

Choral Music, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Consciousness in Ghana

by

Steven Tyler Spinner Terpenning

B.M.E., University of Colorado Boulder, 2005

M.A., University of California, Davis, 2010

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Dr. Austin Okigbo, Advisor

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## Abstract

Terpenning, Steven (Ph.D., Musicology)  
Choral Music, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Consciousness in Ghana  
Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Austin Okigbo

Ghanaian choral music emerged from the colonial experience through a process of musical hybridity and became relevant in the post-independent state of Ghana. This dissertation begins by exploring how two distinct musical forms developed from within the Methodist and Presbyterian missions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These musical forms utilized both European hymn harmony and local musical features. The institutional histories and structures of these missions explain the significance of this hybridity and distinct characteristics of the forms. These local-language choral works spread through these institutions despite the attempts of people in leadership positions to keep local culture separate from Christian schools and churches. The fourth chapter explores the broader social impact of the choral tradition that emerged from the Presbyterian mission, and its implications for the national independence movement through the history of one choral work composed by 1929 by Ephraim Amu. Then, based on a case study of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and its workplace choir, I examine how intellectual leaders such as Kwabena Nketia have, in the context of the post-independent state of Ghana, promoted choral music as an aspect of national development and unity.

Ethnographic work at the GBC reveals the sometimes contentious negotiations that are involved in this process. This dissertation is based on both ethnographic and archival research conducted during three research trips to Ghana from 2012 to 2015. This research reveals how Ghanaians have challenged colonial ideology through composing and performing choral music. Peircian



semiotics and postcolonial theory provides a framework for exploring how the hybridity of choral music in Ghana has contributed to the development of postcolonial consciousness there.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

On April 12, 1957, less than a month before the Gold Coast Colony became the independent state of Ghana, the retiring British colonial governor, Sir Charles Noble Arden-Clarke, took a farewell tour of the colony that ended in Tamale, a large but remote northern city. After giving a nostalgic speech and relaying greetings from Queen Elizabeth II to a large crowd that included local chiefs and government officials, Sir Arden-Clarke was treated to a performance by a combined choir of children from the local schools. The children began their performance with a choral work written twenty-eight years earlier by Ghanaian composer Ephraim Amu titled “Yen Ara Asase Ni” (“This Is Our Land”).<sup>1</sup> A recording of this performance was broadcast at the beginning of the national radio coverage of this historic event marking the transition to independence. I argue in chapter four that, at the time it was composed, “Yen Ara Asase Ni” was a striking departure from the colonial separation between European and African styles instituted through colonialism. The composition has a patriotic text in the local, Twi language without any explicit references to Christianity or particular ethnic groups. The European hymn-style four-part harmony reflects Amu’s Christian missionary education while the call-and-response form and hemiola rhythmic features reflect local musical traditions. That this work, which Professor Emeritus Kwabena Nketia described to me as “the first statement of affirmation of [Amu’s] consciousness of identity” (Interview, August 15, 2012), was chosen to be featured at this event indicates that Amu’s musical creative hybridity had become the basis for a national style of choral composition by the eve of independence.

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<sup>1</sup> This information is based on a recording of a broadcast housed in the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Sound Archive, Disk 008, dated 2/4/1957. However, contemporary reports indicate that the event took place on April 12, 1957 (Daily Graphic, April 13, 1957).



Choral music again occupied a heightened place in Ghanaian public consciousness in the summer of 2012, when I was in Accra conducting preliminary research for this dissertation. On July 24th, the nation was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of the sitting president, John Atta Mills. During the mourning period, choral works were broadcast frequently as interludes or as openings of programs on the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) radio and TV stations. Works by historic composers, including Amu, as well as newly composed works were used in this context. In an interview, Bright Aheto, the host of weekly choral music programs on GBC radio, described how one new work became particularly prominent in this period. He facilitated the recording of a work composed by Newlove Annan (a prominent Ghanaian composer who was residing in the US at the time) that came to be used as the prelude to the six o'clock news by the national TV station (Aheto, Interview, March 11, 2015). The text of the work calls for unity and peace in the local Fante language. The issue of national unity became increasingly relevant during the contentious national elections that followed in December of that year. Choral music was also a central component of the official state funeral for Atta Mills. A combined choir of government employees performed between the eulogies presented by religious and political leaders. The night before, a choral vigil, where more than a dozen choirs performed, lasted until 3AM outside the State House where the President's body lay in wake.

These historical moments raise questions about the role that choral music plays in Ghanaian public life: How did Amu's musical creativity contribute to the transition from colonial rule to independence? In the years since independence, what cultural work has choral music accomplished so that it remains relevant in the wake of national tragedy? I explore these questions in this dissertation through an investigation of the intersections of the political, the

social, and the musical in two parts. In the first three chapters, I consider how two distinct Ghanaian choral traditions developed in the context of the Methodist and Presbyterian missions. This development occurred during the British colonial period, in what was then the southern Gold Coast, and before the popular movement for self-rule began in 1948. Then, in the second half, I examine how the independent state of Ghana has promoted choral music as a sign of national unity since independence. Throughout, I argue that Ghanaian composers and singers of choral music move beyond the categorical constructs of colonialism to develop and express a postcolonial consciousness.

The term “consciousness” in this phrase refers to the aspect of human nature that seeks collective belonging. As Alan Burdick writes, this is “a lasting awareness of one’s self moving in a sea of selves... or a deep and common wish that ‘I’ somehow belong to ‘we,’ and that ‘we’ belong to something even larger and less comprehensible” (Burdick 2015:70). Music can serve as an expression of this desire for belonging, and it can articulate group boundaries and differences from previously defined social groups. This latter process is sometimes configured as identity formation, which is a common subject of ethnomusicological research. Timothy Rice has demonstrated that identity is an illusive concept that is too often taken as granted as a category of social life (Rice 2010). Here, I focus on collective consciousness, rather than identity, because I am interested in the semiotics of Ghanaian choral music in relation to colonialism rather than the role that music plays in articulating any specific identity, such as national. Forming collective consciousness can be conceptualized as a broader process that is a precursor to the more explicitly political process of national identity formation.

The collective consciousness expressed by Ghanaian choral composers and performers extends beyond both ethnolinguistic group affiliation and the boundaries of the European conception of Christianity introduced by missionaries. Multiple local languages, including Twi, Fante, Ewe, and Ga, are used in works that incorporate both hymn harmonies and local musical features. While Ghanaian choral music is deeply intertwined with the colonial experience, because of this hybridity it also moves beyond this experience. I explore how choral music contributed to the shift from the hegemony of European Christian institutions to a postcolonial consciousness infused with Christianity. I argue that the musical hybridity of Ghanaian choral works and singing practices allows for this expression of postcolonial consciousness.

