments and props of diverse nature and character. These accessories play a complementary role in bringing to sharp focus the little but essential items used to enhance the worship performance which aids in establishing the aesthetic posture of the Dangmes, especially the people of Gbugbla. This section of the discussion is conducted in three parts. The first part will concentrate on the nature of *Klama* costumes. This will be followed by body adornments and beads in the second part and, finally, the nature and character of props used will be discussed in the third part. It is expected that at the end of this section, the concept of beauty as is portrayed by the Dangme will be made overt.

The attire, one wears, the color and style employed in the construction of that clothing tells a lot about the persona, the mood as well as the emotional status of the person (Kwakyee-Opong, 2011). Kwakyee-Opong further (2011:4) establishes that “Clothing is an integral part of life because it reflects the historical past and present of an individual, a community or a nation, sending signals with regards to sex, age, status, occupation, ethnicity, religion, geographical location among others”. She continues further that “It is also possible to determine a person’s psychological mind set, tastes and mood through his/her dressing. For instance, it does not take a second to determine an individual’s state of mind in relation to his/her costume; whether the person is sound in mind or mentally ill”. Therefore, the type or nature of our clothing gives a lot of information about our state of being.

Adinku (1994) divulges that costumes, make-up and props have a significant relation with role playing and therefore are connected to communication. He reveals further also that heavy attires and ornaments worn by monarchs all over their bodies, identify them as powerful persons though the attires restrict their movements. Heavy clothing gives them that regal luster just as the scanty and simple apparel worn by ritual agents tend to give them the freedom of movement to perform diverse maneuvers which tend to serve their purpose. In performances, especially dance, costumes, props, and ornaments are very critical in aiding movement as well as enabling the right communication to be conveyed. Therefore, the nature, color and make of the costume is crucial in providing information about the dance. Similarly, in *Klama* dance performances, there is a direct correlation between the costumes, props and ornaments the mediums wear and the nature of the deities they serve. The nature of body adornments also differentiates one deity from another. It is this integrated and complex web of cultural knowledge about costume and its connotations that this thesis seeks to unearth by unpacking the various components to identify the core building blocks.

#### **4.8 The nature of *Klama* costumes**

In *Klama* polity, costumes worn by mediums are diverse in nature. Each type of costume worn give a different indication as to who the wearer is (*ɔkomfua* or *wɔyoo*), her state of being (possessed or not), the nature of a deity, the point in time of the performance etc. I will simplify this by categorizing the discussion into two topical areas (a) Pre-possession and (b) Possession.

#### 4.9 Pre-possession

In this first category, it is of crucial importance to distinguish between two types of mediums at play here i.e. an *ɔkomfua* (medium under training) and a *wɔyoo* (an initiated medium). These two, though they dress a shade differently, they have some basic observable features that set them apart. An *ɔkomfua* in the course of her tutelage, is expected to gear up to reflect her status. She first wears an under-garment skirt before using two pieces of cloth, one to gird her waist and the second to wrap her upper torso. The rationale for wearing this seemingly simple attire is for the purpose of facilitating its removal at the point of possession. This is because at any point in time she can go into trance. In the state of trance, she removes any attire covering her upper torso with haste. Wearing a quotidian dress like everyone else will hinder her quest to quickly get rid of her dress in order to avail herself for divine use. This is because, in the trance mood, a medium does not have the patience to undress properly. She might in the cause of taking off her quotidian dress injure herself. She is also expected to braid her hair in a simple manner to smoothen its removal during possession but until that moment, she is expected to cover her hair with a white calico cloth and walk bare feet (see fig. 13). The *ɔkomfua* also wears on her wrist, a half set of beads known as *lakuku* or *nyoli kuku* (refer to chapter 3). This is standard everyday appearance.



**Figure 13** *ɔkomfuas* seated in *Digble Piem* (shrine) spotting their standard everyday wear. The male has however been already initiated. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

A *wɔyoo*'s costuming is very important in protecting the integrity of the wife of the divine beings. She is also expected as a norm, to wear first, an undergarment skirt followed by cloth to gird her waist. The import of this skirt is to protect her dignity during possessions when she loses her self control. A second cloth is also used to wrap the upper torso, to cover the breasts. A *wɔyoo* is also expected to cover her hair with a white calico and a full complement of the *nyoli* which is the full set of black and white beads indexical of a *Me or Klama* medium. Also, adorning her neck is a single strand of white beads. She is also required to walk bare feet with a full complement of *nyoli* anklets. The two mediums are expected to be dressed in this fashion at all times when not possessed. Hitherto, mediums are barred from economic activities because they are supported constantly by society in the form of gifts to the gods, fees charged for services rendered and honoring of pledges made to the gods. With the change in economic conditions, support offered to mediums have dwindled as a result, mediums have been forced to engage in other economic ventures to complement what they receive. This therefore necessitates that mediums, especially the initiated ones, result to the wearing of certain secular forms of

dressing such as a simple *kaba* and slit (traditional Ghanaian) dress to engage in their ventures (see fig. 14). It must be noted that on the feast days of their deities, they are totally barred from engaging in their economic activities as explained in chapter three.



**Figure 14** Mediums seated wearing basic *kaba* dress. Standing at extreme right is another medium dressed in standard everyday wear. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

#### 4.10 Possession

Mediums see themselves as vessels to be used by the spirits for their purpose. Mediums are therefore required to be ready at all times. The nature of costumes/ attires worn, as explained above, is meant to enable a medium to be in a state of readiness because possession is likely to take place at any time. When possession is anticipated during worship moments or when eventually possession occurs, an *ɔkomfua* is assisted to gear up by loosening the cloth covering the torso to expose the breasts. Exposing the breasts of an *ɔkomfua* is indexical of her innocence and perfection in her own rights. The cloth girding her waist is refastened securely and held in place by the use of *halɛɛ*, (a strip of

cloth that looks like a rope used to hold loin cloth firmly in place at the waist). Afterwards, her head gear is removed to let her hair loose and combed out. At this point, she is in a state of readiness to embody her deity and keep pace with her movement acquisition skills (see fig. 15). An *ɔkomfua* will remain dressed in this fashion till the worship is over.



**Figure 15** *ɔkomfua*s dressed up in a possessed mode mastering the dance skills with *nyoli kuku* on their wrists. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

Contrary to the format of gearing up for an *ɔkomfua*, when possession eventually occurs, a *wɔyoo* is led to the shrine to begin her preparation. First, her cloth girding her waist is loosened revealing her under garment skirt. The skirt is then pulled up, adjusted and securely held in place with the cloth and fastened with a *halɛɛ*. Next is the use of the second cloth that use to cover the torso to secure the breasts firmly in place. The need to cover the breasts of a *wɔyoo* is to give respect to the deity who inhabits her and to also preserve the dignity of the wife of the gods. Finally, the white head gear is removed, the hair combed out and let loose (see fig. 16) and the white calico is used to cover the abdominal region of the *wɔyoo*, to be tied securely at the back of the waist. The

rationale for tying the cloth at the abdomen of a *wɔyoo* is to give the abdomen a bulging appearance. This carries diverse aesthetic appeal. First the womb is located at the abdominal region hence the *wɔyoo* seeks to convey the message that she is the bearer of the deity or tutelary being deep within her womb and as such needs to secure that sacred being.

It is culturally a mark of beauty for a woman to put on a bit of weight and have a bulging abdomen. A bulging abdomen indexes that the woman is living a happy life especially in marriage. Another concept of beauty among mediums is the idea of 'freshness'. According to *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ*, a medium is considered to be in a state of 'freshness' when she bleaches and shows a bit of lightness of the skin. It enhances their appearance when they wear the colorful costumes and present themselves for the worship performance. Hence majority of mediums go at great lengths to tone and maintain a light skin in order to appear 'fresh'. The challenge is that most of them are unable to maintain the freshness and therefore keep switching complexions occasionally. This affects the condition of their skin leaving unpleasant stretch marks and ulcers. Some of the unpleasant appearances are as a result of cheap and harsh chemicals applied on the body. Thus, bleaching has become part of the costume tradition of the people.





**Figure 16** *Wɔyɪi* (mediums) standing at extremes right and left are in ready mode anticipating possession while the one in the middle is experiencing possession and being prepared by *mawa yɪi* (assistants). Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

*Klama* worship performances are laden with multi-layered forms of signs embedded in costumes, props, body adornments, and the use of ornaments. These sign vehicles aid in the advancement of the understanding of the ritual process. They are ambiguous and carry within it multiple meanings condensed into one performance activity thus making the ritual process a semantically rich activity as alluded by Turner (1966, 1973). As a result, decoding to arrive at the deeper meaning is dependent on the observer's orientation of the performance at stake. *Klama* worship performances contain a plethora of information in relation to roles played, deities involved, their nature (Fingesten, 1963; Smith, 1952) and the stage at which each deity/ *wɔyoo* finds itself in relation to the performance process. I will attempt unpacking a typical performance and indicate how costumes, especially, play key roles in advancing the understanding of the performance process in order to extract the diverse aesthetic components. During worship ceremonies, *wɔyɪi* (plural) are first required to be clad in white or shades of white attire. This is the basic threshold

of costume experience where all *wɔyii* begin from or share common features. Every medium is expected to be dressed in white for her first performance. It is after this first performance stage that costume types and nature gets complicated. The white color code is significant here to express purity, chastity and holiness of the divine beings. *ɔkomfua*'s on the other hand are not required to be in total white like the *wɔyii* although they must wear semblances of white. This because they are “threshold people” that are liminal beings whose state are not clearly established yet. When a *wɔyoo* is dressed up in this form of white costume, she makes her way to join the queue for her first performance (see fig. 17). After her initial performance, the deity goes to change the voice and costume (*Gbi tsakemi*). The change of voice is characterized by ritual bathing of herbs amidst incantations in the shrine of the *wɔyoo*. After this brief ritual, a *wɔyoo* is fortified and made ready for the rest of the performance activity. Her *mawa yoo* assists her to wear her next costume. At this heightened state in the worship performance, tutelar spirits take the liberty to appear in costume fineries according to their nature. The rationale for constant change of costume is for the tutelar spirits to appear gorgeous for the festival.



Figure 17 *Wɔyii* in white ready for their first performance. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

#### 4.11 Skirt wearing deities

Within *Klama* performance spheres, there are mediums who wear skirts with bustiers and those who wear gown-like costumes. I will first talk about *wɔyii* who wear skirts. Generally, most of the *wɔyii* wear skirts. The color of the skirts is dependent on the color choice of the deity. I have observed that most of the colors worn by the *wɔyii* are bright in nature. This tends to add color to the worship ceremony which makes the occasion pleasing to the eyes and therefore raises the excitement of the activity. Skirt wearing is part of the universal dress code for women. As wives of the divine beings, priestesses also wear skirts regardless of the sex of the medium. *Klama* skirts due to the nature of its constructions allows for freedom of movement. This gives the *wɔyii* the laxity to execute complex movement maneuvers with the inspiration of the divine beings.

One common yet important feature found among almost all the *wɔyii* including the gown wearers relates to the color of their *subue*. The color red is a standard feature though the shades differ. The *subue* is always used as a bustier to hold firmly in place, the breasts and the abdominals during the second round of performances after the deities have changed their voices (see fig. 18). Deities/tutelary spirits such as *Maa Lalue*, *Yoomle*, *Abla*, *Osabu*, *Ardeŋ*, *Dibɔ*, *Akublebi*, etc. just to mention a few all wear skirts. Among the few deities mentioned, the marked differences are the addition of other accessories such as red feathers stuck into the hair, props, ornaments etc. These set them apart. An example is that of *Abla* deity who adds a long strip of sash-like cloth or *Kente* in front of her skirt to imitate the dress code of *Dupo* initiates. The reason is that

*Dupo* initiation is always organized from this family quarter hence the deity's dressing in such manner.



**Figure 18** *Abla woyii* wearing Kente subue in front of their skirt. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

Another marker that sets *Maa Lalue* apart from the other skirt wearing deities is the use of a silver-plated metal ornament cast in the form of a heart with slits behind it through which a *kente subue* is passed through (see fig. 19). This ornament is known as *toto* which means ‘vagina’ in Ga language. It hangs in front of the skirt on the pubic bone perhaps to symbolize the fact that she is mother to all the spirits present.



**Figure 19** *Maa Lalue wɔyii* their *toto* in front of their skirt. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

*Ardeŋ* is the next deity whose costume is also worth mentioning. This is a warrior deity who also wears skirt as well as raffia skirt with bells on it (see fig. 20). His major prop is the *tu* (gun). I have witnessed a male and female *wɔyii* who serve this deity. Besides these little ornamental and costume differences, props and make-up as well as body adornments and markings also differentiate one deity from the rest. The role props, make-up and body markings or adornments play will be explained under props and body adornments respectively. Skirts facilitate movement execution in *Klama* performances. *Wɔyii* have the laxity to extend their legs to varying degrees without restriction. The skirt which ends just below the knee also aid rapid movement deployment in the heat of the performance leaving the arms with the liberty to concentrate on gesticulations. This adds to the performance spectacles/ aesthetics.



**Figure 20** A male *wɔyoo Ardeη* in full raffia and skirt costumes. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

#### **4.12 Gown wearing deities**

These other set of *wɔyii* wear long gown-like dress that covers the entire body from the neck or shoulder to the feet. This form of costume makes the *wɔyii* appear regal and sophisticated. Although the costume restricts movements sometimes, makers of such costumes go at lengths to give allowance at the base in order to give room for the legs to maneuver. The hands are therefore free to manipulate the props and make gestures. In cases where *wɔyii* need more room to execute certain movements, they bend down and pull up the gowns slightly to free some space to enable movement freedom. As a result, the *wɔyii* appear dignified in appearance (see fig. 21). They are economical in their movement executions and this goes a long way to balance the swift nature of dance performance by the skirt wearing *wɔyii*. This again informs the sense of beauty of the Dangmes embodied in the costume and dance performance. In addition

to the wearing of the gowns, is the standard use of two strips of *subue* to hold the breasts and abdominals firmly in place. Besides the basic use of the gown as secondary costume, there are those who wear hats and scarves in addition to the gowns. A deity like *Tsawe*, *Aaboanu*, *Owufu*, *Agbazo*, and *Oklekpe* all wear in addition to their gowns, a hat, a scarf tied onto the hat, arms and neck plus their respective props. Other deities like *Baatε*, *Nadu*, *Asamanuwa* and *Klamɔ* only wear the gown with no extensions (see fig. 22).



**Figure 21** Gown wearing *woyii* with scarf tied onto the hat, arms and neck holding their specific props. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.



**Figure 22** *Asamanuwa* wearing a gown without the extentions. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

#### **4.13 Color codes and its meaning in Gbugbla**

Color coding as it exists in Ghanaian society enables semiotic understanding and appreciation of cultural practices. Everyday cultural activity within Ghanaian society has color codes infused into it to give it a deeper meaning. Thus, the significance of those occasions lie heavily in one's ability to decipher the multiple colors that are used to express the different ideals. *Klama* dance performance is no exception. Deities upon manifestation adorn themselves in different colors. By this form of color explosion, there is a strong indication that the deities are animated and are therefore concerned with the mood of their people hence the usage of diverse colors to liven the occasion. Dull colors have the propensity of engendering sad and low-spirited emotions. Thus, on joyous occasions, dull colors are always avoided. Vibrant colors are a great way of enhancing dance performances as well as aiding its understanding



and appreciation. This is because dance uses movements with the complement of colors as a means of nonverbal form of communication built on the firm foundations of meanings or codes associated with those colors. The costume color choice adds some form of vibrancy and thus informs the nature and mood of the occasion. According to Ayiku (1998:159-160);

the use of colour is also symbolic, for individual colours and colour groupings have symbolic meanings and significance founded on Ghanaian historical, philosophical, and spiritual values. The meaning of a colour is also derived by associating it with things in nature. Apart from the meanings assigned to them, each colour has its own peculiar relevance in social activities. Thus, the conception of the beauty of colour in the Ghanaian traditional setting depends not on its visual qualities, but also, on the meaning and social relevance attached to it.

In agreeing to the above Ayiku's position on color and its significance in society, I attempt to list a few of such colors and enumerate its implications.

#### **4.14 Red**

In the light of the above, one can easily find a correlation between color choice and its meaning within Gbugbla society. *Dupo* initiation dance performance which is a transitory rite organized for young female adults at the onset of their first menarche is characterized by the color red. The significance of this color is that it marks the color of menstrual blood. The red color which is associated with danger of any form serves as a reference for young females. This is because as part of their initiation, they are educated to know that with the commencement of their menstruation, any form of sexual intercourse could result in pregnancy and this can alter the course of their lives when they are not matured enough or are not well prepared for it. In Gbugbla and in most Ghanaian societies or places of endeavor, the color red is used to index anger, strife, protest, death etc. Whenever an organized group of people adorn

themselves in red attire or use strips of red bands or cloths to adorn their arms, wrist or foreheads, it indexes a grave and often volatile situation. Within *Klama* circles, the color red is predominantly associated with *Lalue wo*. She spots a red further upon manifestation.

#### 4.15 White

The color white often resonates happiness, victory, peace, purity, innocence and chastity. When a mother safely puts to bed a baby, she adorns herself in white to index victory and escape from the danger of child birth. Also, worth mentioning is when someone is exonerated in a case that seeks to tarnish his/her image, or when in political elections, one emerges as a winner, white powder is sprinkled on him to mark his victory. When a person recovers from protracted ailment or is celebrating a landmark anniversary, the color white becomes the appropriate choice to mark peace and triumph. Ga and Dangme (*Kple and Me gods*) priests and priestesses use the white color to index purity, chastity, and holiness. This is their primary color code. Therefore, all mediums wear white either before or during their first performance. Their secondary color code which is deity specific, is the choice of color associated specifically with each deity to which different shades of that color or other colors are adorned by the medium. In *Klama*, *Tsawe* is known for wearing white.

#### 4.16 Blue

Blue is the color code for calmness, gentility, tranquility and coolness. It is associate with the sky and the sea or the gentle flow of water bodies (Ayiku, 1998). Blue has a soothing effect and therefore connotes tenderness, care and affection. In Dangme culture, blue is used in puberty rites through the use of

blue beads known as *koli* around the waist, neck, wrist and arms. During initiation of priests and priestesses, *koli* beads also adorn the ankles, calves, wrist as well as arms and neck to index culturally the import or sacred nature of the ceremony. It also reminds the participants to be gentle and level headed in their daily encounters. The *koli* beads which are precious and very expensive indexes the pricelessness and quality associated with cultural activities. *Digble* is therefore associated with the color blue.

#### 4.17 Green

The color green which is predominantly associated with vegetation, plants, forest and the tropical environment as a whole indexes life, vibrancy, growth, development, health and the general wellbeing of living things. Green also reflects the potency of herbs as form of preventive or curative healing medicine. In the Dangme society, the mention of *jwilamɔ* indicates the usage of a combination of herbs with water which are used for the purposes of purification. It is meant to engender revival and renewal as well as serve as barring of evil spirits from approaching or attacking anyone. Whenever defilement, profanation or desecration occurs, herbal preparations with water are used as cleansing agents to reorder the desecration. Similarly, *klɔbɔ* which is an aromatic herbal preparation is used as a form of embalmment to adorn the bodies of girls during puberty rites as well as priestesses for the purpose of preservation and extension of life. *Yoomle* therefore is the deity that is associated with green in *Klama*.

#### 4.18 Yellow/ Orange

This color code is associated with gold ornaments which represents wealth, elegance and royalty hence gold, besides beads, is the common form of body ornamentation for chiefs as part of their regalia. Indigenously, yellow is associated with the fat of chicken hence the indigenous term *kuηɔ zɔ*. Whenever a domestic or farm animal is growing well and therefore is weighty, it is said to have fat. Similarly, when a man or women puts on weight, it is conceived as a sign of wellness. Yellow or orange also stands for prosperity, riches and life.

Color coding is very significant in social engagements because its semiotic effects powerfully communicates deeper and more complex information than verbal explanations can completely capture. When these color codes are laced over dance, in the form of costume, it enables multi-layered communication to be effected at one time much to the disadvantage of words.

