

A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE
ABOASE DADZIE-MBA MMENSOUN

Our women's tradition on music and dance group which goes by the name "Aboase Dadziemba Mmensoun" represents both a legacy and a tradition. Formed in 1984, as a school by Mrs Letitia Araba Mensah, the then Headmistress of the Philip Quaque Girls school the at once became a symbol of radical departure the customary/traditional notion that and blowing of the traditional horn septet (Mmensoun) was the sole preserve of men. Under the tutelage of some the finest traditional musicians/folklorists in Cape coast Nana Kwamimna Kum of blessed memory, Aboase Dadziemba Mmensoun acquired a unique profile of being the only group of its kind in the country, and attracted the attention of state protocol, whereupon they have become virtual fixtures in the consideration of state protocol in planning big national events/pageants.

Aboase Dadziemba Mmensoun blazed the trail of in taking traditional Akan court music featuring septet (Mmensoun) into the school setting, and institutionalised it as a tradition in Philip Quaque Girls School, Cape Coast. The pioneer members of this unique experiment regrouped in 1992 under their founder/leader Mrs. Mensah, now cultural studies supervisor for basic schools in Cape Coast Municipality, and subsequently affiliated to CILTAD /AGORŊ PROJECT, under whose auspices they have continued to maintain their high level standards in traditional music and dance performance. Aboase Dadziemba Mmensoun have through their performances cultivated an impressive array of admirers, not least of them Bill Clinton – president of the USA.

Mmensoun – Tracks 1-23 are all Adowa rhythms (tracks 1 to 11 are all KETE rhythms originated from the Asantes and the Brongs). Tracks 24-25 are Apente (highlife) rhythms.

Recording at ABOASE 1997

Track (1) **Gyaesu (1'40")**

Fante: Gyaesu oo, Gyaesu mbanyin mbra
Gyaesu mbanyin mbra barima nsu oo
Gyaesu oo Gyaesu mbanyin mbraa
Barima nsu oo
Gyaesu oo Gyaesu mbanyin mbraa
(repeat

Lit Trans: Stop crying, stop crying; for it is the law of men
Stop crying, stop crying; for it is the law of men
Men do not cry
Stop crying; it is men's law

Meaning: Men are believed to be very brave and hence must not cry
This song is meant to console men who on one way or the other
Fall into troubles or problems
It is to encourage men whenever they find themselves in unwanted events
such as the death, illness, poverty and so on.

Track(2): **Emuna Muna Kuntan (1'33")**

Fante: Emuna muna kuntan
Emuna muna kuntan
Emuna muna pampee
Emuna muna pampee
Obi aye wo biribi a bisa no e
Emuna muna pampee, woara sei w'enyim

Lit Trans: You have squeezed your face so hard

You have squeezed your face so bad
If somebody has wronged you, sort the issue out with him
For you are spoiling your own face

Meaning: It would be appropriate to address undesirable issues that one does not like to those who pose onto him rather than to harbour ill-feelings

Track(3): **Tan Me A, Katawani (1'11'')**

Twi: Tan me a, kata w'ani
Tan me a, kata w'ani
W'ani bɛ te ato oo

Lit Trans: Hate me, close your eyes
Hate me, me close your eyes
Your eyes shall fall off

Meaning: Do not be jealous of your fellow human being;
No one can take away what God has given to another.

Track(4) **Yɛ Nam Nyaa Boko (1'21)**

Fante: Yɛ nam nyaa bɔkɔ oo
Yɛ nam nyaa bɛba
Yɛ nam nyaa bɔkɔ oo
Yɛ nam nyaa bɛba
Nana Nyame amaa
Yɛ nam nyaa bɔkɔ oo
Yɛ nam nyaa bɛba aa

Lit Trans: Slowly shall we go
Slowly shall we come
Almighty God has enabled us
Slowly shall we go
Slowly shall we come

Meaning: We shall not rush in life
Once there is life, there is hope
(by God's grace we shall succeed)