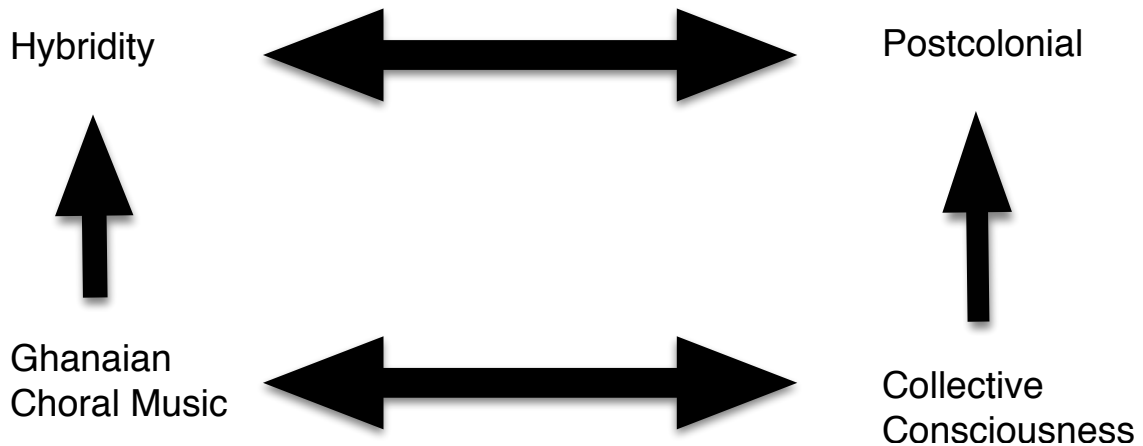


Figure 1.1. Diagram of Thesis Statement.

### **Theorizing Musical Hybridity as Postcolonial Consciousness**

Figure 1.1 illustrates the two conceptual relationships that I develop in this section and that underpin my thesis. The horizontal arrows indicate reciprocal relationships in that each side

of these arrows informs and constructs the other. I establish these relationships through two areas of scholarship: postcolonial hybridity theory and Peircian semiotics. These social theories allow me to present my research in a cohesive, logical manner that contributes to an understanding of the socio-musical reality of Ghanaian choral music. The vertical arrows represent connections I establish in the later chapters of my dissertation through historiographic and ethnographic data.

The upper arrow represents Homi Bhabha's thesis that cultural hybridity gives rise to an ambiguous, and productive, "third space" that can displace the colonial paradigm by challenging the implied or explicit hierarchal categorization of cultures evident in colonial discourse (Bhabha 2004:51-55). He explained an early version of this concept in a 1990 interview: "This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.... The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha, cited in Taylor 2007:145). Bhabha's work provides a basis for connecting the musical hybridity of Ghanaian choral music to the gradual social process of displacing colonial ideology.

In the simplest sense, hybridity is a mixing or crossing of previously separate elements. Hybridity continues to be a contested term among humanities scholars because of its origins in the biological sciences and its problematic associations with race. However, it is generally preferred over terms, such as "creolization" or "acculturation," to refer to the mixing that occurs in the context of contact between previously separate cultures, such as the colonial encounter, because it avoids the implication of hierarchy (Weiss 2014:510). Cultural hybridity can challenge colonial ideology and express postcolonial consciousness through an assertion of cultural

difference without hierarchy. Hybridity asserts a more complicated, uncertain world than can be contained through colonial authority. Citing Walter Benjamin, Bhabha theorizes that hybridity is particularly productive in the public sphere because of its ambiguity; it can be interpreted in multiple ways (Bhabha 2004:26). Colonial authority is threatened by this uncertain, open question posed by hybridity. The use of Amu's "Yɛn Ara Asase Ni" in the context of the farewell event for the colonial governor described above illustrates this. While the sound of indigenous children singing in their own languages in four-part harmony might evoke the success of the colonial project for some, for others the syncopation and Pan-African text demonstrates the incompleteness of this project, and the potential for subverting the "truth" of the superiority of European culture that colonizers sought to impose. Bhabha writes, "How can the question of authority, the power and presence of the English, be posed in the intersitices of a double inscription?" (2004:54). It is this ambiguity that allows the work to exist in a space between the colonial and postcolonial, and thus to be productive as a challenge to the implied or explicit hierarchal categorization of cultures on which colonialism relies.

Cultural hybridity can be most productively identified as a procedural phenomenon operating within a particular historical context. Thus, an operational definition, such as Deborah Kapchan provides, is most appropriate: "Hybridity is effected whenever two or more historically separate realms come together in any degree that challenges their socially constructed autonomy" (1996:6, cited in Kapchan and Strong 1999:243). I incorporate Kapchan's emphasis on process over product into my analysis of the work of Ghanaian composers. While a musical composition is often considered a static work of art, it can also be considered the culmination of a creative process. My use of the term also corresponds with the *hybridity cycle* model, proposed by Stross

(1999) and adopted by Sarah Weiss, where “cultural entities move periodically from heterogeneous forms to more homogeneous ones and then on to more heterogeneous forms” (Weiss 2014:512). Considering hybridity in terms of a cycle problematizes the assumption of “pure” forms that have no history. In Ghana, the movement toward a more homogeneous society, where Euro-Christian practices merged with local practices (each of which emerged earlier from their own hybridity processes), was a part of expressing a shared consciousness that moved beyond colonialism.

Scholarship on musical hybridity has a long history that is intertwined with colonial thought. An early example of music scholarship that engages with hybridity is Alice Fletcher’s *A Study of Omaha Indian Music* (1994[1893]). Fletcher describes a song she heard in a traditional Omaha religious ritual as a “majestic hymn” (ibid. 39). This phrase betrays an assumption of parallels between Christian and Omaha religious practices. She also added harmony to what she describes as “chorals” in her transcriptions done at a piano, rationalizing this by writing, “when I added a simple harmony my ear was content and the Indians were satisfied” (Fletcher 1994:10). Hybridity here is a product of ethnographic engagement and cultural interaction. Fletcher was on the council of the Hampton Folklore Society, which advocated for the US government’s project of assimilation of Native Americans through the education system (Baker 2010:55-8). She also performed Omaha music along with Francis La Flesche at a 1894 meeting of the society (ibid. 59). So, it is not surprising that she represented, and even modified, Omaha music in such a way that it conformed to her own Christian expectations. This collaboration with Omaha musicians and emphasis of similarities between Omaha and European musical features can be interpreted as supporting the assumptions of the assimilation project. Fletcher’s work illustrates not only that

she understood Omaha music in a way that aligned with her own beliefs, but also that musical hybridity is frequently an inevitable result of cultural contact.