#### 4.19 The nature of body adornments (Beads/Ornaments/Make-up)

Body adornments encapsulate the idea of body art where diverse drawings, marks or designs are made on the body of the ritual medium for the purpose of communicating multi-layered, coded messages. Body adornments also include the varied forms of ornaments used in ritual performance processes to enhance the appearance of mediums. In addition, it also indicates positions of authority, character and provide information in relation to the nature of the spirits being 'lived' by the mediums. All these art forms are significant means of establishing systems of meaning within the cultural contexts (Kwakye-Opong, 2011). Within Gbugbla *Klama* institution, body art and ornamental adornments communicate diverse information to the spectating public during

ritual worship performances. In Dangme culture, body art works evince the artistic sensibilities of the different *Wetso* (clans) of the people. Throughout my research in the field, I discovered four items used in making designs on the bodies of the mediums. These design items are *Klɔbɔ* (myrh), *Ayilɔ* (clay paste), powder and red body paint. Basic to the *wɔyii* is the use of *Klɔbɔ*. In Gbugbla *Klama*, *wɔyii* use *Klɔbɔ* which is a scented paste-like herbal preparation, greenish in color, to make stunning designs on the legs, arms, torso and back of the *wɔyii*. The essence of this herbal preparation is its preservative power to maintain the vessel of the divine beings.

The pleasant scent emitted by *Klɔbɔ* enhance the likeability of the *wɔyii*, thereby, endearing the divine beings to the people. This substance is either combined with *ayilɔ* or powder in the design process. Others prefer to use powder on their face whiles yet another applies powder all over their entire bodies. The powder, a sign of purity and goodness, serve a transformative purpose in the ritual process to mask, hide or diminish the identity of the *wɔyoo*. The use of the powder enables the mediums to assume (transformative) the identity of the inhabiting spirit. Other *wɔyii* sprinkle a combination of *ayilɔ* and red paint on their face, arms and legs. This style of art is known as *tuη* pronounced as ‘tuun’. The essence of the *tuη* is akin to the powder.

The discussion of body adornments cannot be complete without the mentioning of the significant role beads play in the life of the Dangme persona. Beads are valuable assets to the Dangme because it is used in every sphere of the life cycle activities. Beads are more valued than gold and silver ornaments, therefore, what beads are to the Dangme, gold serve the same purpose to the

Ashanti of Ghana (Boakye, 2010). Boakye further argues that Krobos and by extension Dangmes, wear beads the most during *Dupo* initiation ceremonies. It is one singular occasion in the life of the Dangme woman that she wears the most elegant of beads (Boakye, 2010:ibid) Among the Dangme and Ewe people, beads such as *Koli*, *Adiagba/Adzagba*, *loogbli*, *Paapinya* are one of the most valuable and expensive beads to come by (Avotri, 2009). They are used in significant rites of the life cycle activities as well the installation of priests/priestesses and chiefs. In addition, beads like *nyoli*, and *aqli* play significant roles in the adornment process to complete the required appearance of a *wɔyoo*. From the neck of a *wɔyoo* to her ankles, specific beads adorn specific parts in a specific manner for specific purpose.

Beads worn on the arm, neck, calves and ankles give shape to those parts and express the concept of beauty (aesthetic) as perceived by Dangmes (see fig. 23). Besides beads, red feathers and silver wares add color and distinctness to *wɔyii* who have been designated to use them. A perfect example is *Maa Lalue*, *Yoomle*, *Abla*, and *Nadu* deities who wear their hair in a particular fashion known as *akuku*. This is a hair style in which the entire hair is made into five distinct plaits. Pieces of silver objects are then stuck into it with a single red feather mounted onto it.



**Figure 23** Skirt wearing *wɔyii* displaying *tuŋ*, *ayilɔ* and powder make-up as well as assorted beads and *akuku* hair style with red feathers stuck into it. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

#### 4.20 The nature of props

In performance practice, props play as significant a role as do costumes and its attendant accessories. In ritual practices, props cannot be wished away. Ritual agents use props in diverse ways to achieve diverse results. The *Klama* performance realm is no different. The *wɔyii* make use of four prop types usually as insignias of office which is significant in relation to the nature of the deities they serve. The props are in the form of *tu* (gun), *hiyɔ/hiɔ* (sword), *bɛsa* (a semblance of indigenous broom) and *whliŋ tso* (paddle). Deities that use the *tu* (gun) are warrior or hunter deities. They therefore use the weapon to defend the community against external spiritual aggression as well as fend for the spiritual needs of the people. They are therefore the protectors of the areas they inhabit and the community at large. Such deities include *Ardeŋ*, *Dibɔ*, *Klamɔ*, *Akublebi*, and *Nadu*. *Hiyɔ/hiɔ* (sword) is a miniature sword used only by the *Osabu* deity, which belongs deity to the royal *Anewe* lineage.

*Anewe* clan, by Dangme social structure, is responsible for electing qualified persons to the high office of the paramountcy. The *Osabu wɔyoo* therefore is the only one who uses the *hiyɔ/hio* (sword) as insignia of office. The *whliη tso* (paddle) is used by deities that are associated with the sea. A deity like *Tsawe* is always associated. Whenever there is abundant fish harvest, *Tsawe* is always praised and celebrated. When the adverse occurs, he is also petitioned. Therefore, it is common to see *Tsawe wɔyii* dance with their *whliη tso* gesticulating with it and in the heat of the performance, frantically paddle whiles miming dragging of imaginary fishing net. Besides all the above-mentioned deities and the props, they use, the majority of the deities left use the *bɛsa*, a semblance of indigenous broom, as their insignia of office. The broom is a cleansing agent therefore, these deities are responsible for cleansing the community and getting rid of any form of pestilence or epidemic that might plague the people (see fig. 24). At the top of the *bɛsa* is a hole created for the purpose of storing extra powder for the deities who use powder to make their faces or bodies up. When a *wɔyoo* or *wɔyii* are in a procession, no one is permitted to cross their path. It is a sign of ill omen therefore, the *wɔyii* use the *bɛsa* to prevent anyone from crossing their path either in the physical or spiritual realm thereby incurring the wrath of the spirits.





**Figure 24** An *Abla woyoo* tucking her *besa* in her armpit and an *Osabu woyoo* holding her *hiyo/hio* with her left arm and resting it on her left shoulder. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

## CHAPTER FIVE: KPLE PERFORMANCE PROCESS/ STRUCTURE IN GBUGBLA

### 5.1 Introduction

*Klama* performance is an integral part of the social process that leads towards the celebration of the annual *Kple* festival among the Dangmes of Gbugbla. This process involves a series of ritual activities and *Klama* dance is a crucial part of these activities. This chapter however will chronicle the calendrical events of Gbugbla and outline where *Klama* dance features prominently and how the performance process is negotiated.

The various forms of aesthetic appraisals in the form of meta- discourse by culturally informed audience during performances will also be analyzed. This will give us a fair idea of the benchmarks of performance expected from mediums. The performative aspects of the performance in the form of language use in songs, chants and prayer formulae will also be examined. It is expected that at the end of this chapter, these pieces will come together to form a unified whole that presents to the reader, a clear perspective of the nature of *Klama* performance within the *Kple* festival context. In this writing, I will adopt Clifford Geertz' concept of *Thick Description* to give a vivid description within the cultural context of *Kple* festival activities in order to bring the reader close to the activity as possible to enable him/her to imagine the performance activity as was experienced by the researcher.

### 5.2 *Tɛkɔmi* (annual calendar determination)

This is the first ritual in a series of rituals that set the tone for the beginning of activities towards the celebration of *Kple* annual festival. This

ritual takes place in the *Digblɛ piɛ*. This is the shrine of the father of all the deities in Gbugbla. The activity commences on Thursday (31/03/2016) evening between the hours of 7:00- 9:30pm. This ritual, for the purpose of peace between the Christian faith and the traditional worshippers, was re-ordered. The chosen day is the Thursday immediately after the celebration of the Christian Easter Monday activities meant to mark the resurrection and appearance of Jesus Christ to two of his followers on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32 (KJV)). The celebration hitherto was met with clashes due to the fact that Christians will stop at nothing to play their loud drums and make a lot of “Joyful noise unto the Lord” during the solemn observation of bans on drumming and noise making by the traditional worshipers. The *Tekɔmi* ritual mood is of a solemn kind. In the shrine, only one local lantern is used to provide a functional light for the ceremony. It therefore creates that eerie ritual environment with shadows cast by the bowers of the single massive tree in the shrine. *Tekɔmi* literally means ‘picking of stones’. This was the indigenous way of determining the calendar of the year. The indigenous Ga adepts had amongst them astrologers and psychics who could read the stars and moons and determine dates by using stones to represent each calendrical month within their lunar system.

The Ga- Dangmes operate within the lunar calendar system observing 13 moons (months) within the year. These 13 moons according to E. A. Ammah (2016) are constant but the challenge is the number of days which vary from 357, 364, 365 and 370 respectively. Through this system of the study of moons and stars, traditional priests are able to forecast when to prepare for specific celebrations. Also, priests are able to compare the accuracy of their forecast by relating it to when their sister Ga- Dangme communities commence or end a

particular celebration. These serve as guidelines for them. Most of the time, until the adoption of the universal or Gregorian calendar, the periods in which certain festivals are celebrated keeps shifting either forwards or backwards depending on when the moon is cited. This is the bases upon which the *Tekomi* ritual takes its root.

The *Tekomi* ritual starts with libation prayers by the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ*, who is the priest and caretaker of the *Digblɛ piɛ*. He thanks the ancestors and gods for their protection throughout the past year and seeks their approval to commence with the ritual activity which marks the beginning of the calendar year. Whiles the libation prayer is going on, mediums under training squat and clap with cupped hands in response to the prayers. The squatting of the mediums, in response to prayers, during libation performances index humility. It is also a ritual posture that seeks to express the modest mental states of the people in making supplications to the ancestral or spiritual fathers. Anytime a ritual agent pours libations, he humbly lowers his cloth to the midriff level if he is wearing a traditional cloth. He also lowers his aura by assuming a meek countenance whiles lowering the vibrancy in his voice. These are all signs used during prayer offerings to present one's self as self-effacing before the divine powers in order that the spiritual beings will be gracious unto them in answering their prayers.

After the libation prayer, the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* presents the *Dadefoi*, who are the musicians, with two bottles of local rum as a form of compensation in order to keep them motivated for the night's activities. The officiant who happens to be the *Kpalɔ*, commences with his usual lengthy opening chant of recitations aimed at soliciting the presence of the divine fathers for a successful activity. The *Kpalɔ* weaves his supplications it into his opening songs which is responded

to by the priestesses or mediums gathered. The next song is responded to both by the musicians with their drums and the mediums. This sets the mediums into a dancing mood. The *Kpalɔ* is careful in his selection of songs to encompass all the deities who are represented by the various mediums present. There are always open confrontations in the form of display of displeasure when for a period of time, a medium does not hear a song of her/his deity yet others which are lower in rank than theirs are mentioned. This, though done on a lighter mode carries heavy sentiments. These sentiments are however resolved when songs relating to their deities are finally sung.

This night's performances, as I observe, does not come with possession. It is a type of *Klama* that Amettier (1989) and Botchway (2006) classify as *Klamagu*. This *Klama* performance features a series of songs of the various deities, songs reflecting social content, as well as songs which relates to the essence of the night. This type of performance is purposely for entertainment to while away time whiles other rituals are being performed. All mediums are required to actively participate in this activity through dancing. It is performed with mirth and gaiety. As explained in the 3rd chapter, *ɔkomfua*s are encouraged to dance on the fringes behind the experienced ones as they are also instructed on the carriage of their bodies with respect to the hands and arms and urged to be nimble footed.

While all these activities are going on, a delegation is sent to a sacred water body at *blekesem* to fetch water to be used the following day to cleans the deities. Besides the deities, all the insignias of office of all priests and priestesses are also cleansed making them spiritually fortified and ready for both the spiritual and temporal work for the year. The delegation to the sacred water

body comprises of the *trolɔ* (carrier) who is charged with the duty of carrying the *bue* (pot) with the sacred water in it. He is dressed in a long white cloth wrapped around the chest with the ends of the cloth tied in a knot on his sternum. He leads the way to the sacred water body and at this point, he is the only person who gets possessed. He is accompanied by the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ*. The *Dibɔ wɔnɔ* after the rituals, informs me that the *trolɔ* is usually accompanied by three people but unfortunately, two of those people have passed on leaving only him to accompany the *trolɔ*. This ceremony is called *Paami Yami* which literally means entering into a river. Since the essence of entering into those rivers or water bodies is to fetch water from it, the terminology has been used to mean water fetching from a river or water body.

When the *trolɔ* returns with the sacred water, there is a brief bout of display of possession by priestesses who assist in bringing the water down from the head of the *trolɔ*. The performance still continues for some time after the arrival of the sacred water. Afterwards the *Kpalɔ* announces the last song for the night. After that performance, the *Kpalɔ* who is the amplifier of the voice of the gods, informs the gathering of activities slated for the rest of the ritual period. He announces the time for the commencement of the next day's (Friday) activity which is *Wɔhi ahedumi* (cleansing of the gods). It is on this *tekɔmi* night that embargo is placed on drumming and any form of noise making. *Klama* music performance within this period is not contemplated upon as music but rather as a form of "silence", a reversal of the norm. This notion of the reversal of the norm resonates with Mikhail Bakhtin's context of "symbolic inversion" or "role reversal" in his oft-quoted "carnavalesque" where the norm or structure in the form of political, social, legal or ideological authority is suspended or

inverted for anti-structure in the form of the “abnormal”, to assume the norm albeit temporarily (Kruger, 2005). Besides Bakhtin, in Ghana, Avorgbedor (2000) in his work, “Dee Hoo! Sonic Articulations in Healing and Exorcism Practices of the Anlo-Ewe”, confirms the idea of “silence” indicating that “silence” does not necessarily mean “total absence of sound,” but rather absence of the sound of drums and supportive musical instruments.” He however clarifies his stands by indicating that “all drums are not equal”. In the case of *Klama*, the musical instruments played represent the voice of the deities. The gods thus inspire its playing in order to facilitate effective uninterrupted communication with the temporal world within this sacred space. Therefore, the playing of any sonic instrument besides the ones used in *Klama* performance amounts to an affront to the gods and this is believed to incur their wrath. There is thus the arrest, seizure and confinement of any musical instrument or anyone suspected of disturbing the peace and tranquility of the community. Kruger (2005:398), in his work “Symbolic Inversions in Death: Some Examples from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near Eastern world” cites Babcock (1978:14) who succinctly defines “Symbolic Inversions” as “any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, or social and political”. This definition aptly sums up the numerous role reversals which are prominent in the course of the *Kple* ritual performance activities where the youth take center stage to formulate songs to castigate deviants as well as cast invectives on the ruling class for mismanagement of the community. Costume reversal is also an

observable feature in the annual ritual performance. All these will be interrogated later in this chapter.

The enforcement of the sacred period and the ban on other forms of noise making is aimed at re-ordering the community through the engendering of sober reflections of the year under review in order to make amends for the coming year.

### 5.3 *Wɔhi ahedumi* (cleansing of the gods)

The purpose of this ritual activity is to cleanse the ritual objects representative of the deities, ritual ornaments and insignias of office of the ritual agents. This is done using the sacred water fetched the previous night. The cleansing also provides the opportunity for mediums to renew their faith and allegiance to the deities. This ceremony takes place the day after *tekomi*. It falls on a Friday. On this occasion, it fell on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 2016. The ceremony commences early in the morning between the hours of 9:00am till late afternoon around 4:00pm. The ceremony commences in *Digble piε*, the same venue as the previous night, with libation prayers as usual by the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* and mediums dressed casually as the night before. The *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* then proceeds to present two bottle of local rum to the *Dadefoi* who are the musicians as usual. After the necessary pre-presentations and negotiations are done, the ceremony commences with the *Kpalɔ*'s opening chant. Then comes a bout of *Klama* music and dance performances also within the *Klamagu* performance realm after which the mediums and the musicians respond.

This spectrum of singing is accompanied by general movements known to all the mediums. The song text covers a broad array of social issues. An example is *Tekpe wumisi ne eya ηɔ yoo* meaning 'Tekpe did not inform me before



marrying a wife'. Another is, *Afeɔnɔ hisi nɛ ayɛ pumi* meaning 'one cannot bear to look elsewhere while a thing of beauty is before him'. These two songs touch on ethical and aesthetic issues and this opens us up to ethical and aesthetic standards of the people of Gbugbla. Within the indigenous traditional system, whenever a young man comes of age and decides to get married, it is the duty of the parents to find a well-mannered woman from a respectable family for their son. It is never the place of the son to secretly contract marriage by himself. This goes against the ethics of society; hence the act is deemed as an insult. This therefore provokes the song *Tɛkpɛ wumisi nɛ eya ɲɔ yoo*. The other song *Afeɔnɔ hisi nɛ ayɛ pumi* simply implies that it is meaningless to deny oneself from beholding a beautiful sight. This points to the fact that it is important to appreciate what is beautiful than to deny oneself of that pleasure.

In the course of the performances, the oldest medium of *Digblɛ* deity makes sure the items to be used for the cleansing ceremony are prepared and arranged as is customary for the ceremony (Figs. 25 and 26). At about two hours or so of performances, 8-10 mediums gather in a circle between the door posts of both *Digblɛ* and *Dibɔ (Oshann)* deities to clap and usher out the past year. This is a clapping performance with cupped hands. It is characteristic of ritual clapping meant to minimize the sound. This clapping is performed with 5 quick consecutive claps, repeated 4 times and ended with a shout of *ajooo*. This forms one routine. The mediums perform 4 of these routines, ending with the loudest *ajooo* aimed at bidding farewell to the past year. *Ajooo* is a corrupted form of *ɛjo*, an Ewe word meaning 'gone'.



**Figure 25** Eldest mediums of the *Digblɛ* deity with ritual items. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe



**Figure 26** Sacred water in the *buɛ* (pot) with other ritual items. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

After about two hours of *Klamagu* performances, 3 priestesses enter into the *Digblɛ Gbatsu* (Shrine room) backwards and subsequently bring out the multiple number of cloths covering the gods. The cloths are taken outside the shrine courtyard and shaken off its dust and laid on a mat in the middle of the *Digblɛ pie* (fig. 27).



**Figure 27 Neatly arranged pile of cloths covering the *Digble* deity with mediums under training in a relaxed mood. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.**

The shaking and laying down of the multiple cloths are done by the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* with the assistance of a male medium. Afterwards the deity/god items are brought out one after the other with the last being the *Digble* deity itself. His coming is characterized by a brief moment of possession by the mediums who touch it or are attuned to it.

The water which is fetched the previous night is then poured into a large silver basin. A local wooden sponge is used to wash the deity in the basin. The cleansing is conducted by the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* assisted by the *Lalue Labia* who is the chief priest in Prampram. After the cleansing is done, another sponge is used to mop off the water, then a white cloth is used to dust off any debris left by the wooden sponge. *Klɔbɔ*, a scented herbal preparation is then rubbed on it. The deity is repainted with the usual wine/burgundy color throughout. Afterwards, two stripe marks are made all over the object with the index and middle fingers dipped into mashed *ayilɔ*, i.e. white clay (figure 28). The rest of the deity items

are adorned in the same fashion as the *Digble*. After the adornment, the items are allowed to dry in the sun (figure 29).



**Figure 28** *Ayilo* paste in earthenware pot for decorating the deity items.  
Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.



**Figure 29** Deity left to dry in the sun. The *Digble* god is the item on the raised platform, the pot is the receptacle for the sacred water.  
Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

Whiles the ritual cleansing is going on, a set of the mediums are also preparing the ritual meal for the day known as *Kuɲmi*. This *Kuɲmi* is a corn powder meal prepared by mixing the corn powder in soup made from the palm

fruit. The main protein in the soup is the *Tsile* fish. This is an exceptionally big fish caught the previous year, smoked dry and preserved to be used for the occasion. This means that each year's fish is caught and preserved the previous year. This meal when ready is served first to the ancestral/ divine beings and the rest to all and sundry. The gods and ancestors are served first because it is in their honor that the ceremony is being held (fig. 30).



**Figure 30** The *Dibɔ wɔnɔ* serving the gods and ancestors *Kuɣmi*. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

The *Kuɣmi* ritual meal serves the purpose of bringing both the gods and ancestors together to dine with the temporal world. This communion of a sort seeks to renew ties, revive and strengthen bonds between the mortals left behind by the ancestors and the divine beings in the other world. While the meal is being prepared, *Klamagu* performance is still ongoing providing entertainment to ward off boredom and lessen the burden of having to wait endlessly for all the ritual activities which take the whole day to complete to grind to a halt.

