

GADANGME INTERNATIONAL INC. (GDI)

Genesis, Development & Initiatives

6TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MAY 27-29, 2005
Toronto, Canada

Preliminary Report

*“GaDangme in the 21st Century, Uniting for Progress
and Development in Ghana”*

Genesis – From everywhere we came – children, youth, men and women ages 10-79!

GaDangmebii with various skills and talents came from the GaDangme homeland, Europe and North America. The language used at the conference was strictly Dangme and Ga.

The 6th annual GaDangme International Inc. (GDI) conference hosted by the GaDangme Association of Toronto in Toronto, Canada from May 27 to May 29, 2005 was all it promised and more. GDI set out to bring representatives of GaDangme organizations, GaDangmebii, friends of GaDangme and all who are interested in the plight of GaDangme to meet face to face, to discuss how we may unite for progress and development in Ghana in this 21st century. The “spirit of GaDangme” that descended on the conference left no doubt that a united front is what is foremost needed among GaDangmebii. A three-way coalition formed at this conference makes GDI three times as strong as when we arrived in Toronto and we hope it marks the nucleus of GaDangme Unity.

From Chicago to Toronto May 30, 2004 to May 27, 2005

I) The interim executive officers fulfilled the three charges given them at the 5th annual conference:

- GDI is properly registered as a non-profit organization and it consists of a fifteen-member board of Trustees, eight Executive officers, Representatives from member organizations, six committees, Professional group members and Friends of GaDangme.
- The GDI constitution was ratified at the annual conference in Toronto.

II) The members of GDI sought to bring awareness of the GaDangme Plight and share GDI’s broad objective, which is to develop effective strategies that will enhance the

quality of life for GaDangmebii in Ghana and everywhere in the world, while protecting our traditions, culture and land for future GaDangme generations. To accomplish this, GDI members with assistance from the interim executive officers contacted their fellow GaDangmebii and invited them to participate in GDI and the conference in Toronto.

When over 100 people showed up for the Friday informal gathering instead of the 40 that was expected for that evening, it signaled the beginning of a successful conference. The excitement generated by the feeling of solidarity in the interest of GaDangme, our home, conjured the spirit of GaDangme and set the tone for the rest of the conference. Indeed, the Saturday conference and the dinner dance were both standing room only and a large contingency attended the thanksgiving service on Sunday that was officiated by Rev. Grace Nugent.

Present were Her Highness, Naa Dedei Omadru III, Ga Manye, His Excellency and Mrs. Samuel Nii Odoi Sykes, Ghana's High Commissioner to Canada, Mr. J.Allotey Pappoe, PRO of GaDangme Council (GDC), Dr. Vince Padi, Chairman of the GaDangme Foundation (UK), Mr. Alex Amarteifio Vice Chairman of GaDangme Foundation (UK), Mrs. Sarah Solomon-Ayeh, Nii Asukru member of Sempe Traditional Council, Nii Akotwei Glover Wulomo NY, Ms. Verity Doodoo, President of GaDangme Yei Anoyaa Kpee, Naa Adorkor Odehe Dzamfi, Sempe Sowutuom Manye, Asafoaste Ottoto and Asafoanye Odametey Tsotso founders of the Imhotep Institute of Philadelphia, Wor-Nii Bortelabi-Bokete-Laweh XIV Krowor Konor and Nungua mantse a.k.a. Dr. Samuel Boitei Doku retired professor of mathematics, University of Cape Coast, members of the GDI Board of Trustees, GDI Interim Executive Officers, GDI Member Organization Representatives, GDI members, Friends of GaDangme and Mr. James Aflah Bannor, renowned photographer, whose vintage pictures of life in Accra in the old days, were on display.

Development

Highlights of the speeches

Mr. Joseph Allotey Pappoe, PRO of GaDangme Council (GDC)

(The speech can be found in its entirety in the GDC booklet "Challenges, Acts and Accomplishments").

Mr. Pappoe gave an overview of the GDC's Aims and Objectives in fostering consciousness among GaDangme people of their common ancestry, and to be the standard-bearers of GaDangme unity as well as an integral part of national unity. To advise, assist and collaborate with GaDangme Chiefs in promoting GaDangme heritage and as an integral part of Ghanaian culture. To initiate, assist and participate in projects and developments beneficiary to GaDangmebii. He admitted that he had to change his prepared speech after experiencing the spirit of the conference. He said the GDC was formed 12 years ago and was incorporated in 2004 and Mr. K. B. Asante is the acknowledged leader of the organization. He emphasized that the GaDangme Kingdom came first before all others and also the GaDangme language was the first to be written. He delineated the GDC hierarchy as:

- GaDangme Congress
- The Supreme Council of GaDangme Chiefs

- The GaDangme Council (GDC)
- The Committees of the GaDangme Council e.g. Chieftaincy disputes, Land sales, Developments, Cultural affairs etc.
- The Secretariat
- Mr. Pappoe emphasized that the GDC is not out to compete with the Chiefs and the Traditional Councils or to take over their authority. Rather, the GDC wants to help them put things in place and to take back all the lands and other properties that rightfully belong to GaDangme and its people.