In contrast to Flecher, ethnographers of African music have historically foregrounded its incomprehensibility and difference from European music (Agawu 2003:56). Prior to 1990, comparative musicologists and then ethnomusicologists focused on mapping distinguishing musical features with geographic regions. These European and North American scholars traveled to these regions to document musical forms, first through notation and then with recordings, that were distinct from what they were familiar with and avoided hybrid musical forms, such as the popular and art music. Kofi Agawu argues that this scholarship by non-Africans pursues a construction of difference that is enabled by and supports colonial ideology (2003:155). He also cites the work of Homi Bhabha and other postcolonial theorists to argue that this trend in African music scholarship can be reversed. He writes that postcolonial theory can “clear space for the acknowledgement, indeed celebration, of the incongruities, contradictions, antinomies, and hybridity of postcolonial culture and experience as necessary elements in the adequate theorization of contemporary Africa” (Agawu 2003:xvii). This dissertation heeds Agawu’s call by interrogating the musical history of colonialism and the social implications of musical hybridity.

Bhabha’s theorization of hybridity has received skepticism from scholars who are wary of celebrating hybridity as a kind of antidote to colonialism. One critique of the discourse of musical hybridity as postcolonial has emerged in recent studies of the commercialization of World Music as a genre. For example, ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor argues that the ambiguity inherent in musical hybridity, which Bhabha asserts is what makes it productive, can

also obscure the power imbalances inherent in the production of commercial music. Taylor reveals how a discourse of hybridity in the “World Music” genre, which became particularly lucrative for record companies in the 1990s and 2000s, emerged to replace the concept of “authenticity” as a marketing strategy. This has perpetuated a marginalization of musicians who do not have equal access to the means of musical production and markets. Replacing a discourse of authenticity, he writes, “[H]ybridity has become a marketing term, a way of identifying, commodifying, and selling what on the surface is a new form of difference, but one that reproduces old prejudices and hegemonies” (Taylor 2007:142). For Taylor, the marketing of musical hybridity undermines Homi Bhabha’s conception of hybridity as resulting in a ‘third space’ that challenges the separations and essentialism of colonialism. However, while the commodification of musical recordings does mean abstracting performances from their contexts and meanings, it also allows for the global circulation of musics across colonially imposed borders. I find it doubtful that the hybridity discourse surrounding World Music reinforces a colonial paradigm for listeners or performers. It is rather the global spread of capitalism and unequal application of copyright law that has enabled the economic exploitation that sometimes occurs in the music industry.

Another critique of Bhabha’s work comes from Amar Acheraïou, who extends the investigation of cultural hybridity as a historical phenomenon outside of the colonial era and into antiquity (2011). By showing that Greek and Roman cultures, what we think of as the foundations of modern Western civilization, were themselves shaped through collaboration with outside cultures and utilized this process to extend their hegemony, Acheraïou questions the assumption that hybridity displaces the hegemonic center. Then, moving into the present and



supporting the work of Timothy Taylor, Acheraïou insists that, “not only is hybridity discourse accommodated by global neoliberal/neocolonial power structures, but also that the very ambivalence or indeterminacy of this discourse is what made this accommodation possible in the first place” (2011:7). So, the interpretation of the cultural work that hybridity enacts through its ambiguity is itself ambiguous. This may be true, but I do not see these critiques as displacing Bhabha’s work. Instead, they put the onus on scholars to be more deliberate in the process of theorizing the connections between instances of cultural hybridity and the broader macro-social environment. Thus, I pursue a descriptive historiography that explores how the hybridity of Ghanaian choral music impacted social life in the colonial environment, but does not valorize all instances of cultural mixing as essentially anti-colonial. Context is, as always, crucial. I pay attention to the actors who enact hybridity and how this enactment becomes conceptualized by scholars and practitioners.

Before moving on to the second theoretical foundation for my thesis, I consider what “postcolonial” means as an academic posture. In a historical sense, postcolonial theory refers to a poststructuralist discourse founded by non-European intellectuals, such as Edward Said, in the 1970s and 80s who espoused the possibilities of literary criticism and Marxism to disrupt the hegemony of established narratives. My understanding of the postcolonial stance is rooted in Stuart Hall’s use of the term as an epistemology of equality, rather than a temporal description of the time after the colonial. The impacts of colonialism are irreversible and ongoing. So, I do not mean to assert a politics of resistance, but I intend, as Hall puts it, “to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries for ever... breaking down the clearly demarcated inside/outside of the colonial system

on which the histories of imperialism have thrived for so long” (1996:247). He proposes blurring the boundaries between categories, such as colonized/colonizer and us/them, to build on the past for the purpose of a less divided future. In this sense it is a utopian discourse, but one still able to expose structures of inequality. By the phrase “postcolonial consciousness” I mean to emphasize how Ghanaian choral music is intertwined with the colonial experience and how it reconfigures this experience. Describing how Ghanaian choral music expresses “postcolonial consciousness” requires a historical understanding of how musical change contributes to ideological changes in the collective consciousness.

The lower half of my thesis diagram (Figure 1.1, above) relies on a semiotic conception of music as a form of communication that can express collective consciousness, or intersubjectivity. The theory of signs developed by Charles Sanders Peirce provides the most productive model for explicating this process. For Peirce, signs are intimately connected with human consciousness because they are both produced and interpreted by the mind. The basis of his framework is the relationships between the material signs (what Peirce calls “representamen”), the objects they stand for, and the image produced in mind (or the “interpretant”). As philosopher T. M. Short writes in his reevaluation of Peirce’s writings on semiotics as a theory of mind, “A sign is anything that causes one to think (such a thought is an interpretant) of something else (the sign’s object)” (2007:24). This definition of signs foregrounds the centrality of the human consciousness in the process.