After all the deities have been cleansed, the insignia of office of the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* and *Lalue Labia* are next to be cleansed (fig. 31). The *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* and *Lalue Labia* also take turns to ritually cleanse themselves with the remains of

the sacred water that was used to cleanse the deities (fig. 32). They then adorn themselves with the clays and paints used to decorate the deity objects thereby fortifying themselves for the spiritual and physical encounters they will be facing in the cause of the celebrations. Their adornment, which occurs right after the deities have been taken care of, is a sign that means that they are the primus gate keepers and as such stand between the physical and the spiritual worlds. In an interview with the *Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* (personal communications held on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2016) who also doubles as my informant, he tells me of the arduous nature of these annual rites which lasts close to 7 weeks.



**Figure 31** The *Lalue Labia* and *Dibɔ wɔnɔ* cleansing the insignias of office.  
Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.



**Figure 32** The *Lalue Labia* and *Dibɔ wɔnɔ* cleanse and adorn themselves in the remains of the paints and clay used to decorate the deities.  
Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

After everyone has had his/her fill of the *Kuɲmi*, the *Kpalɔ* engages the *Dadefoi* and there is a renewed performance of *Klamagu*. This goes on for about an hour or two more and finally, the *Kpalɔ* announces the end to the day's

activity and further informs the gathering of the next meeting which is slated for the next Monday which is three days away. On this day, *Digble*, the father of the deities visits the groove to hold a meeting with other deities to access the past year and to determine when to celebrate the annual *Kple* festival. This ritual process is known as *Huemi yami*.

#### 5.4 *Huemi yami* (entry into the groove)

This ceremony is characterized by *Tsaatsɛ Digble*'s retreat to the ancient groove to consult with other deities in relation to when to celebrate the annual *Kple* festival. This year's *Huemi yami* happens to fall on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 and lasts between 10:00am till 2:00pm. The event commences from the *Digble pie* with the usual prayers, presentation of drinks and *Klamagu* performances. This time round, initiated mediums are attired in all white beautiful outfits (fig. 33). *ɔkomfuas* are always attired as described earlier. The only change occurs during possession, where their torsos are exposed.



Figure 33 Senior mediums in all white performing *Klamagu*. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

After about an hour of performances, the *Gblu*, which is the name of the deity object that represents *Tsaatse Digble*, is brought out from the shrine room with brief possessions by attuned mediums. With the exception of the medium carrying the deity, possession is briefly experienced. The *Lalue Labia* who is the high priest leads the single file parade along the streets to the location of the ancient groove striking along the way, a gong. He is followed closely by the medium carrying the deity. She is ably supported by two more mediums. The rest of the priestesses follow in a long file behind the deity. The entire day's activities are meant to decide on the exact date to celebrate the annual *Kple* festival.

*Tsaatse Digble* is led inside the ancient groove where a large water pot is buried in the ground and filled with buckets of water. This water is then drawn and used for all the rituals in the groove. After about an hour of rituals in the groove, the *Lalue Labia* then comes out beating the gong again and stands in the middle of the blocked road for the final ceremony. The mediums, who have prior to the ceremony, cut a lot of leaves and branches, use it to recreate a forest scene. In a semi-circular manner, the mediums bow their heads with their foreheads touching the floor. This recreation (repetitive performance) is meant to create the erstwhile ambience that existed until development brought about the clearing of large forest groves to make room for the construction of streets and settlements as well as social amenities. A large pot is placed in front of the *Lalue Labia* to which he fills with two buckets of water till it spills over. This is an indexical act meant to replenish water bodies that are drying up due to climate changes. The filling of the large water pot is accompanied with prayer recitations supplicating for rain in abundance in order for plants and crops to



yield their best and also for fish to replenish the sea since fishing is one of the main occupations within the community besides farming and trading.

The *Lalue labia* then proceeds to overturn the pot spilling its contents on the street with the mindset of praying for abundance of food and wealth (fig. 34). He Afterwards, continues to offer a few more prayers and resumes the playing of the gong to index the end of that ceremony. He then leads the parade back into the shrine. In the shrine, *Klamagu* continues through midday till about 2pm before the day's activity comes to an end.



**Figure 34** From the left to right, the *Lalue Labia* going into the Hue (ancient groove) to perform the required rituals. Afterwards, he proceeds to the middle of the street to perform the final rights. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

### 5.5 Feast of *Yoomle*

Among the pantheon of deities/gods found in Gbugbla, only two of them are females. The first is the mother of the deities who is *Maa Yoonue Lalue*. She is followed by *Agbabi Yoomle* or simply *Yoomle*. *Yoomle's* feast is the first to be observed before *Asamanua and Nadu*. This ritual performance follows the *Huemi yami* activity. After *Huemi yami*, the *Kple* festival is normally slated to be performed either in two or three weeks' time depending on the preparedness of the ritual officiants. Before *Kple* is celebrated, all deities will have to be fed

and ritually cleansed. This feeding period is used for the renewal of ties and pledging of allegiance to the gods and vice versa.

The period is also used to prepare the entire town spiritually for the festival. These series of activities commence with *Yoomle*. Her feast, which falls on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 is immediately observed after *Tsaatse Digble* goes to the groove. Activities for the day commence in the morning with cooking and cleaning of the abode for the god. Libations and prayers of assorted kinds as well as redemption of pledges to the god, are the common features that characterize the ceremony. These activities end around late afternoon. For *Yoomle*, her feast's dance performance, that serve as thanksgiving to the deity, is rescheduled to be the final performance of *Klama* dance before the sacred drum is sent to the sea for expiation purposes. This day marks the end of the *Kple* festival activities. On her thanksgiving performance day, *Agbabi Yoomle*'s mediums take center stage and perform to the credit of their deity but with support from other mediums.

The performance lasts from morning till late afternoon. This celebration will receive more attention later in this chapter. It is worth noting that during performances in honor of the gods, they are expected to manifest. Failure for the gods to manifest is indexical of the displeasure of the deities due to an act committed by someone or the imminence of some misfortune of a sort. This has happened before according to *Kpalɔ Teye Mensah Nyavɔ* (Personal communications on February 23, 2016). He claims it is an exception rather than the norm. The refusal of the gods to manifest has been termed *fɔɔyi*. *Fɔɔyi* is a colloquial language employed to mean 'non-appearance'. When this happens, a

succession of rituals will have to be performed to identify the mishap and remedy it.

For every deity/god that is fed, cleansed, prayed to and performed for, there is always a brief *Adetsaani* (thanksgiving ceremony) held the next morning to thank everyone for their assistance and contribution. *Adetsaani* according to Kropp- Dakubu (2009), is used to describe early morning activities. Customarily, when one offends someone, it is incumbent on the offender to wake up early morning to go and apologize in order to make amends. It is believed at that early hour, benevolent ancestral spirits hover around to intercede on behalf of humans and to accept thanks for their benevolence. Within the same frame, when someone gives you a gift, offers help or assists in the performance of a task or an activity, society expects that the beneficiary of the benevolence must go and offer thanks early in the morning. Therefore, when a deity's feast is observed, mediums organize a brief activity early the next day to thank everyone for their assistance. *Adetsaani* is marked by libation prayers, brief meeting to assess the previous day's work and a short serving of refreshments. This process is repeated throughout all the cleansing and feasting ceremonies prior to the celebration of the *Kple* annual festival.

#### **5.6 *Doola fiemi* and the feast of *Asamanua* (9-10<sup>th</sup> April, 2016)**

This ritual activity follows the feast of *Yoomle*. The deity, *Asamanua*, is the son of *Tsaatse Digble* and *Maa Yoonue Lalue* (father and mother of the deities/gods). *Asamanua* who is a hunter, is the next to be fed. His feeding takes two days, Saturday and Sunday. His feeding is preceded by a formal announcement a day before in the form of a dance performance. This announcement on Saturday is referred to as *Doola fiemi*. *Doola fiemi* literally

means 'drum fire playing'. This expression epitomizes the fiery nature or the intensity with which the musicians attack the playing of the musical instruments in order to motivate the deity to manifest. Without that fiery intensity, *Asamanua* will never mount her medium. Thus, it is mandatory for the music to be intensive in order to stir the deity. This ceremony begins around 8:00pm at the *Lalue piɛnya* (courtyard of the *Lalue shrine*) and lasts for about three hours. The purpose of this ceremony is to inform the community officially that the deity, *Asamanua*, will be fed the next day together with *Tsaatɛ Nadu*. *Nadu* is also a warrior deity noted to have long ears that need winding all the time to shorten it. Hence occasionally during performances, younger mediums stand behind the most senior of the mediums to wind the ear.

The *Doola fiemi* and *Asamanua*'s feast performances comes with the performance of complex rhythms. *Doola fiemi* kicks off with a procession by a four-member team who walk in a single file. The first is an elder who leads the way. He plays the bell. He is followed by another person who is ready to take over the gong incase the player is tired. He is then followed by a *wia* player and then finally, another elder who is also on standby to be of assistance. This entourage are the acolytes of *Asamanua*. They parade through the principal households and end up in the courtyard of *Lalue*. On this night, *Asamanua*, sits in state appareled in all white and sitting on a white stool looking radiant in the night. The performance takes off immediately the *Doola fiemi* team arrives. *Nadu Wɔnɔ*, (priest in charge of the *Nadu shrine*), begins the ceremony with a libation prayer. He also calls the gathering to order before the performance begins. His performative utterances are;

<b>Personalities</b>	<b>Utterance</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>Agoo hanyɛ odehe abihi</i>	Permission royal children
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Amɛɛ</i>	Permission granted
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>Agoo</i>	Permission
	<i>Fiaaa fia manye nɛba</i>	<i>Fiaaa</i> , May goodwill come upon us
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Hiao</i>	Let it be
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>fiaa manye nɛba</i>	<i>Fiaaa</i> , May goodwill come upon us
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Hiao</i>	Let it be
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>Pi wagbi kake?</i>	Are we not with one voice?
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Hiao</i>	Let it be
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>Gbekaalɔ ko be wati</i>	We don't have any enemy among us
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Hiao</i>	Let it be
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>Agoo hanyɛ odehe abihi</i>	Permission royal children
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Amɛɛ</i>	Permission granted
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>Agbabi nyɛhe Klama</i>	Agbabi receive Klama
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Wahe</i>	We receive it
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>Nyɛhe Klama</i>	Receive Klama
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Wahe</i>	We receive it
<i>Nadu Wɔnɔ:</i>	<i>fiaa manye nɛba</i>	<i>Fiaaa</i> , May goodwill come upon us
<i>All Responds:</i>	<i>Hiao</i>	Let it be

After these performatives, the *Kpalɔ* takes over with his opening chants and response by the mediums present as well as the musicians. On this night, *Asamanua* deity is expected to manifest by mounting his medium. This is soon experienced after a few warm up performances by the *dadefoi* and mediums present. *Asamanua* all of a sudden begins to shake visibly and starts to take off her head gear and torso covering as the music intensifies. Her handlers quickly move to her aid and begin to dress her appropriately. Her hair is loosened, combed and apparel well secured. First the cloth covering her waist is well-secured in place. Then her bustier is fixed so as not to expose her breasts because she is an initiated medium. Having attained full manifestation, the deity approaches the *Kpalɔ* and *dadefoi* (musicians).

The *Kpalɔ* who is the mouth piece of the deities receive salutations from *Asamanua* in the manner as follows:

<i>Asamanua:</i>	<i>Agbaabi, Agbaabi</i>	Agbaabi, Agbaabi
	<i>Nye he manye</i>	Receive blessings
	<i>Nye so manye</i>	Embody blessings
	<i>Nye mie manye</i>	Be blessings
	<i>Nye ηuɔ ηuɔ</i>	Receive luck
<i>Kpalɔ:</i>	<i>Wa ηuɔ ηe oden</i>	Our luck is in your hands
	<i>Owem saa?</i>	How is your abode?
<i>Asamanua:</i>	<i>Kpɔnɔɔ</i>	No problem
<i>Kpalɔ:</i>	<i>Owem bi?</i>	The people in your abode (ancestors)?
<i>Asamanua:</i>	<i>Hai or yobu be</i>	They are well/ They have no problem
	<i>I haa nye tsumi oo</i>	I give you thanks
	<i>I haa nye adɛɛ</i>	I give you prosperity

<i>I haa nye kplɔkɔɔ</i>	I give you success
<i>I haa nye benya</i>	I give you protection
<i>Nɛ gbiɛku ya</i>	May seasons go
<i>Nɛ gbiɛku ba na wɔ</i>	May seasons come
<i>Nɛ kɛ abi wasiɔ</i>	If people ask of us
<i>Nɛ adeke waɲɛ</i>	It should be said we are alive
<i>Nyɛ twa manye nɛ ba.</i>	May your blessings come to true.
<i>Kpalɔ: Hiao hiao</i>	May it come true

This salutation formula is standard and is used by all mediums who appear before the *Kpalɔ* for the first time in any performance. Variations exist as some of the blessing recitations carry semantic meanings. Examples are *Nyɛ he manye*, *Nyɛ so manye*, *Nyɛ miɛ manye*, and *I haa nye adɛɛ*, *I haa nye kplɔkɔɔ*, *I haa nye benya* etc. These are alternated according to the choice of the medium/deity. *Asamanua* then proceeds to sing. The first song is usually for identification purposes so that the *Kpalɔ* and the *dadefoi* will know the deity manifesting. The deity then mentions its name in this manner, *ami ji Asamanua* (I am *Asamanua*). The response to the songs come with specific rhythms. This goes on for a long time. Though it is the night of *Asamanua*, she is supported by other mediums in normal casual attire to make the night's event a success. Also, worth noting is the fact that both *Kple* and *Klama* music and dance is not the preserve of the mediums. Anyone who has acquired the skill to perform can jump onto the dance arena to perform. The protocol for such intervention is a gentle grab of the possessed mediums knee or leg. This causes the medium to pause, raise the index and middle fingers of both arms in a V shape towards the

person. This is to signify permission for the intervener to dance in the mediums stead. In the cause of the performances, a unique ritual emanates from *Nadu pie*. These are conducted by young men. These young men hold in their hands long sticks that they stamp on the ground as they approach the performance arena. They move straight to where the *Otutu* (mound of the deity) is located (figure 35 the *otutu* on the right) on the performance ground.



**Figure 35** *Lalue Piɛnya* displaying two *Otutu* mounds painted white.  
*Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.*

They continue to go around the *Otutu* a few times amidst singing and heavy stamping of their sticks. They then depart to where they came from. The text of their song is “*Wanu wɔoo jehasu*”. This literally means “lets catch the deities/gods because the year has come”. The ‘catching of the deities’, is a literal translation, meant to ask the deities to possess their mediums. It is a clarion call to everyone to worship the deities who have seen them through the year. These young men can be likened to their *agbungbunte* colleagues (youth wing) in La, a sub Ga community. They serve as ‘whips’ to make sure all and sundry are aware of activities slated for the annual celebrations and to urge everyone to actively take part. This very short but relevant act brings the night’s



performance to an abrupt end. The next day which is Sunday is when *Asamnua* is cleansed and fed as was experienced in *Tsaatse Digble's* shrine. This takes off in the morning and then in the evening, the second phase of performances for *Asamnua* takes place. As a rule, *Asamnua* performs his *adetsaani* (thanksgiving) the next day after his feeding. It usually falls on Monday. The next deity to be fed after *Asamnua* is *Tsaatse Tsawe*.

### 5.7 *Tsawe wɔ fiɛmi* (performance in honor of *Tsawe*)

*Tsawe* is the *Otsaame* (linguist/ Spokesperson) of *Tsaatse Digble* and his wife *Maa Yoonue Lalue*. He is a male deity that mounts women mediums. All the mediums that serve *Tsawe* are clad in white. The event is a night performance at the *Tsawe piɛnya* (figure 36). The performance is set to *Klama* music only because *Tsaatse Tsawe* is a *Me* god.



**Figure 36** *Tsaatse Tsawe's* shrine during the day. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

This performance is held on a Thursday (14<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016). The evening's performance commences in the same manner as previous ones with libations and call to order by the *Nadu Wɔnɔ*. Serving of drinks, opening chant

by the *Kpalɔ* and response by mediums and musicians are constant. The slight twist to this night's performance was the plea from the *Kpalɔ* to *Tsaatse Tsawe* through his oldest medium. His plea is for the gods to give them younger musicians who will avail themselves to learn the art of playing the drums since the older generation outnumber the younger ones. There is also the placement of a smoldering *ɲmatsu* (dried flower of the palm tree) in the middle of the performance arena. The purpose of this *ɲmatsu* is to ward off evil spirits during the performance. After the brief interaction with the medium, the performance gets underway. As indicated in the *Asamanua*'s performance, it's the convention that although the night belongs to mediums of a particular deity, other mediums present, including the general public, are permitted to perform. It is also mandatory for mediums under training to take active part, in order to give them the opportunity to sharpen their movement and rhythmic skills to enhance their versatility. The *ɔkomfuas* as usual dance at the fringes.

In the course of the performance, we are introduced to a young male medium, strong and well built in structure. He will be in his late twenties or early thirties. He serves the *Arden* deity who happens to be the son of *Tsaatse Tsawe*. According to an informant, this deity is a warrior deity hence his movements are vigorous. His movements are angular depicting fighting sequences with strong stamping of feet backwards. *Arden* normally sings in two languages, Ewe and Akan. In his first performance, he sings in Ewe and performs to Agbadza  $\frac{6}{8}$  rhythm. His ending of the dance sequences is typical of Ewe agbadza dance form. This attribute gives an indication of the nature and origin of the deity as well as the place of training of the medium. In his second

appearance on the performance arena, he sings in Akan language which informs us of the versatility of the deity.

*Tsawe's* mediums on the night queue and await their moment to perform. Each medium performs special movements unique to her as well as general movements. There is the constant show of respect and admiration to older mediums through gentle strokes or brushes of the palm on the bodies of the older mediums. This nights' performance is exceptionally long as deities keep manifesting because of the atmosphere created by the quality of music. The ambiance therefore seems to facilitate the manifestation of other deities hence the extension of the performance time which went close to midnight.

### **5.8 *Owufu wɔ fiɛmi* (performance in honor of *Owufu* deity)**

*Owufu* is another senior deity that is fed and cleansed as prelude to the *Kple* annual festival. His feeding in the morning coincides with *Tsaatsɛ Tsawe's adetsaani*. *Tsawe's adetsaani* follows the order of the previous ones. *Owufu* deity falls within the category of *Kple* gods and therefore responds to *Kple* music. The performance occurs at the courtyard of his shrine and the process is as described in *Asamanua's* performances. The occasion is the next day after *Tsawe* and happens to fall on Friday (15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016). In relation to political leadership of the community, the *Owufu We* (clan) are responsible for electing a candidate to the political post of *Mankralo* who acts as caretaker of the stool (town) in the absence of the chief.

### **5.9 *Laapkle Tsawe wɔ fiɛmi***

As preparations get underway towards the feeding of *Laapkle Tsawe*, *Owufu* on the other hand is performing their *adetsaani*. This takes place on

Saturday (16<sup>th</sup> April, 2016). Gbugbla is divided into Upper and Lower towns. Lower town is closer to the sea whiles upper town is inland bound. The afore discussed gods/deities are located in the Upper town. *Laakple Tsawe*, on the other hand, is located in the Lower town. He is fed and performed for like the rest discussed above.

#### **5.10 *Wɔ tsɔwihɪ afiɛmi* (feasting for all the smaller gods)**

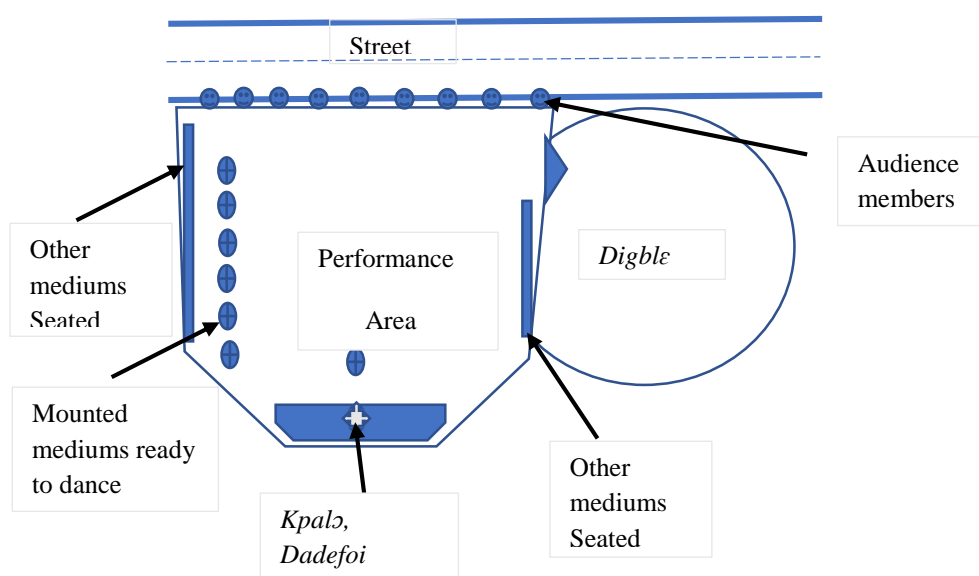
On this very Sunday when *Laakple Tsawe* is performing his *adetsaani*, all the smaller deities found both in Gbugbla (Upper and Lower towns) are lumped together, fed and cleansed. The activity begins in the morning just like the rest with cooking, ritual cleansing and a series of performances that conclude in the evening. *Laakple Tsawe's* performance marks the end to the night performances. The next series of performances take place during the day.