He admitted that relations with the GTC, is a sensitive issue at present, but efforts were being made to delineate their respective roles. Individual meetings are being arranged with Mantsemei of almost all the traditional areas. He would welcome the involvement of the GDI in conflict resolution with the GTC. He went on to describe the GDC's achievements and works in progress, namely working relationship with GaDangmebii in the Diaspora: GaDangme Foundation (UK), GaDangme International (GDI), as well as making efforts to contact other Associations in the Diaspora. He thanked all for financial help and, equipment e.g. computers, copy machines to the GDC secretariat.

He reported on the establishment of a Lands Committee, which includes Valuation experts, Town planners, Surveyors and a Legal team of lawyers, to fight Court Cases for the recovery of GD lands being misapplied. The GDC has been given the Power of Attorney by La and Osu. The GDC hopes that all GaDangmebii will give their full support to the Committee.

On Chieftaincy matters, the GDC Settlement Committee is working to settle Chieftaincy disputes in areas such as: Tema, Nungua, Teshie, Asere and Osu. There are other disputes festering in the satellite villages of all the Paramount Stools and GDC is aware.

Financially, the GDC is self- supporting but just barely and so needs all the help it can get from the Diaspora. He thanked the groups and individuals whose financial support keeps the GDC afloat in maintaining the Secretariat and urged them to keep the support coming.

Ms. Verity Dodoo, President of GaDangme Yei Anoyaa Kpee, Accra.

Informed the Conference about the GaDangme Yei Anoyaa Kpee which seeks to rehabilitate young, wayward GaDangme women into productive lives. She expressed her concern about young GaDangme women who did not have jobs and are therefore settling for less and going into things that are demeaning and selling themselves short of their potentials; single mothers who are not able to pay their children's school fees because they do not have meaningful jobs. The GaDangme Yei Anoyaa Kpee is setting up trade schools and giving out loans to these women to start small-scale businesses to help maintain their dignity and help them take better care of themselves and their children. Other projects include setting up a Kenkey production business that will give employment to women, set up of counseling services for women, sponsor children for better education, for which the GaDangme Yei Anoyaa Kpee has received 800 Pounds from donors in the U.K. She praised the founder Mr. Oko Tetteh for his invaluable service to the Kpee. She pleaded for help from the Diaspora.

Highlights of the Keynote Speech – by His Excellency, Samuel Odoi Sykes.

Note: A different speech that was not given at the conference was published on Ghanaweb on 5/30/05 by a source claiming to be Ghanaian News Canada. To listen to the full speech that was delivered at the conference by Mr. Sykes, please contact GaDangme International Inc. (GDI) by e:mail: napastan0005@yahoo.co

“Since the independence of Ghana over 48 years ago, the people of GaDangme of the Greater Accra Region have been complaining to successive governments about the compulsory acquisition of Ga Dangme lands by the state “in the interest of defense, public safety, public order” and general national development. In recent times, the complaints or grievances of the Ga Dangmes have highlighted perceived threats to GaDangme Language, Culture and Traditions, Poverty, Education, Marginalization and the extinction of the GaDangme Tribe, which has been termed “an endangered species”.

This 6th Annual Summit of the GaDangme International is taking place at a time of disturbing developments in the affairs of the GaDangmemei, which should be of primary concern to all of us here today. Apart from the obvious injustice in the sale of compulsorily acquired lands of the Ga Dangme people, many of the complaints of the GaDangme people have been dismissed as frivolous or illogical. Their rationale has been challenged which has yet to be specifically addressed.

H.E Odoi Sykes said he has not found it easy or comfortable to explain or defend some of our complaints. He said it is difficult for him to believe that there is a conspiracy or plan to keep the GaDangme people or region poor, or to subvert the GaDangme Language or Culture, or to exterminate the GaDangme people. “I say this as a true full-blooded GaDangme citizen, and I accept the responsibility of forming my own opinions”. His Excellency Odoi Sykes said. A cool-headed assessment of the case of the Ga Dangme people shows that all our grievances derive from the fact of Accra being the national capital of Ghana.

