SONGS AND DANCES OF THE
DAGAABA OF WEST AFRICA

Adams Bodomo and Manolete Mora
The University of Hong Kong

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CD Synopsis

This CD comprises songs and dances of the Dagaaba, a West African ethnolinguistic group that, like most other groups in the region, relies more on the oral mode of communication than on the written. The importance of this documentation lies in the fact that traditional oral cultures are fast disappearing among some sections of these traditional societies in the face of a ruthless process of globalization. These CD liner notes outline the social-cultural organization of the communities investigated, give a succinct description of the structure of Dagaare, language of the Dagaaba, and describe the structure of bawaa, their main dance, before analyzing transcriptions of a representative sample of spoken and sung folktales with comments on the thought systems and world-views emanating from these texts.
1. Introduction

This recording was part of a research project that focussed on the language and music of the Dagaare-speaking people of the Republic of Ghana, West Africa. It is intended to document songs, proverbs, riddles, spoken and sung folktales, instrumental music and dance performances, in particular bâwàá, in their “natural” contexts. These notes briefly describe the location of the fieldwork in the northwestern parts of Ghana, where most Dagaaba live, and its capital city, Accra, where many have settled. They also account for the basic structure of the Dagaare language, Dagaare music, and Dagaare dance, especially the bâwàá dance.

Performances were recorded in August 2000 and they mostly come from the Dagaare rural communities of Kogri and Ullo in northwestern Ghana. Kogri is one of many villages that comprise the Ullo community in the Jirapa-Lambussie district. This is one of eight districts that form the Upper-West administrative region, which in turn is one of ten administrative regions of Ghana. Kogri is located in the West African savannah belt between Latitudes 10 degrees and 11 degrees North of the equator and Longitudes 2 degrees and 3 degrees West of the Greenwich meridian.

2. The Dagaare Communities in Kogri, Ullo and Accra

Kogri has a population of about 2000 people and is one of the oldest settlements in the area. The community has two leaders, a political head (niád) and a spiritual head (liengá:gná; literally ‘owner of the land’). The political head answers to the chief of Ullo, who in turn answers to the chief of Jirapa. There are four main clans in the village: the Miáyiréé, the Wávélééé, the Gámbogéé, and the Góbéréé (also known as the Véng Véng clan). Traditional practices like ritual sacrifices, public naming ceremonies, and funerals are organised around these clans; however, there are also village-wide festivities such as the tribute to Köóiténé, the god of the land of Kogri.

Kogri is essentially a ‘traditional’ Dagaare community with relatively few imported ‘modern’ institutions. There are, however, a Government Primary School and a Junior Secondary School that cater for the official educational needs of the community. Students have to go to nearby towns and cities such as Ullo, Jirapa, Nandom in the Upper West Region and other parts of Ghana for senior secondary school and tertiary education.

Kogri, like most parts of the Upper West region, is mainly agricultural. The staple crops include millet, beans, corn and guinea corn. New cash crops, mainly in the form of cotton, have been introduced into the area. Farming activities are dependent upon a rainy and a dry season. The rainy season lasts from roughly May to October and is the time to plow, sow and tend to new crops. Thus, it is normally a time of long-working hours for the members of the community. The dry season lasts from roughly November to April and is the time to harvest and prepare for the next season. It is a period of comparatively light work and, therefore, provides an opportunity for holding ceremonies and recreational activities, including music-making and dancing.

During the dry season, the young farmers of Kogri often leave the village to work as farm labourers in the more southerly parts of Ghana such as the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions, returning to the village farms during the rainy season. Some of these itinerant labourers have settled permanently outside of Kogri, consequently, there are now some sizeable Dagaare-speaking communities located in other parts of the country, including the capital of Accra.

The town of Ullo, also known as Dângtéé, is situated on the Lawra-Han-Tumu road, 24 miles from Lawra and 8 miles from Han. The people of Ullo proudly proclaim that their legendary hero, Bâyôn, conquered and founded the area. Indeed, another one of Ullo’s names is Bâyônýirí (‘the home of Bâyôn’). The Ullo sub-district of the Jirapa-Lambussie district comprises villages such as Kógrì, Tûôpáré, Tampóé,
Gòzì and Ul-kpôh. The traditional political head of Ullo, known as the Ullo Naa, has authority over divisional political heads of the villages within the Ullo traditional jurisdiction. There are modern institutions such as schools, churches, clinics, and shops. Ullo has one of the region’s better senior secondary schools. The Catholic Church has a strong presence in this town as in many other parts of Jirapapa and the Upper-West Region. The Catholic missionary presence in the Jirapapa district and adjacent parts of the Upper West Region from early times has fostered a relatively high rate of literacy and formal education.

Accra, the capital of Ghana, is a flourishing metropolis located on the Gulf of Guinea on the West African coast. Accra started as a small coastal village of the Ga ethnic group in the 17th Century, and has grown to become the political and commercial centre of modern-day Ghana. It now accommodates two million people from various parts of Ghana. These peoples are from distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including, the Akan, the Ewe, the Dagaaba, the Dagomba, and the Frafra. There are also peoples from other West African nations and beyond. Thus, Accra is a cosmopolitan centre which supports a lively and diverse range of popular and traditional musics as the following excerpt illustrates:

Before leaving Accra for the long journey northward to Dagaaba-land Adams, his friend Boniface, and I decided to sample some of the city’s music in both uptown hotels and downtown nightspots. In the Golden Tulip Hotel, a band made up of local musicians performed a variety of Caribbean musics including Cuban mambo and son from pre-Revolutionary Cuba. The band was very good and had clearly assimilated the stylistic nuances of Cuban music. The clave was authentic as were the montunos that supported the instrumental improvisations. Unfortunately, the audience, largely tourists from abroad, did not respond to the call to dance. The leader of the band, perhaps in his late 50s, told me that he had been playing this music and various types of Ghanaian popular dance music for many years.

When the band stopped around midnight, we went downstairs to the jazz bar of the hotel, where some local jazz musicians and a guest singer and piano player from the United States entertained a more appreciative audience. After several sets from the jazz group, Boniface suggested we drive to Adabraka, the nightclub quarter of Accra. Adabraka was a district of ramshackle, single-story, tin-roofed clubs that reverberated with many types of West African urban dance genres from Ghanaian highlife to Zairean kisomba. The music spilled out of the clubs and onto the streets amid the heterogeneous groups of men and women from various parts of Ghana, Zaire, Nigeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Togo. Everyone seemed to blend in and accommodate each other’s language and music, though in the Wakiki club there was the occasional, ardent cry for ‘more French music’, that is, popular music from French-speaking, West Africa. (from Mora’s fieldnotes)

Besides Ga, the indigenous language of Accra, and English, the official language of the country, many languages are spoken in Accra. Various migrant groups have established their own communities, social clubs, and organisations to cater for their social and cultural needs. There are frequent displays of traditional culture within these various social groups, in particular, traditional dance groups.

Rural-urban migration has begun to transform Ghana. Highly educated Ghanaians, as well as low-earning labourers, have moved into the suburban areas of Accra to find jobs and seek opportunities. Dagaaba immigrants have tended to settle in suburbs like Achimota, Nima, and Russia/Larterbiokoshie.
There are many cultural groups among the Dagaaba immigrant communities of Accra, though our field work focusses on the Jirapa Area Youth and Development Association (JAYDA). This dance group started in 1997 and is headed by James Amaree. JAYDA takes particular pride in its báwáá dance and music group, as do the several other Dagaare social organisations in Accra. Indeed, the different báwáá groups in Accra vie with one another for positions of distinction. Rivalry between the different báwáá groups is a significant factor in the recruitment of skilled musicians and dancers from the ancestral villages and towns of the Jirapa region. It also contributes to the continuation of cultural identity.

3. The Structure of the Dagaare Language

One of the objectives of the field research was to obtain a body of music that would serve as a basis for comparative linguistic and musicological analysis. With this in mind, the structure of the Dagaare language and the group to which it belongs, the Mabia languages, are briefly described here along with the main typological features of this group and an explanation of how the linguistic data is transcribed and presented.