Peirce outlines various trichotomies to describe how our minds interpret the material world. The most famous trichotomy that Peirce developed is the relationship between the material sign and the objects they stand for, as icon, index, or symbol (Figure 1.2, below). This

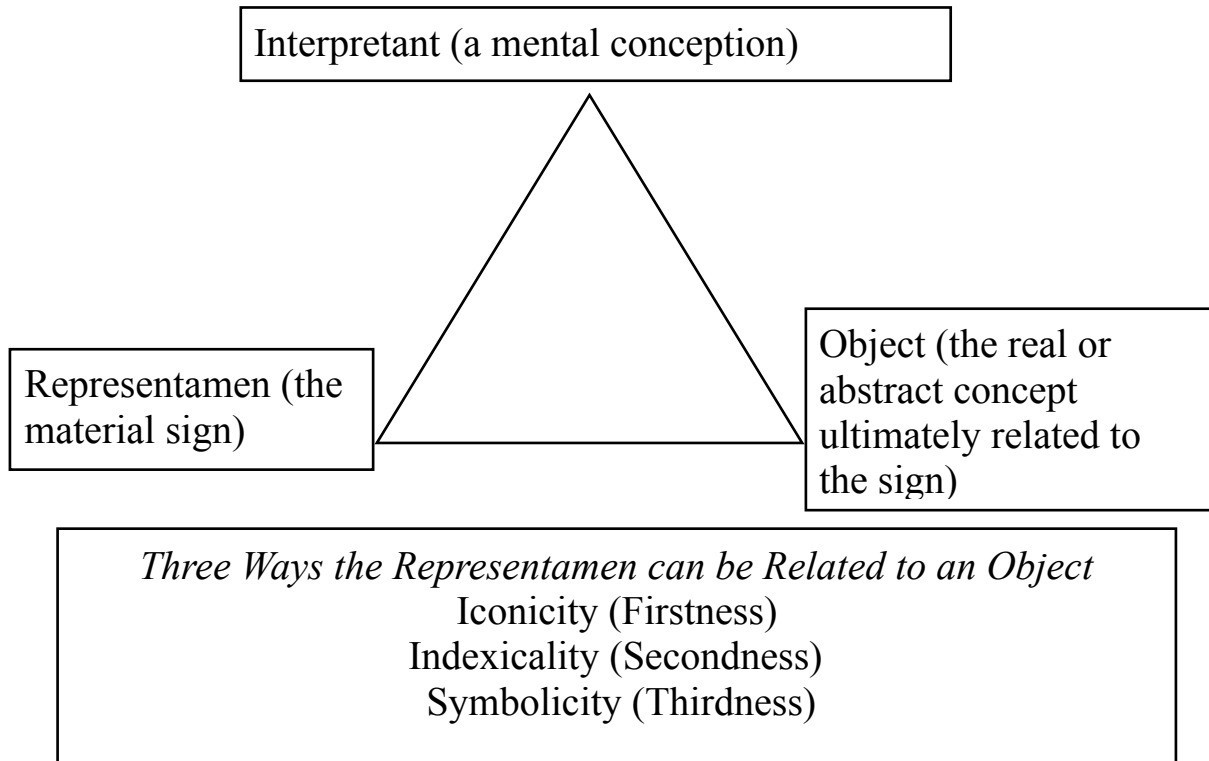


Figure 1.2. A partial diagram of the trichotomies of C. S. Peirce's semiotic model

division, however, is rooted in Peirce's earlier categorization of three "levels" of consciousness. He summarizes this fundamental trichotomy thus: "[F]irst, feeling, the consciousness that can be included with an instant of time, passive consciousness of quality, without recognition or analysis; second, consciousness of an interruption into the field of consciousness, sense of resistance, of an external fact, of another something; third, synthetic consciousness, binding time together, sense of learning, thought" (Peirce 1974[1903]:200). Although all three levels are at play in the production and interpretation of music, I focus primarily on the second level to explore how collective consciousness is expressed in Ghanaian choral music.

A focus on secondness also means focusing on indexicality, as these are isometric in Peirce's semiotic model (Figure 1.2). Indexicality is the process through which a sign is

associated with an object through repetition and co-occurrence. While Steven Feld demonstrated the utility of Peirce's model by attending to iconicity (or formal similarities) of Kaluli music with the animal world (1988), attention to indexicality has become prominent in ethnomusicology following Thomas Turino's work. Turino has done the most to further an understanding of how musical signs are situated within and describe the broader sociopolitical environment through implementing Peirce's holistic framework and terminology (1999, 2008). Turino considers indexicality to be the primary semiotic mode through which humans construct our social and emotional selves with music (1999). He writes, "The emotional power of indexical signs is directly proportionate to the attachment, feelings, and significance of the experiences that they index, but since these signs operate to connect us to our own lives, they can be the most 'personal' and tend to have the greatest emotional potential of all three sign types" (Turino 2008:9). Following Turino, I also consider indexicality to be the most emotionally potent aspect of musical communication. However, I employ a procedural approach that integrates the work of linguistic anthropologists and philosophers rather than Turino's more categorizational approach to Peirce's framework.

Linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein has helped clarify the relationship between Peirce's conception of indexicality and social consciousness or intersubjectivity. He first proposes a continuum of instances of indexicality in language between presupposing and performative/creative utterances (1976:36). Presupposing utterances reinforce prescribed social relationships, such as between a mother-in-law and son-in-law, while creative indexical utterances are instances where individuals creatively engage with social norms to express themselves. He writes, "Adherence to the norms specified by rules of use reinforces the

perceived social relations of speaker and hearer; violations constitute a powerful rebuff or insult, or go into the creation of irony and humor” (Silverstein 1976:35). This categorization system allows for a semiotic analysis of how speech acts, and the context in which they are performed, situate individuals within the broader macro-social environment. If musical hybridity is an indexically creative move where styles are combined in a way that was not previously socially acceptable, then Silverstein’s work can provide insights into the social implications of this move.

Returning to the events described at the beginning of this chapter, the performance of Amu’s local-language choral work, which begins “This Is Our Land,” alongside colonial-nostalgic British songs, such as “Auld Lang Syne,” for the departing colonial governor in 1957 could be considered ironic. However, this work and new compositions in its stylistic mold were presupposed in the wake of national tragedy in 2012. This move from creative to presupposed is what Silverstein explores in a later work that proposes a layering of indexical associations in considering linguistic change. He formulates this in terms of an *n-th* indexical order, which is consistent ideologically with the contextual presuppositions in which a sign is produced, and an *n+1* indexical order, which can supplant or challenge these previous assumptions. If the mechanics of musical change and linguistic change operate in the same way, at least in terms of the relationship between indexicality and ideology, then Silverstein’s formulation proves insightful for this study:

It is immediately seen that (1) *n*-th and *n*+1st order indexical values are, functionally, in dialectic competition one with another; and that (2) in the continued macro-realttime course of things, with sufficient ideological “oomph”—force that follows from uniformity, intensity, and sociological spread—*n*+1st

order indexicality would tend to supplant or at least to blend with such  $n+1$ st order value; so that (3) this dialectical effect of macro-realtime indexicality must therefore constitute a major vectorial force in formal linguistic change.

(Silverstein 2003:194)

Silverstein brings forward the ideological implications of indexical change in a way that is sensitive to the ways meaning is dependent on context and social norms. The contexts for indexical change that I explore in this dissertation are the institutions in which choral music takes place. In chapters three through five, I explore the initial creative force of Amu's musical innovations in the context of the Presbyterian mission and how these innovations became standardized in the national context of post-independence institutions.