Track(5) **Mankessim Yɔɔ Yɔɔ (1'21'')**

Fante Mankessim yɔɔ yɔɔ woridze asɛm bɛn?
Mankessim yɔɔ yɔɔ woridze asɛm bɛn
Akvesi?
Mankessim yɔɔ yɔɔ woridze asɛm bɛn
Asɛm bɛn asɛm bɛn asɛm bɛn asɛm bɛn

Lit Trans: Mankessim so crowded what case are they solving?
Mankessim so crowded what case are they solving, Akvesi?
Mankessim so crowded what issue are they solving

Meaning: Mankessim is a big market town in Ghana located in the Central Region near (Cape Coast). Somebody from the remote area who had never seen such a huge crowd in his life before was alarmed at it.
[Long ago, such huge crowd was normally seen during settling of disputes between groups at the palace.]

Track(6): **Kwamina Atoapem (1'40'')**

Fante: Kwamina Atoapem, Kwamina Atoapem
N'eridwen ne ho yi? Hei!
Kwamina Atoapem , Kwamina Atoapem
N'eridwen ne hoyi? Hei!
Se inyim a, bisa oo bisa oo bisa ma wo nka nkyere wo
Obɔ ho bɔ ho bɔ ho
Tse dɛ bosompo po oo
Sɛ inyim a, bias oo bisa oo, bisa ma wo nka nkyere wo
Obɔ ho bɔ ho bɔ ho
Tse dɛ bosom po oo

Lit Trans: Kwamina Atoapem [person's name]
You are wondering about him? Hei!
He is there, He is there, He is there; like the sea-god
If you do not know, you can ask
Ask and you shall be told
He is there, He is there, He is there; like the sea-god

Meaning: When you are indisposed, your enemies wish you were dead.
And your loved ones wish you speedy recovery.
[It is a song sung by supporters of one opinion leader be it a chief or any leader in times of campaigns and relevant events.]

Track(7): **Ohen Kwesi ɛɛ (2'05'')**

Fante: Ohen Kwesi eee Ohen Kwesi
Igyina sar mu ereyɛ dɛn?
Me gyina sar mu rotow abowa
Woma me mbombo oo
Ohen Kwesi eee Ohen Kwesi ee wo mba nyi oo ayee

Lit Trans: King Kwesi; what are you doing over there in the bush?
I am hunting over here in the bush,
Give me praises;
King Kwesi, here are your children

Meaning: Leadership by good examples
A leader must always act first for his
Subjects to follow
[He who is hardworking deserves praises.]

Track(8): **Ma Ye Ebuburo (1'36'')**

Fante: Ma yɛ ebuburo a wommbo me tuo [repeat]
Nana Nyame ba nye me
Ma yɛ ebuburo wombo me tuo

Lit Trans: I am the Dove; They do not shoot me

I am the Dove; They do not shoot me
We are God's children
I am the Dove; They do not shoot me

Meaning: The Dove should not be killed;
for it is a symbol of peace.
Those that seek for peace must be liberalized.

Track (9): **Me Soa Dumpam (1'36'')**

Fante: Me soa dumpam me nan ase yε nwin,
Me soa dumpam me nan ase yε nwin
Monntum monsoa o
Me soa dumpam me nan ase yε nwin

Lit. Trans: I am carrying a bunch of plantain; my feet are cold [repeat] I cannot carry off.

Meaning: You cannot afford to lose any valuable thing that you have.
[Could have other meanings.]

Track (10): **Nwansema A ɔnye Me Tse (1'57'')**

Fante: Nwansema a, ɔnye me tse,
Na &rika me kur mu
Nwanasema a ɔnye me tse
Na Orika me kur mu.
Ofie na waye o.
Nwasema a ɔnye me tse
Orika me kur mu.

Lit Trans: The fly that lives with me is biting my sore [repeat].
It is home which has caused it,

Meaning: The cause of my suffering /problem is from my own home;
My own people are the cause of my sorrows.

