Music of the *Tabom*: An Emblem of Identity

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Abstract: This paper discusses how music functions as an emblem of identity for the Afro-Brazilian community in Accra, Ghana, known as the *Tabom*. The paper provides a contextual and analytical study of the complete musical enactment as practiced by this community, and argues, that the *Tabom* musical genre, known as *Agbe*, serves the purpose of creating and negotiating identity as found in their use of music within *Tabom* socio-cultural, religious, and political ceremonies. In this paper, I argue that *Agbe* is not only an organized sound in *Tabom* culture, but rather, it is one of the strongest cultural elements that serves as an emblem of identity relating to the life and culture of the *Tabom* community in Accra. Relying on ethnographic research design, *Agbe* is presented as the focus of study, subjecting the context in which it is performed to study and analysis. Moreover, the relationships between the *Agbe* ensemble and their performance context, as well as live events are discussed with the intent of conveying meanings of singing, drumming, dancing, and other related artistic expressions as they all contribute to help the *Tabom* to negotiate their identity.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilians; *Tabom*; cultural identity; *Agbe*; performance

1. Introduction

The *Tabom* community in Ghana form part of a larger Afro-Brazilian Community that, according to Amos and Ayesu (2002) and Schaumloeffel (2008), started arriving along the west coast of Africa in the early 19th Century. These Afro-Brazilians established communities in the countries where they settled and held on to cultural practices peculiar to what they were used to during their days of slavery in Bahia, Brazil. To help distinguish themselves from their hosts, the Afro-Brazilians were identified as *Breseliens* in Togo, *Aguda* in Benin, *Amaro* in Nigeria, and *Tabom* in Ghana. The arrival dates of the *Tabom* to Ghana has existed in oral literature and have been corroborated by recent studies. Amos and Ayesu (2002) and several other authors report that at least three or more groups of Afro-Brazilians arrived at different times and dates and were welcomed by *Mantse* Kwaku Ankrah[1]. These returnees settled among the *Otublohum* people of Ga Mashie and, with time, picked up the name *Tabom* from the Portuguese word "*Estabom*" (briefly translated as, "it's alright") as a result of the natives' inability to understand the Portuguese language that was frequently spoken by the returnees. Their settlement negotiations were largely based on the Ga's philosophy of welcoming visitors to live among them, as well as the several skills they (the *Tabom*) possessed. These skills included well-digging, farming, tailoring, and architecture, among others.

The *Tabom* also came along with cultural practices that helped to distinguish them from their hosts. These practices included their naming pattern, which involved a combination of Christian, Islamic, and Afro-Brazilian names. They also practiced unique funeral and religious rites that aided them to strengthen their Afro-Brazilian identity. Furthermore, among the cultural practices they owned,

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[1] *Mantse* Kwaku Ankrah was then the chief broker between the Dutch and the Ghanaians.

was a musical genre called *Agbe*, which is one of the strongest identity markers for the Afro-Brazilian community. In a conversation with Eric Morton[2], he revealed that the *Agbe* musical genre was brought from *Ijesha* in Nigeria, where the *Tabom* made a stopover on their way to Ghana. To this effect, the *Tabom* have an *Agbe* song that tells us of its origin.

	Yoruba Text	**English Translation**
Call:	*DabimberuAgbekim be wa jo*	We are about to perform Agbe so come and dance
Response:	*Yee dabimberuAgbekim be wa jo ee*	Yes, we are about to perform Agbe so come and dance
Call:	*To ebaberu Ijesha koniba Agbe*	Go to Ijesha, where Agbe comes from
Response:	*Yee dabimberuAgbekim be wa jo ee*	Yes, we are about to perform Agbe so come and dance

This paper, therefore, deliberates on how music functions as an emblem of identity for the Afro-Brazilian community in Accra, in the face of demographic pluralism and globalization. The paper provides a circumstantial and analytical study of the complete musical enactment as practiced by this community, to show how *Agbe* serves the purpose of creating and negotiating identity as found in their use of music within *Tabom* socio-cultural, religious, and political ceremonies. To the *Tabom*, *Agbe* is not only an organized sound within their culture. It is similarly one of the strongest cultural elements that serves as a symbol of identity relating to the life and culture of the *Tabom* community in Accra. Data for this project was collected through ethnographic procedures, attending and participating in several *Tabom* religious and funeral rites over a period of sixty (60) months. During these rites, audio-visual recordings were made and complimented with library and archival search to form the basis of data gathered for this project.

