Hindi Film Songs in the Home: Gendered Experiences of Singing Popular Songs in Tamale, Northern Ghana

Katie Young / Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick

Abstract. Beginning in the 1950s, Dagbamba and Hausa women in Tamale listened to Hindi film songs in their homes, via gramophone records and through state-run women's radio programs. Hindi film songs were soon integrated into existing domestic singing practices, including songs meant for domestic labor (*tuma-yila*) and childcare (*biyola-yila*). Through an analysis of oral history interviews as well as recorded performances of Hindi film songs sung by women, men, and youth in Tamale, I show how everyday performances of Hindi film songs reveal gendered and intergenerational experiences of domestic space, labor, and social life in Tamale.

Beginning in the late 1950s, many Hausa and Dagbamba women in Tamale, Northern Ghana, listened to and sang Hindi film songs in their homes, available via women's radio shows from Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and via gramophone players.[1] The overwhelming popularity of Hindi film songs for Dagbamba and Hausa women in Ghana is evidenced in a record stored in the GBC's Gramophone Library in Accra: inscribed on a gramophone record for the 1944 Hindi film song "Kuke Koyaliya Kunjan Mein" ("The Cuckoo Bird Sings in the Grove") from the film *Bhartrahari* reads "Hausa Women's Sig Tune." This Hindi film song—performed by Indian vocalist and actress Jahanara Kajjan—was the weekly introductory song for the Hausa and Dagbanli women's radio show in early postcolonial Ghana (figure 1).

This article explores the ways in which Dagbamba and Hausa women phonetically memorized and sang Hindi film songs during domestic musical practices in postcolonial Tamale, including *tuma-yila* (songs performed during household chores) and *biyola-yila* (child-directed songs).[2] The article further explores what singing Hindi film songs in domestic spaces reveals about gendered experiences of labor, space, and family life in postcolonial Tamale.

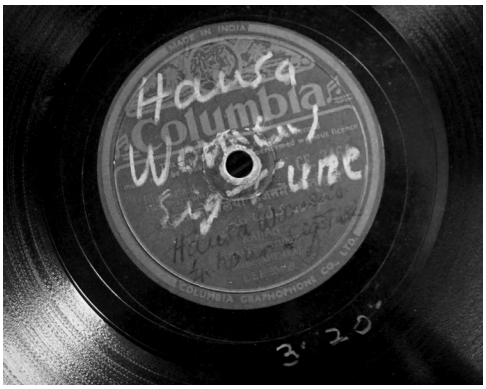


Figure 1: Image of the soundtrack *Bhartrahari* (1944), with the inscription "Hausa Women's Sig Tune." Image taken by author in Accra, September 2016.

Throughout, I explore oral histories of singing Hindi film songs in Tamale homes and also analyze recorded performances of women, men, and children singing Hindi film songs in their homes. Singers' varied performances of Hindi film songs relate to their different experiences of domestic labor, space, and family interactions: for example, male and female performances of the same song reveal disparities in knowledge of melodic content (reflecting who spends more time conducting domestic labor), while mother-child performances of the same song reveal musical alterations unique to a family across generations. Gendered patterns of musical knowledge are not always uniform: for example, while many Dagbamba men are unable to sing Hindi film songs at length, others can; men's different singing abilities reflect their diverse experiences of family life, marriage, and divorce in Tamale's domestic realm, which are substantiated through their oral history interviews.[3]

This article draws from archival research conducted in the University of Ghana's J. H. Kwabena Nketia archive and the GBC Gramophone Library in Accra, along with more than two years of ethnographic research conducted in Tamale between 2013 and 2020. My positionality as a white female foreign researcher is important to consider in relation to Dagbamba and Hausa people's experiences of Hindi film songs in postcolonial Ghana. My ethnographic research is based on several trips to Tamale, the first of which was in 2013. At that time, I was visiting Ghana to conduct research on music and tourism and was staying in Accra, where I attended Salsa dancing classes in the evenings. At Salsa dancing classes, I became friends with a man from Tamale; when I told him that I would like to visit Tamale, he encouraged me to stay in his friend's family home in one of Tamale's central neighborhoods. This initial introduction was significant, as by staying in his friend's home, I first encountered the domestic use of Hindi film songs in Tamale. In each subsequent trip to Tamale, I stayed

in this home and developed long-lasting friendships with family members and with those who lived in neighboring homes. By engaging in day-to-day activities in this neighborhood, I was exposed to, and subsequently studied, Dagbanli language. I was also exposed to the many Hindi film songs released between 1940 and 1990 that remain popular in Tamale and learned to sing these songs along with others who sing them each day.

The ethnographic research drawn upon in this article is based on periods of time spent with people in their homes in Tamale. Each person I spent time with has experienced Hindi film music in the Northern Ghanaian context on a daily basis throughout their lives. Although their richness and depth of experience with Hindi film music is the focus of this article, it is important to note that the research presented here is ultimately framed and filtered through my experiences and encounters in Tamale as a white foreign researcher. Furthermore, this article is written in English rather than Dagbanli or Hausa, the main languages spoken by participants in this research.

This research explores experiences of singing popular music in everyday life. In her work on Yoruba traveling theatre, Karin Barber (2018) shows how West African popular theater plays were adapted and reinterpreted by people in their everyday lives. Barber suggests that these plays entered into states of "perpetual potential" as they traveled, shaped by the different generational, religious, and gendered experiences of those who engaged with and performed portions of plays in their daily interactions (13). When Hindi film songs were broadcast on the radio and heard on gramophone records in postcolonial Tamale, these songs also entered into states of "perpetual potential." Singers made changes to the melody, rhythm, and lyrics of Hindi film songs to suit their daily practices, reflecting the diverse gendered and intergenerational experiences of each singer.

Existing scholarship concerning West African singing practices tend to focus on professional or semiprofessional singers in either traditional or religious contexts, with less concern for everyday singing contexts, especially with regard to popular music. The study of quotidian performances brings Barber's (2018) aforementioned "perpetual potential" framework into dialogue with studies of everyday musical experience, such as Tia DeNora's (2000) work on music in everyday life in the United Kingdom and the United States. At the same time, Barber's notion of "perpetual potential" aligns with scholarly work on music and digital culture, such as Georgina Born's (2005) work on relayed creativity. In the realm of digital music, Born suggests that music becomes "an object of recurrent decomposition, composition and re-composition by a series of creative agents" where recurring recorded performances of the same piece augment, alter, and extend a musical performance over time (27–30). I suggest that relayed creativity extends beyond digital music, as people who sing Hindi film songs in their homes in Tamale similarly participate in a process of relayed creativity over time and across generations.

Exploring the Gender Dynamics of Family, Labor, Leisure, and Music in Tamale Homes

Domestic singing practices in Tamale are situated within a highly gendered context. Gendered divisions of labor, leisure, and space foreground who engages in musical activities in the domestic sphere, as well as what kind of musical activity one might participate in. In this section, I outline the gendered nature of labor roles, access to space, and musical experience in Tamale homes.