If the capital of Ghana has not been transferred from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877, the GaDangme people would not today be a minority in their own land. Our lands, languages, and cultures would not have come under constant siege. But Accra would not then have enjoyed the benefits of exceptional developments and privileges of a capital city.

The development of Accra and Greater Accra as the national capital region for economic and social services and amenities necessitated the compulsory acquisition of stool and family lands of the GaDangme people by successive governments before and after independence. There was nothing wrong with that arrangement. However, there have been long-standing complaints about the transfer or sale of such lands, which were not used for the purposes for which they were acquired, or the leases of which had expired. Government officers, without

the payment of compensation realized huge profits from the transfers or sales to the original owners or returning their lands to them. This he said is the main creditable complaint of the GaDangme people.

The problems of GaDangme lands are not generated solely by the compulsory acquisition by the state. A far more widespread problem is created by the rampant sale of lands by stools and families. Many GaDangme chiefs sell the land of their districts to strangers and use the proceeds for their own purposes without rendering account to their citizens. Sometimes a chief and/or his elders in Accra sell the same piece of land to two or more buyers, leading to protract and costly land litigation, and losses to innocent victims.

The people of GaDangme he said were involved from the beginning in the movement to fight for Ghana's independence. Two of the famous "Big Six" pioneers were GaDangme citizens Ako Adjei and Obetsebi Lamptey. Of the three Ex-service men who were shot and killed at the Christiansburg Crossroads shooting incidents in 1948, two were GaDangme citizens Sgt Adjetey and Cpl Odartey Lamptey. It was this event, which kick-started the final struggle for Ghana's independence. Accra was the cradle of modern national politics, and the main battleground for the independence struggle. The youth and women of Accra bore the brunt of the fight against the colonial administration.

GaDangmes have played vital roles in all political groupings or parties at all times. Vulgar abuse and insults have however kept many high profile GaDangmes from venturing into politics. There is a strong perception that the GaDangme people have been marginalized in politics. They do not get their fair share of the national cake in spite of their enormous contribution to Ghana's socio-political development. He said as long as the GaDangmes are not united, they could easily be taken for granted in national politics.

The Ga Language is taught as a core subject at the primary level in all schools in the Greater Accra region. Every school child in Ghana is required to learn and pass in at least one vernacular language at the primary level. As the national capital of Ghana, Accra has attracted Ghanaians from all parts of the country to settle in the city in search of work and other social amenities and opportunities unavailable to them in their own towns and villages. They speak their own languages, and the state cannot compel them to speak the Ga language. They are also greater in number than the GaDangmes who form just 8% of the population. Dangmes are 4.3% and Gas are 3.4%.

The GaDangme people have failed to attain their best in national affairs generally because they are not united. We seem to get on better with people from other ethnic groups than with ourselves. Unity holds the key to progress and development of the Ga Dangmes in the 21st Century. Our chiefs should emulate the good examples of their counterparts from other regions of the country to push forward the development of the GaDangme region. We should encourage and support them to do so instead of attacking the integrity of hard-

working and successful chiefs from other ethnic tribes. Success and praise can only be won by one's efforts, and one person's gain does not represent the loss of another.

Finally, GaDangme citizens in the Diaspora should take an interest in the progress and development of their region and the whole country. You can particularly be of assistance in the fields of Education and Health in which Ghana stands in dire need of help. If our children, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces are not sufficiently educated in modern Ghana, they will be marginalized by the system. To accept this challenge will attest to your sincere interest in your region and country.”

Wor-Nii Bortelabi Bokete-Laweh XIV a.k.a. Dr. Samuel

Boitei Doku, advised the delegates to uphold the GaDangme language and to encourage their children to speak it at home. He informed delegates of a project he is involved with concerning Ga language books including a Ga Dictionary, which can be used in schools, and hopefully develop an encyclopedia of the language. Dr. Doku said it breaks his heart when he hears that land is being sold. “Land can never be sold, it's only leased”, he said. He urged that we should not only make noise in Ghana, but we should be loud and clear around the world, proclaiming our determination to fight for what is ours and encouraged us that with a united front GaDangmebii will prevail; our language and our culture will not be lost.

Dr. Naa Ama Kuma Barnor, Pediatrician in Toronto: Spoke about proper GaDangme child rearing in the Diaspora. She encouraged delegates to contribute funds toward Youth education in Ghana and toward the establishment of Youth centers in the Diaspora where they can learn about their heritage, and their culture. The youth were specifically introduced during Dr. Barnor's speech.