Dagaare is a two-toned language of the Mabia subgroup of the branch of the Niger-Congo language of West Africa. (Bodomo 1997, Bodomo 2000, Anttila and Bodomo 2001). It is spoken by about 2 million people, mainly in Ghana but also in neighbouring regions of West Africa, like Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast. Phonologically speaking, Dagaare and other Mabia languages, including Moore, Dagbane, Frafra, Kusaal, Mampruli and Buli, are marked by a preponderance of consonants and a scarcity of vowel sounds when compared to Indo-European languages, such as English and French (Bodomo, forthcoming). One distinctive phonological feature is the double articulation of some consonants. These include labio-velar stops like /gb/ /kp/ and /ngml/. Such features, rare in Indo-European languages, are a common feature in many African languages. The labio-velar and velar sounds are partially complementary, as in the alternate causative/non-causative forms of the verbs kó / kpì, ‘die’ in Dagaare. Regular allophones often involve /d/ and /l/, and /g/ and /gh/ across the various languages. There may also be limited cases of free variation as it is between /h/ and /z/ in the Dagaare word, hádá/záá, ‘all’.

There is the typological feature of vowel harmony in Dagaare and many Mabia languages. Words like kógó (‘chair’), bìrì (‘children’), and tóúró (‘digging’) are pronounced with tense or advanced tongue root vowels, while words like kóbó (‘bones’), bìrì (‘to brew “pito” the second day’), and tóóró (‘insulting’ are pronounced with lax or unadvanced tongue root vowels. Front rounded vowels, found in languages like French and Norwegian, and back unrounded vowels are absent in these languages, except when phonetically realized in particular environments.

Syllabic nasality is also a typological feature in these languages. These are realized in some environments, most often as pronouns and particles; as in the case of the Dagaare third person pronoun /n/ as in m bá, (‘my father’), n zá (‘my head’) and in the Dagaare particle, -η, which is a cliticized form of the polarity marker, lá.

Dagaare and other Mabia languages primarily have two tonal systems, high and low, (respectively marked by acute and grave diacritics on the sounds with contain them) with cases of downstep in some of the languages, i.e. subsequent high tones may not be as high as preceding ones. These tones serve to express both lexical and grammatical oppositions as in the Dagaare verbs, dá (‘push’), lâ (‘buy’), and as in the declarative and hortative readings of pronouns e.g. ū kúlí lá yirì/ ū kúlí yirì (‘He went home/ He should go home’).

Dagaare, and its group of languages, usually manifest open syllables. Both CV and CVC syllables can be reconstructed, but it is usually possible to insert a final syllable. Thus, the Dagaare verb ‘to leave’, may be
realized either as bâr or bârò. There are also dialectal differences with respect to these two forms.

An important typological feature of these languages is the system of noun classes. Noun class manifestation is a common feature for Niger-Congo languages, but while most of these languages use a prefixal pattern, i.e., cases in which nominal inflections occur before, rather than, after the root, Mabia languages mostly use a system of class suffixes. These are typically based on singular/plural alternations. Most nouns exist in three forms: the root, the singular, and the plural. An example is the Dagaare word for ‘woman/wife’: pɔg- (root), pɔgá (singular), pɔgbá (plural), with the further vowel assimilation in some dialects to give us pɔgɔ and pɔgbo. In this case the singular/plural affixes are -al -ba. All words that exhibit this pattern are then categorized into one class.

Another important typological feature within Dagaare and its group of languages is verb morphology. In most of these languages, there is a regular form of marking perfective and imperfective aspects by adding suffixes to the verbs, as in zè ‘have run’ and zɔrò ‘running’.

Most Mabia languages exhibit the Subject Verb Object order in their basic sentence patterns. Another prominent syntactic typological characteristic includes verb serialization, a syntactic construction in which two or more lexical verbs may share arguments without intervening connectors. The issue of verb serialization or serial verb constructions has been the topic of much discussion in theoretical linguistics and, in this respect, Dagaare and other Mabia languages have contributed very interesting research data.

Texts and linguistic transcriptions

As far as possible, the various texts associated with the music on this recording are presented with tonal transcriptions. For phrases and larger chunks of data, we provide interlinear glossings. These glossings provide interesting insights into the grammatical and communicative structure of the Dagaare language. Finally, free translations follow the glosses to capture salient aspects of the linguistic and cultural meaning behind these texts. This linguistic data transcription is an important aspect for the analysis and interpretation of the music texts. The following is an illustration:

\[
\text{Kà néè biéng wá bông bàwáá tènéè pàálông bié nàá} \\
\text{COMP person child.FOC NEG know bàwáá 1.PL area child NEG} \\
\text{‘If a child doesn’t know how to dance bàwáá s/he cannot possibly be a child from our town.’}
\]

In this sung text, the first line is the Dagaare enunciation, with the high and low tone markings on all the words and particles in the sentence. In the second line, is a gloss of the grammatical category or the literal meaning of the word. The grammatical category COMP indicates that the first word begins with a complimentiser ‘if’. This is followed by the word ‘person’, then ‘child’. As can be seen, a grammatical element FOC standing for ‘focus marker’ is attached to this lexical item ‘child’. All this is followed by the grammatical item NEG standing for a particle or element that marks negation. This is followed by the verb ‘know’ then by ‘bàwáá’, which means a special kind of dance, so we leave the latter word as it stands. This is followed by a grammatical item 1.PL which stands for ‘first person plural marker’. Finally, we have the items ‘area’, ‘child’, and another negation marker completing the glossing of this Dagaare sentence/enunciation. The third line provides a free translation of the whole enunciation. This is not meant to be an exact translation but rather an attempt to capture the essence of the meaning and cultural significance of what is being conveyed. Other abbreviations of grammatical categories are included in Appendix I.

4. Dagaare Music

While the music on this recording is the expression of a distinct ethnonlinguistic group, the Dagaaba, nevertheless, have had long historical, social, cultural and linguistic ties with other peoples of the northern parts of Ghana, such as the Sisaala, the Waala, the Dogomba, the Frafra, the Kasena, the Bulsa, the
Music-making among the Dagaaba, like other peoples of the region, is an intrinsic part of social life. Certain types of music and repertories of song may be associated with particular occasions, cults, cooperative work groups and organized labour, age groups, and rites of passage. For instance, praisongs (dànnòng) are performed regularly as a tribute to the chief while other types of music are exclusive to the rituals and ceremonies of the royal court, such as an investiture, an assembly in the court or audience chamber, or a funeral. Particular types of music are identified with the religious cult called bägré which holds an annual festival; or with traditional associations, such as the kpëtdá, which comprises reciprocal help groups for young farmers. The ánéné social dance is reserved for females; the férò is a dance performed by the youth; while the sèegàànàa is danced mainly by the elderly. There are warrior songs (zòoré yiélè), as well as songs for farming, grinding, pounding, floor-beating, plastering, hunting (wààròng yiélè) and herding. There are special songs for initiation ceremonies, funerals (kòbëe), ritual sacrifice, weddings, and public naming ceremonies that occur seven days after the birth of a child (referred to as ‘outdooring’). On some occasions, certain types of music may be prohibited, for instance, the baâwáá is not performed when a member of the community is seriously ill or when someone has died. Music may also occur as the spontaneous expression of individual community members, such as the music for the solo bamboo flute (wúléé), the harp (pëndá or koriduo in Nandom), or the lullaby (bì-yágléyiélè). Finally, music is used to welcome and honour important guests and visitors, as illustrated during our visit to Kogri, the ancestral home of Adams Bodoemo:

We arrived in Kogri at around 1:30pm. All the members of the village, as well as those from neighbouring villages, had gathered to greet us. They had been waiting for our arrival since morning. The chiefs and elders sat ceremoniously in a row under the massive Baobab tree while the women and girls danced the ánéné. As we got out of the jeep, the dance and music intensified. The dancers moved in a circle under the trees to the accompaniment of a drum played by an adult male. Some young boys hammered spontaneously on the xylophones some distance away from the dancers. The women danced, clapped and sang heartily as the rumbling rain-clouds gathered overhead. I promptly got out the equipment and just as I began to record the rain poured and lightening flashed across the sky. We scampere out of the rain though the dancers kept on. How frustrating it was to let this exhilarating welcome, which lasted uninterrupted until dusk, go unrecorded. We hoped for better weather in the morning when most of the villagers present promised they would return. (from Mora’s fieldnotes)

The selections of music on this recording include: baâwáá dance music, xylophone duets, individually sung folktales (sènsélè) and spoken folktales, women’s dance songs (ánléé), and women’s praise songs (dànnòng). Performances of baâwáá and xylophone duets recorded in the social clubs of Dagaaba immigrants in Accra are also represented. The baâwáá and xylophone selections are intended to give some indication of the kind of social music that still thrives within Dagaare communities in both rural and urban settings and, therefore, they make up the bulk of recordings on this compact disc. Indeed, the baâwáá is one of the most important cultural practices of the Dagaaba so aspects of its performance and structure are described in some detail.