#### **5.11 *Digble nya fiɛmi* (18<sup>th</sup> April, 2016)**

Having cleansed, fed and supplicated the pantheon of deities present in Gbugbla, the next set of performances will be the merged *Klama* and *Kple* dance performances. These are morning performances that are characterized by a lot of possessions from both *Me* and *Kple* deities. These dance activities serve as *adetsaani* (thanksgiving) for *Digble*, *Lalue* and *Yoomle* deities. The performances also precede the first, second and third annual *Kple* festival celebrations held in three successive weeks. It commences with an opening dance at *Digble nya*. This performance sets the ball rolling for the commencement of *Kple* festival activities. With the fore knowledge that *Tsaatse Digble* is the father of all the gods in Gbugbla, the ritual performance ceremony commences with him. This day also marks his *Adetsaani* after his cleansing.

This foremost performance is so significant, it marks the official dance ceremony to kick start the annual *Kple* festival activities. Mediums turn out in their numbers looking colorful in their array of regalia to perform to thank the gods for the year that is past and the welcome of a new year.

The ceremony is held on a Monday. It starts in the morning around 9:00am with the usual libation prayers by the *Nadu Wɔnɔ*. His role in these performances is very sacred because it is his performative utterances in the form of prayer offerings that calls the gathering to order to commence the ceremony. After the prayers, there is the usual offering of drinks to the *Dadefoi* followed by the opening chant by the *Kpalɔ*. As usual, there is response by the musicians and chorus singers who most of the time are mediums. They play the *tɔ* (gourd rattle) and clapper sticks instead of clapping their hands. These clapper sticks are made of split pieces of bamboo cut into sizable pieces, held and played together. On this performance day at *Digblɛ piɛnya*, the mediums mounted by their deities line up to the left of the *Kpalɔ*, waiting for their turn to perform (fig. 37).



**Figure 37 Outline of performance are at *Digblɛ Piɛnya* (Shrine courtyard).  
Design by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.**

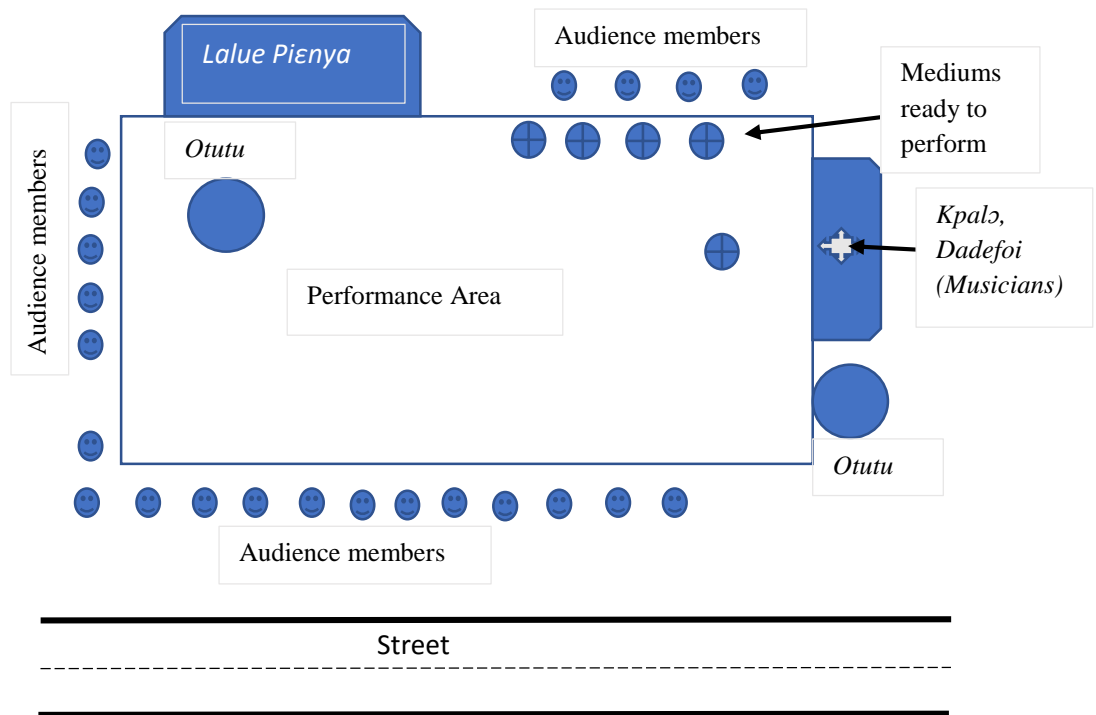
When the mediums finally appear before the *Kpalɔ*, they go through their usual salutations, followed by their identification chant, then comes the rest of the songs they would like to perform to. After a medium, has finished her performance, she informs the *Kpalɔ* of her wish to depart and make way for the next person. She does this through her parting song *imlɔwe mo se Iyaa maba* (I will be back). When she returns after changing her outfit and voice, she sings *emi iya okɔ luu kɛkɛ nɛ ikpale ba* (I went to *okɔ* and I have returned). As often as a medium return to the performance stage, she sings this song repeatedly. After about four hours of performance time, the ritual dance comes to an end. The mediums then go around to thank the *Dadefoi*, *Kpalɔ* and all present. This grand performance paves the way for *Maa Lalue* to receive her first performance which will be the next day, Tuesday.

### 5.12 First *Kple* performance (19<sup>th</sup> April, 2016)

This performance follows *Digble's adetsaani*. It is the first performance in a series of three performances that will bring the annual *Kple* festival to an end. The performance is in two parts i.e. the religious aspect in the morning and the social part in the late afternoon. After the day's religious and social dance activities, there will be no other dance performance till the following week Tuesday. This performance is held in the *Lalue pienya* which is the courtyard of *Maa Lalue* (fig. 38). All the deities that are in *Gbugbla* are expected to manifest, hence provision is made for them. This spectacle is as colorful as that of *Digble's* but more accommodating of deities (*Klama* and *Kple*) perhaps because of her role as mother of the gods. Mediums under training are not left out of the performance. They take active role by learning other movement sequences and polishing their proficiency of already acquired movement skills.

This is done at the fringes of the performance arena in their possessed state. They are referred to as *mumui* which simply mean deaf beings (Chapter. 3). They become speaking entities when they are initiated and given the power of speech through the opening of their spiritual mouths to be given the voice of the gods to sing. The spiritual opening of their ears to hear the voice of the gods/deities also is given to them during their initiation. Uninitiated mediums, during performances, communication via gestures only. Initiation of a deity is dependent on one's ability to display mastery of the craft. This includes; mastery of movement sequences, ability to master the sequences of songs of the deity one is serving as well as deities of one's ancestry. The final qualification is the endorsement by the senior medium under whom one is apprenticed to. Although one is deemed to have qualified within three years of tuition, others are able to master and get initiated within their first-year while others spend two years in training before graduation.

The first *Kple* ritual dance opens early in the morning around 8:00am and runs for about 3-4 hours and ends just before midday. This is to make room for everyone to go home and rest for the second aspect of the festival activity which is the *Kple* social dance.



**Figure 38 Outline of performance area at *Lalue Piɛnya* (Shrine courtyard). Design by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.**

### 5.13 *Kple* communal dance performance

This is the second part of the days' activity. It is a moment where the entire community is engaged in a frenzy of *Kple* social dances at the *Kple tso shishi* (under the *Kple* tree) which is the venue for the dance activity. Before the commencement of this social activity, the *Agbaabi*, who are the religious elders, meet in the *Lalue piɛ* for a session of singing and chanting. This is a prayer activity for the success of the ceremony. This period in the life of the festival is very volatile. This is because any unforeseen physical or spiritual catastrophe could happen hence, ritual agents fortify themselves both spiritually and physically in anticipation of such challenges. More so, the day also marks the only period in the year in which the sacred and original *Kple* deity, in the form of *Kplemi* (*Kple* ritual drum), is brought out and played. This sacred drum is very significant in the life of the Dangme of Gbugbla because its presence index



the unity of the entire Gbugbla communities. Its capture also marks the doom of the people. Hence, after the long moment of singing and chanting, a select group of people led by the high priest are delegated to go for the sacred drum.

The myth surrounding this sacred drum is that, no one is supposed to know its abode or how its sent there. It is carried by the chief priest who shaves his hair totally once every year in order to carry it. The chief priest on this day is referred to by the deities as *tete mi nyɔgwɛ trolɔ* (ancient slave carrier of the sacred drum). He is flanked by religious elders who hold two long ropes that serve as a form of protection for the sacred drum. The drum entourage then make their way to the *Lalue pienya* where the drum is played for the first time. The *Kple* social dance rhythm is played three times on the sacred *Kplemi* to the admiration of all. Afterwards, it is carried in similar fashion to the *Kple tso shishi* where the entire community awaits its presence for the communal/social dance performance (fig. 39).



**Figure 39 The Kple sacred drum being carried by the chief priest to the Kple tso shishi. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe**

The *Kple tso shishi*, is a performance arena with a huge tree (*Kple tso*) in the middle of the performance space. It is a rallying place for social performances. The dance is performed in counter clockwise direction which is an index of the path of life. As a rule, no one is permitted to dance with shoes or any kind of footwear. This is significant because both Ga and Dangme

communities claim to be descendants of Moses. Therefore, just as Moses was commanded by God to take off his shoes, because he was standing on a sacred land, they must follow in the stead. Thus, it is common to find mediums walk about without footwear. This therefore informs why no one is permitted to wear any form of footwear during the social or ritual dance forms. One may however decide to wear a pair of socks to ameliorate the severity of the heat on the feet as well as beat the dust down a bit as I found during the ethnographic field work. (fig. 40).



**Figure 40** A cross section of populace at the beginning of the *Kple* communal dance. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.

After the sacred drum arrives and necessary preparations done, the drummers commence playing to set the dance underway. After about 20 minutes of dance time, a brief pause is observed. At this point, everyone on the dance floor begins to run around the tree kicking their feet in the air while jumping. The indexical meaning to this brief activity is to urge everyone to leap or jump into the coming year with hope. This trend is repeated over and over again till the dance activity comes to an end at about 6:00pm. Costumes worn for this activity varies according to the fancy of the wearer. It is a moment to show off in the most outrageous fancy attire, consequently people go at varied lengths possible to create and wear the most unimaginable attire that gives the person the prominence he/she so desires. This is a classical Bakhtinian “role reversal”

or “symbolic inversion” where the norm of dressing is cast aside to make the abnormal, the most outrageous fancy attire with its attendant awkward movements and gestures, the new norm. In this situation, women tend to dress as men and vice-versa. This new norm tends to evoke fun, laughter, meta-dialogue and a rebirth of the tradition thus, renewing the culture through the social praxis (Jackson, 1983). There are plausible reasons why fancy dressing has been accepted as the dress code for the occasion.

The first is that, due to the number of people who throng the *Kple tso shishi*, it leaves little space for people to dance and maneuver their way around, hence there is so much push and pull. Anyone wearing a decent attire may end up getting it more dirty or torn due to the unpredictable nature of activities and the manner in which people behave. Therefore, wearing a nice-looking garb will be out of place rather. A second plausible explanation is that since the occasion makes room for society to let go off steam through passing of comments on the deeds of people, there is the possibility of reprisal attacks if people can be easily recognized hence the need to disguise oneself. A third possible reason for fancy costuming stems from the idea that these activities mark the end of an old year and a transition into a new life. Consequently, it is appropriate to discard old habits characterized by the wearing of outrageous attires. Upon entry into the new year, all these seemingly unwanted or inappropriate attires are discarded in order to turn on a new leaf without the baggage of the previous year. These and many other reasons mark the age-old usage of outrageous costumes for such occasions.

After the social dance is over, shouts of *ajeekpo* (don't go out) is heard. This is to announce to everyone to go home never to come out till the next day.

The rationale has been that no one is supposed to see the sacred drum depart to its secret abode. It is said that anyone who is caught trying to learn of its sacred place will not live to see the following year hence ample time is allowed for the teeming crowd to get to their homes.

Whatever transpires on this day is repeated on the second and third weeks with slight differences. A clear example is that, the next performance which is a week away, the original *Kple* sacred drum is not used. What is played is just a replica. There is also the tendency for the numbers participating in the dance to swell. This is because the replica drum that is used on the second and third occasions sound better due to constant usage and re-tuning. The sacred *Kplemi* is never brought out nor tuned so its pitch level is not as appealing as its replica. On the third and final performances, the dance moves from the *Kple tso shishi* through the streets to marked performance places in Lower town before finally, rituals are performed ending with the replica *Kple* drum being dipped and cleansed in the sea.

#### **5.14 Kpaa shimi**

Meanwhile, in the cause of the *Kple* social dance, the youth take to the streets performing the *Kpaa shimi*. This is a stomping dance and music activity usually performed by the youth as an avenue to let go off steam. The youth who engage in this activity within the “symbolic inversion” paradigm, take advantage of their agency/licence to comment on socio-political activities within the year under review. These comments come out in the form of lampooning songs that use explicit language (Nii Dortei 2012) to convey the sentiments as deemed fit by the youth. In the cause of the year, the voiceless voices of the youth become restraint and out of reach (Madison, 2005). Hence,

the only medium for these concealed voices to be heard is during the social performance of *Kpaa* where the youth take advantage to compose songs with themes reflecting ominous activities of the ruling class as well as people of high repute. *Kpaa shimi* lampooning songs and dance come as an activity to re-order and bring redress to some of the deviant deeds of people within the community thus orchestrating a revival/renewal of the society. The misdemeanors tend to produce imbalance. It is therefore through this *Kpaa shimi* reversal activity that such misdeeds are addressed thereby restoring balance to hitherto unbalanced society.

The youth organize themselves into identifiable groups with color and flag codes to represent them (fig. 41). They spend considerable amount of time meeting to compose songs that reflect on the themes under review. On the performance day, each group come out with explicitly composed songs to ridicule and shame offenders who desecrate the community with their misdemeanor. They take to the streets in their identifiable attires and flags singing provocatively to melodious rhythms provided on idiophones such as varied sizes of bells and gourd rattles. They also choreograph movements unique to the group that match the songs they sing.



**Figure 41 Energetic youth in *Kpaa shimi*. Pictures by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.**

This is colorfully displayed much to the admiration of all especially when the group perform a choreography to synch with their song. They stamp their feet in the process and end their routine in a synchronized manner. It must be mentioned that the groups take turns to do this performance in a healthy competitive mode in order to win the admiration and respect of onlookers. These spirited performances are repeated on the second and third performance days. Just like the *Apoɔ* festival of the people of the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana, there is a day set aside for everyone to air his view without fear of being penalized. This is necessary to provide an avenue for the release of pent up energy or emotion held up over long periods of time as espoused in Spencer's (Spencer, 1985:4-5) 1<sup>st</sup> theme *Dance as a safety valve: the cathartic theory*. He informs us that;

Certainly, there is strong medical evidence that dancing can induce a relief of this kind. Various authorities have noted the effects of rhythms in creating tension, anxiety, and stress under certain conditions, and of releasing them once they are built up; and they have pointed out the implications of this for tribal and other dancing.

### **5.15 Second *Kple* performance (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2016)**

*Kple* festival performances from the first through to the final, always come in two parts. It is mostly common to have initiation of new priestesses conducted during the morning sessions. This is what occurs in this ceremony.

The ceremony commences as usual with performances by senior priestesses supported by those under training and the constant audience members who sometimes join in the performance through the right processes. The only difference in today's performance is the initiation. As a result, the ceremony commences earlier than usual around 6:30am.

The first time the *ɔkomfua* to be initiated is introduced, she is flanked by two older priestesses who tuck her with their arms to provide physical support for her. She is brought before the *Kpalɔ* who receives her salutation and responds to her first voice as she sings for the first time. She dances to her own music and after stopping the music, she is led away in the same manner she is brought. This draws shouts from the audience who hail her for singing and dancing well. Her first rendition draw shouts of praise *ogbi ηɔ* that is to say your voice is sweet literally. In this context, the audience members shout a barrage of praises including the mentioning of the feast days of the deity. In this situation, her feast day falls on Sunday so one will hear *Awushie oo*. The rest are as follows;

<b>Day</b>	<b>Praise</b>
Monday	<i>Ajo oo/ Ajotɔ</i>
Tuesday	<i>Abla oo/ Ablatɔ</i>
Wednesday	<i>Aku oo/ Akutɔ</i>
Thursday	<i>Awo oo/ Awotɔ</i>
Friday	<i>Afi oo/ Afitɔ</i>
Saturday	<i>Amɛ oo/ Amɛtɔ</i>

In Dangme, appreciating a medium through praise shouts is known as *ligbi jemi*. *Ligbi* simply means day and *jemi* stands for act of fetching or removal of something. Figuratively, *ligbi jemi* is a term used to show appreciation to a deity or any ordinary person who is doing excellently well in an activity. It is believed that by mentioning the soul or sacred name of that person, he/she becomes elated therefore mentioning the sacred day name of a deity enables that deity to be more benevolent. This is one of the aesthetic means of appreciating

the performance of a person. Sometimes *ligbi jemi* comes with some of the audience members running into the performance arena with cloth to fun and wipe the sweat of the performer.

Aesthetically, they also either throw their cloth on the floor for the medium to walk on to show how special the medium is or they go around the medium, wipe the sweat off her face and body, bend and fan her feet using one opened end of a cloth. Others prefer just to raise loud shouts of excitement accenting it with thunderous claps. One significant thing I note with *ligbi jemi* is the language context in which the days are marked. Clearly, the days have Ewe bearing i.e *Ajo, Abla, Aku, Awo, Afi, Amε* etc. Could the adoption of Ewe day names be traced back to the close relationship the Ga- Dangmes enjoyed with the Ewes during their migration as described in chapter 2? One would realize, the two groups had a close relationship until events at *klɔvɔ*, characterized by strife and mistrust, got the group separating to their current location.

The costuming of the initiate is very symbolic. In an attempt to show her purity and innocence, she is clothed in a white apparel with her breasts symbolically exposed. After this liminal performance, her next appearance presents her as a fully-fledged priestess. She wears beads on her neck, arms, wrists, calf and ankles. Her hair is combed out in the manner appropriate to her status. Beautiful designs adorn her body made with *klɔbɔ*. Her breasts are now covered to mark her transition from an *ɔkomfua* into a *wɔyoo*. She then takes center stage to perform again for the second time. It is believed that every appearance on the dance arena, presents an opportunity for the spiritual realm to communicate with the temporal world. Therefore, as often as a priestess



makes appearance on the performance scene, messages to the temporal world, conceptualized as voice change, is always different. On the third and final time, she is allowed to sing to her deity's desire. Her singing and dancing draws a lot of support from her older colleagues who dance closely with her throwing their hands around her and urging her on (fig. 42). She finally leaves only to return in a new outfit and dressed like her other colleagues. She now wears the two red pieces of *subue* to cover her breasts and belly area.

*Subue* is one important piece of cloth that serves diverse purposes in the life of the Dangme woman. Originally, *subue* is used as loin cloth to gird the loins of maidens when the usage of undergarments was not in vogue. This same cloth is used as loin cloth, held in place by a mass network of beads, during initiation of young maidens into womanhood in *Dupo/ Dipo* ceremonies. *Subue* is the long red cloth with white patterns printed in it. In traditional marriage, a man's purchase of *subue* for her wife is symbolic of his ability to take absolute care of her. The same *subue* is also used indigenously by women as sanitary towels during their menstrual period. The usage of *subue* therefore becomes critical in this situation. This is because *subue* is used by women to protect and safeguard their sensitive parts and it is within this same frame that it is the cloth of choice to cover the breasts of the elect of the deities.