In the precolonial period, Dagbamba family structure was both extended and polygynous, with extended families cohabitating and sharing in domestic and agricultural labor (Ardayfio-Schandorf 2006:132). Traditional Dagbamba domestic architecture comprised several round, mud-brick rooms with thatched roofs organized in a circle, facing toward a shared courtyard where cooking and chores took place (Pellow 2011:137). There was a room for each wife, a room for the husband, and additional rooms for other relatives. Throughout the colonial period, Islam grew in popularity in Northern Ghana, and despite colonial pressures to adopt monogamy in Dagbon, Islam in part reinforced existing polygynous practices (Prah 1995:208; Pellow 2011:132–141; Bogweh and Bellwood-Howard 2016:48). While the construction, material, and shape of homes are changing in contemporary Tamale (mud-brick rooms are being replaced by concrete rectangular rooms, and thatched roofing is changing to aluminum), the overarching principle of a communal family arrangement remains similar.

Family finances and living arrangements are also gendered. As Dagbon is patrilineal, the male head of the household typically owns domestic property and is often expected to financially support the running of the household (Blankenship 2014:48; Yoggu 2015:3). In contrast, married women are often expected to maintain the home—including caring for children and completing daily chores. In Tamale's polygynous homes, each wife shares her room with her children, while the husband lives in separate quarters (Pellow 2011:137). Deborah Pellow notes that female children sleep in their female guardian's room until marriage, while male children live in their female guardian's room until they are old enough (roughly between the age of five and ten) to move to another room with an older male family member, such as a father, uncle, or cousin.

In Tamale homes, women sing a range of songs with differing purposes, including "courting songs, lullabies, and music [. . .] to older children for recreation and educational purposes" (DjeDje 1981:3). The gendered dynamics of children's living arrangements in Tamale shape these domestic musical experiences. As female children spend longer periods of time in the care of their female guardians, they are more likely to be exposed to domestic singing practices, including tuma-yila and biyola-yila. Male children tend to have different experiences of musical enculturation in Tamale homes. For example, Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai explains that in the domestic context, when a child reaches three or

four years of age: "if it is a boy, they will get the child a small drum" (a tin can covered with skin and string to tie it) and "the child will be beating it around the compound" (Abdulai and Chernoff n.d.). Abdulai further explains that "at that time the child doesn't learn singing, but they always take him when they go to beat the drums. He will be watching until his hands become fast." During my research in Tamale, I similarly found that young boys were experimenting with drums constructed out of tomato tins (figure 2), while young girls usually sang with other women in the home, underscoring a gendered element to domestic music learning.

Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje (1981:3) writes that in Tamale, most instruments—including membranophones, chordophones, and aerophones—are usually played by men, with women sometimes playing gourd rattles. Women sing in a range of contexts in everyday life, including certain ceremonial contexts such as weddings, in informal everyday contexts for recreational and educational purposes, and for personal enjoyment and during work activities (3).

In varied Islamic contexts, boundaries of the communal courtyard (the shared space connecting all family members' rooms) shift between private and public throughout the day, dependent on the kinds of activities taking place in the courtyard (such as cooking or laundering) and the differing social status of individuals in relation to these activities (age, gender, occupation) (Gilsenan 1992:203). In Tamale, many married women experience leisure time

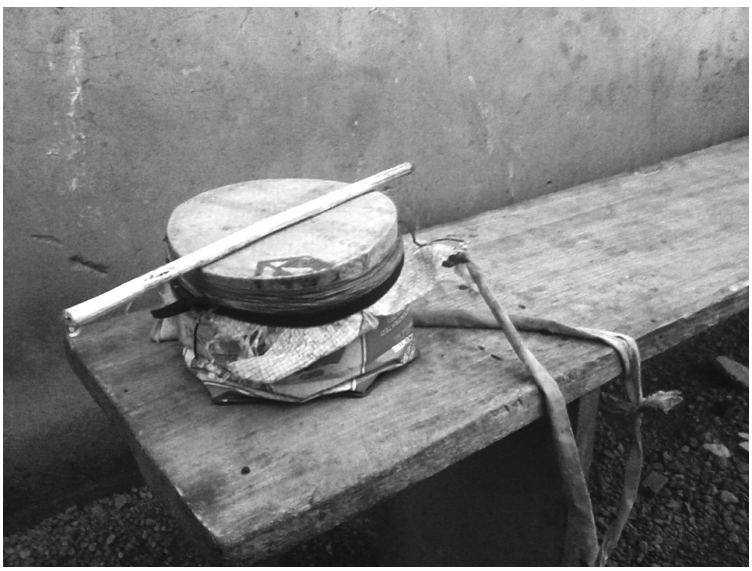


Figure 2: Example of a tomato tin drum used by several boys in a family home in Tamale. Image taken by author in Tamale, July 2016.

as interwoven with domestic labor that takes place in the communal courtyard, such as socializing with other women during food preparation, walking to the market, or going to fetch water. Throughout the day, many married women are busy within the domestic sphere conducting chores and looking after children, and there is a general social expectation that married women will stay home after dark.[4] In contrast, men tend to vacate the household during the daytime, either to work or to socialize with other men when unemployed.[5] After work, men often gather and socialize in designated areas outside the compound among other men, playing board games such as cards, *mancala* or *ludo* (figure 3). Men and women tend to eat dinner separately, and while men enter the courtyard at points during the evening, they often attend social, religious, or political meetings outside of the home at night.

Women in Tamale have performed Dagbanli language songs during domestic labor in both pre- and postcolonial contexts. While researching in Tamale, DjeDje (1981:3) observed that women sang in the domestic sphere in order to make work (such as the grinding of corn or pounding of pestles in a mortar) less monotonous. The collection catalog at the University of Ghana's J. H. Kwabena Nketia archive further hints at the range of functions that songs had in collective labor tasks among Northern Ghanaian women, with recordings from the 1960s including: "Northern Women's Floor Beating Song," "Dagarti Women's Grinding Song," and "Worksong: Nandom Women's Grinding Song and Floor Beating Song."[6] Beyond the Northern Ghanaian context, scholars have shown how songs are used in a variety of Sub-Saharan African domestic contexts to motivate labor, including grinding corn and tomatoes, sweeping, thrashing grains, pounding mortar with a pestle, and pounding rice (Egblewogbe 1975; Finnegan 2012:224; Gunderson 2010; Hale and Sidikou 2014:9; Mack 2004:11; Musa 2020:94; Mvula 1986).

Figure 3: Young men play a game of *oware* in Tamale in July 2013. In the background, several women who live in the household are sitting together talking while cooking. Image taken by author in Tamale, July 2013.

In Tamale, tuma-yila are a long-standing musical practice; these songs are usually rhythmic, accompanying the movements of the body during repetitive physical tasks, including solitary tasks, such as laundering and cooking, as well as group tasks, including replastering walls or shelling groundnuts. As domestic work songs are largely performed by women in Tamale, small children in the care of women are often exposed to tuma-yila from an early age. For example, in a conversation with Faruq in Tamale in December 2017, he recalled that during his youth, women from various houses would gather each week to plaster the walls of a woman's home with a mixture of shea nut oil, cow dung, and gravel. During these communal tasks, women would sing tuma-yila together. The presence of children during women's communal domestic tasks that typically included tuma-yila is evidenced in this 1910 photograph of women preparing clay in Northern Ghana (figure 4).