The Bâwáá Dance
Group dancing is intrinsic to ritual and ceremony and is an important marker of social competence. In order, then, for an individual to participate in a ritual he or she must be able to dance. Group dancing is also an important way of maintaining community solidarity. As a Dagaare song says: 'If one's child does not know how to dance, it does not belong to the community'.

The bawadá is a call to young people to make dance and music together, indeed the term "bawadá" literally means, "young people, come together" (Kobina Saighoe:1984). The bawadá dance then, is a favourite pastime among the Dagaaba youth. It often occurs simply as a spontaneous expression of young members of the community when an opportunity arises. Mostly, however, the bawadá dance is incorporated into various celebrations, including: rites of passage marking birth, puberty, marriage and death, or to honour an individual.

The bawadá dancers also make up the chorus which comprises both young males and females, including children. One of the dancers, normally a male with the most skill or experience as a dancer or instrumentalist, takes the role of lead singer called the bawà-ngmadárà or the bawà-kyééré ('the cutter'). The dancers are accompanied by two xylophonists, one plays a ‘male’ instrument (gỳíl-dàdà) and the other plays a ‘female’ instrument (gỳíl-nyáángdà), and a drummer who plays a single-headed drum (gànggàà). The leader of the dance-chorus decides when one song ends and when a new one begins. The chorus, called bawà-sángéréba (or sàgré: singular ‘one who agrees’), responds to the calls from the leader. The dancers wear metal leg jingles (kyéémé), beaded girdles (lèbê), metal finger cymbals (pérà pl. pèrè) and sometimes metal wrist jingles. Uniforms are sometimes worn by the dancers but this may not be so in other cases.

The Structure of the Bawadá Dance

The call to dance normally begins with the clapping of finger cymbals. The two xylophone players, who sit opposite each other with the drummer next to them, begin while the crowd gathers around the dance area. The dancers then enter the area and form a circle around the musicians, dancing in either an anti-clockwise or clockwise direction (see Figure 1).

The main part of the dance consists of an alternation between two sections. The first section is called the séeò during which they perform a song in call and response fashion. This is followed by a more intense section called à émmó ('to put in'). During this section, the dance becomes more intense as the dancers synchronize their steps with heavy syncopated accents and displays of skill. In Accra, a practice has developed whereby individuals or pairs exit the circle for competitive displays of skill. The whole dance ceremony often has a ‘director’ called the bawadá nàá who does not participate in the dance event itself, but who oversees the entire performance. This cycle is repeated any number of times for each song, until such times as the leader signals a new song and the cycle begins again.

When the dancers show signs of tiring one of the xylophone players gives a signal to end the dance. In the village setting the dancers simply stop, while in Accra a more formal arrangement exists whereby the dancers exit the circle in a single line. Generally, a performance lasts between twenty and thirty minutes.

The Dagaare Xylophone

Dagaare xylophones are normally played in pairs, facing each other. While the instruments are tuned the same one is meant to have a

The Dagaare xylophones (gỳíl, pl. gỳílé) recorded in Kogri-Ullo have 18 keys while those in the Dagaare social clubs in Accra have 17 keys. The keys (gỳíl bí́r, lit. "seed") are tied together with antelope hide and mounted over a hide cushion on a wooden frame. Gourd resonators (kóšrà, pl. kóšè) graduated in size
are suspended under each key (see Figure x). Two or three holes about 2-3cm in diameter are bored into each gourd and covered with a spider’s egg case (pémpéné) to increase the resonance and to produce a buzzing effect. The last and lowest key (zàŋgbááð) does not have a resonator as it is used for playing a repeated rhythmic ostinato (kpááróó). The other keys are played with a wooden beater (gỳldóʒlé) about 30cm long, covered with rubber at the head. The tuning of the Dagaare xylophone is pentatonic (anhemitonic) and has a range of two octaves.

The accompanying drums are normally single-headed (gàŋgàré), though a gourd drum (kòʒrè) usually reserved for funerals, was used in the Accra performances (Figures x & y).

5. A Selection of Song Texts

Notes on the Selections

Description of the 11 selections on this CD include a brief account of each band, song texts, and translations. Track 1 comprises a set of báwáá dance songs. Track 2 features a xylophone duo. Tracks 3 and 4 feature two sung folktales, while Tracks 5 and 6 present two spoken folktales. Track 7 is a selection of women’s dance songs. These tracks were recorded in the village of Kogui. Tracks 8 and 9 constitute a recording of praise songs for the Chief in the town of Ullo and tracks 10 and 11, a xylophone duo and a set of báwáá dances, were recorded in Accra by migrant Dagaare workers from Dagao.

Track 1: Báwáá

This particular performance of báwáá contains four songs, which are among the most renowned in the region. Song no. I, Bá yáá wáé lá – ‘They’ve come again’, is usually a ‘signature song’ that is used by a báwáá dance group to identify itself, especially in a competitive dance event between several groups of contestants. In this particular case, we hear the people of Kogui come in with praise names and genealogical and lineage apppellations such Bòwáldéé, Múténedéé, Múwaráéé and Pàwäldéé. Song no II, Andónedé yè nòdóró, is an exhortation to humanity to be more wary in a world of uncertainty. Song no. 3, Kónóó wààñà, enacts a particular cultural situation: a funeral celebration that entails the affirmation of kinship ties and intra-community relations. Funeral celebrations are occasions for long-time absent members to return to the family. Those who have strong links with the community through both parents are easily recognized and heartily received, while others with weaker links are often not. This song, therefore, is a consolatory message to those who have tenuous links with the community: “once a family member, always a family member!”. The last in this group of báwáá songs is the Dagaare equivalent of the proverb: ‘whatever you do people will talk of you’. We see the protagonist in a ponderous mood, wondering: “how can I handle my deeds as I relate to various groups of people in the community?” This is the philosophy of man in search of the best ways to tread between personal preoccupations and those of the community.

(I) Bá yáá wáé lá yéé – They Have Come Again

Bá yáá wáé lá yéé
3.PL again come FOC PART
‘They have come again’

Bá yáá wáé lá yéé
3.PL again come FOC PART
‘They have come again’
(II) **Andónée yé nòòró - People of the World Tread Carefully**

Andónée yé nòòró yéeé  
Masses 2.PL move back PART  
‘People of the world be careful.’

Kúú bë puòri yàà tè wááná  
Death be back again DIR come  
‘Death is imminent.’

Bòwáálée yé nòòró yéeé
Bowaaee 2.PL move back PART
‘Bowaaee be careful.’

Kúú bé puòrí yàa tè wááná
Death be back again DIR come
‘Death is imminent.’

(III) Kônó wàáná yée - Oh, Come Mourn with Us

Kônóó wááná yée
Weep-IMP come-IMP PART
‘Come along and mourn!’

Kônóó wááná yée
Weep-IMP come-IMP PART
Come along and mourn!

Fó náng wá táá sáá né má
2.SG yet NEG have father and mother
‘Though parents you no longer have’

Kyô méng kônóó wááná lé
but 2.SG also weep come PART
‘You may also still come along to mourn with the others.’

Kyô méng kônó wááná lé
but 2.SG also weep come PART
‘You may also still come along to mourn with the others.’

Kônóó wááná yée
Weep-IMP come-IMP PART
‘Come along and mourn!’