Silverstein's work has the potential to further the analysis of musical indexicality in the colonial environment being done by ethnomusicologists. In his study of popular music in Zimbabwe, Thomas Turino has framed musical hybridity as a continuation of European hegemony rather than as a possible way of overcoming hegemony. He pursues a critique of cosmopolitanism and globalization that frames this "modernist reformism" as a continuation of the colonial marginalization of indigenous people (Turino 2000:16). Imani Sanga draws on Turino's conception of cosmopolitanism to describe how the "hybrid soundscapes" of Christian popular musics have emerged in Dar es Salaam (Sanga 2010). Sanga describes the various reactions to this *Muziki wa Injili* including those who "criticize the practice of music hybridization especially in African countries on the grounds that it seems to be a manifestation of Western cultural hegemony over African cultures and a hindrance of local music creativity" (Sanga 2010:151). However, Sanga also critiques this fear of globalization by

drawing on Bhabha to bring out the potential of hybridity to subvert both the Tanzanian nationalist narrative and Western hegemony (153). While Sanga helpfully situates Turino's resistance to globalization as in tension with Bhabha's promotion of hybridity, his suggestion to simply reframe the globalization process as "localization" leaves this tension unresolved (154). By investigating the broader historical scope of choral musical hybridity through the semiotic framework of indexical creativity, the relationships between cultural hybridity and ideological change within institutions becomes clearer.

The concept of community also runs through Peirce's work. Community, for Peirce, is central in our conceptualization of reality. He writes, "[R]eality depends on the ultimate decision of the community; so thought is what it is, only by virtue of its addressing a future thought which is in its value as thought identical with it, though more developed. In this way, the existence of thought now depends on what is to be hereafter; so that it has only a potential existence, dependent on the future thought of the community" (Peirce, quoted in Short 2007:36). This conception is reflected in Peirce's trichotomy of icon, index, and symbol, but is obscured if this trichotomy is primarily treated as way of categorizing signs. An indexical relationship, such as between a weathervane and the wind, for example, is only meaningful if someone is aware of a possible connection and then repeatedly observes the representamen in proximity to its object. Philosopher Terrence Deacon reinforces this point when he argues that the interpretent, or thought sign, is the origin for any communication (Deacon 2014:95). Temporally, it comes first in the series rather than after the material sign. A procedural approach foregrounds the creative potential of musical indexicality. As I explore further in chapter four, Amu's creative hybridity of "Yen Ara Asase Ni," composed in 1929 for a colonial holiday, can be considered the result of a

social consciousness of a possible community beyond the confines of European colonial thought. This procedural approach to Peirce's semiotic framework asserts a reciprocal relationship between Ghanaian choral music on the one hand and the consciousness it can be heard as expressing on the other.

Understanding the postcolonial nature of this consciousness expressed through singing requires considering the semiotics of the colonial ideology that preceded it. The nature of the colonial experience has been theorized by scholars such as Franz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) as a "dual consciousness" and by W.E.B. Dubois in his *Souls of Black Folk* as a "double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (1903:3). Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, was influenced by these thinkers, along with more extreme anti-colonialists such as Marcus Garvey, in developing his political movement for Ghanaian independence (Addo 1997:57, Korang 2004:51). Nkrumah understood colonialism through the lens of Marxism and material exploitation based on many years of philosophical study in London and the United States. He sought personal and societal liberation from colonialism through what he later theorized as *Consciencism* (Nkrumah 1964). In this book Nkrumah outlines a philosophy and practice of decolonization that combines the philosophical strains going back to ancient times of materialism and idealism. He outlines a path to a unifying African personality through hybridity that expands Dubois's double consciousness into something of a triple consciousness with the inclusion of Islam. He writes:

African society has one segment which comprises our traditional way of life; it has a second segment which is filled by the presence of the Islamic tradition in Africa; it has a final segment which represents the infiltration of the Christian



tradition and culture of Western Europe into Africa, using colonialism and neo-colonialism as its primary vehicles. These different segments are animated by competing ideologies. But since society implies a certain dynamic unity, there needs to emerge an ideology which genuinely catering for the needs of all, will take the place of the competing ideologies, and so reflect the dynamic unity of society, and be the guide to society's continual progress. (Nkrumah 1964:68)

Nkrumah embraced hybridity in the form of a egalitarian, socialist government that could encapsulate and not reject these historical forces. At the same time, Nkrumah's is ultimately a dialectical philosophy where these forces (along with capitalism and communism) are in tension. He writes, "Philosophical consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience, indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience" (1964:79). In contrast, my history of Ghanaian choral music suggests that the conflict is a manufactured aspect of colonial thinking. And, following Bhabha, I am skeptical of the German school of dialectical materialism that Nkrumah and other early postcolonial thinkers adopted. Nonetheless, Nkrumah seems to have valued choral music as a form of patriotic expression in his administration. In chapter five I explore how the socialism that Nkrumah put in place shaped the development of choral music in Ghana.

While Nkrumah turned to Marx and ancient Greek philosophers to develop a theory of colonialism, I rely on more recent scholarship to understand the semiotics of colonialism. The work of linguistic anthropologist Webb Keane builds on both Peirce and Silverstein to describe the ideology that structured the nineteenth century mission encounter in terms of semiotic ideology. This is an extension of the concept of linguistic ideology, which examines the social

norms for where particular registers of speech are appropriate. In *Christian Moderns* (2007), Keane considers the logic of how Protestant missionaries approached their work. He argues that Protestants were invested in the work of “purification,” a term borrowed from Bruno Latour meaning “an overarching project of making separations...driven by the sense that there is something scandalous or threatening about the mixing of humans and things, culture and nature” (Keane 2007:23). For Keane, these separations are an integral part of the Protestant worldview (especially Calvinism, the denomination that Keane studied most closely), or semiotic ideology, that is intertwined with Enlightenment conceptions of freedom and human agency (Keane 2007:116-8). Protestants imposed separations and boundaries in the colonial context to structure the lives of those they converted and to justify their own work.

In Ghana, a central aspect of the purification project was to strictly forbid converted Christians from interacting with the surrounding unconverted communities (Dor 2005: 443; Meyer 2002; Jenkins 2003). In chapters two and three, I trace how the hybrid forms of choral music that emerged in the context of the missionization contradicted the historical narratives of universal Christianity that missionaries produced. This narrative supports Homi Bhabha’s assertion that, “Hybridity represents that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification — a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (2004:162). Bhabha’s theory of how hybridity is located in the colonial environment can be considered an example of Peirce’s conception of the secondness as an “interruption into the field of consciousness.” Thus, Peirce’s semiotics can help provide some structure to the deconstructionist nature of postcolonial theory.