Alongside children's exposure to tuma-yila, children in Tamale are exposed to biyola-yila, a form of child-directed song akin to lullabies. In Tamale, as is true elsewhere in Ghana, the act of performing a lullaby is gendered, and the music children hear most often in infancy are songs performed by mothers or female guardians (Agawu 1987:409, 2016:86; Blankenship 2014:83). Research on lullabies in Northern Ghana is limited, and at present the only archival example of a Dagbanli language lullaby is "Mbia Cheli Vuri Yee Yee" ("Child, Stop Crying"), recorded by Verna Gillis in Tamale in 1976. As DjeDje (1981:3) writes in the liner notes for this album, the recording is performed out of context, with call and response from other women rather than between child and guardian.

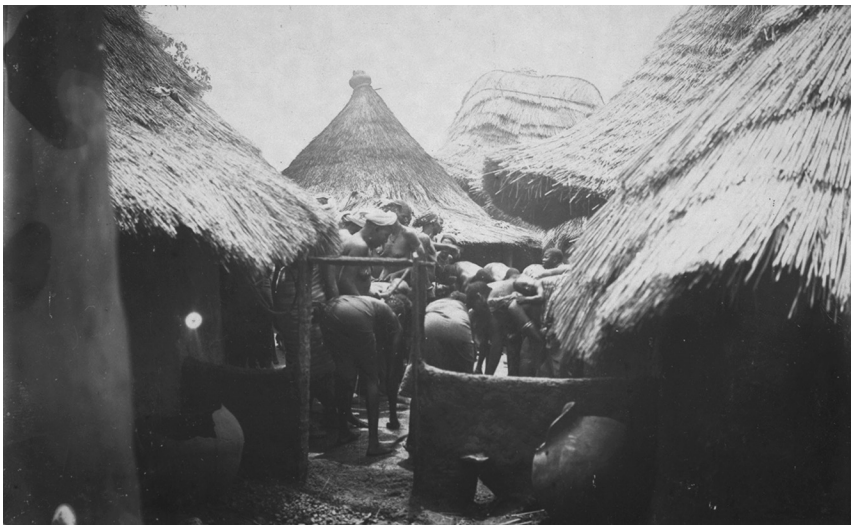


Figure 4: Basel Mission Archives. D-30.54.048. "Communal work. Preparing clay." Rudolf Fisch. Northern Ghana. March 6, 1910.

Even still, "Mbia Cheli Vuri Yee Yee" shares structural characteristics with lullabies elsewhere in Ghana as well as in other African contexts. Writing about lullabies in varying African contexts, Kofi Agawu (2016:214) notes that lullabies are often limited in the number of pitches used, are repetitive, and embody a melodic impulse informed by varying linguistic and expressive forms. The small melodic range and repetitive nature of lullabies found in diverse regional contexts is reflected in "Mbia Cheli Vuri Yee Yee." Agawu (1987:411) writes that in Ewe lullabies, words without specific meaning are also drawn upon to convey "a certain euphonious effect." As I discuss in more detail below, Dagbamba women similarly integrate words without meaning when they incorporate quasi-Hindi words into a Hindi film song to sing to children in their homes. As biyola-yila feature short, repetitive verses relying on a limited number of pitches, Hindi film songs—with similarly short, easy-to-remember melodies—were well-positioned to be integrated into child-directed singing practices as they circulated throughout postcolonial Tamale.

The Introduction of Hindi Film Music in Tamale Homes

As was the case for many growing African cities, the postcolonial period was a time of profound technological change in Tamale. By early 1957, Ghana's first government had introduced new media technologies to Tamale, including a cinema house and a radio diffusion station. Cinema nights quickly grew in popularity in the city, and Hindi films were especially popular, providing moving images and a full-length soundtrack in three-hour-long events (for example, see Chernoff 1979:129–130). At the same time, gramophones were becoming fixtures in Tamale homes, and radio was becoming increasingly significant to urban music listeners as well.

In early postcolonial Tamale, married women were often expected to stay home at night and were thus largely restricted from attending evening cinema shows. With restrictions on public leisure for married women, young women began to expect gramophones as part of the marriage agreement. In various oral history interviews and archival notes from this period, men are noted as purchasing gramophones for their homes, either to impress a potential wife or to ensure a happy marriage. For example, ethnomusicologist J. H. Kwabena Nketia (1956:194) writes that cocoa farmers in rural areas of the Gold Coast were traveling south "to buy gramophones for their wives." Poet and author Kofi Awoonor (1990:176) reflects that rising incomes in late 1950s Ghana became obvious when "farmers [were] buying four gramophones (one for every wife)." Similarly, in my research, one interviewee recalled that his father bought an additional gramophone upon his second marriage in the 1960s (Mahdi, interview with author, December 2017, Tamale). An archival recording titled "Drumming from Dagomba Land, Hourglass, Simpa" further underscores the gendered use of

gramophone technologies during this period.[7] In the recording, an interviewer asks a Northern Ghanaian man to "discuss and talk about songs," to which the man replies:

> In the house, oftenly you see your wife, singing, going up and down, going down to the kitchen, even coming back to the store room, whilst cooking, when going to help fetch water by the riverside, you find her singing all the time, just trying to make herself happy. . . . If you happen to go and marry somewhere, and there is no entertainment, how can you and your wife be happy in the house? She will be so lonely, that sometimes, she runs away from you. So, we should all try to get something that will amuse ourselves in the house. That's why you often see some people having gramophones. When he's annoyed, or she is annoyed, she goes to take it, and then starts playing with it—and such a thing gets you happy. (J. H. Kwabena Nketia Archive 1959:AWG-DG-06)

By the late 1950s, gramophones and gramophone music had become intrinsic to marriage and domestic life in Northern Ghana, clearly linked to women's singing practices during domestic labor.

The introduction of gramophone players meant that Dagbamba women built collections of foreign music records, including popular Hindi film soundtracks such as *Albela* (1951) and *Saqi* (1952). For example, in an interview with Mahdi (a man born in Tamale in 1955), he recalled that his mother's favorite album was the *Albela* (1951) film soundtrack (interview with author, November 2016, Tamale). He remembered that his mother would both listen to and sing songs from this and other soundtracks at home, explaining that "she was singing the songs . . . when she was washing, she would listen and then be singing along." Other interviewees recalled hearing Hindi film songs on the radio on Thursdays and Fridays, aligning with the weekly timings for the "Hausa and Dagbani Women's Magazine" program listed in the Ghana Radio Review schedule (Ghana Radio & Television Corporation 1964).[8] Alika, a long-term resident of Tamale's Hausa Zongo, recalled that in the 1950s and 1960s, she heard the radio box near her house playing Indian songs "on Thursdays and Fridays. They were old, old songs, from *Albela* (1951), *Sangam* (1954), *Saqi* (1952)" (interview with author, December 2017, Tamale). Jabir, a man born in the mid-1950s, similarly recalled that when he was going to school in the late 1960s, he would only hear Hindi film songs playing from the radio box outside his house on Thursdays and Fridays, during the Dagbanli section (Jabir, interview with author, October 2016, Tamale). The GBC's Gramophone Library in Accra holds other Hindi film records, including *Anmol Ghadi* (1946), *Bhartruhari* (1944), *Khandan* (1942), *Khidki* (1948), *Naya Tarana* (1943), and *Naujawan* (1951). While these Hindi film records were produced in the 1940s and early 1950s, their circulation on Ghana's Hausa and Dagbanli radio segments likely occured following Ghanaian independence in 1957, when the GBC introduced broadcasting in languages

including Hausa, Dagbanli, and Nzema (Akrofi-Quarcoo 2015:165). At this time, a central broadcasting office was built in Tamale, making Hausa and Dagbanli radio segments accessible in the city (Public Records and Archives Administration Department-Accra 1956:RG7/1/168).