Kônóó wááná yée
Weep-IMP come-IMP PART
‘Come along and mourn!’

Bèkpée wá táá sáá né má
orphan NEG have father and mother
‘Though, orphan as you are - no longer having parents’

Kyô méng kônó wááná lé
but 2.SG also weep come PART
‘You may also still come along to mourn with the others.’

Hîné wááná yée
Wail-IMP come-IMP PART
‘Come along and wail!’

Hîné wááná yée
Wail-IMP come-IMP PART
‘Come along and wail!’

Fó náng wá táá sáá né má
2.SG yet NEG have father and mother
‘Though parents you no longer have’
KYØ méng línné wááná lé
but.2.SG also weep come PART
‘You may also still come along to mourn with the others.’

KYØ méng línné wááná lé
but.2.SG also weep come PART
‘You may also still come along to mourn with the others.’

(IV) N éébó - Whatever You Do…
N éébó yáá  (repeat many times)
1.SG do.NOM PART
‘My deeds…’

N páá móó e’é néé yéli kàng
1.SG now always.come do somebody thing some
‘Sometimes when I relate to some kinds of people’

Wà la bông N éébó yáá
NEG FOC know 1.SG do.NOM PART
‘I don’t really know how best to thread.’

Kà N bùàrá lá bée
COMP 1.SG grow.IMP FOC PART
‘Whether I will survive this’

Kà N kpírë lá bée
COMP 1.SG die.IMP FOC PART
‘Or I will perish from this, ’

N páá móó é lá néé yéli kàng
1.SG now always.come do FOC somebody thing some
‘Sometimes when I relate to some kinds of people’

Wà la bông N éébó yáá
NEG FOC know 1.SG do.NOM PART
‘I don’t really know how best to thread.’

Track 2: Gyillé ngmééó né lénnò - Xylophone Duets
   by Dekongmen Bodo and Bayuo Digre

In many Dagaaba areas, the xylophone is considered a sacred instrument and only played at funerals. Customs and taboos surrounding the performance of the instrument are properly observed, such as, the preparation of spiritual defenses against the dangers of playing in public by a neophyte or the forbidding of women from playing the instrument lest they become barren (Kropp Dakubu 1986).

Among the Dagaaba of Kogri, the xylophone duet may also be played for recreational purposes, as was the case in this recording. These performances normally consist of a medley of compositions intended to illustrate the skill and inventiveness of the lead player who improvises around a variety of melodies connected by linking phrases or reiterated single pitches.

(I) Lead xylophonist: Dekongmen Bodo
   Accompanying: Bayuo Digre

Kúú yóng téng téng
Death only ideoph ideoph
‘Only death!’

Kúú nång wáá gândáá
Death only be hero
‘It is only death that is the ultimate hero.’

Kúú yóng ká bà máng wá só
Death only COMP 3.Pl always NEG own
‘It is only death that can’t be controlled.’

Meaning: ‘Only death is supreme. You may do anything but you can’t subdue death.’

(II) Lead xylophonist: Dekongmen Bodomo
Accompanying Bayuo Digre

Ngmàángà dá kông zóró bàá
Monkey PAST NEG fear.IMP dog
‘Why wouldn’t Monkey fear dog?’

Báá nång táá pòtééré
Dog then have supporter
‘Dog has a supporter.’

Ngmàángà méng pòtééré bë
Monkey also supporter where
‘But where is Monkey’s supporter?’

Meaning: ‘If you have support in this world, you can really get progress.’

(III) Lead xylophonist: Bayuo Digre
Accompanying: Dekongmen Bodomo

Kúú yéng yéng lé
Death near near that
‘Death is so near.’

Kyéng kyë gàänè
Walk and stride
‘Walking in a stride’

Kyéng kyë gàänè
Walk and stride
‘Walking in a stride’

Kúú yéng yéng lé
Death near near that
‘Death is so near.’

Meaning: ‘You may do all kinds of heroic things but one day you will have to come up to death.’

Note: Why do the theme of ‘death’ so frequent? Because it’s the thing we can’t do anything about.
Track 3: Sénsellè yélôn (Sung folk tales) - Downtrodden of the world
by Bayuo Digre

In this song, the singer seeks to draw attention to the plight of the weak, disabled and disadvantaged in society. In the first part he makes a plea for them and then in subsequent parts he makes them speak through his voice: ‘If God were only a roof-top away I would consult him, my totem wouldn’t allow me to improve my situation, etc.’

Tôô mà Bâyúô Dígré, mà la bôôrô kà’ éng yélô à yélôn
Ok, 1.SG bayuo Digre, 1.SG that want-IMP COMP I sing DEF song
‘OK, it is me Bayuo Digre that wants to sing the song.’

Nâànmèn zú nënsâánà
God head person-spoil
‘Disabled of the world’

Nâànmèn zú nënsâánà
God head person-spoil
‘Disabled of the world’

Yè màang nyè
2.PL always see
‘Oh please consider (them).’

Zôngô mèng yöng màang nàà
Blind also alone always NEG
‘The blind should not be left to their fate alone’

Kôngô mèng yöng màang nàà
Leper also alone always NEG
‘Lepers should not be left to their fate alone’

Tè zàà yélè
1.PL all matter
‘This is an issue for all of us.’

Sèë ta’a yélè kórông
Better than other exist long ago
‘Differences in abilities have always existed.’

Kà nèéng wà dang séébô
COMP person come first better than
‘If a fellow has a higher ability’

Tá nyè sûúrí
NEG see anger
‘Don’t get frustrated.’

Kà nààngmènèng dà wàà pêë
COMP God.TOP PAST become roof.top
‘If God were only a roof-top away,’

Kàng dó bé kà té nyè tâà
COMP.1.SG climb there CONJ. 1.PL see each other
‘I would have climbed up there to consult with him.’
Track 4: Sènsełè yfélóŋ (Sung folk tales) - Living cautiously

by Bayuo Digre

This song takes up a recurrent theme in Dagao about the need to tread carefully in society. The Dagaaba believe in witchcraft and supernatural powers and generally consider that when all is not going well, it is most likely due to a spell from someone or retribution from a god, hence the need to tread carefully. But members of this community also believe that God the Supreme Being (Naangmen) is the final arbitrator and will judge in their favour: since their enemies are not God they couldn't possibly have the power to carry out their evil wishes!

Ká N tá yöʒro wélle
COMP 1.SG NEG roam-IMP wildly
‘My enemy would not want me to walk around freely.’

Déndómọ̀ élá á Náángmén bée
Enemy be FOC DEF God PART
‘Is my enemy God?’

Déndómọ̀ yelí ká N tá yöʒro wélle
Enemy say COMP 1.SG NEG roam-IMP wildly
‘My enemy wishes I could not walk around so freely.’

Déndómọ̀ élá á Náángmén bée
Enemy be FOC DEF God PART
‘Is my enemy God?’

Fò mọ̀̀ élá á nóóngmén bée
2.SG anyway be FOC DEF God PART
‘Are you God anyway?’

Fò mọ̀̀ élá á tẹ̀ngán bée
2.SG anyway be FOC DEF God of the earth PART
‘Are you God of the Earth anyway?’

Déndómọ̀ yel káng tá yöʒro wélle
Enemy say COMP 1.SG NEG roam.IMP wildly
‘My enemy wishes I could not walk around so freely.’

Déndómọ̀ élá á tẹ̀ngán bée
Enemy be FOC DEF God of the earth PART
‘Is my enemy the God of the Earth anyway?’
Gbonggbɔrị yêli kò wá bôrọ bọ
Hyena say COMP.3.SG NEG want.IMP goat
‘Hyena says he doesn’t like Goat.’

Wénnáá yèli kò wá bôrọ bọ
King-of-the-wild say COMP.3.SG NEG want.IMP goat
‘Lion says he doesn’t like Goat.’

Yéng kọ́ ngmà à bàrè ká bó́ ọ̀ oyó́rọ́
Where COMP.2.SG cut leave COMP.3.SG goat roam.IMP
‘Where have you set aside for Goat to roam?’