Dr. Vince Padi - Chairman of the GaDangme Foundation UK

Dr. Padi, in a Power- Point presentation, explained the structure and function of the GaDangme Foundation. He proposed a three-way collaboration of GaDangme Foundation UK with GaDangme Council (GDC) and GaDangme International Inc. (GDI) through the reason and its willingness to work with the GDI, and the GDC. He indicated that GDF would be prepared to work with other GaDangme organizations in the Diaspora to achieve the dream of the GaDangme renaissance.

Election:

The following members were elected at the conference. They will serve for two years.

Dr. Samuel F Quartey	(Philadelphia)	President
Sarah Mills-Okaikoi	(New York)	Vice President
Eugene Kotey	(Toronto)	Executive Secretary
Emelia Coker	(Chicago)	Asst. Executive Secretary
Joseph A Annan	(Toronto)	Treasurer
Emmanuel Quaye	(Toronto)	Financial Secretary
Patience Nunoo	(Chicago)	Public Relations Officer

Eric Quartey

(New York)

Asst. Public Relations
Officer

Mr. Alexander Sowah Kuma – member of GDI board of Trustee

At the dinner dance, Mr. Kuma, chairman of the evening's festivities repeated the call for rebuilding the GaDangme heritage and to meet the challenges ahead. He thanked all who have assembled and the member organizations of GDI for their efforts in making GDI strong and viable.

Awards Ceremony:

The following awards were given at the Dinner Dance:

Onukpa Attoh Quarshie, a GaDangme Patriarch was given the Highest GDI award for his dedication in promoting the GaDangme cause. Mr. Sowah Botchway founder of GDI and first president of GDI and Mr. James Quarcoo, Chairman of the Toronto GaDangme Association and the first vice President of GDI, received the GDI Excellence Awards.

Appreciation awards were also presented to His Excellency Odoi Sykes, Mr. Allotey Pappoe, Ga Manye Naa Dedei Omadru III, Naa Adorkor Odehe Dzamfi, Sempe Sowutuom Manye, the Interim Executives and some members of GDI.

Thanksgiving Service:

A large contingency attended the Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, the sermon was preached by Rev. Grace Nugent the officiating minister for the Ghanaian Trinity Presbyterian Church. She based her sermon on the **Theme "Be thou Merciful as your Heavenly Father"**. She said to be merciful is not just to co-exist, tight-lipped resentment, but to engender love, to give oneself in care, to be merciful without limits, to be merciful to those who hurt us as well as to those who love us, to be merciful as our heavenly father is merciful. This message calls us to go beyond apathy, to extend goodness in an active way, to take initiative, to care, to show compassion, to desire the highest good even for those we most hate.

Prayer of Intercession was conducted by Pastor Bright Debrah a visiting pastor from Germany. He thanked God for a successful GaDangme International Conference He asked the Almighty's blessings and traveling mercies for delegates and observers who came from afar to attend the conference to return home safely.

Initiatives:

D) Effort to assist in unifying all factions of GaDangmebii.

1. GaDangme International Inc (GDI), GaDangme Foundation UK (GDF), and the GaDangme Council (GDC) have agreed to a triangular association committed to working closely together to achieve common goals.
2. GaDangme International (GDI) and GaDangme Foundation UK (GDF) will collaborate in the following areas:

- Assist in resolving the “Conflict” between the GaDangme Council and the Ga Traditional Council.
- Collaborate with GaDangmebii in the Diaspora to gather resources to support work of GDC and the GaDangme Youth and other GaDangme organizations in Ghana.

II) Effort to Maintain and Teach GaDangme Languages and Traditions to the next generation.

- The Imhotep Institute of Philadelphia founded by Asafoaste Ottoto and Asafoanye Odametey Tsotso in collaboration with GDI are engaged in teaching GaDangme culture and traditions.
- GDI will set up learning centers in GaDangme areas for after school programs that will include GaDangme languages, GaDangme history and traditions, English, mathematics and computer literacy, music and sports.
- GDI will sponsor GaDangmebii in teacher training colleges to teach GaDangme languages in schools as well as encourage GaDangme students to learn GaDangme languages in Secondary school. To accomplish this, The Interim Executive officers last year established a GaDangme Youth Education fund that will provide funding for GaDangme high school students in Ghana.
- GDI plans to increase its fund-raising efforts in order to assist more students.