The case of Hindi film music circulation in postcolonial Tamale reflects a broader trend of Hindi film songs circulating outside of South Asia beginning in the mid-twentieth century. Beyond the more well-studied circulation of Hindi films outside of India, many ethnomusicologists have examined the transnational reach of Hindi film music from an early stage. For example, in Indonesia, Hindi film song melodies were used in the popular genre *dangdut*, emerging in the 1950s (David 2008; Weintraub 2010), while in the 1940s and 1950s, Malaysian popular musicians including Abdul Rahman, Jasni, R. Azmi, and P. Ramlee were drawing on Hindi film songs in their own compositions (Lockard 1996:3 and 9–12). In 1950s Turkey, the song "Awara Hoon" from the popular film *Awaara* (1951) "became part of folk culture" as musicians recorded their own versions of the song (Gurata 2010:83), while John Baily (1988:86–88) discusses the influence of Hindi film songs on life-cycle genres such as wedding songs in 1970s Afghanistan. Professional Romanian singer Naarghita became internationally recognized in the 1950s for her live Hindi film song concerts and recordings (K. Gajendra Singh, quoted in Iordanova 2006:123). Hindi film songs were influential in Greece at this time as well, with local musicians adapting Hindi film songs into a genre called *indoprepi* (Abadzi 2008; Eleftheriotis 2010).

Hindi film songs circulated throughout Africa to varying degrees beginning in the mid-twentieth century. In Northern Nigeria, Hindi film melodies have been used in a range of musical contexts, including entertainment music at bars and clubs, in *bandiri* songs used to praise the Prophet Muhammad, and more recently in popular songs used in 1990s Hausa video films (Larkin 2000:232–233, 2004; Adamu 2007). In Western Nigeria, the Hindi film song style was incorporated into Yoruba popular music, including *jùjú* music, and in regional films starting in the 1970s (Waterman 1990:2; Okome and Haynes 1995:96). Along the Kenyan coast and in Zanzibar, *taarab* music developed a subgenre known as *taarab ya kihindi* (Indian taarab) in the 1930s, also referred to as *mahadi ya kiHindi* (Indian style) (Topp 1992:132; Eisenberg 2017:336). Indian taarab gained prominence in the 1930s with recordings by Jumbe Ali and Chuba Shee and grew in popularity over the twentieth century, reaching the height of its popularity in the 1980s (Eisenberg 2017:336–341). In Zanzibar, musicians such as Yaseen were using Hindi film song melodies for their own musical recordings beginning in the 1950s, such as using the "Awara Hoon" melody to write his famous song "Sina Nyumba" ("I Have No Home") (Eisenberg 2017:343; Fair 2018:125). Hindi film music circulated to diverse regions outside of South Asia

throughout the twentieth century, shaping and influencing a range of private and public popular and folk music styles.

Why did Hindi film songs gain popularity among Dagbamba and Hausa women in Tamale? First, throughout my time spent in Tamale, women often noted an affinity to songs where they believed the singers were Muslim women, like them. In early cases, such as the Hausa women's signature tune, the trained female Indian vocalist Jahanara Kajjan was Muslim (Ramamurthy 2006:207), an aspect that may have been widely known at the time considering Kajjan's international acclaim, with her photograph circulating on cigarette packs as far as Egypt (Kahlon 2020).[9] Other songs popular in Tamale homes are from films that feature Muslim female characters. For example, music from the 1979 film *Noorie* has remained particularly popular in Tamale, especially the song "Chori Chori Koi Aye." The soundtrack for *Noorie* (1979)—available in Tamale's central market—features the female film character's image (wearing a red and gold head covering) with her Arabic name bolded on top (Noorie Nabi).[10] The representation of female Muslim singers and characters is particularly significant in the Northern Ghanaian context, as the majority of popular foreign music and film circulating in the region has tended to be either American or European singers or bands, or otherwise West African music made largely by male, Christian performers.

Along with a sense of shared experience for Muslim female listeners in Tamale, there are several sonic reasons for the inclusion of Hindi film songs in domestic music-making practices as well. It is possible that the murmuring tone of 1950s and 1960s playback singers, with their soft and crooning *filmi* voice, would have been particularly well-suited to domestic music-making in Tamale, as the sound of the voice would carry easily from one room to another during domestic work. In contemporary Tamale, Dagbamba and Hausa women continue to select Hindi film song melodies that were originally performed by both male and female playback singers of this era, including "Pancchi Banoon Udti Phiroon" ("As a Bird I Want to Fly") from the film *Chori Chori* (1956) and "Raat Suhani" ("The Pleasant Night") from the film *Rani Rupmati* (1957), both originally sung by Lata Mangeshkar. Songs performed by male playback singers of the 1950s and 1960s, including Mohammad Rafi and Kishore Kumar, remain popular choices for Tamale's domestic singers.

The majority of Hindi film songs from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s that remain popular in Tamale today are based on pentatonic scales, which are also common in both Dagbamba and Hausa music (Djedje 1981:3–4, 1984:171). For example, two 1950s film songs still popular in Tamale today that I mentioned above—"Pancchi Banoon Udti Phiroon" and "Raat Suhani"—draw on Western music scale degrees one, flat three, four, five, and flat seven, while the radio signature tune "Kuke Koyaliya Kunjan Mein" draws on degrees one, two, four, five,

and flat seven. While early Hindi film song melodies popular in Tamale draw on pentatonic patterns, this is not the case for all Hindi film song melodies popular in Tamale homes. For example, 1980s film song melodies including "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" and "Jaaneman" discussed in the musical analysis below are not based on pentatonic scales. Even still, it is possible that the shared use of pentatonic scales between Hindi film songs and Dagbamba songs established early on in the circulation of Hindi film music in Tamale inspired an affinity for this film music in Tamale homes, setting the stage for the inclusion of other kinds of Hindi film song melodies in later decades.

Many film songs performed in Tamale homes are from film *loris* (lullaby film scene contexts)—as is the case for the first musical example discussed in depth later in the article: "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho," a Hindi film lullaby (lori) from the film *Andhaa Kaanoon* (*Law Is Blind*, 1983). It is possible that the style of Hindi film loris like "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" featured calm, lilting melodies similar to Dagbanli language child-directed songs. It is also common for women to sing Hindi film song melodies that are concerned with lost love and romantic longing, as is the case with the musical example "Jaaneman"—from the 1982 film *Ghazab*—discussed later in this article. Such songs of longing imply a sense of affect, love, and care that may have been suitable in the context of lullabies and childcare in the home.