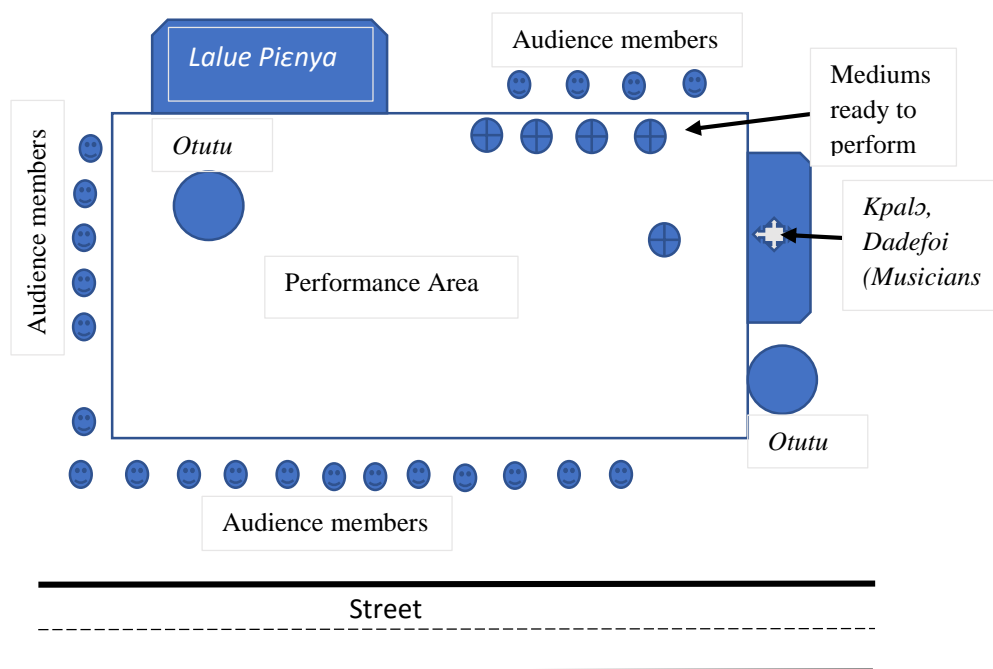


**Figure 42 Priestess being guided through her initiation by older colleagues. Picture by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.**

Since the day is in the honor of the initiate, she takes center stage in everything. After another long period of performance, she leaves the arena for her older colleagues to have their turn before the ceremony comes to an end. At midday, this part of the day's activities come to end with everyone leaving to rest for the *Kple* communal dance. The communal dance is as the same as the first day. The only difference is in the use of the replica sacred drum. This drum which is in constant use sounds better than the sacred drum itself because it is tuned and is constantly being used. Also, after the performance is over, no one is under compulsion to go home and remain indoors. Thus, the second week's activities come to an end.

#### **5.16 Third/ final *Kple* performance (May, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016)**

This third *Kple* ritual performance is the very final performance that seeks to bring the entire celebration that has to do with possession to an end. It is performed at *Agbabi Yoomle's* shrine located at *Kle Tsokunya* (fig. 43). *Agbabi Yoomle* is the second and last female deity within the *Gbugbla* cosmology. As has been discussed in chapter two above, *Maa Yoonue Lalue* is the first and most powerful deity who happens to be the mother of the deities. This final performance is very crucial because, it paves the way for the *Kple mi*, which is the sacred drum to be taken to the sea shore at lower town, later in the afternoon, to be dipped ritually into the sea for the purpose of communal expiation. After this performance, all deities retire to their sacred places of abode to rest and watch the corporeal world go about their businesses. When the deities are needed, they will be supplicated through the various shrines led by the priests in charge.



**Figure 43 Outline of performance area at *Agbabi Yoomle* shrine courtyard at *Kle Tsokunya*. Design by Aristedes Narh Hargoe.**

This performance ceremony, which starts at 8:00 am, is heralded as usual with libations by the *Lalue Labia* and the *Nadu Wɔnɔ* who seconds the *Kpalɔ* as discussed in chapter two. He as usual calls for consensus and the performance kicks off with the performance of the prelude as usual from the *Kpalɔ*. On this day, any medium found seating on a stool painted spotlessly white with a cushion on it is indexical of a newly initiated medium. The new initiates are expected to seat on these white stools for approximately three years because they are considered as new brides, hence enjoying their ‘honey moon’. These third and final performances tend to be the most exciting because, it is at these performances that one observe means by which mortals appreciate their clan deities. By this, I mean to say that, affluent community members whose clan deities come to perform, tend to thank the deities for their benevolence over the year under review by bringing to them gifts in the form of money. These well-off members tend to finance either individual mediums related to them or

show general appreciation by doling out large sums of money on the mediums. As a rule, mediums are not expected to handle money hence their handlers hold them up in trust for the mediums.

The aesthetics of acceptance of financial gifts by a medium is that, she must place her foot on the money to show acceptance. But in a performance mode, the mediums tend to continue the performance whiles the money is speckled literally on them. I will however make some few observations with respect to appreciation and acceptance of money from well-wishers or financiers. First of all, a financier who may happen to be a spouse or close family member may target a particular medium and speckle out money on her. The handler then picks the money. Secondly, the financier may fold the money and stick it into the hair of the medium. Thirdly, the financier may also have to place the money on the floor and the medium will place her foot on it to accept it then the handler can pick it up. Sometimes in the frenzied moments, the money touches other mediums who may happen to be performing alongside a particular medium. A handler of a medium may pick up money just because her medium has been touched by the money. It is at this point in time that the otherwise beautiful performance tends to take a different dimension as handlers scramble for their share of the money. This tends to disrupt the performance for a brief moment especially when there is no clear understanding as to who the money belongs to. It is however not only the mediums who are appreciated money wise. The *Agbaabi* who are led by the *Kpalɔ*, the instrumentalists and the singers who play the clapper sticks are also appreciated by placing money on their forehead or tucked into their dresses. According to Drewal (1992), by “spending money”

on a deity, it is believed they receive a special recognition and blessing from the deities.

Another observation I made on this final day of ritual dance performance is the abuse of seniority. As the convention demands, every medium wishing to perform must join the queue to await her/his turn. Custom and also mutual respect for the elderly sometimes enable younger mediums to offer older deities the opportunity to take their place and perform first. In the entire performance, I have come to observe that some older mediums tend not to join the queue. They take advantage of their seniority and jump the queue much to the displeasure of those whose turn it is to perform. An average performance of a medium could go as long as between 6-8 minutes depending on the number of mediums present to perform but some older mediums out-perform their time on the arena. In the events where some senior mediums keep jumping the queue, junior mediums find it worrisome to stay in the queue for such long time due to the numbers performing in a day. They openly complain to each other to no avail. One bad incident I witnessed is when a younger medium after some time of complaining, had to angrily walk out of the performance arena but was invited back through the pleas of the *Kpalɔ*. When she arrived, she only performed for a short while and left. Mediums, after they have performed, go and change into a different outfit. Sometimes instead of joining the queue again, they form another queue and literally thrust themselves forward bullying the younger mediums in the queue. This attitude normally occurs at the shrines of those deities in whose courtyards the performance is taking place.

The final *Klama* ritual dance performance gradually comes to a halt at half past midday. After every performance, it is incumbent on the mediums to

go around and thank everyone for turning up for the worship ceremony. The appreciation commences with the musicians, then colleague mediums who did not perform, and finally, the audience members. The mediums either shake hands, hug or raise both arms up and show their two palms to the audience and thank them. At this moment, the mediums say to everyone *wɔhaa nyɛ tsumi oo* which literally means 'we give you thanks for a good work done'. It is considered a lot of work to leave one's home to be present at the worship ceremony to participate either through clapping, cheering, or singing. Figuratively, *wɔhaa nyɛ tsumi oo*, simply is a show of appreciation. After this ceremony, mediums head to their shrines for the deities to be dispatched to their places of abode.

Throughout this research, I have observed three ways of sending the deities to sleep. I use the term 'to sleep' because at one moment when this brief ritual was going to be performed, I heard a medium keep saying *Iyaa maya wɔ oo* (I am going to sleep) as she drowsily staggers to go and sit in a chair provided for such purpose. In the chair, her feet are stretched and put together while she is made to cross her arms tucking her hands into her armpits. A large cloth is put over her and the *wɔnɔ* (priest) holds her feet firmly to the ground. They both stay under the cloth for close to about five minutes allowing her to cool down. The second observation is made while this final ritual performance was ongoing. A medium who was not part of the performance got caught up in one of the frenzied moments of the performance. After dancing for some time, she was assisted back to her chair and was made to sit calmly with her aids patting her at the back to cool her down.

To finally dispatch the deity, water in a sachet was placed at her back. She immediately reacted and this act jolted her back to life. By this act, I can conjecture therefore that, mediums are trained in the act of cooling down deities or as it were sending deities to sleep. The third observation was dramatic in nature. In this scenario, the deity possessing the medium was bated. This was a very fiery deity who made the medium move in an aggressive manner. In sending the deity to sleep, a chair was put down and a man sat in it. The medium upon seeing the man in the chair, ran and literally thrust herself onto his laps. The man immediately held her arms and crossed it over her body, holding her firmly. Assisted by other men, her feet were firmly held in place by two other men. The *wɔnɔ* on the other hand went in for water and sprinkled it on her vigorously to jolt her back after she cooled down for a while but the deity did not oblige. It was at the third attempt that they were successful in sending the deity to sleep.

#### **5.17 *Kplemi kɛ woomi woye* (Dipping the *Kplemi* into the sea)**

This round of activity is the most final ritual activity performed openly to bring the celebration of the annual *Kple* festival to an end. The activity marks the descent of the *Kplemi* which is the ritual drum from Upper town to Lower town where the drum is to be ritually dipped into the sea, for the purpose of cleansing and retiring it to its place of safe keeping. This process has three significant stages. The first is the procession of the *Kplemi* followed by a throng of both citizens and tourists as well as media houses. The second is the change in carriage of the *Kplemi* and the final stage is the ritual activities at the sea shore.

The *Kplemi* is carried this time by a *wɔnɔ* and not the *Labia*. It is played while in motion. This procession stops briefly at ritual intersections. At those intersections, the *Kplemi* goes around the intersection three times amidst the making of prayer supplications through libations and then continues on to the next spot until they get the town square of Lower town.

The town square has an ancient baobab tree. The *Kplemi* is taken round the huge baobab tree three times. The *Kplemi* then changes carriers this time to a *wɔyoo*. It is at this point that the second stage commences. This stage also observes three marked activities. These activities are performance based. The *Kplemi* makes three stops at designated places. At all these places, the *Kplemi* is brought down and the social *Kple* rhythm is played for all to dance to. After the last stop, the *Kplemi* is finally carried to the sea shore to commence the final ceremonies.

This final crucial ceremony climaxes all public ritual performances. At this point where the *Kplemi*, a replica of the sacred drum, which holds equal import is brought to the sea shore, a last *Kple* rhythm is played on it. The *Lalue labia* who is the chief priest leads the ceremony. While the rhythm is going on, he performs a ritual act with the purpose of supplicating the deities to replenish the stock of fish in the sea. He therefore simulates the art of fishing by stepping into the sea and casting an imaginary hook and eye. His act demonstrates the skills and diverse arts employed in fishing. His demeanor is grave and focused. He then runs to where the rhythm is being played with verve and runs all his fingers through the sand with his back towards the sea walking backwards in a gorilla manner till he ends up in the sea. This he does thrice and then starts throwing his hands in the air in a conjuring manner. He finally goes and grabs



the sacred drum into his bosom protectively and being flanked on both ends by elders, he wades deep into the sea, dips the drum thrice into the sea amidst incantations and then the youths take possession of the drum and runs with it to be kept at its secret shrine. After this act, the *labia* himself ritually cleanses his body with the sea water. It is at this very point that the masses join in the expiation. The expiation goes on for a while after which everyone retires to their homes.

After this last public performance, a period of two weeks is made to elapse in order to allow the community to prepare to transit back into normalcy. This transitory period also allows the deities and their mediums to rest from the hectic activities. After the two week, transitory period, the mediums together with the priests, dressed in white apparels, will perform the *maami naami* (lit. stepping inside the town). *Abaa naa maami* as is performatively used, literally means they will walk through the town. After having to lock the entire town down by the imposition of ban on drumming and noise making, the mediums go on a ritual parade through the town to unlock the erstwhile locked town. They, in their single file, symbolically make sure the town is spiritually safe to be opened up for secular activities. The ritual entourage visits every home in the community. One is obliged to make donations either in cash or in kind to support them for their spiritual vigilance over the community throughout the year.

Two days are dedicated to this act. It usually falls on a Friday and a Saturday. This is to forestall any spiritual lapse or wandering spirits whose encounter might spell doom for the health of the community. The ritual parade is also intended to bring equilibrium or harmonize the society. After the Saturday, there is a meeting at the *Digblɛ piɛmi* the following day which is

Sunday. On this day at 3pm, there is a general meeting to assess the events of the ritual period and the spiritual welfare of the town for the coming year. Afterwards, all the donations received during the parade are accounted for and distributed accordingly. A delegation is then sent to the paramount chief to officially inform him the town is ritually safe for the ban to be lifted. The chief then summons his musicians to officially play the *Obonu* which is akin to the *fontomfrom* of the Akans of Ghana. This drumming which is referred to as *miε nɔ puemi* (pouring or playing on the drum) symbolically lifts the ban known as *manya blimi* (town opening). The working relationship between the traditional and the political leadership brings us to the notion of sharing of leadership space. This is part of the duality between the sacred and the secular in the traditional governance polity. After the lifting of the ban, the ritual activities in which *Klama* features prominently comes to an end.

### 5.18 Summary

This chapter has reviewed chronologically, the annual ritual performance calendar of the people of Gbugbla highlighting moments where *Klama* is performed, effecting communication between the cosmic beings and their temporal fellows. The chapter has examined the performance standards that reveal the aesthetic sensibilities of the people. This is done through meta-discourses as engineered by the informed audiences who are active participants in the ritual process without whom the ritual worship activity will fall short. The chapter also puts into perspective all the elements that constitute performance i.e. the performers, music, dance, costume, props and finally the audience. We have also seen performance sites or spaces as well as performance etiquettes observed by both ritual agents and the audience. The next chapter will therefore

attempt to analyze just one performance activity with the purpose of merging all components into a unified whole in order to scrutinize every department in line with the objective of explaining the performance aesthetics of the *Klama* dance of the Dangmes of Gbugbla.

## CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE

### AESTHETICS OF *KLAMA* DANCE

#### 6.1 Introduction

Gbugbla culture like all Dangme cultures, are propelled by traditional religious practices. These practices stipulate when rites and festivals are to be performed. These rites and rituals are what the Dangmes refer to as *kusum* or tradition. *Klama* religious practices personified within the dance is another form of *kusum*. In this *kusum*, performatives like *wa yaa fiε wɔ*, *wa yaa tsu wɔ*, *wa yaa je wɔ nyaŋma* and *wa yaa do wɔ* which literally means “we are going to worship the deities”, are semantic ways in which ritual dance performances held in honor of the deities/gods/ancestral spirits are referred to. In Dangme culture, besides libation prayers and a few other rites, *Klama* dance performances are rituals in their own rights and the manifestation of tutelary spirits are a confirmation of the ritual process.

In *Klama* dance performances, movements performed by mediums or deities repeatedly may virtually be the same each time, but then there are slight variations. This is due to the creative potentials of the people employed in keeping the integrity of the performance. The performances are revelations of the nature of the spirits who inhabit their mediums. By using the bodies of the mediums, the deities perform themselves into being thereby communicating with the corporeal world. It is through the constant repetitive (restored behavior) re-enactment performances (Drewal, 1992) that the rituals take on a new life thereby transforming the worship processes. It is also within this same re-enactment processes that the Dangme’s aesthetic principles are made overt to

the general public. Nketia (2005:129), an astute ethnomusicologist reveals to us that;

because a musical performance may have visual and movement aspects in the form of costumes, props, and dance, gestures and some form of orderly presentation, it can be described as beautiful when such aspects predominate or form the focus of the observer's attention. A performance without such visual emphasis is not normally described as beautiful, since music is appraised not just in terms of its apparent surface structures, but more especially in terms of the impact it makes through such structures or the intensity of feeling it generates.

I agree with Nketia because I am of the opinion that he makes these observations based on the immediacy of response (feedback) that music and dance provokes from its audience. This immediate response comes as a result of the unique manner in which music and dance informs the affective domains of its observers (Jackson, 1983) hence engendering metacommunicative pronouncements from them. These pronouncements speak to the aesthetic dimensions of the people. Adinku, a pioneer dancer and scholar in Ghana (Adinku, 1994), in his work *African Dance Education In Ghana*, cites Aspin who talks about "aesthetic experience" and "aesthetic activity", two ways in which people appreciate beauty (aesthetic) in performance. According to Aspin, "the spectator's perception of it and his response to it as coming under the general heading of "aesthetic experience" whereas his observation, attending, estimation, judging, valuing and so on, we could call "aesthetic activity" (Adinku, 1994:31).

These two frames seek to explain audience' appreciation or experience of a performance and how the performance has impressed on them hence their reaction as coming under "aesthetic experience", however, the passing on of value judgment in relation to the quality of the performance, the techniques

employed and the treatment given to the movements or performance comes under “aesthetic activity”. These reactions to performances are based on the personal idiosyncrasies and knowledge of that cultural process/ phenomenon from the observer’s perspective. Therefore, in this chapter, aesthetics within the context of *Klama* are explored through the lens of Dangme concept of aesthetics.

According to Gyekye (2003), aesthetics within the African purview is judged based on the functional, symbolic and purely aesthetic properties of African art forms. The rationale for Gyekye’s position is that most writers of aesthetics claim African art forms are ‘functional and symbolic’ in opposition to European held conception of “art for art’s sake”. Gyekye (2003:127) opines that,

the distinction that is often drawn between African and European art is that while the latter is purely aesthetic the former is functional and symbolic and empty of the purely aesthetic element. This distinction is definitely incorrect, for in African art production and appreciation equal value is placed on functionality, symbolism, and the purely aesthetic.

Therefore, “dance performance is evaluated by reference to the aesthetic qualities of body movements and style and to the significance of the movements” executed (Gyekye, 2003:128). I am in full agreement with Gyekye and I believe African art forms serve more purpose than just a mere art for art’s sake. This is because African art forms have embedded within it philosophies and symbolisms that speak to the belief systems, the history of the people and their future aspirations. Therefore, in watching an African performance art, what is communicated goes beyond the physical, the here and now. It is an embodiment of the philosophy or worldview of the people which cuts across their political, social, economic, religious as well as cultural foundations of the

society. But besides these, the African is capable of sifting through its performance art forms and enjoying the purely aesthetic components without reference to the functional and symbolic baggages. Dele Jegede (1993) among a host of other scholars have also argued that African art forms transcends the utilitarian functions, in that it combines beautifully both the contemplative and functional features of art through the blurring of its genres to serve diverse ends concurrently. Therefore, African art forms seek to express the notion of “art for life’s sake” as an all-encompassing idea as opposed to “art for arts sake” which when subjected to critical scrutiny with beyond the surface, communicates deeper underlying messages. *Klama* performance praxis does not only serve the functional purpose of organizing the community for ritualized worship, but seeks to communicate and uphold attendant moral values in addition to the aesthetic pleasure of entertaining the society in general. Yuriko Saito (2001), in his work “Everyday Aesthetics” also speaks to the quotidian spatial organization, arrangement of material objects, the manner in which mediums, quasi- mediums (trainee mediums), attendants, musician and audience members go about their activities as carriers of inherent aesthetic qualities.

It is within this frame that the study is examining the aesthetic qualities of *Klama* performance. This is the crux of the thesis. This chapter is parsing out the aesthetics of the performance by outlining the functional, symbolic and the purely aesthetic components of the dance form. The chapter will achieve this through analysis of the performance process. This will be done in three stages i.e. pre-performance behavior, performance behavior and post-performance behavior. Also, to be analyzed will be the semiotic components i.e. iconic,

indexical and symbolic usage of movements, props and costumes of diverse nature within the three performance stages.