Addendum:

To crown the year and to usher in the beginning of GDI’s work, a mini conference was held in Philadelphia on June 18th, 2005 at the science center of the Imhotep Charter School. The guest speakers included Nii Ayite Boafo, Aid to the president of Ghana, Mrs. Elizabeth Sackey MP for Okaikoi North, and Ms. Verity Naa Anokwale Dodoo, President of GaDangme Yei Anoyaa Kpee. Present also were Asafoanye Odametey Tsotso founder of the Imhotep Charter School, Dr. Samuel Quartey, President of GaDangme International Inc. (GDI), Ms. Sarah Mills-Okaikoi, Vice President of GDI, members of GaDangme Foundation of Philadelphia, members of GDI from New York, New Jersey, Minnesota and Delaware.

Ms. Verity Dodoo, President of GaDangme Yei Anoyaa Kpee, Accra

Described the need for educating GaDangme girls and fostering self-esteem in GaDangme young women and ending the cycle GaDangme girls having babies. She described the projects that GaDangme Yee Anoyaa Kpee are involved in to provide vocation for girls and young women who already have children and grandchildren and encourage them to send their children to school. Their initiatives include setting up a banking system to support small businesses for the women. An example of such business is a kenkey factory. She called on GDI and GaDangmebii to support such ventures.

Mrs. Elizabeth Sackey, MP for Okaikoi North acknowledged that all that Mrs. Dodoo had described was true across the board in GaDangme. She stressed the need for GaDangmebii to participate in Government and assist in the education in GaDangme children. She stressed the need for unity among GaDangmebii. She expressed her willingness to work with GDI to achieve GaDangme goals. She promised to follow up on the concerns that were brought up at the conference and invited GDI to call on her for further discussion on how she may assist GDI in

some of her initiatives. She has built a library for her constituency since she took office one year ago and she is encouraging GaDangmebii to use the library.

Nii Ayitey Boafo Aid to the President of Ghana Congratulated GDI for its vision and initiatives. He stressed the need to educate GaDangme Mantsemei and Manyemei in both traditional and modern protocol. He emphasized the need for Unity between GaDangmebii and advised GDI to put itself in a position to be able to work with all factions. He pledged his support and promised to help in any way possible.

In the spirit of GaDangme, issues affecting GaDangme were discussed, and the government officials present, provided clarification on some of the issues. They promised to maintain an open door for better communication and advised us to avoid “hearsay and get the facts to avoid embarrassment for GaDangmebii. They were delighted to be part of the conference in Philadelphia and hoped to be invited to future GaDangme events.

Asafoanye Odametey Tsotso announced the building of a five storey new facility for the Imhotep High School and the acquisition of a nearby building to be used as a hostel for GaDangme children sponsored by GDI and others coming from Ghana to attend the Imhotep High School in Philadelphia.

GaDangme International Inc. (GDI) will hold the 2006 Seventh Annual GaDangme International Conference in, Minnesota, (USA). It will be hosted by the GaDangme Foundation of Minnesota.

Afterword

The 6th annual GDI conference was designed to bring together GaDangmebii from every walk of life and faction to define our predicament and to find out how best to work together to achieve our common goals. We believe that the conference in addition to the tremendous attendance was well represented. For the most part all agreed that GaDangme is in trouble and whatever can be achieved will require unity and effort from all GaDangme people. GDI made big strides in the past year, and this annual conference has served to assist GDI in defining its role in the work ahead for GaDangme.

GaDangme International Inc (GDI) extends its gratitude to all the children, youth, men and women (and their patient families) who assisted in various ways in making this historic conference possible, to Mr. James Aflah Bannor for sharing his photographs and to all our guests. We especially thank the GaDangme Association of Toronto for hosting the conference. We thank our underwriters and sponsors, His Excellency Samuel Odoi Sykes for sharing his knowledge on GaDangme affairs as the guest speaker and for his personal donation \$1000 to GDI, GaDangme Foundation (GDF) of UK for their support and their donation of £500.00 and to Western Union for their generous donation.

The three-day event in Toronto and the one-day conference that followed in Philadelphia were highly successful and memorable. They have set the standard for future annual GDI events. Not only because of the attendance, or the organized and disciplined conduct of delegates and

participants but more importantly, because GaDangme International Inc. (GDI) has achieved worldwide recognition.

Submitted by:

GDI Secretariat

For a full Conference report, please send your request by e-mail to napastan0005@yahoo.com

GaDangme International Inc. is a non-profit (501 (C) 3), non-political and non-religious organization that is dedicated to the preservation of the culture, history, values and the heritage of GaDangmebi; fostering unity, understanding and cooperation among the various ethnic groups in Ghana.