2. *Agbe* and Cultural Identity

According to Hall (1996), there are two ways of thinking about cultural identity, the first of which can be viewed in terms of a people with a common or shared history and ancestry. The second, is what we really are as individuals. Additionally, identity is a production which is never complete and always under construction (Hall 1996). These statements by Hall, as far as this paper is concerned, are inseparable. Whereas the *Tabom* have been bound together by historical activities, they have, over the years, gone through several transformations to arrive at a point of becoming who they are today. Collectively, they (the *Tabom*) have been identified as *Ga* due to acculturations. They speak the *Ga* language, dress like the *Ga* people, and engage in several of the *Ga* cultural activities. According to Quayson (2014, p. 62), the *Tabom* adapted well and easily into the *Ga* community and culture because, they (the *Tabom*), never managed to gain a grasp on the Portuguese language. The *Tabom* lost their language in what Quayson (2014) explains as "a span of two short generations". He continues to note that even though fast, the settlement and readjustment was not as easy for the returnee Africans who still had to find ethnic elements that distinguished them from their *Ga* hosts and other settling groups in the country. Some of the distinct ethnic practices of the *Tabom* today can be found in their naming pattern, religion, and funeral celebrations, which are observed with the inclusion of *Agbe*, the sole musical type that defines them.

To date, *Agbe* has provided a mechanism by which the cultural baggage of 'home' has been transported through time and space, and transplanted into a new environment, assisting in the upholding of *Tabom* culture and identity (Connell and Gibson 2003, p. 161). *Agbe* has helped in constructing the identity of the *Tabom* through the direct experiences it offered of the body, time, and sociability. These experiences have enabled the *Tabom* to place themselves in what Frith (1996, p. 124) describes as imaginative cultural narratives. The performance of music, such as *Agbe*, as part of a people's culture, helps to construct a sense of identity that is unending. This act of expressiveness confirms Shelemay's

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2   Master drummer and chief musician of the Tabom's *Agbe* Ensemble.

argument that, "many music traditions are associated with communities that share a background and a history." (Shelemay 2015, p. 386).

3. *Tabom* Musical Culture

With reference to *Tabom* oral accounts, the name *Agbe* is a word in *Yoruba* that refers to the *shekere*—a large beaded calabash instrument. As written by Botsford (1990), this large beaded calabash called *Agbe*, is customarily possessed and played only by professional musicians. Because this instrument features prominently in the *Tabom's Agbe* performance, it is evident that perhaps this musical genre took its name from it, since according to Nketia (1974), some musical types are named after principal instruments used in the ensemble. Ethnographic accounts by *Tabom* interlocutors argue that a holistic performance of *Agbe* entails drumming, singing, and dancing- with each component complementing one another. As a musical type, *Agbe* has, over the years, served as an identity marker for the *Tabom*. It accompanies every *Tabom* ceremony such as funerals, the installation of *Tabom* traditional elders, weddings ceremonies, naming ceremonies, and the worshipping of Şángò[3]. During these ceremonies, the *Agbe* songs that are sung constantly remind the community of the various layers of their members and their own identification with the members. For instance, they have songs that recognize their widows, children, chiefs, orphans, traitors, etc.

The language used for the song texts in *Agbe* is mostly *Yoruba*. This language, though not used in everyday discourse by the *Tabom*, is mainly heard or referenced in their songs during their *Agbe* performances. It is also evident that the pronunciation and meaning given to these songs by the *Tabom*, may be different from the meanings that present-day *Yoruba* speakers would assign to them. The reasons given, according to oral accounts, was that the first generation of *Tabom* sang those songs with meaning, but as the years went by, and as they passed the songs on to subsequent generations, the meanings could have been altered. Some of the song texts could include other languages that the *Tabom* might have come into contact with while in Brazil. It is also very possible that the songs could contain altered versions of the *Yoruba* language.

4. Contextual Utilization of *Agbe*

Whereas the hosts of the *Tabom*, the *Ga*, have several musical types such as *Kple*, *Kpa*, *Kpanlogo* which help to identify them, the *Tabom* have *Agbe* as the only musical type, which they feature in all their cultural activities. Thus, *Agbe* serves as their cult music, social music, recreational, and folk music. *Agbe* is performed as part of their day-to-day activities and events that are typically *Tabom*, as well as non-*Tabom* events. Despite the *Ga's* strong musical, religious, and funeral cultures, the *Tabom* have been keen in maintaining a strong performance convention that helps them to negotiate their identity, which is evident in their funeral and religious rites.