## 6.2 The Dangme concept of aesthetics

Christopher Waterman (1990) in his work *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music* argues that in contemporary Yoruba ceremonial life, aesthetics, sensuality and pragmatics are interlaced. As a result, it's not easy to parse them out into different entities. This argument holds true for the Dangme socio-religious praxis, *Klama*. In the Dangme cultural space, as exists in most African cultural forms, visual aesthetics are expressed in verbal terms because according to Abusabib, as cited by Van Damme (2000), "traditional forms -that is, proverbs and sayings, etc.-are more rewarding and more reliable, since they are usually the products of deep and refined thinking which certainly reflects the communal experience of the people". Therefore, in analyzing the Dangme notion of aesthetics, both pragmatic and sensual awareness is implied. Sensuality deals with sensations (*henumi*) or feelings embedded within a person that endears him/her to an activity. This is what Geurts (2002) refers to as *seselelame* in her work "Culture and the Senses: Bodily ways of knowing in an African Community". Geurts argues for three sensory modalities that governs kinesthetic, internal and external sensory awareness (Proprioceptive, Interoceptive and exteroceptive senses). All these combine towards the understanding of the body, which is at the center of social praxis, and its complex means of communication either audio or visually.

In Dangme aesthetic expressions, such as *afɛɔɔ* or *fɔŋfɔɔ ni* (a thing of beauty), when a person is dressed elegantly, the person is praised with the aesthetic expression *ohe ne fɛɔ/fɔɔ* that is to literally say 'yourself is beautiful'.



This expression has no reference to gender. The Dangme concept of beauty is premised on an age-old Dangme proverb *afɛonɔ hisi nɛ ayɛ pumi* which when translated simply implies that “it is meaningless to deny oneself of the pleasure of beholding a beautiful sight”. This points to the fact that it is natural to appreciate a beautiful spectacle than to deny oneself of that pleasure. Aesthetics, when expressed in relation to a dance, is expressed as *doɔ nɛ fɛo/fɔɔ* that is ‘the dance is beautiful’. This is occasioned by the standards or expectations that govern sensual responsiveness in activities such as music and dance performances. When a performance meets these culture specific sensations, it draws a certain reaction from the perceiver. Thus, sometimes, it is a challenge to draw the distinctions between sensual reaction and aesthetic reaction. If beauty is expressed in relation to dexterity of movement execution, then the skilled performer is deemed; *ele domi* or *ehe daa* or *ehe kpɔ*. *Ele domi* means ‘he knows how to dance’. That is to say, the person has acquired the know-how to perform the dance. When the suffix *waa* is added, then it means that the person dances well. The second and third expressions *ehe daa* or *ehe kpɔ* literally means ‘he is smooth’ and ‘he is peeled’. These two expressions refer to the great skill employed in movement execution that enables smooth and flawless dance performance. On the contrary, *eli domi* (he doesn’t know how to dance) and *esa* (he is rotten) are used to negatively critique a dancer who has not invested time and practice into learning and mastering the dance. Judgements in relation to beauty or expressions used in dance performances are always passed by the culturally informed audience members anytime there is a performance. In relation to a successful music performance for a dance activity, audience members speak to the general harmony or coordination among the

musicians and how their concerted efforts advance the performance activity. For this to be achieved, musicians tend to follow the playing sequence and respond appropriately to the dictates of the master musician or the *Kpalɔ* who is the music empresario presiding over the performance.

In Dangme culture, daily appropriate social behaviors referred to otherwise as customary behaviors has aesthetic qualities attached to it (Saito, 2001). An instance is that, when a person arrives at a gathering, it is incumbent that he/she observes basic social or customary behaviors. This movement aspect of customary behavior is required of every Dangme persona. Premium to this behavior is greeting, respect for the elderly, offering of seats when an elder makes appearance at a gathering. These behaviors bother on ethics but then again, in Gbugbla culture, there is also a thin line between some ethical behaviors and aesthetic behavior. The Dangme phrase; *e ɲɛ fɛo/fɔɔ kaa...* that is to say “it is beautiful that...” is used to bridge the gap between ethical behavior and aesthetic behavior hence some forms of ethical behaviors can also be judged as aesthetically pleasing.

When mediums arrive at a gathering at a time they are not mounted yet, their greeting follows the normal greeting pattern used in everyday social interaction. They commence their greeting from the far right of the gathering. If they approach a *wɔnɔ* (a priest in charge of a shrine), an older male or female or senior *wɔyoo* (priestess), they shake hands whiles squatting briefly. This is a sign meant to show reverence to the person. If the people are a lot, it is expected that the medium will stand in the middle and perform the mass greeting. She/he puts the feet together, casting the right hand from the extreme right through the extreme left into the laps ending in a slight bend of the upper body and a bend

of the knee. This is followed by the greeting phrase *tsemε ke nyεmε nyε pεεnε nyε ha manyé* that is to say ‘fathers and mothers, kindly bestow blessing’. A mode of greeting that places one’s personhood lower to those being greeted hence the request for blessings. These greeting mannerisms speak to the notion of what is beautiful and appropriate to the Dangme.

“*Klama ηϙϙ, Klama ηϙϙ, tsapi Klama nε wayεϙ*” (*Klama* is sweet, *Klama* is sweet, we say, but we don’t eat *Klama*.) This piece of *Klama* song underscores the Dangme philosophy of feeling or sensuality. Consequently, when the Dangme person takes active part in a performance of any kind and he/she enjoys the experience or is satisfied with the experience, he/she expresses such affective sentiments in words such as *ηϙϙmi* that is “sweetness”. However, his/her observation of a beautiful or interesting performance comes under the expression *fεo/fϙϙ* (beautiful). “Sweetness” in *Klama* dance performance emanates from the amalgamation of the various components of the performance process i.e. musicians playing their roles as expected, mediums/deities being present and performing, making room for others to equally have their chance to perform in a friendly atmosphere. Also, audience members turning out in their numbers and cheering the performers with their meta comments whiles appreciating both the deities and the musicians with gifts and financial donations to support the worship process is encapsulated in what accounts for the sweetness in *Klama*. Therefore, to the Dangme, the sensation of “sweetness” is in active participation whiles that of beauty *fεo/fϙϙ* is seen through the lens of the observer. Hence, aesthetics and sensations to the Dangme, is an amalgam of skill employed in movement execution, observation of performance etiquettes and diverse forms of performance appraisals by audience members. Also,

embedded in aesthetics is the use of costumes, props, music, and the art employed in the application of make-ups and body adornments. Thus, in operationalizing aesthetics, it is within this frame that the study will examine the aesthetic qualities of *Klama* performance.

### 6.3 Functional, symbolic and aesthetic aspects of *Klama*

It is true that African dance forms and for that matter religious dances like *Klama* are performed to serve utilitarian needs of the community. Besides the utilitarian act of aiding the worship of *Dzemawɔhi* /*Jemawɔhi* (benevolent spirit beings that inhabit rivers, trees, rocks etc.) by the worship community, the activity exposes the aesthetic and symbolic sensibilities of the people. Indeed, throughout the course of the life cycle, there are dance activities infused into it to functionally mark every moment of a person's journey through life and beyond. All the dances performed at these stages symbolically mark each period and seeks to draw society's attention to the fact that its members are growing and developing. Therefore, an art form such as *Klama* speaks to the notion of art for life's sake (Jegede, 1993). A clear example is the performance of *Dupo* otherwise known as *Klama hae* to mark the attainment of a marriageable age of an adolescent girl. This performance indicates to society the need to be circumspect about the sort of training given to the younger, volatile and adventurous generation in order to churn out responsible adults who will be at the helm of affairs in the near future. This transformational activity with its bodily praxis components seeks to "tame", "mould", "ripen", and inculcate a "new sense" into the young adults because bodily movements indeed does more than mere words can do (Jackson, 1983). This and more performances are critical in the life of the African society because these dance activities have been

purposefully established to serve transitional functions within the life of the community without which some meaning to life will be lost to society.

Whenever *Klama* is performed, it's function is to serve as a reminder to the Dangme society of the end of a successful year and the commencement of another. It also calls for a communal stock-taking of the previous year and a collective hope in the year beginning. The libation prayer performatives capture these thoughts and hopes therefore, when the community responds *hiao* (let it be for us), they are actively taking part in the resolution making process for a change in habit, life style and approach to living.

*Klama* dance performance as explained in the first chapter, is prohibited to be performed during funerals because *Klama* is a hallowed performance activity. The only time that it can be performed at a funeral is when the departed soul is either a priest, priestess or the *Kpalɔ*. It is believed these group of people interface with the divine beings hence they are as holy as the ancestral spirits. As a result, performing *Klama* at their funeral is commemorative of the holy lives they have lived on earth. Thus, whenever *Klama* is performed, it's function is to index to the community of the celebration of a holy life lived by a devotee hence that performance is termed, *abofu Klama*. This simply means a unique performance outside of the norm.

A successful performance of *Klama* is a symbol that is self explanatory of the unity of the society. The presence of the key functionaries that is the musicians, the *Kpalɔ*, the presence of community members, the mediums and ultimately the presence of the deities in the form of possession affirms that agreement of stakeholders in the performance of the social process. A contrary

indication will be what is known as *fɔɔyi* that is non-manifestation of the deities. This therefore calls for an investigation into the non-appearance and the error remedied.

Besides the functional purposes of *Klama* religious dance forms, used as part of worship or ritual activities, the dance is also observed and enjoyed by looking beyond its functional purpose of aiding worship. Sometimes, it is possible to remain fixated to the overarching religious context but besides this religious frame, *Klama* serves the entertainment and cathartic needs of the people (Jackson, 1983). Indeed, *Klama* dance is quite entertaining to behold. It is full of dramatic activities seeing the deities playing themselves out. It is also a great converging point of diverse art forms like costumes worn by mediums at different stages, props held and used by mediums and key functionaries within the course of the performance. Also included are make-up and body adornments or markings of different nature etc. just to mention a few. When all these art forms are merged in a single performance, it lays overt the aesthetic world view of the Dangmes of Gbugbla. It is as a result of these aesthetic experiences enjoyed by audience members that automatically draw comments in appreciation of the performances.

Dance scholars like Sklar (2001) have explained the correlation between movement knowledge and cultural knowledge. Davies as cited by Dixon-Stowell (1988), also notes that in order to understand the culture of a people, their dance must be studied. These critical facts reveal that dance does more than just being a movement activity. It reflects the aesthetic values (Coplan 1972, Sklar 1991), unearths the philosophies, moral, and political as well as

social sentiments of the people. Therefore, if movement is so vital in indigenous knowledge system, why neglect it?

I argue in this thesis that to a large extent, movements reflect cultural history. The way a person moves symbolically expresses his philosophy, experience and gives insight into his culture and status etc. Adinku (1994) clearly illustrates that the manner of restricted, elegant and majestic movements of a king (monarch), bearing in mind his regalia, cannot be compared with the simple, swift and agile movements executed by a priest in a shrine. Therefore, understanding *Klama* as a movement system means understanding the aesthetic and cosmological world view of the people. In the same breath, the concept of *Klama* and its thematic components, and how each component relates with others towards the realization or the attainment of balance between the cosmic and the temporal realm is very important to establishing the foundation of this thesis.

I am of the firm resolve that this thesis' template, in the form of the concept of *Klama*, is a model for other religious dance performances to be interrogated. This is because the *Klama* concept encapsulates the underlying ideological foundation upon which the entire community's cosmology revolves. This cosmology is hinged on four thematic frames of *lami* (songs/music), *tsupa* (herbal medicine), *fiemi* (play/performance) and *doo* (dance). I am reaffirming the notion that the dance, which is the fulcrum of *Klama fiemi* (performance), is one single overt activity that rallies other Dangme artistic forms to showcase the culture of the Dangmes to the outside world. The socio-cultural and political structure, medicine, beliefs in what constitutes illness, wellness, entertainment and rituals concerning economics etc. are all enshrined in the *Klama* dance. This

relates to the polytheistic nature of the *Klama* worship system with specific deities in charge of every facet of the life of the people. All these deities and philosophies are embodied in the dance therefore, I postulate forcefully that to the Dangme, *Klama* means the very life force that drives the world view of the people.

*Klama* dance performance is full of complex web of symbols that give indications of diverse functions. These symbols whether in the form of movements, props, body adornments, costumes, make ups, songs or cues embedded within the instrumental music structure etc. becomes signs that index multiple meanings and provides a host of information about the social process. Having become familiar with all these basic complex codes within the performances, one tends to transcend and concentrate on the purely aesthetic aspects of the dance thus appreciating the movements and gestures as expressive forms. One can also appreciate the dance due to the performance structure, mannerism, gestures, the dramatic components and the dexterity with which mediums perform the dance. It is at this level that audiences perceive the expressive form, enjoy and pass comments in relation to the aesthetic expressiveness of the dance.

#### **6.4 Pre-possession behavior of mediums**

On a typical *Klama* performance day, the behavior, appearance and mannerism of a medium is enough to give a lot of information in relation to the performance yet to commence. A clear example is the dress code of a medium. As a sign, something that stands for something else for someone in a special way (Turino, 2012a), a medium is seen dressed up in a spotlessly white garb to



cover both upper and lower torsos with the complement of neck, arm, wrist, calf, ankle beads as well as ankle bells. Mediums may also be seen with green body and leg markings through the use of *klɔbɔ*, an aromatic herbal preparation akin to myrrh, or simply through the use of powder or *ayilɔ* (white clay). The nature of the designs or markings on the body, arms and legs of the mediums are made in relation to the dictates of the deities or the aesthetic sensibilities of the artist who makes the markings. The hair of the medium is expected to be neatly braided to allow for easy unbraiding at the onset of possession. Consequently, the hair is carefully wrapped with another white piece of cloth. The only people that are exempted from wrapping their hair are the mediums who wear the *akuku* hairstyle (chapter 4). Even the craft employed by hair stylists into molding the *akuku* hair piece is aesthetically pleasing. A quick look at the wrist beads of a medium will indicate the presence of a black and white pair of beads which immediately indicates that the medium is a *Klama* medium and therefore responds to *Me* music.

Every aspect of a fully costumed priestess is a sign that has indexical connotations pointing to one thing or the other. Semiotically, the appearance of a medium prior to a dance is a sign that immediately indicates that the medium is in a state of readiness for a worship ceremony. It is also possible a medium dressed in this manner is observing her deity's feast day. Peirce' (Turino, 2012a,) semiotic theory is used to explain the thought pattern or mode of understanding of people's social processes. A sign which is primarily what one observes, makes meaning when it is brought in relation to an object. The relationship transforms into index which is the implication or the meaning ascribed to what is observed in the sign. The meaning generated is as a result of

the constant contact with the phenomenon and the knowledge of its significance over a period of time. Hence, understanding of what is seen in a social process becomes automatic. However, the third aspect of the theory (symbols), are the theoretical implications or the shedding of light on a social process for the purpose of documentation and or teaching. These semiotic foundations advance the understanding of *Klama*.

On a worship performance day, it is possible a medium may be mounted from home or her shrine before she makes appearance on the performance stage. The possession could sometimes be triggered by the hearing of the solo drum rendition performed as a call for the community to make its way to the performance grounds. The choice of the white color as basic attire for mediums is a sign meant to index purity, holiness and sacredness of the deities whom the mediums represent in the physical world (Ayiku, 1998). This is the basic costume worn by all mediums before possession commences. Mediums are always expected to walk bare feet in respect of the sacredness of the earth they tread on. A medium is deemed appropriately dressed when she appears in this order.

### **6.5 *Klama* performance venues**

*Klama* performance venues are sacred platforms or stages that have been designated by the traditional religious authorities for communal worship dances to take place. In Gbugbla, every principal *Wetso* (family) have a courtyard where such performances can take place. The courtyards of shrines are also spaces that are used for worship performances. But besides these spaces, the two most important performance sites are the courtyards of *Digblɛ* and *Lalue*

*piɛnya*. These are the two parent deities whose courtyards are used for major performances.

At the convergence of mediums, musicians and audiences, that space automatically is transformed into a sacred space even without the performance of libation prayers. When the performance quorum is established, that is the presence of key actors like the musicians, mediums and audiences, there is the general observance of space usage etiquettes. These space usage etiquettes are, (a) no one is permitted to walk across the performance space. The fringes serve that connective purpose. (b) If an ordinary audience member must of necessity use the space, footwears must be taken off because the space has been transformed into a sacred space. (c) No one is also permitted to walk across or be along the path of a performing deity and this includes a *mawa yoo*. Proper protocol is expected to be followed when an audience member wishes to perform in the stead of a deity. Libation prayers are used to thank and seek the consent of the divine or ancestral spirits to be present in order for the activity about to begin to be successful. This is the final activity that sets the ball rolling for a performance to begin.

Performance spaces (stage) in Gbugbla come in two distinctive shapes i. e. oval or circular and rectangular. Circular or oval spaces are mostly found within the shrines. In actual sense, the shrines are typically circular in appearance. This gives an indication of the typical indigenous architectural style that prevailed years past. The shrines are also places of meeting and so has space within it to accommodate small performances. As a result, when performances are held in these spaces, the sitting arrangement is circular. The circular nature of the space indexes the idea of the circle of life where it is believed that both

the living and the dead, at any social or religious gathering, are ever present. In performances that occur in circular spaces, there is also the constant reminder of the presence of the duality of life and death. Society is also reminded of the link between the ancestral/ tutelar beings and the temporal world through the anticlockwise and clockwise movements patterns executed. Its worth noting that at every gathering, there is the presence and memory of ancestral beings who are evoked and re-lived hence when the Ga says *wɔbɔle kutuu wɔkpe* (we have gathered round in a meeting), it includes the presence of the cosmic forces. One is also prompted of an eventual journey into the 'other world' hence good deeds, patience and decorum is the prerequisite for such journeys. Finally, performances orchestrated in circular spaces also indicate to the physical world, of the sense of community which is embodied both in the bodies of the performers or participants (Norris, 2001) and the other worldly beings.

Rectangular performance spaces on the other hand are mostly found outside of the shrines. These spaces make room for more participation hence accommodates large audience members. The rectangular nature of the space is indexical of a masculine feature when compared to the soft circular features that give an indication of femaleness. This type of space seeks to reflect the male chauvinist orientation of the cosmic composition which goes to reinforce the fact that Gbugbla is a Patri-society with large male cosmic composition that allows little room for females to make an impact. This is evident by the fact that only two female deities exist within the cosmic structure of the people of Gbugbla.

## 6.6 Possession behavior of mediums

At the constitution of the musicians, the *Kpalɔ* informs either the *Lalue wɔnɔ* or the *Nadu wɔnɔ* to perform the libation prayers. This prayer is the official cue to inform everyone that the ceremony is about to commence. The prayer also requests the presence of the ethereal beings to mount their mediums and direct the affairs of the day to a successful end. One notable request during libation prayers is for the dance to be “sweet”. After the prayers, the *Kpalɔ* then goes ahead to perform his opening chants to which the mediums and the musicians respond to. He goes ahead with the musicians to begin singing the praise songs of the deities. These songs with its pragmatic propensities, is intentioned to invoke the deities to manifest by mounting their mediums. At the heightened stage of the singing, mediums who have attuned themselves begin to show signs of onset of possession. This three-phase transition commences with (a) tensed emotions followed by (b) brief moments of fits, gripping or holding on to people or anything within arm’s length and (c) breaking into songs of the deity manifesting as well as trying to get rid of head gears and torso coverings. This is quite contrary to Friedson and Rouget’s universal approach to possession (Friedson, 2009; Rouget, 1985) characterized by emitting of high pitched “he he he” sounds. What is experienced among the Dangmes is rather a busting out of songs reflective of the deity possessing the medium.

Mediums show of the any of the three-phase transition characteristics indicate to any culturally informed member that possession is afoot. *Mawa yii* who are aids to these mediums quickly move to their assistance. Depending on the advancement of the possession and the behavior of the mediums, the *mawa yii* either help the mediums to gear up instantly or help them to a nearby room

and assist them dress up properly. Mediums are aided first by fixing their lower torso costume first to avoid exposing their nudity and then continue to fix their upper torso. The *mawa yii* further unpick the braids of the mediums, combing the hair to the desired texture. Mediums that use powder on their faces are provided with powders. Mediums whose manifestations have been anticipated in advance are moved to a holding area or shrines to be prepared for the ceremony. After going through these routines, the mediums finally attain full possession and they are left alone to be controlled by the deities.

The personhood of the mediums now enters into the *flow state* where their personalities are virtually lost in the performance activity. The musicians also enter into and out of this flow state a lot of times. This state occurs mostly in the mind due to the intensity of the performance and how much one immerses him/herself into the activity. The switch between the flow state and back is fast for the musicians but for the mediums, they lose consciousness even of who they are because their personalities have been taken over (Turino, 2014b).

The greeting of deities after attainment of possession is a mark of their first encounter with the temporal world hence the greeting affords the ethereal beings the opportunity to fraternize. This calls for the deities to bestow the blessings and good wishes they have for the mortal world. It is at this level that performatives like *nye he manyé*, *nye mie manyé*, *nye so manyé*, and *nye ηυο ηυο* (see chapter five) are used to bestow divine blessings on the populace.

