

Harouna Abdoulaye and Sons

Ethnic group: Dagomba

Language (dialect): Dagbanli

Country: Ghana

Recording date: August 23, 2015

Recording location: Sagnergou neighborhood, Tamale, Ghana

Total Recording time: 27:31

Technician: Brian Nowak

Group members:

Harouna Abdoulaye - lead vocals and talking drum

Harouna's sons oldest to youngest - Inusah, Iddress, Sadik, Ibrahim, Alhassan, Abdul Rahaman, Hamdan, Abdul Hamid, Mohammed, Ahamed, Mahi.

Instruments:

lung bila - small talking drum

lung daa - medium size talking drum

lung titali/dohow - large talking drum

gungun - double-sided barrel drum

Track names -- duration

1) Dakoli Nye Bi Ba - 14:10

2) Harouna Abdoulaye's sons - 4:28

3) Sadik Harouna - Dakoli Nye Bi Ba - 1:21

4) AbdulRahaman Harouna - Naa Nyaghisi - 2:43

5) Iddress Harouna - Bizing - 2:01

6) Inusa Harouna - Yiwawlana Azima - 2:48

Group introduction:

Abdoulaye Harouna has been blessed with so many sons to inherit his linguistic skill. He has drums and matching clothes of all sizes, one for every level of the apprenticeship. Sons traditionally stay physically close to home, and their father, whereas daughters marry and move to the groom's home. The father and sons music compliments existing bonds and serves as a family entrusted with a cultural heritage.

Abdoulaye has impressively committed to a well-rounded education for all of his children, so each attend public school, including his oldest child, and only daughter. The drastic son to daughter ratio confirms the rare importance of this family's unique place in Dagomba society.

Knowledge of songs for the ancestors links the next generation to long lines of cultural heritage that Abdoulaye has learned over the decades. They now live on the outskirts of Tamale, Northern Ghana's major city

negotiating musical traditions, based on rural customs, from an urban periphery.

Recording context:

As both a demonstration of an ensemble and a home rehearsal, father and sons visually represent learning in time through the line-up of their ages, situated on one side of the circular adobe hut. In this home, the hut, traditionally reserved as an open welcome room for guests and the entrance to the home concession with door openings on two sides, also serves as a space dedicated to music. Abdoulaye gathers his sons for a full rendition of one of his many songs to the ancestors.

This welcome-room hut has the drum collection hanging from the wall, and serves as an informal and formal practice space, drum-making workshop, and starting and ending point for the older boys that play around town. They leave their home, sometimes after grabbing a dress shirt, stopping to pick up their instruments before heading into town. Then, after hours, the boys return to hang the drums up after an exhausting and exhilarating day in town before retiring into the home's courtyard.

Abdoulaye's sons play backup for him but also play in groups of four in public around the market. They are often spontaneously commissioned on the street to play for an impromptu celebration so that a group of women in the market can dance and have fun, or to have a party for a group of young women tailors that finished part of their apprenticeship. The boys' solo voices, for portions of different songs, highlight the difference in sound with a young lead singer, and the attention to correctly pronouncing each word.

Notes on Language Use:

The boys enjoy the experience of participating in a variety of language contexts, adding to their overall knowledge, with past and present complimenting the construction of a new Dagomba linguistic identity. Dagbanli is their language and they also learn to read and write Dagbanli as well as English in their bilingual school.

The boys translated to their father from English and basically arranged everything for these recordings, including the spelling for the songs. Here, oral tradition and formal school meet in some of the first generations of musicians, holders of historic genealogies and musical traditions that can now also read and write in Dagbanli.

For his sons, the formal school and apprenticeship rounds out layers of knowledge that interact along various content areas including: oral and written literacy, genealogy, sacred names, heightened vocabulary,

annunciation and phrasing, and their different school subjects. The boys also gain practical knowledge involved in knowing the socio-spatial environment of different neighborhoods, streets, markets, languages, and people in an urban setting while maintaining the linguistic standards associated with songs mostly for the ancestors.

Abdoulaye sings *Dakoli Nye Bi Ba*, an elder's advice to a young man that just had a son. This is a specific socio-cultural situation, different than a man who is married without children, or married only with a daughter or daughters, since father and son have many customs of learning and inheritance.

The situation is especially interesting in the context of Abdoulaye with his own young songs backing him up in this song. His singing advises others about their sons having sons, while watching his boys grow closer to the age where he will also find himself in the position of advising his own sons about their sons.

The tempo of the songs follows a pace much slower than life, creating the sense of needing to fully engage in listening to the slowly unraveling lyrics. The meticulous annunciation, and spaced out drum strikes, sets a serene tone of careful listening, in a time almost distant from the social reality of everyday life.

Abdoulaye almost reveals the words of the lyrics, one-by-one, setting a specific socio-linguistic space for songs of advice and ancestral discourse. Within its musical framework, of dragging, pulsating rhythms and a deliberate, deep, echo of authority, the lyrics also develop a sense of the importance of listening.

The lyrical content, and singer-audience relationship, established a relationship that ranges from recitation and towards pleading. The apparent and serious tempo, as well as the focus on the initial consonants of names and words, follows the regal, emotional, and attention-grabbing quality of these songs.