The funeral rites of the *Tabom*, though similar to that of the *Ga*, adopt a different procedure, derived from the Brazilian roots of the group (Schaumloeffel 2008). The *Tabom* celebrate the death of their citizens with an elaborate funeral program that is divided into three stages namely: Keeping wake (breaking plate), *ardua,* which is celebrated one week after the burial, and *Okujonjor,* celebrated forty days after the death of a person. In all these stages, *Agb-e* is significantly employed to give the funeral rituals a *Tabom* identity. In the first stage of the funeral, for instance, the *Agbe* ensemble perform a series of songs in a build up to their ritual of breaking a ceramic plate on the dead and singing the *viva viva,* which is a farewell song for the dead. This song, which is sung immediately after the breaking of the plate, is uniquely *Tabom*. Its performance aids in providing *Tabom* funerals an identity that stands out among funeral rites organized by other cultures living within the enclaves of the *Tabom*. During

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[3] According to oral accounts, *Şángò*, which originates from Nigeria and, is found in several Latin American countries was brought to Ghana by Alasha Nelson, the leader of the *Tabom* who arrived in Accra in the early nineteenth century and has since been recognized by the *Tabom* as their deity.

the funeral, members of the audience are seen carrying their 'luggage' as they see-off the deceased. It is worth noting that by singing this song, the *Tabom* do not only aid in transporting the spirit of the dead back to Brazil, but they also remind themselves and all those present of the *Tabom* 'origin' and their travels from *Ijesha* to Ghana. Of course, this is the only *Tabom* song that has Portuguese text, and by this performance, they state their identity as Afro-Brazilians longing for 'home'. During the One Week (*Ardua*) and Forty Days (*Okudjondjor*) ceremonies, *Agbe* performance is performed to give the ceremonies a *Tabom* essence. The songs sung, the invitation to dance, and the cleansing rituals all add up to emphasize *Tabom* identity.

While it is evident that *Agbe* was originally used to accompany the funeral rites of the *Tabom*, this musical type, in more contemporary times, has been extended to accompany almost every *Tabom* ceremony. The presence of the *Tabom* performing *Agbe* is now a constant feature during the annual *Chale Wote*[4] festival of arts, which is an alternative platform that brings art, music, dance, and performance out of the galleries and onto the streets of James Town, Accra.

Beyond these ceremonies however, the *Agbe* musical type has even been linked to the *Ṣángò* deity. Consequently, during *Agbe* performances where a *Ṣángò* medium is present, she presides over the performances. Thus, *Tabom* oral accounts suggest that *Agbe* is now owned by *Ṣángò*, hence its role as a religious music. One therefore hears chants like *Olulukorluuuuu*, *Omogidiagbo*, *OmoIjesha*[5], during *Tabom Agbe* performance. All these dynamics help to perceive how the *Tabom* deepen their identity socially, culturally, religiously, and politically.

5. *Agbe* Performance Setting

Conventionally, there are two ways of presenting a musical performance to an audience or spectator. Nketia (1974) identified these two conventional ways as processions and performance in situ. In the case of *Agbe*, the norm has been mostly focused on the latter. An *Agbe* performance "is mostly confined to a well-defined but limited area where participants take fixed positions due to the requirements of the musical type as well as the anticipated interaction that may take place." A sitting arrangement, which creates a U-shaped "inner space", is formed for performance. This space acts as the main performing space. The two parallel lines of the U-formation is set up for members of the community, whereas the connecting third is reserved for the instrumentalists. But there are few occurrences when *Agbe* is presented in a procession, as in the case of the *viva viva* presentation.

6. Performance Conventions of *Agbe*

Musical enactments in African settings are governed by certain conventions that guide their presentations. Nketia (1974, p. 231) notes that the prevailing conception of a musical performance is one that integrates music with other arts. Wherever there is a musical performance, there is sure to be other related arts such as dance, drama, and visual elements. Often, these elements are an integral part of the musical performance, playing complimentary roles in the holistic presentation. A performance of *Kpanlogo*[6], for example, incorporates singing, with dancing, and some dramatic elements. Other performances such as *kete*, *agbadza*, and *bamaya* (which are all traditional dances from Ghana) incorporate body art and instrumental decorations to aid in performance identity. The performance of *Agbe* is no exception. Music (singing and drumming) is performed in combination with dance, as well as other visual elements such as costumes and decorations on the drums.