The aesthetics of greeting performance is observed when the performer commences from the extreme right to the left bearing in mind his/her status in relation to the recipients. As customary or social behavior stipulates, younger

members, when greeting asks for blessings and the older members bestow blessings. Therefore, deities tend to bestow blessings. After having performed the appropriate greeting, a deity must of necessity join the cue to perform. If there are no deities in the queue, then the deity will make his/her initial approach to the *Kpalɔ* to begin his/her performance.

A deity's approach to the *Kpalɔ* signifies importantly, his/her willingness to communicate with the corporeal world. This is because, both as gate keepers, they are means through which each world can access the other. This access is therefore negotiated on the dance performance stage. It is therefore through the dance that both the corporeal and ethereal worlds are able to fellowship and transform the ritual process. The process of both worlds negotiating and reaffirming ties demands the observance of some social or customary aesthetics. This customary aesthetics comprise of the visitor's greetings and response, statement of mission or purpose of visitation which is indigenously referred to as *amaneɛ*, as well as identification. It is important for deities to identify themselves for the avoidance of doubt due to the ability of a medium to be manifested through by multiple deities. This identification is necessary in order for the musicians to know exactly which deity is manifesting and the type of rhythm is to be played for them.

Dance movement is the fundamental means of effecting communication between the ethereal and corporeal worlds besides singing. It makes use of gestures orchestrated by the hands, arms, head, eyes, face, etc. General body carriage and dexterous feet movements which together can be referred to as body language also aid in effecting communication between the two worlds. Besides the functional use of dance within the religious context, *Klama* dance

presents itself as a spectacle that can be appreciated equally for its own sake without reference to its religious connotations due to the nature and quality of movements expressed. *Klama* dance avails itself to many movement patterns depending on the nature of the deity performing. Generally, movements are performed either in situ or across the floor of the performance space. Movements that can be performed in place are short movements. Travelling movements on the other hand either takes the performer a few steps away from the instrumentalists or requires the performer to use the entire performance space and sometimes beyond.

*Klama* dance movements are a complex combination of hand gestures, facial expression, rapid, sprightly and dexterous foot works. The frame of the body depending on the nature of the movement, goes into undulation, contract and release, and leaning forwards or backwards in the performance process. The body frame also provides support so that ancillary movements performed by other body parts can be executed. Most movements are executed as a solo performance by mediums whose turn it is to perform. A medium may however be accompanied by her colleagues who serve the same deity or by other mediums present as a form of support for the performer. The purpose, though is to provide support and lay emphasis on the meaning of the song, also engenders some form of comradery among the tutelary spirits. This act of bonding is meant to be an example of what the divine spirits expect to be replicated in the corporeal world. Travelling movements in *Klama* comes in different ways. It can be in the form of (a) rapid shuffling of feet across the performance arena, (b) step and hops and (c) vigorous stamping of feet alternatively among others.



Sklar's (2001) concept of "five premises for a culturally sensitive approach to dance" in which movement knowledge is viewed as embodiment of varied forms of cultural knowledge falls inline with this study. Critically reviewing Sklar's work on the various movement knowledge concepts, I find a strong linkage between Sklar's concepts to that of Peirce whose theory of semiotics is a foundation for understanding human perception, experience and thought. The very first concept which is "Movement knowledge is a kind of cultural knowledge", reflects movement embodiment within cultures. These movement ideas give a clue as to who the people are. In Peircean semiotics, movement which is in itself a sign, becomes an index, indicating the nature of the people in just as much a way as their language gives identity to them (Turino, 2012). Within *Klama* movement performance praxis, mediums when not possessed move ordinarily like anyone but upon possession, their movements become brisker especially when they are moving from one point to another. When they are stationary, their arms move up to akimbo position and they begin to either shake or they tend to pace from left to right. Any perceiver who is aware of these movement embodiments can automatically understand the state of the medium. This is indexical in Peirce's semiotics due to the fact that such movements indicate to the observer that the medium has attained full manifestation of her deity and it is in fact the deity that is performing itself into being. Another of such occasion is when possession is about to occur. Mediums tend to exhibit characteristics such as tensed emotion or aggressively holding on tightly to anyone or object close by. After these characteristics come the bursting out of songs of the deity and the removal of head gear, beads worn on the neck and upper body cover cloth. These tendencies are also indexical of

possession and handlers are apt to make sure the mediums are assisted to gear up.

Sklar's second concept, "movement knowledge is conceptual and emotional as well as kinesthetic", falls within Peirce's *secondness* in musical or movement experience. This concept raises questions about belongingness or affiliation within the larger world. This could be religious or social affiliation. Within this realm, the act of worship through kneeling, bowing or paying obeisance as well as movement engagements in dance performances are encased in the doctrinal ideas that are embodied within the performance. These doctrines are engrained in the subconscious memory of cultural bearers so much so that it becomes a natural part of the person, what the French philosopher and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as *habitus* (Bailey & Pickard, 2010; Noland, 2009).

Music and dance performances are therefore hinged on these movement, doctrinal cum emotional ideas. These engender what Csikszentmihalyi (Norris, 2001; Turino, 2012a) calls the *flow state* where one is emotionally engrossed in a performance to the extent that one sort of "gets lost" in it. This is a feature of *secondness* in Peirce's semiotics. *Secondness* which is similar to index, is a way of immediately understanding or knowing about a phenomenon or an action based on the frequency of encountering that action and experiencing the same results over again. As a result, the feedback is automatic and factual. And so, in *Klama* performances, it is very easy to establish the exact moment of a performance by observing the costume type worn by a medium. The identity of the deity manifesting can also be discovered through the use of props, costumes etc. as explained in the fourth chapter. All these occur at the level of *secondness*.

Sklar's third concept, "movement knowledge is intertwined with other kinds of cultural knowledge", speaks to the eclectic nature in which movements and other social practices aid our comprehension of performances. The concept speaks to the cultural baggage or diverse contexts in which movements are selected from or can be used during performances. Therefore, understanding movements also means that one ought to appreciate the shared understanding of other customary practices and experiences which inform meaning of movements used in performances.

In Sklar's fourth concept, "one has to look beyond movement to get at its meaning", Peirce's idea of *symbols* which is embedded in his *thirdness* has a correlation. Sklar believes that merely looking at movements as they are performed does not generate the necessary meaning one requires to understand a performance phenomenon. Movements become meaningful when it is related to the experience or history of the people, or explained through interactions or research. At this moment, one can then be able to appreciate the performance in its entirety. Peirce explains in his concept of *thirdness*, that *thirdness* (Turino, 2012b) is the insight, knowledge or conclusion drawn or advanced on the relationship between a sign and an object. These insights which are mostly drawn and used by academicians in their teachings or in their academic papers aid in the understanding of certain phenomena. This extensive quote by Sklar (Sklar, 2001:31) encapsulates both concepts.

When a man in church slips into a kneel, he is not just doing something with his body; he is honoring a divine being. As a researcher, I need to know something about that being to understand the man's experience of kneeling. I might be able to identify a quality of humility in his kneeling posture, but I couldn't know that both the kneeling and the humility have to do with the complex relationships between living human beings and a divinity called Jesus Christ. Unless I asked somebody. Likewise, I

couldn't know that the moves of ballet refer to codes of chivalry and medieval court rituals, unless someone told me or unless I opened some books. The concepts embodied in movement are not necessarily evident in the movement itself. To understand movement as cultural behavior, one has to move into words.

The quote above, is evident that symbolism in movement performance needs explanation or interpretation to unearth its deeper understanding or meaning. Therefore, the philosophical knowledge embodied by performers in relation to the symbolic contents that underlie *Klama* performance, will depend on ethnographic research to establish such meanings. Other meanings can also be realized through performance etiquettes, performance areas, spatial organization, time and context of performance.

In Sklar's final concept, "movement is always an immediate corporeal experience", movements performed communicate through the affective and immediate and unambiguous feedback is received. Sometimes, the knowledge and experience embedded in movements are difficult to explain using words. As a result, one has to physically experience the movement in order to understand and appreciate its message. Dance anthropologist, Anya Peterson Royce (1977:155) in her book *The Anthropology of Dance*, cites dance pioneer Isadora Duncan as having said that "if I could tell you what it meant, there will be no point in dancing it". This assertion is also corroborated by Michael Jackson in his work "Knowledge of the Body". Jackson (1983:339) avers that

"By the same token, the anthropologist who seeks to reduce bodily praxis to the terms of verbal discourse runs the risk of falsifying both (cf. Bourdieu 1977: 120; 223 n. 40). Practical understanding can do without concepts, and as Bourdieu points out 'the language of the body . . . is incomparably more ambiguous and overdetermined than the most overdetermined uses of ordinary language . . . Words, however charged with connotation, limit the range of choices and render difficult or impossible, and in any case explicit and therefore "falsifiable", the

relations which the language of the body suggests' (1977: 120). it is because actions speak louder and more ambiguously than words that they are more likely to lead us to common truths; not semantic truths"

This means that dance as an aesthetic and pragmatic activity transcends language. In aiming at explaining the meaning of dance, Sklar informs us that he "observed and analyzed movement in detail and qualitatively, for it is the "how," rather than the "what" of moving that gives clues beyond visual effect toward the sensations and feelings of moving." (Sklar, 2001:31). Therefore, in *Klama* dance performance, the relationship between audiences and mediums/deities are deepened because they share a lot of kinesthetic information during their performances together. This consequently results in audiences being "caught up in the dance" (Royce, 1977) as it were, with some falling in trance in response to the heightened intensity or impact of the performance through kinesthetic means of transmission.

When dance becomes a symbol, by Peirce' standards, it is implied that further insight must be shed drawing meanings and explanations from external sources. This may include audience members, performers and the writer's own reflections based on his knowledge and experience of the phenomenon. Also, similar documented works can provide some source of information as to the meaning of the performance at stake. Dance is a complex cultural activity which avails itself to multiple explanations. It tends to communicate its meanings via the observer's senses. The observer therefore processes meanings from the (a) visual perspective, that is the costume and its colors, nature and style of it's make (b) accompanying sound produced by musicians, singers or sound produced by the dancers themselves. Another sense in which dance carries information is through the (c) tactile sense of touch and (d) smell either from

the dancer's body or fragrance. Therefore anthropologist Anya Peterson Royce concludes that "this multi-sensual immediacy of dance is what contributes to its ability to thrill and excite but also at other times causes people to also fear or resent it" (Royce, 1977:162).

### 6.7 *Klama* movement performances

In *Klama* dance performances, most of the movements executed are reenactments of historical epochs, social commentary and performance of identities of the deities. The movements rendered speak to the song text chosen by the deities as well as acknowledgement of the omnipotence of the supreme being. Before any medium performs, the first movement mannerism observed is the raising of the right hand with the index finger pointing upwards. This movement gesture is a sign meant to index respect and acknowledgement of the sovereign power of *Mawu Okplejen* as the supreme and all powerful being besides whom no other prevails. This iconic movement is performed by every medium at the commencement of every song. The use of the right hand is a sign of respect and cultural appropriateness due to negative connotation the usage of the left hand indexes. Even when mediums hold props in their right hands, they either transfer the prop to the left hand or raise the prop up to reference the same intention.

A typical *Klama* opening song such as *nysba wado wo jeha se* (come let's dance the deities out, the year is rip) is meant to invite the deities to commence mounting their mediums. The song is led by the *kpalɔ* and soon taken over by the first possessed medium to commence the performance. The accompanying movements enables the embodied deity to travel across the

performance space inviting everyone to engage in the performance. The arms are opened wide and movements that indicate beckoning are executed. The feet move in rapid succession in order to move around the space quickly. Immediately after this invitation dance, comes the dance of caution “*Ablamita*”. This dance seeks to caution the community of any impending predicament which might possibly befall the community hence everyone is expected to be careful to avert the catastrophe. The song is thus *kekε ne nyεba nyε yisi, nyε ka nyε yisi oo, ablamita lee ebe ηε nyε yinɔ* (so bend your heads, keep your heads down in order for evil winds/misfortunes to pass you over). This song, coming from a deity, is a forecast of future events. Songs of this nature are composite parts of what constitute messages from the deities. This dance is performed in place. The priestess usually raises the two arms up and bends the upper torso down from the waist level with the feet spread out in order to provide support for the possessed body to attain stability. This dramatization enables the message to reach those who are unable to hear the songs due to the level of sound activity.

The next song and dance, *Okle ηme*, that also indexes caution to the general public is *Dasi ηε okleηme lohwehi atse ba* (stand firm without wavering, the king of the animals is here). Just like the aforementioned, this song urges the general public to remain steadfast in the face of hostilities. These hostilities are metaphorical and could mean hardships of any form. Therefore, there is the general encouragement for the entire community to be steadfast in the face of challenges. This dance is also performed in situ and the performers feet are spread apart for support. The body is held erect and the arms move up to akimbo position indicating an elbow that is turned outward. The only twist to

this position is that the hands does not end up at the waist but just above the navel. The priestess tends to stagger a bit in order to dramatize her message. The next couple of songs index the Dangme's concept of manliness and bravery. This commences with the song *kɛ oɛ Kwaku we nɛ oɛ nyumu we*. This song seeks to explain that "when you enter Kwaku's house, you have entered a man's house". Legend has it that *Kwaku* was a brave hunter who used his skills to kill game for the community. He also defended his people through fighting external aggressors. Because he is a hunter, he has amassed immense knowledge of herbs as well as has a large family. As a result, he is responsible to a lot of people living in his household. This paints the picture of a male dominated society with the man at the helm of affairs. This dance is brisk and rapid with quick feet shuffling movements and the display of physical aggressive tendencies characteristic of masculinity. Other priestesses who will want to join such dance also display such attributes.

Despite the attributes of who a man is or ought to be, by social standards, we are reminded that there is something much greater than a man beyond his safe quarters. We are told that *agbonya ni nɛ nɛ p emo nyumu* (there is something outside which is more than/bigger than man/ can defeat a man). This song has a bifurcated meaning. It speaks to the fact that in life, one must never think highly of him/herself as the ultimate. This is because man/woman's life is transient and bound to end someday. The song, on the other hand, also speaks to ethereal issues that transcend man's comprehension and powers hence what is spiritual must be left in the hands of spiritual adepts to deal with and what is physical must also be left to those who are capable of handling such matters. The deities by this song are speaking to the general public to observe decorum



and respect the abilities of everyone. Movements in this dance, although engages shuffling of feet, they are more slower and coverage of the dance space does not go beyond the center of the stage.

*Hene hiyami wo wa yaa* (where no one dares to go, that is where we go) is another of *Klama* songs that seeks to tout the prowess and powers of the deities. The deities through this song claim they are endowed with powers and skill to face challenges that may present itself to them. Haven't learnt that the deities perform themselves into being, songs of this nature tend to establish their superiority over the corporeal world. This pride exuding dance is also slow in nature. Thus, makes room for the mediums to show off their dexterity and movement skill. The arms of the mediums are bent slightly with the elbows turned outwards to display the network of beads. They as well hold themselves out with the head and general body in upright position. The feet step gallantly to index strength and sure footedness. The dance is a display of strength and power.

The final song to be analyzed is *omanyε makpa woo kpoɔ he?* This song asks a question "can you traverse the entire coastline?". Legend has it that once upon a time, there lived a little powerful bird with strong wings that is always seen flying over the entire community. Because the bird is able to outfly its colleagues, it thought it could fly around the entire coastline of the vast sea. It tried though, but it could only cover a few miles of the shore. This song seeks to advise the general community to acknowledge each one's limits and place in society. Movements performed to this song are simple and graceful. The priestesses tend to spread their arms out in a display of flying or hovering around. Depending on the discretion of the dancer, she may decide to perform

the movement moving around the entire performance space or limit herself to just the center. The feet shuffle alternatively and enables the performing body to move in a relaxed gliding manner.

### **6.8 Modes of performance appreciation**

In Dangme dance praxis, appreciating someone for performing exceptionally well besides the usual metacommunicative utterances such as *ehe daa* or *ehe kpɔ*, movement aspects of appreciation are most appropriate. In *Klama* dance, there are assorted modes of showing appreciation using movements. An audience member may choose to dance in the stead of a deity by following the performance protocols. A person may choose to wrap a piece of cloth around the shoulders of a deity during a performance or fan the deity with a cloth. The audience member may further decide to throw a cloth on the ground for the deity to walk on. Another mode of performance appreciation is by placing money on the forehead of the deity or holding the money and allowing it to drop on the deity one currency at a time. Placing money on the floor to be stepped on by the deity or placing the money in the hair by deities is another option. It is customary behavior to also appreciate the musicians who through their skill and efforts, provide musical service to facilitate the worship performance. Such appreciations tend to boost their egos and serve as encouragement or motivation to give off their best at the next performance. The general public however receive their appreciation after the performance has come to an end. The mediums go round and thank them for being available for the worship performance through arm gestures as well as pronouncements.

Besides all these, aesthetic modes such as *ligbi jemi*, and *doo jemi*, as discussed in previous chapters are also means of performance appreciation among the Dangmes.

### **6.9 Negotiating *Klama* performance aesthetics**

The Dangme persona has options when it comes to aesthetic negotiations. Aesthetics, in relation to movement dynamics, is found in the posture of the performer and in this case, priestesses. The posture of a priestess is that of poise, what American historian and writer of African arts Robert Farris Thompson denotes as “coolness” (Thompson, 1973) or what contemporary American slang refers to as “swag”. The “coolness” poise is when a dancer having performed amidst rapturous applause manages to maintain a calm posture or demeanor in order to index a sense of self-control even at a point when the performance is taking a toll on her. “Swag” on the other hand is a display of high sense of confidence and composure. These aesthetic details are mostly seen in the relaxed facial expression and bodily mannerisms displayed by mediums during performances that last several hours without a break.

In African dance performances, there is the seemingly subtle but powerful competition that exist among performers. At each and every performance session, there is the constant urge to outperform the other. In *Klama* dance, this competitive urge is negotiated first among musicians through the techniques they employ in the playing of the instruments, what Drewal refers to as “competitive relatedness” (Drewal, 1992). The master drummer challenges his colleagues by playing complex rhythmic phrases to either test their alertness or competency to respond. The dynamics as well as the pulsations created

through this enterprise creates lasting impressions on the observer and this seeks to advance the musical and performance interests of participants subsequently enhancing the musical aesthetics.

Among the mediums, there is also some sort of healthy competition meant to either outperform or to outcostume one another and yet claim innocence of it. This manifests itself when a priestess spends a bit more time than she/he is required on the performance stage in order to display her/his costume or unique dance prowess. When she/he finally will have to make way for another colleague to perform, she/he makes a brief comment to either the *Kpalɔ* or the incoming priestess thus *tɛ nɔko naawe nɔko nane nɔ?* This translates as, “I hope no one has stepped on another’s toes”. This show of innocence is a means of showing off. It also tends to test the patience or tolerance level of colleague priestesses thus propelling the aesthetic appreciation of the performance.

Another instance worth citing is the performance repartee between the musicians and the mediums. There is always a healthy coordination and appreciation of each other’s efforts. The musicians tend to play to question the performance abilities of the mediums. When the mediums are able to rise to the occasion, they intend challenge the competence of the musicians by dancing beyond the rhythmic threshold of the musicians. These seemingly silent yet very buoyant exchanges have the propensity of advancing the performance aesthetics of the dance thereby creating excitement in the worship ceremony. Sometimes, these exchanges prolong the performance time because the deities refuse to return to their esoteric abode due to the magnitude of fun they are engaged in with the temporal world. This action affirms the age-old Dangme maxim that

says that *hiemle afiεε ηε se pi gbeje* meaning “having fun takes place in this world and not in the after life”. These mutual compensations aid in the promotion of beauty in the performance. Finally, the symbiotic relationship that exists among musicians, mediums and the audience cannot be overlooked. All these personalities take active part in the worship performance process through their interactions and exchanges creating a mutually healthy atmosphere for the performance.

*Klama* performance aesthetics are also found in the color, style and nature of costumes. Props used in *Klama* performances and their significance in relation to what or how they represent the deities also has aesthetic implications. An instance can be cited using *Maa Lalue* who does not use any prop but as part of her costume, there is an ornament known as *toto* through which a sash goes through to gird her loins. This ornament which is placed strategically on her pubic bone is a symbol of her femininity/womanhood out of which comes other deities. Her hair is made in the *akuku* style with a red feather ornament stuck in it. When she approaches the performance grounds she is hailed by all her “children”. The aesthetics of her arrival is seen in her entourage. It must be noted however that she is always in the company of her husband *Digblε*, her grandson *Ardeη* who is a warrior and therefore carries a gun as well as other deities. Her husband and grandson are there to provide a form of protection for her. All these theatricalities enhance the aesthetics of the performance. Besides the props, the usage of beads, their color and what it indexes as well as body adornments in the form of body paintings or markings lays overt the aesthetic sensibilities of the Dangmes.