## Previous Scholarship on Choral Music as National Expression

In the previous section, I asserted a general indexical relationship between music and collective consciousness. In this section, I provide an overview of scholarship that focuses on a special case of this relationship: how choral traditions have been employed in the expression of nationhood. The expression of nationhood through music should not be equated with musical nationalism, however. As Thomas Turino notes, “The contemporary idea of *nationalism*—a political ideology and movement to make ‘nation’ congruent with state—is relatively recent, only emerging at the end of the eighteenth century” (2000:162). As I show, the expression of collective consciousness through music has a broader history that became entangled with the modern nationalism movement as this European idea spread through colonialism.

### *National Choral Traditions of Europe*

Studies of the relationship between music and nationhood have generally accepted the notion of nation as an “imagined community,” first proposed by Benedict Anderson (2006[1983]). Anderson provides a history of European nationalism that begins with what he calls “print-capitalism,” a confluence of increased literacy, access to books, and use of vernacular languages rather than Latin (with the decline of the Catholic Church) that led to the formation of “imagined communities” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These communities were based on affinities that went beyond face-to-face communication but had clear boundaries (7). Some musicologists have contributed to Anderson’s notion of nationalism by showing how twentieth-century compositions by canonic composers have explicit nationalist objectives, especially in the case of Russia. Richard Taruskin’s entry on “Nationalism” in *New Grove Music*

provides an overview of this approach to musical nationalism in the European context (2001). This scholarship focuses on the relationship between the folk music of a nation and the development of what Taruskin calls the “fine art of music as a literate tradition” (Taruskin 2001). Taruskin does acknowledge the potential of choral music to express national sentiment, but only insofar as written, large-scale choral works are iconic of a national community. For example, he writes, “By the 1840s, the exemplary musical artifact of Italian nationalism was the big choral unison number that conveyed a collective sentiment in tones not drawn from the oral tradition but destined to become a part of it” (Taruskin 2001). Critics of Anderson would likely also critique Taruskin for a Eurocentric approach that does not recognize the multiplicity of nationhood as it is manifested around the world (see Askew 2002:8-10). Anderson’s focus on print communication as the basis for imagining a national community, and Taruskin’s focus on music as literature obscures the role of participatory singing in performing and contesting national construction.

This discrepancy is beginning to be remedied even in the context of European musicology. The national significance of participatory musical activities is apparent, for example, in nineteenth-century Germany. As historian Ryan Minor demonstrates in his *Choral Fantasies* (2012), the emergence of a tradition of community participation in choral singing contributed to a sense of German nationhood. Compared to other European nations, Germany was rather late in forming a unified state. Choral music, especially as performed by amateur singers at festivals in the 1840s, supported the creation of “a nation from the bottom up” (Minor 2012:3). Minor traces how this organized choral movement emerged alongside a unified German state through analysis of writings by German intellectuals and musicians. This movement

promoted choral singing as music of the folk, or “*Volk*,” and therefore connected to the soul of the nation, as J. G. Herder (1744-1803) had formulated. Minor argues: “[T]he push for German nationhood before unification consistently relied on acts of collective participation, such as communal songs and festivals promoting the German *Volk* as an active, sovereign participant on the world stage. To sing in a choral society or to participate in a festival was not simply a matter of being German: Germany also came into focus as the product of public conjuration” (2012:9). So, these occasions for amateur singing functioned as a space to perform the nation that was not yet politically realized. Minor also points out that although participants were not professional singers they were required to have a significant amount of education to participate in choirs. These middle-class social formations extended beyond their immediate musical function to play a role in German national life.

Karen Ahlquist considers the gender roles that were implied in these nineteenth-century German choral societies in her article, “Men and Women of the Chorus: Music, Governance, and Social Models in Nineteenth-Century German-Speaking Europe” (2006). She points out that women played a significant role in these middle-class choral societies in the context of changing gender roles and the secularization of the public sphere. She writes, “The growth of amateur choral singing in secular settings belongs to the massive political and social reconfiguration that resulted from the Enlightenment and the growth of bourgeois culture” (2006:266). The prominence of women in these secular social formations provides insights into the broader social changes in nineteenth-century European life. Ahlquist also notes that the choral movement became so politically potent that laws were enacted by fearful officials to govern and limit their power in the 1850s (ibid. 278). German choral societies became strongly associated with the

expression of German nationalism, the potential of which were also recognized by politicians in the twentieth century.

The indexical association between choral singing and allegiance to the German nation was utilized by Adolph Hitler to further the goals of his Nazi party to redefine the German nation. Thomas Turino argues that the indoctrination of German youth through the participatory singing of patriotic songs in youth camps and rallies furthered support for the extreme racism of the Third Reich (2008:208). This case provides an extreme historical example of the possible negative results of national social cohesion in which choral singing can contribute. In Hitler's Germany, nationalism became transformed into an assertion of superiority over others on a racial basis, and choral music played a role in supporting this ideology. The potent indexicality of choral music in the history of Germany is a stark reminder for the need to attend to the semiotics of choral singing as it relates to collective consciousness.

The rise of participatory choral singing occurred earlier in England and was explicitly connected with a shift in Christian practice. After Henry VIII broke from Roman Catholicism in the sixteenth-century, vernacular musical traditions were promoted by Anglican church officials under Elizabeth I to foster a sense of religious autonomy. Historian Christopher Marsh documents the rise of music education and participation in "Elizabethan" England across class lines (2010:9). This was a society in the course of redefining itself in the wake of its independence from the Roman Catholic Church. Music was integral to this political project because it was considered to be essentially connected to the divine and necessary in the maintenance of a stable society. Marsh writes, "The music of humans was, at its best, an echo of heavenly harmony and thus a foretaste of eternal bliss. Four-part singing had one of its

correspondences in the earthly operations of the four elements, each maintaining its allotted place in the order of things” (2010:12). The Reformation marked the emergence of congregational hymn singing throughout Europe and a move away from the musical specialization that had characterized the Renaissance. Furthermore, as British historian Jonathan Willis notes, “Congregational song was uniquely democratising, and unlike any other religious practice, for the transition from congregation to chorus vitiated gender, class, age and social status through singing and hearing, a universal process of constructive and receptive aurality. Furthermore, music in this form was active: not simply a ‘structural reflection of the social’ but actually ‘constitutive of the social’” (Willis 2010:211). While Willis deals primarily with religious identity, and not nationalism directly, this passage illustrates how these changing choral practices might be seen as contributing to the emergence of a self-governing British society.