Given the constraints of domestic labor, many women I spent time with in Tamale were less likely to know the title or plot of a film related to a given song, as women usually listen to songs during chores and childcare, lacking the time to watch a full three-hour film.[11] For example, when I asked Nafisa (a Dagbamba woman who raised children in Tamale during the 1980s) if she watched Hindi films in her home or at nearby neighborhood video centers while raising her children, she replied:

> I had to go to market, I had to go fetch water, and water was very scarce then. After that, I had to cook, and wash, there are so many things to do. When you have done all of these things, you are too tired. (Nafisa, interview with author, November 2016, Tamale)

Nafisa explained that, instead, she listened to and sang Hindi film songs from her favorite cassettes while working, including *Andhaa Kaanoon* (1983), *Bhagavat* (1982), and *Disco Dancer* (1982). While more recently women in Tamale do have access to DVD players and televisions in their homes, I found that women were more likely to buy Hindi film song video compilations that they played on their DVD players, listening along to a continual stream of music while they moved in and out of their rooms; at times, women stopped to catch glimpses of an accompanying film song scene in moments of rest.

Adapting Hindi Film Songs for Domestic Singing in Tamale Homes

Over time, Dagbamba and Hausa women phonetically memorized and adapted Hindi film songs to sing during domestic labor in the home. For example, during an interview with a woman named Samira, she explained her process for singing Hindi film songs in the home following her marriage in the 1970s:

> Author: After marriage, did you sing in your house?
> Samira: Yes, I used to do that when I was doing my house chores, like washing and laundering. I didn't want to get bored, or feel lazy, so I would sing Indian songs while I'm washing. (Samira, interview with author, November 2016, Tamale)

As Hindi film songs became integrated into domestic singing practices in the home, children began to hear their mothers and female guardians' versions of Hindi film songs removed from the original film song context. For example, Mahdi (introduced in the previous section) recalled his mother singing to his younger sister during his youth:

> Author: Did your mother ever sing songs to you as a child, to calm you down?
> Mahdi: When I was small, I can't tell. But I witnessed my sister below me, when she was crying, my mother would sing Indian songs to console her. Especially songs from *Love in Tokyo*. (Mahdi, interview with the author, December 2017, Tamale)

Mahdi proceeded to sing fragments of "Love in Tokyo," the feature song from the 1966 film of the same name, underscoring the ways in which this song became associated with, and indexical of, childcare and the domestic sphere for Mahdi. Samira similarly reflected on her experiences performing Hindi film songs during childcare, explaining: "I could sing without listening to the songs. Especially when a child is crying. You could just comfort the child while singing the song. It will make them stop their crying." (Samira, interview with the author, December 2017, Tamale)

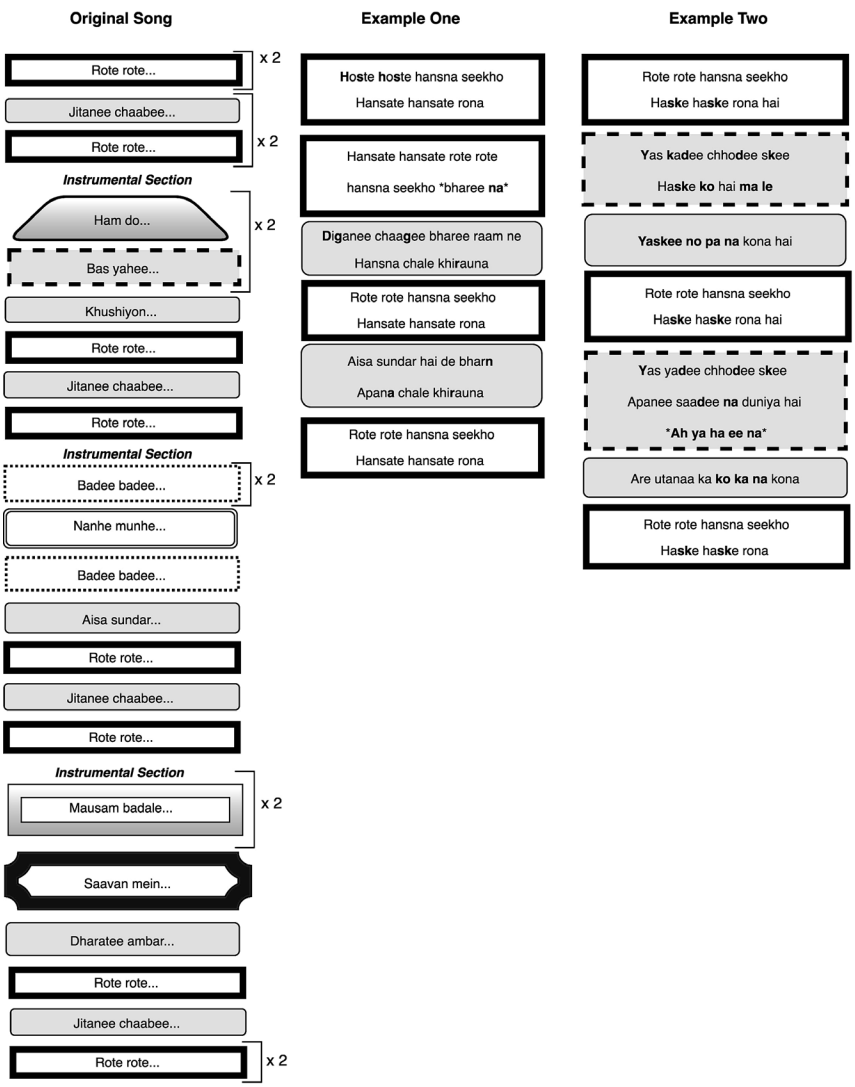
Earlier, I noted that while both boys and girls spend their initial years in their mother's room, daughters typically spend more time with their mothers or female guardians, as they live together until marriage, while boys typically move away from their mother's rooms at puberty. As a result, girls are exposed to women singing in the home for a much longer period of time, developing a more comprehensive knowledge of the songs their mothers sing. For example, Alika, who was born in the mid-1950s and lives in Tamale's Hausa Zongo, became a mother to four children during the 1970s. When asked about singing Hindi film songs to her children, Alika explained:

> I sang to all the children, but most especially my daughter. Because she was a girl, I spent so much time with her. . . . After I had my first son, I had my daughter. Because she was a girl, I had so much attention for her! I was always singing to her. (Alika, interview with author, December 2017, Tamale)

Here, Alika highlights the closeness between mothers and daughters, who spend more time together in the home, while also underscoring the gendered transference of domestic musical knowledge and practice between women across generations. As Hindi film songs were integrated into domestic singing practices, daughters were more likely to be exposed to singing Hindi film music for a greater period of time. This pattern is reflected in the different ways Dagbamba and Hausa women and men sing Hindi film songs.