Track 5: Sënsélé Sèllò̀ (Spoken tales) – A Dagaare Pandora’s Box or ‘How Diseases Came About’
by Bayuo Digré

This folk tale is very popular among rural Dagaaba. It conveys the common mythological explanation for the prevalence of disease in society. Badere, the Spider, a cunning, inquisitive hero in many Dagaare folk tales is appropriately at the centre of an unfortunate ‘discovery’. Badere roams far into the wilderness arriving at the spot where all diseases are contained in a hermetically sealed receptacle. But when Badere hears strange sounds from within the receptacle, his curiosity gets the better of him and he opens it unleashing all manner of disease upon the world. An additional moral here is to eschew unbridled curiosity.

Tóò màà Bâyúó Digré, màà lá bôrọ̀ nàá sèllàà sënsénlông
Ok 1.SG Bayuo Digré 1.SG FOC want.IMP to tell story
‘All right, it is I Bayuo Digré who wants to tell this story.’

Tóò N pàà pîlè lá
Ok 1.SG then start.IMP FOC
‘All right, I am now going to begin.’

Bàlènlông hàà lá à hàà dà làngèè táá
Sickness all FOC 3.Pl all PAST get.together each other
‘All kinds of diseases…they were all together.’

A tàà bà yírì kó bë m̀sógò̀ pháà
And have 3.PL house COMP.3.SG be.at bush.middle inside
‘And it was in the middle of the bush.’

kà bá tàà ... à bààlènlông pègàà pà̀nè bàrè
COMP 3.PL have... DEF sickness close door leave
‘And they had...the diseases were all locked in a room.’

Tóò 1̀g lá daáré kàà Bàdéré yó
Then that FOC day certain COMP Spider roam
‘Then, one day, Spider roamed.’

A gèrè à nyé pà̀nè nàng pègè
And go-IMP and see door then close
‘As he went he saw a closed door.’

A tãà ò nú tè kúôr
And have 3.SG hand go knock
‘He knocked at the door.’
That FOC COMP sickness turn ask each other
‘And the diseases turned around and asked each other:’

Nyààlòng hôò lá tò páné
Guinea.worm 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Guinea worm, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Zúósmó hôò lá tò páné
Headache 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Headache, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Gbémórmó hôò lá tò páné
Leg.swollen 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Swollen Leg, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Lòmbòrí hôò lá tò páné
Side 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Troubled Ribs, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Pòbèémé hôò lá tò páné
Stomach.ache 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Stomach ache, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Nìmìbèémé hôò lá tò páné
Eye.sickness 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Eye Sickness, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Ka Bâdéré lèè sèèrè à sèè sèè lèèng tè gàà
COMP Badere turn dance.IMP and dance dance in this way DIR go
‘And Spider turned around and danced; he danced away for sometime.’

Kyé là lèè wà à là wà tàá o nũ là wà kóór
And again return come and again come hold 3.SG hand again come knock
‘and returned again.’ ‘And knocked at the door again.’

Kàà bánlóng là sò̀rè táá:
COMP.DEF sickness again ask each other
‘And the diseases asked each other again:’

Nyàlóng hò̀̀ lá tò pàné
Guinea.worm 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Guinea worm, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà̀̀ bá tò pàné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Zúósmó hò̀̀ lá tò pàné
Headache 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Head ache, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà̀̀ bá tò pàné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Gbémórmó hò̀̀ lá tò pàné
Leg.swollen 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Swollen Leg, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà̀̀ bá tò pàné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Lòmbórí hò̀̀ lá tò pàné
Side 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Troubled Ribs, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà̀̀ bá tò pàné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Pòbèèmè hò̀̀ lá tò pàné
Stomach.ache 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Stomach ache, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà̀̀ bá tò pàné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Nìmíbèèmè hò̀̀ lá tò pàné
Eye.sickness 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Eye Sickness, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà̀̀ bá tò pàné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Nàtèbáá hò̀̀ lá tò pàné
Sole.pains 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Pains of the sole, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màa bà té páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Kà bà là lèè…kà á Bádéré là lèè sèèrè…
COMP 3.PL again turn COMP.DEF Spider again turn dance-IMP
‘And they turned… and Spider turned again and began dancing.’

Lèè kà Bádéré là lèè sèè lèèng tà gàà
That.FOC COMP Spider again turn dance that.way DIR go
‘Then Spider turned around again and danced away.’

A là lèè mà à bòtà pòò à lòò kùòù
And again turn come DEF 3.ORD inside and FOC.come knock
‘And returned for the third time to knock at the door.’

Kàà bàlàlòng là sòòrè táá
COMP.DEF sickness again ask each other
‘And the diseases asked each other again:’

Nyààlàlòng hòò là té páné
Guinea.worm 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Guinea worm, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màa bà té páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Gbémórmó hòò là té páné
Leg.swollen 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Swollen Leg, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màa bà té páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Lòòmbòrí hòò là té páné
Side 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Troubled Ribs, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màa bà té páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Pòbèómé hòò là té páné
Stomach.ache 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Stomach ache, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó màa bà té páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Nímúbèómé hòò là té páné
Eye.sickness 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Eye Sickness, was it you that touched the door?’
Ohó mà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Nàtëbáá hàò lá tò páné
Sole.pains 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Pains of the sole, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Zúósmó hàò lá tò páné
Headache 2.SG. FOC touch door
‘Head ache, was it you that touched the door?’

Ohó mà bá tò páné
No, 1.SG NEG touch door
‘Oh no, it wasn’t me that touched the door.’

Lè là kà Bádégré là lè sè sè lèéng tè gàì
That FOC COMP Spider again turn dance that.way DIR go
‘Then Spider turned around again and danced away.’

Kyé wà à yèl kòo nàà déè yúò lá yàì
And come and said COMP 3.SG will just open FOC anyway
‘And upon returning he said he will just open it.’

A nyè bòì ná náng lá à bè
And see thing that then FOC DEF there
‘And just see what it is’

A màng kyè à yèlông à vëñà nyèè
And always cut DEF song DEF nice like.this
‘That is singing so nicely.’

Lè là kà Bádégré yúò dìë nà wà báàrè
So FOC COMP Spider open room that come finish
‘Spider, upon opening the room.’

A wà nyè bòì hàá bè
And NEG see thing all there
‘Saw nothing inside there.’

Kyé kà bààlông hàá déè mà pògè
But COMP sickness all just attach cover
But he got completely swamped by the diseases.

Kò zuú ñëèì
COMP.3.SG head ache.IMP
‘And his head was aching.’

Kò póò bëèrè
COMP.3.SG stomach pain.IMP
‘And his stomach was paining.’
Kà nâte'báá n ọgè
COMP pains of the sole catch
‘And he had pains on his sole.’

Kà nyààlông bè zié kàŋg
COMP guinea.worm be place some
‘And Guinea worm too was somewhere on him.’

Kà lòmbórí bè bè
COMP troubled.ribs be there
‘And Troubled Ribs too was on him.’

Bádéré né ng déé vù 1 ẹẹng
Spider as just crawl along
‘Spider just crawled along.’

Déè wá tá dìè là kà Bádéré kpì
Just come reach room that COMP Spider die
‘And upon reaching home, Spider died!’

Tóò Bádéréng tùò bàlaông à wà èng nènsààbá
Ok. Spider.FOC carry sickness and come put humans
‘All right, it is Spider who introduced diseases to humanity.’

Bàlaông dà kyé bè
Sickness PAST NEG.be there
‘Diseases never existed.’

A dèè dà lánggè táá
DEF just PAST gather each.other
‘They were together’

A mèng táá à yírlí kpèèré
and also have 3.PL house enter.IMP
‘in their own house.’

Bádéréng tùò bàlaông wà
Spider.FOC carry sickness come
‘It was Spider who brought diseases to us.’

OO dà bááré lá
Ok. 3.SG finish.PERF FOC
‘Ok, it is finished.’

Tọọ kà màààng pàà nàà là pílí kàngá lá kàng páà nàà là píllí
Ok. COMP 1.SG then FUT again start another FOC COMP.1.SG then will again start
‘If it is necessary to start one, I can start one again.’