These histories of vernacular choral traditions in Europe demonstrate how choral music was intertwined with the emergence of the European concepts of nation and self-determination. The Protestant movement embraced a more direct experience of Christianity that involved vernacular congregational singing in both Germany and England. These conceptions of choral music as religious expression were transferred to Ghana through the colonial experience. Protestant missionaries from both countries established churches in Ghana where hymn singing was a key aspect of religious practice and evangelization. Early on, German Presbyterians carefully and deliberately translated German language hymns into the local language of Twi and taught music literacy to seminary students, while British Methodists taught their hymns in the original English, which was more commonly spoken by Fante elites. A parallel indigenous

singing tradition emerged among the non-English speakers in the Fante region, as I discuss in the next chapter.

### *Religious and National Musical Practices in Ethiopia*

The history of Ethiopia provides an example of how liturgical musical practices have been used to express distinctions between particular Christian denominations in a non-European context. In fifteenth-century Ethiopia, the Christian monarch, Zar'a-Ya'iqob (1399-1468), faced a challenge. Due to Jewish influence, his subjects were divided on the issue of what day to observe the Sabbath and what musical practices to observe. Egyptian Bishops, who had some authority in Ethiopia, insisted that it should be on Sunday, but a group of persecuted monastics in the mountainous regions called the Ewostathians wanted to continue practicing Sabbath on Saturday, which they had adopted from Jewish influence. This conflict and its resolution by Zar'a-Ya'iqob marks the emergence of a national identity across Judaic and Christian practices, both of which had been established in Ethiopia since the first century. Zar'a-Ya'iqob's sanctioning of the observance of Sabbath on Saturday effectively unified and distinguished Ethiopians from surrounding communities. Ethiopian historian Tadesse Tamrat quotes Zar'a-Ya'iqob: "Our country Ethiopia [is surrounded by] pagans and Muslims in the east as well as the west.' This idea haunted his mind throughout his reign, and... his major preoccupation was to reorganize the Ethiopian Church, and to make full use of its resources in an attempt to stamp out alien religious practices among his Christian subjects" (1972:231). Thus, as in much of Europe, religious musical practices were an aspect of an emergent national identity and helped distinguish Ethiopians from surrounding populations.



Kay Shelemay's music research in Ethiopia during the 1970s reveals how Christian and Jewish musical practices continued to be intertwined. She concluded that fifteenth-century Christian monks spread liturgical practices to the Jewish Falasha people she worked with. This finding had problematic political implications in terms of Falasha immigration to Israel, as she discusses in her monograph, *A Song of Longing* (1991). Shared practices were maintained and transmitted by the *Däbtära*, a class of Christian musicians and traditional healers, who commonly worked among the Falasha (Shelemay 1992).

Shelemay also describes the innovations undertaken by the national orchestra, Orchestra Ethiopia, which was patronized by the Emperor to develop ensemble playing with indigenous instruments and notation. She writes, "Their new system of musical notation was a remarkable synthesis of symbols derived from Ethiopian church notation and Western musical notation" (1991:124). The Ethiopian Christian notation system referred to here dates back to the period of reconstruction following a Muslim invasion in 1529, which "disrupted liturgical performance and musical transmission" (Shelemay 1991:72). This notation never replaced oral transmission, however. This balance of written and oral procedures in transmitting religious chant reflects local values: "Ethiopian chant is an example of a musical system whose notation was never intended to replace oral transmission.... The development of this notational system occurred in a specifically Ethiopian context and reflects particularly Ethiopian values concerning orality, flexibility and authority" (Shelemay et. al. 1993:117). The hybrid musical notation system used by Orchestra Ethiopia in the 1970s demonstrates that this Christian musical notation system was relevant to national politics and was not limited to the context of Christian worship. After the 1975 revolution, TV musicals were broadcast accompanied by the Orchestra Ethiopia

(Shelemay 1991:125). The long history of Ethiopian music is tied up with the political turmoil that is still affecting Ethiopian society. Orchestra Ethiopia is comparable to the Ghanaian National Symphony and the Pan-African Orchestra, which also combine European and local instruments and musical approaches. These ensembles demonstrate that African nationalism is frequently performed as a hybrid of European and local practices.

### *Non-European Nationalisms*

Although nationalism as an ideology of political determinism originated in Europe, it came to be a primary governing principal throughout the world during the twentieth century. As Thomas Turino writes, “The original idea of nationalism was diffused in Africa through colonialism, and especially mission education” (2000:12). As missionaries spread Christianity, they also implemented European ideas of governance and justice systems. However, African intellectuals did not accept these European ideas uncritically. In the twentieth century, there was an increasing rejection of the colonial order and a celebration of local culture in the complicated process of moving from foreign rule to independence. Partha Chatterjee provides an intervention into the nationalism scholarship of the 1980s that is helpful in understanding the role of musical creativity in this negotiation between European nationalism and local values. Chatterjee builds on the descriptions and categorizations of national processes based entirely on European models proposed by scholars such as Benedict Anderson (1983). Instead of considering nationalism as a European invention that was exported to the rest of the world, Chatterjee foregrounds creativity as a central component of national formation in Africa and Asia. In an early work, Chatterjee (1986) showed that the formation of national identity under colonial rule has typically been portrayed as a paradoxical, if not a contradictory, project because national leaders were bound by

the parameters of European Enlightenment principals in their rejection of colonialism. In characterizing this scholarship, Chatterjee writes: “Nationalist opposition to European rule is driven by a faith in a theory. Yet the theory itself, and indeed the very attitude of faith in a theory, are the gifts of Europe to the rest of the world. Nationalism sets out to assert its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its project, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashions” (1986:9-10). This view, that non-European nationalism was a derivative project, has gained currency in ethnomusicology. Thomas Turino’s work on popular music in Zimbabwe is perhaps the strongest example of an acceptance of this view of African nationalism as a continuation of Western cultural hegemony. Turino cites Chatterjee to establish musical nationalism as a cosmopolitan, although not entirely Eurocentric, formation that accepted the premises “on which colonial domination was based” (Turino 2000:164).

In contrast, I see Chatterjee’s work as emphasizing the importance of creativity in the process of creating separation between anti-colonial nationalism and its European predecessor. Turino’s view provides an incomplete and fragmented picture of non-European nationalism. While the paradox of nationalism as both a European export and tool to challenge colonialism was certainly something many national leaders had to contend with, nationalist movements were not *primarily* a continuation of European ideas, as Chatterjee later argues: “The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the ‘modular’ forms of the national society propagated by the modern West” (Chatterjee 1993: 5, emphasis in original). In order to take account of how non-European independence movements are locally and historically situated, we need to shift attention from the political movements themselves to the construction

of postcolonial consciousness that took place through creative processes in theater, literature, and music before the explicitly political movement for self-rule began. Chatterjee continues, “Anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power” (ibid.:6). This shifts attention from the later political movements themselves to the earlier construction of national consciousness through creative processes that introduce hybridity.