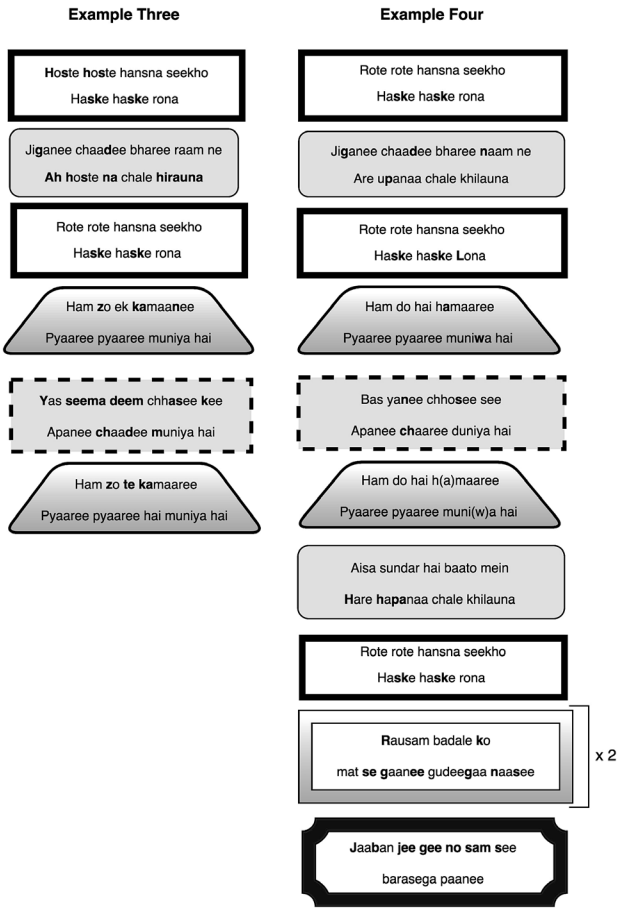
In what follows, I compare four different performances of the Hindi film song "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" from the film *Andhaa Kaanoon* (*Law Is Blind*, 1983) through a visual graphic, with two performances by men and two by women, all born between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s. All four singers were recorded in Tamale between 2015 and 2020, when at the end of interviews, I gave an opportunity for each interviewee to sing a song of their choice. The first column of the graphic (musical example 1) is a visual representation of the original Hindi film song, with each new shape representing a different recurring melodic segment. The first column is followed by four columns, representing four examples of the same song performed by different people in Tamale; examples 1 and 2 are performed by men, and examples 3 and 4 are performed by women. The different shapes in each subsequent column correlate to the different recurring melodic segments from the original Hindi film song in the first column. The lyrics of each Tamale-based performance differ from the original Hindi film lyrics as well as from each other's performances. At times, singers rearrange Hindi lyrics within the song, while at other times, singers integrate words and phrases not found in the original film song lyrics. Often, these inclusions are not Hindi words, but appear similar to Hindi (I will refer to these as "quasi-Hindi" words throughout). In musical example 1, I have bolded any words or letters not found in the original film song lyrics and have starred sections where melodies deviate from original melodies.

Example 1 was performed by Wadood in October 2015. Wadood works as a technology repair person, and given the precarity of work in the informal sector, he spends a great deal of time socializing with other men in the games area near his house. His wife, by contrast, spends the majority of her time in the communal compound of her home, where she listens to Hindi film songs while taking care of their children, conducting chores, and preparing meals for the family. Wadood did not have many recollections of singing Hindi film songs with his mother or female guardians as a child, as he moved to live with his male family members at puberty. As seen in musical example 1, Wadood's version of "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" uses only the first two melodic segments of the original song, appearing in the same order as they would have been heard in the original song. Example 2, recorded in January 2020, is an example of "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" performed by Mahdi (introduced above) who fondly recalls memories



Musical Example 1: A graphic visualization of four different versions of the Hindi film song "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" as they were performed in Tamale.

of his mother listening to Hindi film records in his home growing up. While his performance of the song is technically as long as Wadood's, Mahdi's performance includes more melodic material, including the first, second, and third melodic blocks of the original song. Example 3 is a performance by Fadilah, recorded in November 2015. She is a mother now in her sixties, who primarily takes care of



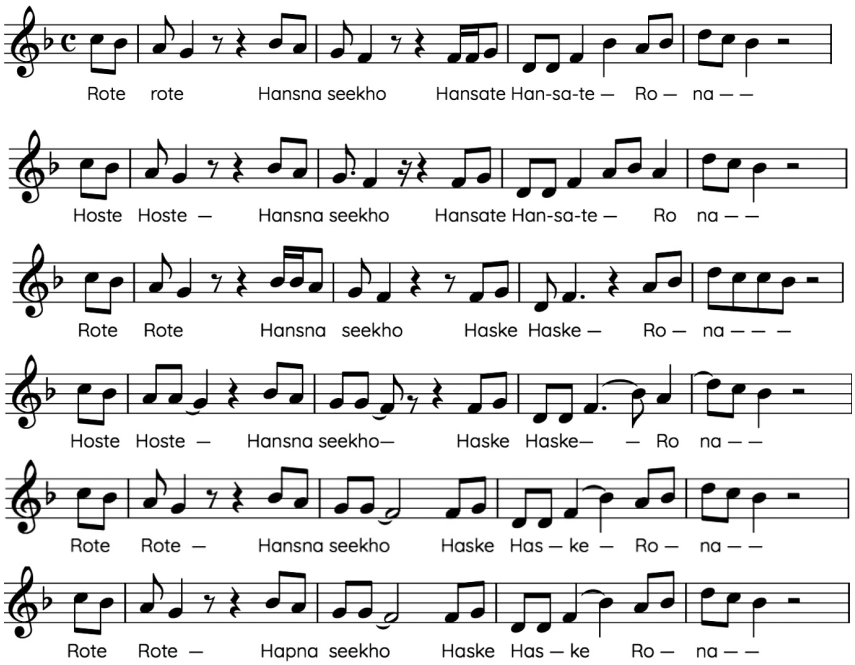
Musical Example 1 (*continued*).

her home and the children living in the house. Fadilah's performance features four different melodic blocks, extending beyond Wadood's and Mahdi's musical knowledge of the song. In example 4, Rabiyya, who is also the main caretaker in her home, performed six melodic segments of "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" including sections from later in the original song, signaling that she has listened to and performed this song in full many times. This is not surprising, as from personal experience spending time in Rabiyya's home, she spends the majority of her time there, cleaning, cooking, and looking after her children while listening to and singing Hindi film songs. She often listens to songs via her Bollywood hits music video playlist DVD, which she plays on her television, as pictured in figure 5.

Figure 5: Rabiyya cleans and prepares dinner while listening to a compilation of Hindi film songs from the 1957 film *Mother India* via her DVD player. Image taken by author in Tamale, July 2016.

An important element visualized in musical example 1 is that women's unprompted performances of Hindi film songs tend to include more melodic content than men performing the same song. Even men who openly express their appreciation for Hindi film songs (such as Mahdi) are still less familiar with film song melodies in comparison to women, who perform these songs more frequently as part of their day-to-day activities. At the same time, the variations between Wadood and Mahdi make clear that men have differing experiences of domestic life and thus different levels of exposure to domestic music-making practices, an aspect I explore in more depth below.