**Track 6: Sénèsélé Séllòó (Spoken tales) – A West African Gulliver’s Travels** or ‘No one Woman Can Give Birth to a Hero’
by Bayuo Digre

This is a rendition of a typical West African story of ‘Man Pass Man’. As we increase our horizons we are able to take stock of our relative weaknesses and strengths. Each of the Herculean men in this folktale
meets an even more gigantic and powerful creature as they wander into new regions. This Gulliver type of discovery is aptly expressed by a Dagaare moral: No one woman can give birth to a hero!

Pɔŋ-yėnŋ wá dɔŋ-ʁó ɡa ンドáá
Woman-one NEG give.birth-IMP hero
‘Not only one woman gives birth to a hero.’

Tɔɗ kɔŋŋ kɔŋŋ míŋ lá lá bɛ bɛ
Ok another another also FOC again be there
‘All right, here is another story.’

Dɔŋ kɛŋざा kɔŋŋ lá lá dɔŋ bɛ bɛ
man strong another FOC and PAST be there
‘There was once a strong man.’

A pɔ̀ kɔ̀ kɔmááŋə
and then farm corn
‘He farmed some corn.’

Tɔɗ tɛm nά a kɔmááŋə
Ok time that DEF corn
Ok, as the corn was’

Nɔŋŋ wà tɛ ɬɛɛ lá
When come DIR whiten.IMP FOC
‘getting ready to be harvested’

Kɔ̀ɔ ɛŋ ɗ bίdʒɔ kɔ ɡùùrɔ̀ a kɔmááŋə
COMP.3SG put 3SG son COMP.3SG watch IMP.DEF corn
‘He asked his son to watch over the corn fields’.

Kaa bίdʒɔ yɛ́rè dɪɡrɛ̀ a dàkɔ̀yɛ́rɛ́
COMP.DEF son go out.IMP chase.IMP DEF parrot.PL
‘And the son kept on going out to chase off the parrots from the corn fields’.

Dáárɛ̀ kɔŋŋɛ̀ kà dɔŋ nà ɣì yɔ́
day certain COMP man that go out roam
‘One day the man went out for a walk’.

ɔ̀ yɔ̀ ɬɛŋŋ wànɔ̀ kà dàkɔ̀yɛ́rɛ́ lά mà pɔ̀ɡàa kɔmááŋə dǐrɛ́
3SG roam until come.IMP COMP parrot FOC attach cover.DEF corn eat.IMP
‘On his return, there were a lot of parrots in the corn fields eating up the corn’.

Kɔ̀ dɛ́ dàlɛ̀ nɛ súúɾí wà kpɛ́
COMP.3SG just walk fast with anger come enter
‘He just angrily walked in’

A kpɛ̀ tɛ sɔ̀dɔ̀a bìɛ́
and enter DIR ask.DEF boy
‘and asked the boy’

Kà bɔ́ŋɔ lá ko yɛł ko dɪɡrɛ̀ a kɔmááŋə dàkɔ̀yɛ́rɛ́ bàrà
COMP what FOC COMP.3SG said COMP3.SG chase.IMP DEF corn parrot.PL leave.IMP
‘That why has he asked him to keep off the birds from the corn field’
Kò vèng kà à dàkyèrré sààná
COMP.3SG leave COMP DEF parrot.PL spoil
‘and he has instead left them to spoil the corn’

kyé kò kpè wà bè à dièng gângè
and COMP.3SG enter come be DEF room.LOC lie.down
‘while he is lying inside the room?’

Ká bìè tàngè nòòrè kò là sòòrè
COMP child keep quiet.3SG mouth COMP.3SG again ask
‘The boy kept quiet and he asked again’

Ká ónò ná kó sòòrù ká bòng kò kpè wà gângè èrè
COMP 3.SG NEG COMP.3.SG ask.IMP COMP what COMP enter come lie down do.IMP
‘That isn’t it him he is asking? That what is he lying down here doing?’

kyé kà dàkyèrré dìrè à kámáána
and COMP parrot.PL eat.IMP DEF corn
‘while the birds are eating up the corn?’

Kò là tàngè
COMP.3.SG again kept quiet
‘He still kept quiet.’

Kò là sòòrù gàèrè bòtà póò
COMP.3.SG again ask leg ORD.three inside
‘He asked a third time.’

Kàà bìè tàngè
COMP.DEF child keep quiet
‘The child kept quiet.’

lè lá kó dèè zèè à bìè zèè
that FOC COMP.3.SG just scoop DEF child scoop
‘So he just scooped the child’.

àràà dièng kyé zà bàrè kó yí lè yèngé póò
stand.DEF room.LOC and throw leave COMP.3.SG go out fall outside postp.
‘Stood inside the house and threw him outside.’

Kyé kò dèè wà yi nòò súúrì à yòò yòórò
and COMP.3.SG just come go out with.3.SG anger and roam roam.IMP
‘And he just came out with anger and wandered away.’

ò yòórò léèng gèrè
3.SG roam.IMP until go.IMP
‘As he wandered along’

kà dòò kàng mèng là gângè ò kyèràà párè
COMP man certain also FOC lie 3.SG ake.apple.tree down
‘He came upon a certain man lying under his ake apple tree’

Tòò kaa kyèràà lààrà
ok COMP.DEF ake.apple laugh.IMP
‘The ake apple tree was ripe with fruits.’

Kà dàkyèrré dìrè
COMP parrot.PL eat.IMP
‘And parrots were feeding on them’.

Kó mèng áng yi gàngè à dígré à dákỳerré bàrà
COMP.3.SG also always go out lie down and chase.IMP DEF parrot.PL leave.IMP
‘Like the man’s son, he too was always there to ward off the birds.’

Dố nà náng y’àrré gërè kàà à tê nà gàngè à dígré
man that as roam.IMP go.IMP COMP.DEF 3.SG other that lie.down and chase.IMP.DEF
‘As he approached and found the other man also lying under the tree.’

dákỳerré à kyèrrà à màn à dê dê gërè
carry.IMP DEF left.IMP know.IMP parrot.PL DEF ake apple down COMP.3.SG just go.IMP
‘warding off the birds, he…’

dê dê nôgê dê à dê dê nôgê à zêlà à tê pârè
just DIR hold take DEF and just DIR hold and lift  DEF tree under
‘just went and lifted him up from under the tree…’

à dê zá nê à kyèrré mìnè nquàrà rê à wò dôrô
and take throw with DEF ake apples some cut and collect chew.IMP
‘and used him to throw at some of the ake apples, which were severed from the branches. He
picked them and began to eat them.’

Kyê kà à dố mèng yí gàà à tê lê gàngè kônô
and COMP DEF man also go out go DEF DIR fall lie down cry.IMP
‘In the mean time, the man fell from a distance away and began crying.’

Kyê kò dôrô à kyèrrê kàà dôs kông léng kô
and COMP.3.SG chew.IMP DEF ake apple COMP.DEF man cry until COMP.3.SG
‘He ate the fruits as the man cried and cried until’

éngê wà tê fûrî fêè kô ńrî wà à wà sôôrô
body come DIR cool off a little COMP.3.SG get up come DEF come ask.IMP
‘he cooled off a bit and went over and asked,’

Kó bâ kà bông lâ kô sôôrô kà kà bông è
COMP.3.SG friend COMP.3.SG what FOC COMP.3.SG ask.IMP COMP and what happen
‘That why? And he asked that what is the matter!’

Ká wôlô kà nê gàngè kô wà zêlód à dê
and why COMP person lie down COMP.3.SG come scoop.3.SG and take
‘That why does he come along and pick up a fellow lying down peacefully, using the fellow as a
tool…?’

Zâ nê kyèrrê à ngmàrà rê dôrô kyê
throw with ake apples and cut and chew.IMP and
‘to throw at and pluck ake.apple.fruits to eat and in so doing…’

Kó tê gàngè à wà làrà gà dôs kâ ńwì
COMP.3.SG DIR lie down and NEG laugh.IMP COMP man COMP oh!
‘cause so much pain on the person. The man said that oh!…’

Kó wà bông kô wà bông kà nêsàlá lâ kà ónô èng
COMP.3.SG NEG know COMP NEG know COMP human being FOC COMP 3.SG TOP
‘that he didn’t know that it was a human being, that…’
as he walked up to the tree he thought it was a cudgel lying down.