Another convention that governs an *Agbe* performance is its social control. According to Agawu (1995a) "despite the communal, and inviting nature of musical performances in African societies, it does not necessarily support claims that no limits are placed upon acceptable modes of behavior during such

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4   This is a *Ga* statement which is interpreted as 'friend, let's go'.
5   These are chants in praise of *Ṣángò*.
6   *Kpanlogo* is a social art form performed mainly by the *Ga* of Accra in Ghana.

performance." In view of this, there is the need for one to be aware of the social control within a specific setting to conform to norms and practices that the performances allow. As already stated, a wholistic *Agbe* performance involves drumming, singing, and dancing. Each of these components is reserved for specific players on the day. The drumming component is performed by the core members of the *Agbe* ensemble present, while the singing and dancing are executed by all others present who are conversant with the performance practices of the *Tabom*. In addition to that, people constantly clap their hands to provide rhythmic support to the entire performance, as they complement the efforts of the instrumentalists, and may occasionally react with shouts, ululations, and slogans to the performance in general. These reactions, according to the *Tabom*, are a requirement aimed at building excitement towards a successful performance.

One other convention worth mentioning, is that which concerns the singing aspect of an *Agbe* performance. It is the master drummer who generally leads the singing and calls out the songs as he directs the performance. However, women present at the performance may also call out songs intermittently. The master drummer, together with the other drummers, decide at what rate songs should be switched. The performers commonly present a selection from their repertoire of music while the dancers respond to the rhythms of the drummers as well as the songs of the singers. The song selection generally consists of favorite songs of those who lead the group and items that relate to the occasion or to current events. They may also reflect the memory of the performers, as well as the scope of their knowledge of the music and correlated expression.

7. Performance Personnel and Instrumental Resources of *Agbe*

"Although it is widely known that active participation in music making is encouraged, participation differs with respect to performing roles, and the skills and knowledge that individuals playing a given role bring to bear on a performance" (Nketia 1974, p. 51). An *Agbe* performance thrives on the availability of certain personnel with well-defined roles. Each of these personnel work hand in hand as they complement each other to ensure the success of a performance. These performance personnel include the *Agbetse* (father or leader of the ensemble), two *malinwo* (drum) players, an *agogo* (double bell) player, several *shekere* (gourd rattle) player(s), as well as singers and dancers.

The *Agbe* ensemble usually consists of idiophones and membranophones (see Figure 1 below). The idiophones include the *agogo*, and several *shekere*, while the membranophones consist of two (at times three) small drums called *malinwo*. The idiophones characteristically play fixed recurring patterns that often work as the time line of *Agbe*. The two membranophones come in varied pitches, one being lower in pitch than the other, with the lower pitched drum assuming the principal role of master or lead-drum. The combination of membranophones and idiophones in an ensemble is not peculiar to the *Tabom*. Anku (2000) identifies the *Akan* and *Ewe* as having similar combinations in their drum ensemble. According to him, each society specializes in a distinct collection of instruments. These collections and combinations help to give the musical type an identity. The names of the instruments, however, differ from one region to the other. The gourd rattle, for instance, is identified as *axatse* among the *Ewe* of Ghana. Also, the double bell is known as *gankogui* among the *Ewe*.

Figure 1. *Agbe* Instrumental Resources.

8. Structural Organization of *Agbe* Ensembles

The occurrences of drumming among the *Tabom*, usually include a combination of song and dance. Apart from such combinations, the *Tabom* drum ensemble may be performed without song or dance accompaniment as a prelude to a major performance. The aim of the preludes differ in context. It could be performed as a warm-up section for the musicians, or to draw the attention of a passer-by to the event that would be taking place. At certain instances, the *Tabom* may incorporate handclapping to reinforce the accompaniment to songs, allowing other members of the audience to partake in the performance.

There are certain common features found in the organization of the *Agbe* drum ensemble. The general role of the *shekere* is to reinforce the *agogo's* rhythms. One of the drums is also confined to the role of playing the bell pattern. These instruments are assigned prescribed basic rhythms, establishing a specific relationship around a common timing referent. This timing referent becomes a common point for all the instruments of the drum ensemble, as well as the dance and accompanying songs. Holistically, the *agogo*, *shekere*, hand clapping, and *malinwo* play in an *ostinato* fashion, allowing the master drummer a lot of room for improvisation. It is commonly known that one of the devices of composition that Africa can proudly boast of is the *ostinato.* Anku (2000) defines it as "a circular conception of rhythms providing a backdrop for structural manipulations by a lead instrument. The process implies constantly changing rhythmic concepts against a fixed structural matrix." The *ostinato* experience in an *Agbe* performance provides a repeated structure without which the maneuverings of the *Agbetse* would be rendered incoherent.