During periods of research in Tamale, some of the Hindi film song performances collected were from parents and their children. I never requested that someone sing a specific Hindi film song, and I often recorded parents and their adult children separately, at different times and even in different locations. As such, it was coincidental when a parent and their adult children performed the same song. These performances are particularly fruitful when exploring the intergenerational exchange of domestic songs in Tamale. For example, Rabiyya's example of "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" (example 4 in musical example 1) was also performed by her daughter, Rahama, on a separate occasion. When comparing these mother-daughter recordings, there are various rhythmic, melodic, and lyrical similarities between the two, especially compared with the other three performances by Wadood, Mahdi, and Fadilah. Musical example 2 begins with a musical notation of the main melodic line of the original "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" film song, followed by the performances by Wadood, Mahdi, Fadilah, Rabiyya, and Rahama. Performances from Rabiyya and Rahama are nearly identical in their rhythmic and melodic approach, except for a slight lyrical shift at the end of the first measure. That their performances of "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho" have the most in common in terms of melodic and rhythmic content of all of the Tamale-based performances highlight the intergenerational exchange of Hindi film songs between mothers and daughters in the home.



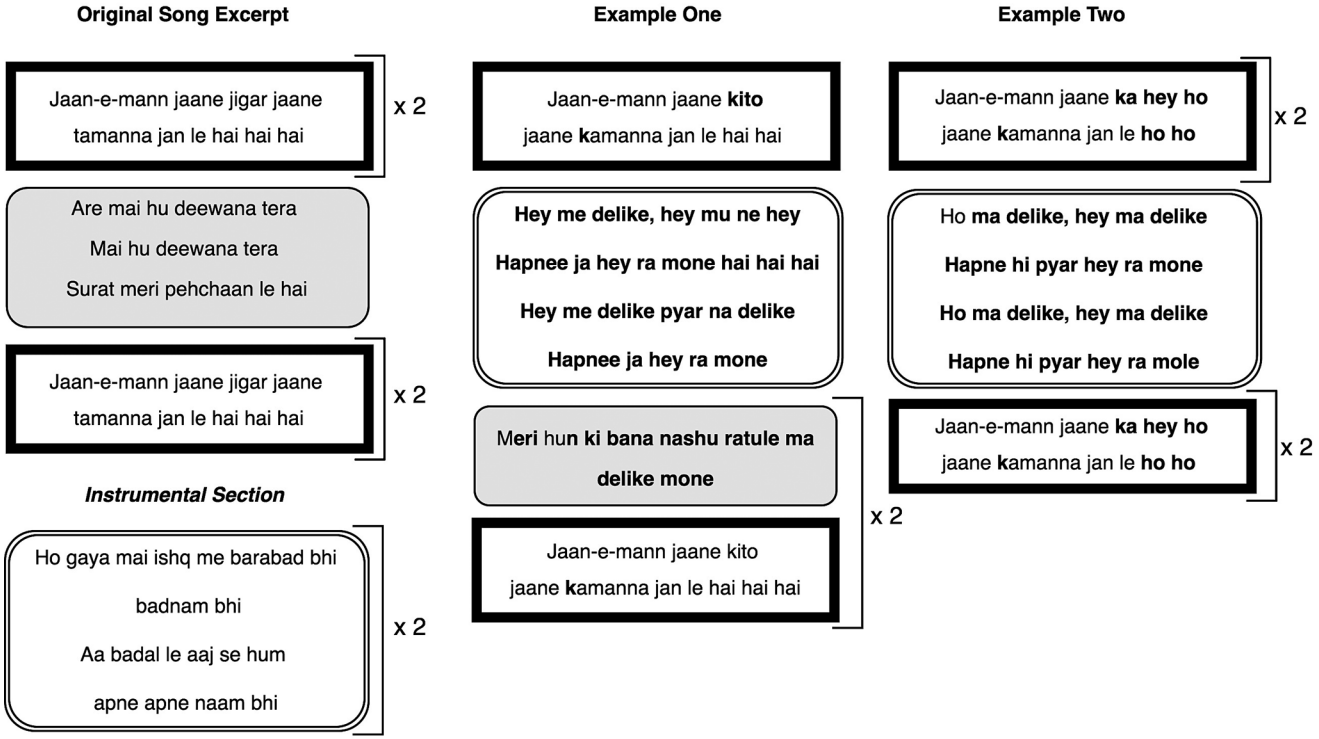
Musical Example 2: Five Tamale-based versions of the chorus line of the Hindi film song "Rote Rote Hansna Seekho."

While gendered living arrangements and social expectations typically inform where young girls and boys spend their time in Tamale homes, gendered living arrangements can be complicated by changes in family structure, such as the death of a parent or a divorce. In Tamale, both male and female children often stay in their father's home following a divorce, while the mother moves back to her family home. In these instances, gendered living arrangements are upheld. However, there are instances where mothers bring their children with them when moving home after divorce. In some situations, boys who return to their maternal home spend much longer in their mother's room than what is deemed socially acceptable. In Tamale, boys who live with their mothers or grandmothers into adolescence are often teased by their peers for spending too much time around women and are referred to as *paɣaba-leliga* (roughly translating as "women cockroach," referring to a boy or man who spends most of his time around women).[12] Men who enjoy Hindi film songs are similarly teased for being paɣaba-leliga, a link underscoring the relationship between the gendering of domestic space, labor, and related musical practices. Such non-normative

experiences of domestic musical singing is evidenced in the oral histories and singing examples of Samira (introduced above) and her two sons.

Samira and her husband divorced several years after having her two sons. Somewhat unconventionally, she moved back to her mother's room along with her two sons. Both sons lived with their mother and maternal grandmother until they were in their late teens. Given that Samira sang Hindi film songs in her room as tuma-yila and biyola-yila, her sons learned to sing these songs as well. I first met Samira's younger son Basim in 2013, when I was staying in their family home in Tamale. On my first night there, I entered the communal courtyard after dusk to find Basim sitting in a lawn chair, singing a song to himself. Given that the song sounded like a Hindi film song, I asked Basim what the song was called and where he had learned it. He was unaware of the song title or film and explained that his mother used to sing it to him as a child. I later found that the song Basim sang was the Hindi film song "Jaaneman" (from the 1982 film *Ghazab*).

Basim's mother, Samira, no longer lives with him in the family home, as she has since remarried. During a visit to Samira's home in October 2015, Samira also sang "Jaaneman" to me. Comparing Samira's version with the original film song version, she has altered the original film song significantly. For example, while the original version of "Jaaneman" features five distinct melodic sections, as well as two instrumental portions, Samira's version draws on three of the five melodic sections of the original song (Samira's version is "example one" within musical example 3). In Samira's second segment (which corresponds to the verse that immediately follows the first instrumental section of the original "Jaaneman" film song, outlined twice in black in musical example 3), the lyrics have been altered, replacing the original Hindi film song lyrics with quasi-Hindi words. Interestingly, the quasi-Hindi words Samira sings are not found in the original film song lyrics, yet they do relate to Hindi words commonly found in other film songs. For example, in the second verse, Samira sings the word "delike" (corresponding to *dil ke* in Hindi, meaning "heart"), and the word "pyar" (*pyār* in Hindi, meaning "love"). Samira has performed Hindi film songs to the extent that she has developed a set of quasi-Hindi words that she incorporates into songs when improvising, akin to the use of words without meaning in Ewe lullabies, discussed above (Agawu 1987:411). The new words Samira includes—such as dil ke and pyār—indicate that she listens to Hindi film songs dealing with themes of romance. Interestingly, Basim's performance of "Jaaneman" draws on the same quasi-Hindi lyrical content found in Samira's version, rather than lyrics from the original film song (see "example 2" within musical example 3). That both Samira and Basim performed this verse in a similar way, drawing on the same invented phrases absent from the original film song, reveal musical insights into the process of intergenerational exchange.