That’s why he also used it to pluck some fruits to eat.

He also used the cudgel to get up and let...

The man got up and the two of them began to walk away together.

They went up to him and he just dipped into his bag...

and pulled out the two elephants, throwing them on to the ground. They said...

‘oh! these things, that they can’t carry!’
COMP.3.SG do COMP 3.PL all hold go.IMP COMP COMP 3.PL
‘That he should let them carry them together and go on until they. …’

wà tè nyè hùù bénèé yàà kà bà bá sè kó bà kòng come DIR see fire somewhere PART that COMP 3.PL roast COMP.3.SG 3.PL NEG
tòò sà de able.DEF take
‘come upon fire and then roast them. That they just cannot possibly lift them up’.

Kyè kà ònọng lèè sóglè à yèë’i kó à
and other turn hide and said give DEF
‘And the one hid and told the other who had mistaken him.’

ò bông kà dàoé kpééó mèng là ràngè lè ò dênèé
3.SG know COMP man.DEM strength also again pass FOC 3.SG own
‘strength is far greater than his’.

Tóò lè kà bá kyèng lèèng à gèrè kà nènsààlá hàng ok that COMP 3.PL walk until and go.IMP and human being as
‘Alright, as they walked along, they came upon a huge human being.’

tá ọnọ lá à gbírí ràngè kà mà nòór háà à kà bá téé reach 3.SG FOC and sleep lie down COMP.DEF mouth ajar and 3.PL think
‘who was asleep and his mouth was wide open – and they thought it was a’.

sígi là, bá téé sígi dèndòré lá yùù ràngè bá wà bông kà nènsààlá hut FOC 3.PL think hut door FOC open lie 3.PL NEG know COMP human.being
‘hut, that it was a door of a hut that was wide open that they didn’t know it was a human.’

là gbírí gánàà lè
FOC sleep lie that
‘being who was fast asleep’

Tóò lè lá kà bá tò tìá bá bátà à pàà kpè zèngè Ok that FOC COMP 3.PL follow each other 3.PL ORD.three and then enter sit
‘Ok, all three of them followed each other into his mouth and.’

à nòór póó màng hùù à pàà sè à sèèrè à wòòrè DEF mouth inside make fire and then roast and roast.IMP DEF elephant.PL
‘sat down, made a fire and began to roast the elephants.’

bà sè wòòrè nà lèèng wòòrè nà nàng wà tè bèrè là 3.PL roast elephants DEM until elephants DEM as come DIR cook.IMP FOC
‘As they roasted the elephants and they began to get cooked.’

kà nyòbógrí tùú lè à dòó nàng kpèrè ò nàng kpèrè and nose warm FOC DEF man as sneeze 3.SG as sneeze
‘the man’s nose became hot. The giant sneezed. In sneezing, his breath.’

wà bááré lá kà à nyòbógr hùùrón déé dé come finish FOC COMP DEF nose breath just take
‘was so strong that it flushed all three of.’
à bà háá bátá à dée dé lős bàrè tôôré lé ká bà DEF 3.PL all ORD.three and just take throw leave far that and 3.PL ‘them out and they fell out a long distance away. They…’

kpélé kpélé gàngè kyé kó là lèe gàng gbîrè passed.out passed.out lie.down and COMP 3.SG again turn lie.down sleep.IMP ‘passed out completely while the man went back to sleep’.

Lé ká nô bá ná à tê gàngè lêéêng kà bà nîgê wà tê vêlè that COMP people DEM and DIR lie down until COMP 3.PL face come DIR clear ‘They lay there until they regained consciousness’.

Bà nîgê wà vêlôó pûôrí ná lá kà bà pá 3.PL face come clear.NOM back DEM FOC COMP 3.PL then ‘On coming back to, they then looked up and…’

Kàârä bôngè láá nênsàálá lá à kó té gàngè look.IMP know COMP human being FOC and COMP.3.SG DIR lie down ‘lo and behold, it was a huge human being.’

do gió do gió do gió o là gbîréé lá gàngè lè yöö ideoph ideoph ideoph 3.SG again sleep FOC lie down that PART ‘It lay there very massively. It was fast asleep again’.

Kà bà déé sôgèlà bà bátá à déé sôgèlè zô yàârê and 3.PL just hide 3.PL ORD.three and just hide run disperse ‘And they just furtively ran away and went their various ways. They went to their…’

à kûtí bà yè tôô kyé yêlì kà dôôé mèng kpêôô là gàngèè bà and go home 3.PL house ok and said COMP man.DEM also strength FOC pass 3.PL ‘various homes, saying this man’s strength is far greater than…’

deni kà nyo nênsàálá…..
our COMP see human being ‘theirs. What a human being!’

Kà dôô ná à kûtí à yè kà kà ónông dâ wà yô and man DEM and go home and said that it 3.SG PART NEG roam ‘And the man went home and noticed that if he hadn’t travelled…’

ô wà bông kà nênsàálá bêbê kò kpêô là sêngòó 3.SG NEG know COMP human being be there COMP strength again equal.3.SG ‘he wouldn’t have known that there was a human being far stronger than him.’

kyé kò tôô hêng nênsàálá nyoôôôôô piô kò wà and COMP.3SG able lift human being nose inside COMP.3.SG ‘Imagine sitting inside a human nose until it gets heated! He sneezes and…’

 tôô kò kpérê kà bà yî té lê à kpélé heat COMP.3.SG sneeze COMP.3.Pl go out DIR and pass out ‘sends you reeling on to the ground and passing out!’

Lê lá kà dââáár màng lóô sékpôôrè kà pôöyêñ wâ dôôrô gân dàâá That FOC COMP Dagaâbe always throw proverb COMP woman.one NEG give birth hero ‘That is why the Dagaâbe have a proverb which says: “No one woman gives birth to a hero.”’

Ô mèng là bâáâréé lá
Track 7: Ånléé (Women’s dance songs)

by the Women of Kogri

The performers of these dance songs vividly evoke the plight of women in Dagaaba society. These women spontaneously express their feelings of helplessness, the frustrations they experience as they attempt to relate to the world around them, but also their resilience to do better, and their consolation that circumstances will improve.

(I) Némbàallá ôhóó…
Person-poor PART
‘Oh poor helpless person…’

(Kɔɔ̀ m ɔɔ̀  yèl yèlìbìlì
COMP.2.SG always.come say thing.small
‘You may say something trivial,’

Kyê wà wònàà kà ánlá náá)
But come hear.3.PL COMP 3.PL NEG
‘But it gets exaggerated when next you listen to people talk of it.’

(II) N wà lá bɔng N bɔɔrè nyè (repeat 2 or more times)
1.SG NEG again know 1.SG sacrifice DEM
‘I really cannot decipher this one fate of mine.’

N bɔɔrè wójrè nyè yàà
1.SG god problems these PART
‘These divine problems of mine’

N wà lá bɔngëng bɔɔrè nyè
1.SG NEG again know.1.SG God this
‘I don’t know what to do with them.’

(III) Tàá yèlë yèlë tàá yèlë (repeat many times)
have matter PART have matter
‘Sacrifices and problems,’

Bɔɔrè mèng yòng nàà tàá yèlë (repeat many times)
God also alone NEG have matter
‘It is not only gods that one must make sacrifices to.’

Bààlà mèng yòng nàà tàá yèlë (repeat many times)
Sick also alone NEG have matter
‘It is not only the weak that has problems.’

Track 8: Yë èngné yè Nàá (Respect your King)

led by Marcelina Bongnea

In this song, the women of Ullo sing the praises and exaltations to the lineage of their overlord. The lead singer urges her community to show respect and deference to their Chief, and to carry her message home forcefully she makes reference to how citizens of another community respect their Chief. Throughout the
song, she recounts various lineage appellations in praise of the Chief, and by extension the society as a whole.

Ye engne ye Nàá (repeat many times)  
2.PL respect 2.PL Chief  
‘Respect your Chief!’