9. Drumming in *Agbe* Performance

The drum ensemble of *Agbe* falls under Nketia's categorization of an instrumental combination, which includes an ensemble of instruments capable only of indefinite pitches (Nketia 1974). It involves a combination of membranophones and idiophones organized in both linear and multilinear forms. Apart from the introduction of a song, which is accompanied by the ensemble in what Nketia (1974, p. 125) refers to as metrically free and lacking rhythmical regularity, the most part of the performance is in strict time, imparting a feeling of regularity of beat which can be articulated in regular bodily movement. The *Agbe* drum ensemble consists of two basic sectors. They are the master-drum and the background involving prescribed non-variant rhythms. The ensemble's performance is usually controlled or conducted by the *Agbetsɛ*(Master drummer). The *agogo* is assigned the role of time line. Its role, however, is not confined to the time line, but it is sounded as part of the music and regarded as an accompanying rhythm and a means by which rhythmic motion is sustained. The ensemble includes two or three *malinwo* played with the stick and the hand. One of the three drums plays the same pattern as the *agogo,* whilst the other two play lots of improvisation based on what Anku (2000) refers to as a "stock of generative rhythmic vocabulary" which they have in store.

10. Singing in *Agbe* Performance

One very important component of *Agbe* is its vocal accompaniment. The form of singing is typically *call-and-response*, requiring the dexterity of a cantor, while the rest of the ensemble members and spectators do the chorus, corroborating Agawu's contention that "traditional music is communal" (Agawu 2016). The cantor during *Agbe* performances must possess a good voice and a stock of songs in his or her memory. What constitutes a good voice to the *Tabom* according to the current *Agbetse* is that voice, which is loud enough to pierce through the loud drum accompaniment, as well as be able to sing in pitch.

The *Agbetse* usually assumes the position of cantor and doubles as the conductor of the performance. He therefore calls for the beginning of a performance by offering libation prayers. This serves as a call on the ancestors to help them remember the songs they would be performing. The call on the ancestors and deities, at the site of performance, is additionally intended to seek the presence and protection of the spirit beings (Agawu 2003, p. 206).

Having called on the deities for their presence and protection, the cantor then proceeds to call for the attention of all persons gathered at the site of the performance by chanting the words *Oseeyie* (praise word), followed by *Agoo* (knock/permission). This chant aims at seeking the permission from the gathering for the performance to proceed. The vocal accompaniment in *Agbe* music, in brief, falls into one of the four types of vocal music in African setting which according to Nketia (1974), includes one that emphasizes the role of a lead singer or cantor (s), with a supporting chorus.

11. Dancing in *Agbe* Performance

Nii-Dortey (2014) has identified four stages of a dance performance. According to him, "the dance itself begins with an invitation from the master drummer to prospective dancers. This is followed by the initial response to the invitation by the dancers concerned. The third stage is the actual performance of the dance, and finally the invitation by the master drummer to the dancers to end their dance units."

Similarly, dance plays an integral role in the performance *of Agbe, thereby contribtuting to its inter-disciplinary nature.* During the performance, close collaboration is always required between musicians and dancers because of the relationship between the structure of the music and the design of the dance (Nketia 1974, p. 228). The dance could be performed by any of the musicians (both instrumentalist and singers), or any member of the audience who is called upon by the musicians through special coded or symbolic songs[7]. It must be noted that in *Agbe* performances, the focus usually is on one dancer at a time. Thus, at any point in time, there would be a solo dancer in the arena. However, there are instances when two or more people enter the arena to dance. In this case, the focus remains on the individual who had been summoned to dance by the musicians through their coded messages. The second dancer joins to offer moral support to the 'main' dancer, who might not have fully grabbed the art of performing *Agbe*.

According to Agawu (1995b, p. 113) dance styles and dance formations are varied by gesture and the part of the body on which movement is focused; and within the norms of dancing, room should be made for individual interpretation. In dances that stress individual expression, the relationship between the music and the dance movements may not be so tightly knit. Scope may be given to improvisation, and each person may work out different elaborations of the basic movements in relation to the rhythmic patterns played by the master drummer or other instrumentalist who provides the basic guide to the dance, or the dancer may devise his elaborations in relation to the resultant of the combined rhythms of the different instruments of an ensemble.