Musical Example 3: A graphic visualization of intergenerational exchange found in the Hindi film song "Jaaneman."

Basim recalled his experience of "Jaaneman" as a child-directed song rather than a film song, and his rendition reflects time spent with his mother in the domestic sphere. At the same time, Basim's example is of particular importance in understanding the relationship between marriage, space, and gender in Tamale. His atypical experience of living with his mother and grandmother into young adulthood allowed for an ability to sing his mother's own versions of Hindi film songs, reinterpreted as tuma-yila and biyola-yila. Basim explained to me that his ability to sing these songs is a point of contention among peers, noting that men like himself who sing Hindi film songs are teased for being paɣaba-leliga. At the same time, Basim is confident in singing Hindi film songs in semipublic contexts around friends and family members even when he is teased, revealing the varied expressions of masculinity and differing experiences of gender, music, and domestic life in Tamale that are negotiated in seemingly mundane moments, including singing a popular song in a courtyard at night.

While Basim is comfortable singing Hindi film songs in his home around friends and family members who are aware of the context of his upbringing, another research moment reveals other ways in which men navigate being teased about singing Hindi film songs in more public contexts. In 2015, I began to attend a Hindi film music club that held weekly in-person meetings for listeners. I attended this weekly meeting whenever I was in Tamale. While attending one of those weekly meetings in early January 2020, I set up a recording station in a semiprivate space nearby the open-air club meeting site. I offered an open invitation for members of the group to come and sing their favorite film song at their leisure, either prior to, during, or after the two-hour-long meeting. The meeting was attended by thirteen men and seven women; six women made their way to the room throughout the meeting to sing Hindi film songs, while only one man, Mahdi (introduced earlier), entered the room. I noticed that following his entrance into the room, and upon return to the club meeting, Mahdi was continually laughed at and teased by both women and men from the club, including the phrase paɣaba-leliga. The same laughter was not directed toward the six female performers, regardless of their knowledge of, or ability to sing, Hindi film songs.

During the recording session, Mahdi confidently sang a range of Hindi film songs of his choice. Despite being teased, he remained in the room to sing a selection of songs, revealing a confidence in his positionality as a Dagbamba man with extensive knowledge of Hindi film music. At the same time, he made specific choices about the kinds of songs he performed, perhaps as a way of navigating the policing of normative gender boundaries enacted through terms like paɣaba-leliga. While Mahdi is able to sing a range of Hindi film songs performed by both male and female playback singers, all five songs he performed during this semipublic recording session were originally performed by male playback singers, contrasting with the female vocalists who sang a mixture of songs from male and female playback singers during the recording session (table 1).

Table 1: Songs performed by Mahdi during January 2020 recording session.

Film Title	Film Song Title	Film Year	Name of Playback Singer
Andhaa Kaanon	Rote Rote Hansna Seekho	1983	Kishore Kumar
Naseeb	John Jani Janardhan	1981	Mohammed Rafi
Sholay	Yeh Dosti Hum Nahi	1975	Kishore Kumar
Yaadon Ki Baarat	Yaadon Ki Baarat (Part 2)	1973	Kishore Kumar and Mohammed Rafi
Albela	Qismat Ki Hawa Kabhi Naram	1951	C. Ramchandra

Concluding Thoughts

In postcolonial Northern Ghana, women undertook the bulk of domestic labor and childcare in the home. With the arrival of gramophones and radios, women began to listen to and sing Hindi film songs during domestic work, so that foreign film songs became a part of domestic musical genres including tuma-yila and biyola-yila. Such creative adaptations made by women in the home are important sites of relayed creativity (Born 2005), in which listeners decompose and recompose music dependent on their own interests, needs, and desires. At the same time, these domesticated film songs reflect a kind of perpetual potential (Barber 2018), in which the shifts and changes made to a song reveal important insights about gendered experiences in the home that are at times normative (for example, in the case of Wadood) and in other instances reveal more nuanced and varied experiences of gender in domestic life (as is the case for Basim and Mahdi).

The shifts and changes made to foreign popular songs in the home—such as improvising or changing words, melodies, and rhythms—illuminate different relationships to domestic labor, space, and music. Consistencies between mother's and children's performances of Hindi film songs further underscore domestic experiences of intergenerational musical exchange, which are equally shaped by the gendered makeup of domestic space. Knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of a song's melodic content reflects differing levels of exposure to domestic labor in daily life. An analysis of Dagbamba singers' performances of Hindi film songs, contextualized through lived experiences and oral history interviews, make clear the varied experiences of music and gender in domestic life across generations in Tamale.

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Notes

1. In Ghana, both Hausa and Dagbamba communities share a range of cultural ties, including that they are both majority Muslim communities and that, historically, both groups have origins in Northern Nigeria. The majority of informants for this article are Dagbamba; however, several interviewees, such as Alika, are Hausa and live in Tamale's Hausa Zongo.

2. There is no Dagbanli word that directly correlates to the English word for music. Throughout, I focus on the domestic everyday practice of singing songs. In Dagbanli, the word for songs is *yila*.

3. Interviewee's names have been changed throughout, using only a first name pseudonym for identity protection and to ensure anonymity.

4. With a recent rise in male unemployment in the city, it is becoming more common for women who may have held roles within the home to leave during the day and the evening in order to make extra money selling food or goods in the markets or in roadside shops.

5. Though farming was once the main occupation of men living in the region, environmental factors have destabilized farming practices, and precarious employment opportunities in the formal sector have made it increasingly difficult for men to provide for their families (see Haas 2016:27 and 108).

6. See discography below for full archival listings.

7. The people who live in the kingdom of Dagbon (a geographic region in Northern Ghana) are referred to in academic literature as both Dagomba or Dagbamba. I use Dagbamba throughout. The majority language spoken in Dagbon is Dagbanli (also referred to as Dagbani in some scholarly and media contexts), which is from the Gur branch of the Niger-Congo languages.

8. Women's radio shows were divided by language, with Ga, Ewe, Nzema, Twi, and Hausa/Dagbanli women's hours broadcast on different days of the week (see Ghana Radio & Television Corporation 1964).

9. See "Image 12" for an example of the packaging via this link: www.prafulthakkar.in/my-hobbies/other-collectibles/cigarette-packs.html.

10. While women in Tamale may have listened to the soundtrack rather than watching this film in full, it is set in Kashmir and does explore the experiences of a Muslim family.

11. Youth who learned Hindi film songs from female guardians as biyola-yila are less likely to know the film title or context of a song.

12. For more information on this term, see Alhassan 2012:96.

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