Ye engne ye Nàá  
2.PL respect.IMP 2.PL Chief  
‘Respect your Chief!’

Kà nóbò nyé sòng èng kò ye  
COMP people see help respect give 2.PL  
‘So that people may realize how worthy he is.’

Kówááré náng táá Bà-wá bóórà-nóbò  
Koware clan as have Bawabośōnoba  
‘Don’t you see how the Kowaar ee clan’

Bà máng wá èng gàngàà lè  
3.PL always come respect surpass that  
‘respect Chief Bawabośōnoba so much.’

*****

Dantëélèé ye engne ye Nàá  
Dante people 2.PL respect.IMP 2.PL Chief  
‘People of Dantë, respect your Chief!’

*****

Sòzëélèé ye engne ye Nàá  
Sòzëélèé 2.PL respect.IMP 2.PL Chief  
‘Sòzëélèé, respect your Chief!’

Track 9: Exaltations to the Youth of Ullo:  
led by Marcelina Bongnea

The main message in this song is an exhortation by the singer to the people of Dangte (Ullo) to join together and advance their community. She begins by telling them that they are being castigated by outsiders and that they should put their faith in God and put their axes together in unison. She invokes the founder of their clan and lineage appellations to intensify her exhortation.

Bà yó sààná ye lá  
3.PL go.around spoil 2.PL PART  
‘They are going around castigating you’

Ká ye kòn tòb è yèlì  
COMP. 2.PL NEG able do thing  
‘That you can’t do anything.’

Ye dì yè te’ròn lángnè Nàangmènè  
2.PL take 2.PL thoughts put God
‘Put your faith in God.’

Bayɒŋ bɪrí yë nà tôd lè ṣáámá kà bá yí
Bayong children 2PL FUT able help strangers and they going
‘Children of Bayong, can you entertain guests?’

Yë de yë téɛ róŋ lângnè Bâyɒŋ
2.PL take 2.PL thoughts put Bayong
‘Put your faith in Bayong.’

Yë de yë téɛ róŋ lâng né Nàangmèn
2.PL take 2.PL thoughts put God
‘Put your faith in God.’

Yë nà tôd è lá
2.PL can able do PART
‘You can do it.’

Dâteëléë bìiri bà yò sààná yë lá
Children of Danteë 3.PL go.around spoil 2.PL PART
‘Children of Danteë, people are going around castigating you.’

Tiïrōngdème, yë de yë téɛ róŋ lâng né Nàangmèn…
Tiïrōngdème 2.PL take 2.PL thought put.together with God
‘Tiïrōngdème, put your faith in God.’

Track 10: Xylophone duets (in Accra)

Like the Kogri performance (Track 2), the Accra players perform a number of compositions in medley fashion though the latter performance is characterised by a denser rhythmic and melodic texture and a faster tempo. Another significant difference between the Kogri and Accra performances is the insertion of sung phrases. The medley comprising this performance is a cocktail of nine, pithy songs intended to illustrate the range of xylophone tunes in Dagaaba culture.

(I) Kòrì wà yírì yéé (repeat)
grow.old come house PART
‘Grow-old-come home,’

(II) Zoŋò néngfáiá (repeat)
fear-IMP person-bad
‘Beware of a bad person.’

(III) póó yëkí yéé, hè póó yëfì, nèé kòngbòng, (repeat)
stomach matter PART, 1.SG stomach matter person NEG know
‘No one can know too much about a person’s inner feelings’

Kàŋg gbìrée yéé, kàŋg bà gbìrì yéé, nèé kòngbòng
COMP.1.SG sleep PART COMP.1.SG NEG sleep PART, person NEG know
‘Whether I sleep or not, no one can know exactly.’

(IV) N mà wòó piì má kyimé kàŋg yì yèŋgè séé bàwàá (repeat)
1.SG mother PART wear 1.SG jingles COMP.1SG go out dance bàwàá
‘Mother, please some jingles on me to go out and dance bàwàá.’

(V) Tempèlõng né ngmåné, àanna záá kà màriá kyîríé (repeat)
ash and calabash all these COMP Christian dislike.IMP
‘A calabash full of ashes and all such things are what Christians dislike.’

(VI) Bông kàngá lá mélé góngólóng à nyè wà sòglàa zòòré (repeat)
thing some that coil around like snake black tail
‘There is something coiled around like the tail of a black snake.’

(VII) N bá kàngkàngmúléè nàng pôré kàngkàngáá l 35 má (repeat)
1.SG friend kangkangaa.bird please pluck kangkangaa.fruit throw 1.SG
‘My friend the kangkangaa bird, please get me a kangkangaa fruit.’

(VIII)Sáálláá béróng (yàà) (repeat many times)
food.bowl fat PART
‘A fat bowl of saabo,’

A máng dîré bá tégré
DEF always eat.IMP NEG satisfied
‘One keeps eating and never gets full.’

(IX) Kúú sòrî lá yèng..(repeat many times)
Death road FOC where
‘Where is the way to Death?’

Track 11: Báwáá (in Accra)

As in the Kogri performance (track 1), this medley of ten, short báwáá dance songs illustrates salient themes in Dagaaba society, such as love, bravery, morality, seasonal migration to urban centres, and the need for community solidarity. The performance is noticeably more intense than the Kogri performance mainly due to the addition of the marked syncopations of the gourd drum (kóźrè) which has a significant role here in enlivening the dancers during their displays of skill and rhythmic vigour in the émmó (‘to put in’) section of the dance.

(I) Ændónié wá táá yél.. (repeat many times)
masses NEG have [something]
‘Humanity does not have [inaudible..]’

(II) Kómmié wóó, (repeat several times)
tomato.PL PART
‘Oh, tomatoes!’

Dàngmù sòglàa nàng wóng kómmié
Wood.short black just bear tomato.PL
‘A black piece of wood bearing tomatoes!’

(III) Póóléé náng vëèlé lé kyé nyóg kpááléé éng séngfëng (repeat)
woman.small as beautiful that but catch guinea.fowl.small put jar.inside
‘Oh, what a beautiful girl but she has tried to hide a small guinea fowl in a jar!’

(IV) Wa yí ká tè gàà màné (repeat many times)
come go.out COMP 1.PL go sea
‘Come, let’s go to the Coast.’

(V) Lágélágé yélméngé léé póí ká bá máng zélé (repeat many times)
Bitter bitter truth turn arrow COMP 1.PL always poison
‘Like an arrow, truth can get poisoned.’

(VI) Ká nógráá’irá kúlò ky éká bá mááfebà t éngé (repeat many times)
COMP alien get.up go.home.IMP and 1.PL make 1.PL land
‘They say that aliens should go back home and let them develop their country.’

(VII) Kóóseé nómé ná (repeat many times)
cakes sweet.PERF FOC
‘Cakes are sweet.’

Kyáá dàåró̄ng wàà túó
But.3.PL cost be bitter
‘But they are costly.’

(VIII) Bipóló máng nong lá tâá (repeat many times)
child.young always like FOC other
‘The youth ought to like each other.’

Bipóló wá kyíré tâá
Child.young NEG hate other
‘The youth should not hate each other.’

(IX) wáá wáá wáá wáá (repeat many times)
PART PART PART PART
‘Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh…’

(X) Kúú wóó, kúú wóó yéé (repeat many times)
death PART, death PART PART
‘Oh, death, oh, death…’
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APPENDIX I: List of Linguistic/Grammatical Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 first, second and third persons
CONJ conjunction
DEF definite article
DEM demonstrative
DIR directional verb
FUT future tense
IMP imperfective aspect
LOC locative
NEG negation
NOM nominalization
ORD ordinal number
PART particle
PAST past tense
PERF perfective aspect
SG singular
TOP topic
References


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\(^1\) (cf. Dakubu. A sociolinguistic survey of northern communities in Accra).

\(^{ii}\) Popularly known as Jimmy (or Gyimi in Dagaare orthography).


\(^{iv}\) The numbers of keys on Dagaare xylophones may be 14, 17, 18 or 19 (see Wiggens (1995); Kropp Dakubu (1986).