People who wish to dance usually alternate repeatedly to put together a complete performance session which can last for several hours. The performance duration for each dancer is suggested either by the length of a song, or at the discretion of the *Agbetsɛ*. On the other hand, a dancer could also indicate to the musicians, by sending a signal to show that he/she has ended his/her dance session. At times, a performance unit may last for a shorter time if the dancer indicates his/her intention to end the dance. But it could also last longer if, out of excitement, a dancer indicates his/her intention to do more movements in response to the drumming and singing. When the signal is given, the end of that performance unit becomes discernible. Thus, a performance unit may last for about two to five minutes depending on the factors enumerated above. Some dancers may perform repeatedly at different points of a performance session. Chiefly, the *Agbetsɛ's* flexible choices, or the cantor for a particular song determines this.

The *Agbetsɛ* or cantor often applies such choices depending on the caliber of persons in the dancing arena. More often than not, when a prominent man or woman of *Tabom* origin, in the society steps into the arena, the drummers and singers perform a strikingly different way, with increased intensity of drumming and singing. This increased power creates decisive repetitions that help a performance unit

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7　The songs sung by the *Tabom* mostly invite an individual to dance. For example, when a song like *Oyawoshambara* is sang, it is expected that the widow/widower among the gathering would respond to the call to dance.

to extend. During such events, dancers are seen turning creatively in the middle of the arena as they dance back and forth in response to the master drummer's signals as well as the songs being sung.

Switching from one dancer to another is facilitated through signals sent by the *Agbetsɛ* or the cantor. This signal could be in the form of a hand gesture beckoning the dancer to the dance arena, or in the form of a song that is rendered about a particular person among the audience. Other people from among the audience could also suggest or nominate people for a dance. Before a member of the audience or member of the ensemble takes his/her turn to dance, he/she approaches the bowl that has been placed in front of the *Agbetsɛ and* bows in the presence of the drummers as he/she puts an amount of money in the bowl. In cases where *Tabom* elders are among the gathering, the dancer moves towards them and stoops in their presence as well, to seek their permission before the dancer begins. The elders give their approval by stretching one hand or both hands while making the victory sign towards the dancer. This act helps the dancer to crave the attention of both elders and musicians, and to show civility to them as well.

12. Costume and Props in *Agbe* Performance

The *Tabom*, despite their long stay in Accra, still maintain their *Yoruba* traits[8]. This connection is evident at *Agbe* performance gatherings where performers dress in Nigerian clothing designs. Whilst some wear the *buba* attire, others use the veils, Nigerian hat, and *coolimi* hat. Apart from their *Yoruba* connection, *Tabom Agbe* performers also identify with their Brazilian colors -yellow and green- (as in the Figure 2 below) during other social gatherings such as the *Chale Wote* festival.

Figure 2. Costume in Nigerian 'Buba' style and Brazilian colors.

In September 2018, during a ceremony to welcome the new Brazilian Ambassador to Ghana, the *Tabom* prepared a cake in Brazilian colors, as in picture below, Figure 3, to affirm their Brazilian identity.

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8   The *Tabom* met the *Yoruba* during their days in Bahia, as well as when they (the *Tabom*) made a stopover in the Nigeria on their way to Ghana during the aftermath of slavery. The *Tabom* picked up certain cultural practices of the *Yoruba* during these contacts and have held on to them as part of their identity markers.

Figure 3. Cake clad in Brazilian colors.

13. Conclusions

From the above ethnographic findings, it is evident that the *Tabom* musical culture serves as one of the principal definers of the Afro-Brazilian community in Ghana. Its organization as an integral part of other cultural forms has helped its sustainability over the years. Anywhere the *Tabom* gather to perform a social activity, be it religious, funeral, or any other function, there is the performance of *Agbe*—for it is in this that they are readily identified as a people. Since their arrival, they have been influenced by the *Ga* culture massively, and in most cases, have assimilated completely. Thus, *Agbe*, remains a key factor used by the *Tabom* to negotiate their identity within the face of demographic pluralism in Accra as well as or within the *Ga* subcultural identity. Its performance confirms Agawu's observation that "the performance of traditional music is usually open to people who share language, blood, or a belief system" (Agawu 2016). In brief, the *Tabom Agbe* musical culture functions as one of those musical forms that symbolizes identity and maintains strong links with the past and the present (Shelemay 2015, p. 386).

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