Track (11): **Hwe Ma Obi Ewu (0'57'')**

Fante: Hwe ma obi ewu Hwe ma obi ada,
Hwe ma obi ewu Hwe ma obi ada: Apia e!
Hwe ma obi ewu Hwe ma obi ada Apia e
Hwe ma obi ewu Hwe ma obi ada aa

Lit Trans: Look at how somebody is dead;
Look at how somebody is laid, Apia [person's name]
Look at how somebody is dead
Look at how somebody is laid

Meaning: Do not be too proud of your wealth;
After all we shall all die on one day or the other
The death of one man is a reflection of another man's death
[It is a song to draw someone's attention of his 'scandalous' conduct that might result him in death.]

NWOMKRO

Tracks (12), (13), (14) and (24) rudimentary enchanting songs which the cantor performs as prelude to the actual “Nwomkro” performance. The lyrics are too indigenous to explain. [need to conduct research to be able to explain the indigenous lyrics].

Track (15): Ayee ɔdi Nse (0’59”)

Twi: Ayee ɔdi nse ee Nana ye/ me sre wo gyina bre o
Ayee ɔdi nse ee
Aboase gyina bre
Ayee ɔdi nse ee

Lit Trans: He is swearing, your majesty
We are seeking vacancy

Meaning: [We swear the oath of being under your jurisdiction.]
The Traditional Chief is highly respected in the Ghanaian society.
His subjects swear an oath to be under him and serve him

Track (16) Bonyaa (1’28”)

Twi Bonyaa ee, Bonyaa Bonyaa Bonyaa
Me sre ɛwurade e
Na me sre Asaase ansa na ma gro
Bonyaa ee Bonyaa Bonyaa Bonyaa aa

Lit Trans: Humbly I am, humbly I am, humbly I am
I am seeking for God; I am seeking Nature
I am seeking for Nature’s protection before I perform

Meaning: It is a song in acknowledging and seeking God Almighty for His protection during performance.

Track (17): Onyame E Boa Me (1’31”)

Twi: Onyame e boa me
Onyame e boa yɛn Nana Nyame e
Onyame e boa yɛn
Ee ye hia wo mmoa o
Onyame e boa yɛn oo

Lit. Trans: Oh God! Help us, oh God us
God almighty help us; we need your help;
God help us.

Meaning: We are asking for God to be our protector

Track (18): Yerenyane Agrɔ (1’58”)

Twi: Yerenyane Agrɔ ee
Yerenyane Agrɔ ee
Na yerenyane Agrɔ
Y’agrɔ su daa bia nyane oo
Yerenyane Agrɔ ee
Ebuo o y’agrɔ su daa bia nyane oo.

Lit.Trans: We are waking up our group
We are waking up our group
If our group was asleep, it has now woken up

Meanig: In this instance, performers are creating the awareness
that the group is back in total function again after a collapse

Track (19): **Na Me Kyiri Yuo (1'49'')**

Fante: Na me kyiri yuo o,
Na me kyiri yuo oo
Me srɛ bɔfoɔ sɛ ɔnkum yuo
Na me kyiri yuo oo
Kyekyere bɛdɛ na yuo da mu oo
Na me kyiri yuo oo
Me se me di yuo da biara da
Bunaa ee ee obi kaa yɛ o sɛɛ nɛ nyɛ bunaa ee
Ee koo baa yee ɛnɛ nyɛ oo

Lit trans: I hate the kangaroo
I hate the kangaroo
I plead with the hunter never to the kangaroo
There is a kangaroo in the wrapped basket
I said I will never eat the kangaroo ever.
Respect the, some one said that
Mothers are good
Koo Baa, mothers are important

MeaningThe kangaroo is a “clan animal”;
prohibited to be eaten by people who belong to the particular clan
A stubborn lady who ignored her mother’s advice ate the meat of the
kangaroo and was having some negative reaction as a result of that and was advising others to be obedient
to their mothers.