In relation to *Klama* dance performances, aesthetics commences from the performance conventions observed in the form of greetings, order of performances, and performance interjection by audiences. In African performance modes, there is a symbiotic relationship between the performer and his/her audience. These relationships are prevalent and is almost a pre-requisite in judging a successful African dance performance. The rationale is that there is always some form of mutual communication kinesthetically or through metacommentary, as well as show of appreciation in diverse forms between the two. When a performance does not appeal to the affective domain of an audience member, then there is something wrong with it. Therefore, audience's active participation is an endorsement of a beautiful performance activity. Finally, as part of performance etiquette or aesthetic, mediums in turn show appreciation to ritual officiants and the general public as a form or reciprocity.

#### **6.10 Post-possession behavior**

Post-possession in *Klama* performance sense can be likened to the denouement stage in drama after the conflict has been dealt with. In *Klama* dance performance praxis, after the ritual dance activity is over, the priestesses make their way to their various shrines for the deities to be dispatched to their ethereal homes. This is known as *sōlemi*. This activity which has been explained in detail in chapter three is a crucial process that leads to the decoupling or truncating of the direct link between a deity and a medium who represent both ethereal and temporal worlds. Having succeeded in the *sōlemi*, mediums assume a reconnection with themselves and full consciousness is attained. Most of the time, it takes the mediums a few moments to ascertain their environment and find their bearing. A quick look at their demeanor reveals disorientation and

uncertainty but experience teaches that this soon wears away and mediums return to their active life styles.

A discourse with *Tsawe* priestess reveal that when a medium goes through *sɔlemi* (after a deity has been dispatched), a medium retains no memory of what transpired during possession. She/he only remembers events prior to and post the possession. I find this claim contestable although I have no empirical proof to indicate otherwise. During my fieldwork, I have come across possessed mediums who break out of their supposed possessed character to have a brief discourse with their colleagues. A *mawa yoo* has also intimated to me that she once upon a time chanced upon a group of mediums who were supposed to be possessed chatting away during their *gbi tsakemi*. I have seen and heard mediums respond to appellations and was fortunate to be present at the visitation of a medium to my mother after a performance ceremony. What I find remarkable in these scenarios is the convincing manner in which mediums are trained to maintain their character. When mediums are possessed, their language changes. They tend to use a mixture of esoteric and Dangme language to communicate. In addition to the esoteric language, their conversations are laced with a lot of gestures and body languages to convey information among themselves. The head, hands and general body posture becomes viable tools in these conversations consequently, it is difficult to claim that mediums are not possessed at all times although I still maintain that there is some form of pretense at one point or the other.

Possession, as I have witnessed, tends to affect the physicality of the medium. After *sɔlemi*, mediums often show signs of fatigue, weariness and pain as after effects of the possession. They tend to hold their feet or display emotions

of agony at the affected part and virtually drag themselves home to their everyday lifestyle. *Dibɔ* Nii Martey explains that annual festivals are always a challenging period for them. This is because, it physically wears them down. Post possession behavior of a medium is a sorry and unpleasant sight, quite the opposite of pre-possession. It is characterized by rejection and loneliness. Finally, with the assistance of their *mawa yii*, they fold and tuck away their costumes and ornaments to be used at another time.

### 6.11 Conclusion

This chapter has as its objective, to analyze *Klama* performance in order to reveal the aesthetics embedded within the social process. It also set out to prove that beyond the primary functional and symbolic roles that *Klama* performance play in the life of the Dangme as a worship ceremony, the phenomenon can be appreciated in its own terms without recourse to its functional baggage as championed by Gyekye. In order to understand and appreciate this social process, the entire phenomenon was categorized into three phases of pre-possession, possession and post-possession. The analysis of these stages has provided indebt knowledge about what is classified as beautiful and therefore acceptable within the social process. Throughout the analysis, it is evidently clear that the Dangme concept of aesthetics can be found in the movements, linguistic performatives, costumes, props, ornaments and body adornments. Also, aesthetics is deeply enshrined in the music and dance performance negotiations. Therefore, *Klama* performance, is a total performance phenomenon that speaks to the Dangme's worldview as well as the people's aesthetic sensibilities.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Summary

The dissertation right from the onset has been designed as an ethnographic study of the performance aesthetics of *Klama* religious dance of the Dangmes of Gbugbla. The study is geared towards understanding and appreciating *Klama* holistically within the performance paradigm with focus on the aesthetics of the dance performance. Throughout the six chapters, facts presented leads to the argument that *Klama* religious dance performance is an exposition on the aesthetic values and sensibilities of the Dangmes. It also re-enforces the fact that *Klama* is the life force that defines the very existence of the Dangme community. *Klama* is an aggregate of the culture or knowledge system of the people of Gbugbla who are a small population of the entire Dangme fraternity. It is through the consistency of this performance praxis that the movement system of the culture is transmitted to younger generations thus revealing the aesthetic awareness of the people. *Klama* as an integrated performance phenomenon involves music, dance, drama, props, costume and the informed audience (Dortey, 2012).

*Klama* performance praxis, by its eclectic nature, allows for the amalgamation of diverse art forms what Stone (2000), refers to as “constellation of the arts”. All these elements come together in *Klama* performance as part of the annual *Kple* festival of the people of Gbugbla. Movement, which reflects not just the somatic, but the people’s philosophy, emotional as well as beliefs and moral values (Sklar, 1991), has become critical to this study. *Klama* performance is a crucial part of Dangme/Gbugbla ritual processes as a reflection

of the society's worldview and aesthetic values but above all, it is aimed at the re-enactment of the community's histories for the purpose of social integration and revival.

The second chapter of this thesis, in order to appreciate the past and determine the direction that the people of Gbugbla are charting, thus, takes a historical journey of the migratory accounts of the Dangmes. This scope is skewed to reflect the people of Prampram, a corrupted pronunciation of their indigenous name *Gbugbla*. Through a cursory look at the people from the social, political, and religious lenses, the thesis reveals their world view. The revelation supports the assertion that *Klama*, which is the foremost amongst other music and dance performance traditions of the *Gbugbla*, is the core art form that serves as the “*twi kɛ kla*” (‘heart and soul’) that holds both the cosmic and the corporeal worlds together in a subtle equilibrium. Furthermore, the chapter also aids our understanding of the fact that it is within the performance of *Klama* art forms that the aesthetic sensibilities of the people are ignited.

In chapter three, the thesis examines critically the processual stages that mediums go through, as per the demands of custom, in order to qualify as fully trained priestesses. The process which manifests in three stages commences with the mode of selection of priestesses which is mainly at the impulse of the tutelar beings. From this perspective, we discover that whenever there is a vacancy or a tutelary spirit deems it fit to take on ‘a new wife’, the deity reserves the right to select any medium within his affiliation to serve him/her. That selected person will lose her identity to the deity, consequently, mediums are known and referred to indexically by the names of their deities.

The training process which follows after the selection, enables the mediums to acquire the collective behaviors and beliefs of the people through enculturation after which the medium is empowered to use the knowledge acquired for the service of the community. It is therefore at the commissioning stage that a medium, having been encultured, is declared to be of service to her deity. Further to this chapter, is a discourse on the gender dimensions. This scrutinizes the roles played by men and women within the ritual process and why those stereotypes. It is discovered that gendered roles are a reflection of the male chauvinist bias of the cosmic structure of *Klama* deities. It is discovered during the fieldwork that majority of the mediums are women who have devoted their lives to become wives to the deities. Whether a medium is a male or female, he/she is always referred to as *wɔyoo* (wife of a deity). The thesis therefore asks the question, what is it about the female body that makes male tutelary spirits long for, thus taking them as wives to serve them? If a heterosexual union between a male and a female is the norm, then what about the male deities whose mediums are males? What also becomes of female deities whose mediums are females?

In the fourth chapter, the audio (musical) as well as the visual dimensions of *Klama* performance are analyzed. The analysis of the audio dimension is to reflect the dynamics of the soundscape of the performance as well as modes of transmission of this sonic art form in order to reveal the musical aesthetic awareness of the Gbugbla/Dangme society. According to Gbolonyo (2009:472),

The survival of any type of music is dependent upon the extent to which the music is able to satisfy the values the people seek in it. The values, which may be aesthetic or structural, social, historical or religious, may operate individually or in a simultaneous complexity. In other words,

the factors that shape and maintain the music, the text and all other things associated with it may be found in the music itself, in the artist, or in the context of performance, as well as in the rationale behind the composition and performance of such musical works. Besides that, the poetic creativity that goes into the composition of these songs plays an important role in their maintenance and continuous transmission.

In agreeing with Gbolonyo, I am of the opinion that *Klama* music and dance performance resonates with his assertion. This is because, *Klama* music, which contains the historical, social, aesthetic, political and religious dimensions have entrenched within it, elements that serve mnemonic and transmission purposes as well as bring to the fore, the creative sensibilities of the people. This creativity is impacted through music's "participatory" and "presentational" propensities as espoused by Thomas Turino in his recent work "Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation" reviewed by Chami Hicham (2013). According to Turino, the participatory focus of a musical culture lays emphasis on the social interaction that leads towards the creation of the music. As a result, much attention is given to the creative process as much as the experience participants draw from the process as opposed to the sound output. The presentational aspect of communal music activity however concentrates on the clear demarcations between the performers and audience members. This aspect of the musical performance sometimes has its boundaries blurred because the audience members in *Klama* are also active participants in the presentation process. The audio dimension takes into consideration, the selection and training of *Klama* musicians. Through this, I discover that the gods have a direct hand in who qualifies to be a player of the *Klama* sacred musical instruments. This is revealed through a conversation between the *Kpalɔ* and a principal deity with the former requesting the gods to provide them with

dedicated people to train as musicians. The rationale for this request is found in the belief that *Klama* instruments are embodiments of the voice of the deities hence the deities have a hand in who qualifies to be echo their voice. It is obvious that sometimes people volunteer to be trained, but the question the thesis is asking is could this volunteering be related to the inspiration of the divine beings or through an individual's own conviction to offer himself to the service of the community?

The visual dimension of the thesis, on the other hand, broadens our knowledge on the Dangme conception of beauty captured within the diverse costume usages, props, make-up and body adornments. The aesthetics exposed through the visual dimension is seen in the assorted color, nature and style applied in the construction of costumes and props as well as the artistic impressions of those at the helm of applying make-up on the bodies of the mediums.

In the fifth chapter, the calendrical events of Gbugbla's *Kple* festival celebration are chronicled. Frameworks of where *Klama* dance features prominently and how the performance process is negotiated are clearly outlined. The chapter also discusses the various forms of aesthetic appraisals in the form of meta- discourses by the culturally informed audience during performances. This provides a fair idea of the benchmarks of performance expected from mediums. The performative aspects of the performance in the form of language use in chants, social commentary and indigenous terminologies used in explaining ritual activities has also been examined. It is expected that these pieces will aid the understanding of the ritual processes or stages within the

Gbugbla ritual calendar in order to present to the reader, a clear perspective of the nature of *Klama* performance within the *Kple* festival context.

In the sixth chapter, analyzes is carried out within the theoretical frame of performance, semiotics and aesthetics in order to understand the Dangme concept of beauty and how it plays out within the performance (*fiemi*) dimension of *Klama*. According to Kofi Agawu (2003:18), who is a music scholar from the Volta Region of Ghana, specializing in musical semiotics,

precolonial African cultures were predominantly oral cultures whose poetry, dance, and song reside in the memories of the performers and audience. Each occasion of performance provided an opportunity to retrieve what had been stored and to display it afresh

therefore, in line with Agawu's view point, each performance of *Klama* seeks to retrieve and re-enact the ritual activity in order to showcase it to the future generation. Consequently, in analyzing *Klama* phenomenon, the ritual process is divided into three stages namely pre-possession, possession and post-possession. It is at these three stages of the performance that the three theories i.e. semiotics, aesthetics and performance are applied. Through the analysis, it is observed that it is through performance that costume, music, props, make-up, body adornments, ornaments and drama speak to the idea of semiotics and aesthetics. The understanding of the use of colors, props, insignias of office, movements and the meta-comments unleashed from the audience furthers the understanding of the entire ritual process embedded within the dance. Therefore, in reviewing the concept of beauty or *fɔ̃ɲɔ̃ɔ̃ni/afɛɔ̃ɔ̃* (aesthetics) in *Klama*, one has to approach it from the holistic perspective. This will include the functional and symbolic aspects, movement performance praxis, modes of performance appreciation, and post-performance behavior. Thus, in shedding

light on these constituent parts of the multifaceted phenomenon, the true meaning of *Klama* is unearthed. The performance venue and how the space is negotiated also enables the reader to understand the holistic nature of *Klama* and the fact that to the Dangme, *Klama* is the life force that drives the community thereby reflecting their worldviews.

## 7.2 Findings

Having set out to investigate the performance aesthetics of *Klama* religious dance of the Dangmes of Gbugbla, I discovered that the performance aesthetics experienced in *Klama* dance praxis is an exposition on the Dangme worldview of beauty. Consequently, it is in the performance of *Klama* dance that the aesthetic sensibilities of the Dangme's are made overt. These are observed in the performance etiquette, musical repartees, movements, possession drama, color codes and styles employed in costume construction. Furthermore, props, use of language by the culturally informed audience and the diverse make-up and body adornments applied onto the body of the dancer/medium, contributes towards the appreciation of the aesthetic foundation of the Dangme people of Gbugbla.

I again discovered that *Klama* is a comprehensive religious and socio-political phenomenon that can be understood from four thematic conceptual frames. These are; *Lami* (music), *Tsupa peemi* (medicine making/healing), *Doo* (dance) and *Fiemi* (performance). Therefore, it is in the dance performance mode, which is *doo fiemi*, that the other thematic components are brought together in a single performance activity. This is because the dance performance incorporates musical aspects (both vocal and instrumental forms). Also, in the dance performance, *tsupa peemi* (medicine making/healing) of a sort takes place

both on the performance arena or in the confines of the shrines through assorted usage of herbal products either for *jwiramɔ* (cleansing, blessing or purification), warding off spiritual attacks using *ɲmatsu* (flower of the palm tree) on the performance stage or the use of *Klɔbɔ* aromatic preparation in order to harness its fragrance and therapeutic effect on the body of the medium. Thus, it is evidently certain, that dance plays a vital role in the performance of religion through its subsuming power and kinesthetic ability of giving and receiving immediate feedback through its affective means.

Another major contribution of this work towards the study of dance within the context of religion is that, *Klama*, like most ritual performances in Africa, does not have its music, dance, possession and dramatic aspects separated as different entities. They come together as integrated performance art. Consequently, in *Klama* performance approach, music, dance, drama and a host of visual art objects such as costume, props, make-up etc. are infused into the performance activity to give it a holistic aesthetic appeal appreciated by its aficionados.

I have additionally revealed through this study that, besides the religious frame of *Klama*, the phenomenon is also a form of entertainment and psychological release. The *Kpaa shimi* context is another avenue where the youth are given the opportunity to vent their anger and emotions by questioning the status quo and commenting on events in the year under review. The youth also sing the praises of heroes and castigate ill-mannered people in leadership positions who use their office for personal and criminal gains.

Finally, through this study, I realize that the artistic performances also serve as an opportunity for the younger generation to be enculturated in the



Dangme tradition thereby facilitating the onward transmission process of the culture of the Dangme of Gbugbla.

I am therefore, by this thesis, theorizing that the four-thematic conceptual frames of *Klama* has a universal application potential. The reason being that like *Klama*, most, if not all African religious practices, besides its integrative nature can be examined from these four dimensions namely; the *lami* (musical), *doo* (dance), *tsupa peemi/tsami* (healing/medicinal) and the *fiemi* (performance) frames. I therefore argue that it is during organized performances of especially the dance that all the component parts are welded together in a single performance activity. Mention can be made of Yoruba mask dances, voodoo/vodu/vudu religious practices across the globe, shamanism, candombe/candomblé, yeve, akom etc.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

In the course of this ethnographic research process and in keeping with the focus of this thesis, I have come across related research areas that calls for further attention in order to aid the total understanding of some aspects of *Klama* phenomenon. Having interacted widely with gate keepers of the *Klama* tradition, it is becoming compelling that something will have to be done in order to salvage this ancient religious system. The reason being that, increasingly, the youth are shunning this religious practice hence it is becoming a challenge convincing them to commit to the study of this practice due to contemporary forces of change such as religion, education and new media technology.

My first recommendation is that, since ancient *Klama* movement vocabularies are as varied as are mediums that are mounted by the plethora of deities, there are large bodies of movement knowledge that can be investigated,

learned, transmuted and recreated into novel artistic works. This will result in the preservation of this ancient movement form for the purposes of education of future generations and the preservation of the movement system to prevent loss due to lack of dedicated mediums to perform them.

Secondly, it is discovered that the issue of modes of transmission of *Klama* indigenous musical knowledge is fraught with challenges as to its sustainability due to lack of codification or standardization as well as documentation. The thesis therefore, is calling for further research into sustainable modes of transfer of these indigenous modes of knowledge transmission.

Thirdly, historical knowledge derived in the performances of *Klama* can be studied, and re-enacted bearing in mind its essence for pedagogical purposes within the academia. This will aid in the preservation of some of these historical facts as well as ancient religio-artistic cultural forms.

Fourthly, the question of what it is about the female body, that makes male deities prefer to “marry” female adherents deserves further investigation. This will answer the following questions; (a) does this union index a reflection of conjugal norm within society? (b) What about male deities who take to wife male adherents and female deities who also marry female adherents? (c) Does male deities taking male mediums for a wife reflect contemporary rise of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite, queer etc. (LGBTQ) rights on the continent and the world at large? (d) To what extent could these forms of unions be a reflection of the cosmic realm?

#### 7.4 Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to investigate *Klama* performance aesthetics as a composite art form amongst the Dangmes of Gbugbla. In my attempt, I used repetition aspect of Drewal's performance theory (Drewal, 1992), Gyekye's theory of Aesthetics (Gyekye, 2003) and Piercean Semiotics (Turino, 2014a) to analyze my work. The rationale behind these combinations are that, in any performance scenario, all three elements (namely, performance, aesthetic and semiotics) are likely to be present. These are observed in the 7 thematized areas i.e. performance etiquettes, musical repartees, movements, possession drama, color codes and styles employed in costume and make up construction, props and the use of metalanguage by culturally informed audience to contribute towards the appreciation of the aesthetic foundation.

In my analysis, I discovered that in the dance for instance, a possessed mediums gestures, facial expression, body language, costume, make up and props seeks to make a statement. This artistic statement carries within it, the African notion of art appreciation where equal value is placed on the functionality, symbolism and the purely aesthetic which falls within the larger notion of "art for life's sake", with its propensity to serve multiple ends simultaneously, inherent within it.

Additionally, I came out with four conceptual constructs i.e. music, dance, medicine and performance through which any religious dance phenomenon like *Klama* can be analyzed. I am therefore, by this thesis, theorizing that the four thematic constructs of *Klama* has a universal application potential. The reason being that like *Klama*, most, if not all African religious practices, besides its integrative nature, can be examined from these four

dimensions. And while its meaning is concealed in several metaphors, it is evident that understanding *Klama* as a movement system means understanding the aesthetic world view of the people in that the way a person moves symbolically expresses his philosophy, experience and gives insight into his culture and status. In brief, *Klama* is the life force that drives every facet of the Dangme persona.

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### Personal Interviews

*Wɔnɔ* Tsutsu Dapo, January 21, 2014 at Prampram.

Nii Dorteɣ, interview June 14, 2016 at the Institute of African Studies, Legon.

*Kpalɔ Teye Mensah Nyavɔ* (Personal communications on February 23, 2016).

*Dibɔ Wɔnɔ* (personal communications held on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2016)

Sarah Korkor Padi December 23, 2016 at Prampram.

Tsaatsɛ Tsawe December 23, 2016 at Prampram.

Tsewayo Mensah (*Kpalɔ*) December 23, 2016 at Prampram.

Dibɔ Wɔnɔ Nii Martey December 23, 2016 at Prampram.

Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah January 12, 2017 Legon

Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah, in an interaction dated April 21, 2017