Track (20): **Paapa Amoa (1'46'')**

Twi: Paapa Amoa e Maame Amoa ee
Wɔ nfa tuntum adee mma Amoa
Na wɔ nfa kɔkɔ adeɛ mma kɛse o
Ama olee lee lee baama
Wɔmbe yi w’ano a, akola we sua e do Nyame

Lit.Trans: “Paapa Amoa” give reddish things to
Amoa and give black things to “Kese”
One day, one day, you will be called upon
To answer and swear to God

Meaning: Call a spade a spade
If it is black, say it is black and
If it is red, say it is red be truthfully

Track (21): **Kaa No Kwa/Waa (2'33'')**

Twi: Kaa no waa yaa yee
Kaa no kwa yaa yee
Kaa no kwa oo
Kaa no kwa bɛ kum mpempem
Mpempem bɛ kum asante oo
Kaa no kwa
Akwadaa no kaa no kwa yaa yee
Kaa no waa yaa yee
Kaa no waa yaa yee
Ebuo o

Lit.Trans; Said it for saying sake
Said it for saying sake
Said it for saying sake shall kill asante
Asante shall kill thousands
Said it for nothing
The child said it for nothing.

Meaning; If you want to say or speak out
Your opinion, do that
You might end up by killing
Others and yourself.
[Delays are dangerous]

Track (22): **Ntontom Ne Hwan (2'22")**

Twi: Ntontom ne hwan,
Ntontom ne hwan na sami ahono noe
Enowa ee aye
Ode mako ado ma ni o aye
Akyenkyena Kofi
Daa wo mia
Ayee ekom de me aye
Abusua bone ama ekom de me
Ekom me a me yam abusua bone
Ama ekom de me
Obi didi a obi rebua adaa oo

Lit.Trans; Who is the mosquito that
Get a boil on her body
They have put some pepper in my eyes
Akyenkyena Kofi [the name of a bird]
Everyday they say it is me
Bad family has caused hunger in my stomach
While some are eating, others are starved

Meaning; Do not be deceptive like the mosquito
Who said she has a boil.
If you are incapable of doing
Something, do not deceive.

Track (23): **Enframa Aye Dwee oo (0'38")**

Twi: Enframa ayε dwee oo, ayε dwee
Enframa ayε dwee
Ayε dwee Enframa ayε dwee ee
Enframa ayε dwee

Lit.Trans: The wind is strong; the wind is strong
(repeat)

Meaning: It is the last in the Nwomkro performance
It is supposed to inform performers about the rains.

Track (24): **Pɔɔlee Pɔɔlee (2'08'')**

Twi: Pɔɔlee ee Pɔɔlee ee[Elijah, Elijah]
Pɔɔlee ee Pɔɔlee ee
Pɔɔlee Pɔɔlee Pɔɔlee Pɔɔlee
Pɔɔlee'am ma ntem a
Osen adinkanfo o

Lit.Trans: Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul
Paul did not come early but he
Is more than those who came early.

Meaning: Although Paul was a late convert to Christianity,
he achieved a great deal. Just because others have
gone before you, don't think you have nothing to offer.

Track(25) **Basa Basa (2'18'')**

Twi: Basa basa wɔ me mu ee
Enti merebɔ mpae aa
Nana Onyame e sɔ me mu oo
Nana Nyame sɔ me mu oo
Naa maa ba
[repeat]

Lit.Trans: There is confusion in; so when I am
Praying almighty God touch me
Almighty God, hold me
I have come.

Meaning: Seeking for God's protection
Confessing and forsaking the devil

Track (26): **Wɔfa Kortsen (4'23)**

Twi: Wɔfa kortsen na ɔnyi me nka oo
Wɔfa kortsen na ɔnyi me nka oo
Otsew kookoo a
Odze hwε ne yer na nembra
Owu too noa
Na ɔresu frε me
Mara me wɔfa yi, owu nye no nko
Mara me wɔfa yi, owu nye no nkɔ [repeat]

Lit.Trans: My only one uncle, he don't talk with me(repeat)
 When he harvests his cocoa, he
 Spends the money with his wife and children only
 When he is dying, he calls me
 This uncle, death should take him away

Meaning: If you are a miser, at the time you
 Need other people's help, they also
 Tend to be reluctant.
 Generosity is always good.