### *South African Choral Music*

In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, scholars of South African Christian choral traditions have done the most to support Chatterjee’s argument by considering the role of musical creativity in the early stages of postcolonial national formation. These scholars explore how indigenous composers and performers adopted European musical and religious ideas for their own purposes. This scholarship was precipitated by the work of the musicologist and missionary A. M. Jones, who provided an early survey of the music used in African Christian churches (1976). He wrote this at a time when debates about whether to introduce local African musical styles into church services, or “musical indigenisation,” were ongoing (Jones 1976:35). After a careful consideration of the opposition to this trend, Jones cites himself as having promoted hybridity since 1933: “The present writer claims for the African the right to sing African hymns, of which the music is composed by Africans in native idiom” (Jones 1976:14). His 64-page pamphlet draws on his extensive experience and personal relationship with missionaries across Africa in addition to a consideration of various publications of African hymnody that had appeared up to that date. However, there is little musical or social analysis of how these publications are used or how they relate to the musical practices outside the church context.

British ethnomusicologist John Blacking was perhaps the first to deal with the intersections of religious music and politics of the South Africa anti-apartheid struggle in a chapter originally published in 1981 and later titled “The Music of Politics” (1995). In this work, Blacking discusses the music of Venda Christian “Zionist” Church in South Africa. He argues that “the way in which the Zionists sing, and much of the music they sing, expresses opposition to white domination and reinforces the Africanist view of the political future of South Africa” (1995:199). Blacking contextualizes the singing he experienced in this independent African church (not associated with a European mission) in terms of resistance to the apartheid system of control. In this way, he places Christianity at the center of the role of music in South African Black liberation movement. In the church services he attended, Blacking observed “a new, Christian, but truly African way of acting in community,” that subverted colonial expectations (1995:218).

Austin Okigbo extends Blacking’s arguments by examining how choral composition in South Africa contributed to black cultural nationalism (2010). The Christian basis for South African Black nationalism is reflected in the texts of choral composition by Enoch Sontonga, Isaiah Shembe, and John Dube. These songs could be sung widely by non-literate blacks, thus spreading intellectual ideas to the urban, black, working-class population: “The mechanism of musical inculturation and theological transformation enabled the pioneers of South African black nationalism to bring their people along in the rather highly intellectualistic nationalism formulations by couching their ideas in an expressive form that was recognizable to them” (Okigbo 2010:44). Okigbo points out that Franz Fanon developed a framework that foregrounds the role of “Oppositional Arts,” such as choral composition, in transmitting the

intellectual nationalism to a broad population. Similarly, I employ Partha Chatterjee's analysis of the creativity evident in the early stages of postcolonial national formation as a way of disputing the conception of postcolonial nationalism as a derivative discourse (1993:4). South African choral works sometimes had explicit political aims such as Ruben Caluza's "Si Lu Sapu" which protested the Land Act of 1913 (Okigbo 2010:55-6). The situation of Ghanaian choral music differs from South Africa in that cultural nationalism through choral music developed later and was not explicitly anti-colonial. Thus, making a similar argument about the centrality of choral music in the formation of national consciousness requires focusing on musical features and practices, rather than on primarily on the texts of compositions.

The choral tradition of Tanzania also exhibits elements of hybridity, as Gregory Barz establishes (2003). His ethnographic work with multiethnic Christian church choirs (or *kwayas*) in Dar es Salaam reveals how these choirs provide a sense of community and even family in an ethnically diverse postcolonial context (Barz 2006). Barz explores how choir leaders and members express their Christian devotion while acknowledging the trauma of the colonial past through music. While Barz acknowledges the hybridity of the Tanzanian choral tradition, he does not explore how this hybridity is situated within national intellectual discourses in Tanzania.

#### *Ghanaian Choral Music Scholarship*

Scholars have recognized that Ghanaian choral music has, at least indirectly, contributed to the emergence of national consciousness. Perhaps the first published case for this link was made by Atta Annan Mensah in his discussion of *Ebibindwom*, a Fante-Methodist singing tradition discussed in the following chapter:

The creation of suitable African music for Christian worship appears to be the concern of Christians in emergent Ghana. The tradition of the Church shows, however, that this is not a new problem brought about by the rise of national consciousness, but one of which Christians, particularly pre-literates steeped in their own musical traditions, have long been conscious. (Mensah 1959:183)

As a Methodist and composer himself, Mensah makes the case that a postcolonial consciousness was being formed by *Ebibindwom* singers well before the movement for independence began.

*Ebibindwom* scholars have produced conflicting narratives about the origins and boundaries of the genre. Mensah provides a broad perspective that incorporates the multiplicity of this singing practice based on his interviews with expert practitioners: “The Akan church lyric could, indeed, be any local musical type divested of some of its usual rhythmic complexities and made simple enough for everybody to be able to join in” (1960:183). In other words, *Ebibindwom* singers come from a variety of musical backgrounds and bring these musical influences to their Christian compositions. However, another Ghanaian scholar, Adolphus Turkson, ascribes a definite origin to *Ebibindwom*: “The songs come from *adenkum*, a musical type performed by older Fante women as recreational music” (1992:66). Other Ghanaian scholars, such as Kras Arthur (2013), Ampaw-Asiedu (2008), and Joshua Amuah (2013, 2014), have offered their own narratives of *Ebibindwom* specific to particular locations and traditional genres. These scholars have also presented a centralized narrative of *Ebibindwom* as arising from Methodist Missionary leadership, rather than the multiplicity of narratives that Mensah observes in his ethnography. This tension has implications for understanding how postcolonial consciousness emerged within the Methodist mission, as I explore in the following chapter. What

is common in all these narratives is a recognition that *Ebibindwom* represents the modification of local styles to fit the Christian context.

The most internationally prominent scholarship regarding Ghanaian choral music has focused on the work of Ephraim Amu (1899-1995), who was educated in the Presbyterian mission (Agawu 1984; Dor 2005, 2014; Terpenning 2016). Amu's most famous student was Professor Emeritus Kwabena Nketia. Nketia has also done the most to shape Amu's legacy within Ghana, as I discuss in chapter five. Nketia presents Amu as a national leader who paved the way for a Ghanaian style of choral composition in the 1920s and 30s. The distinguishing innovation of this style has been identified by Nketia (1993), Dor (2005), and Agawu (1984) as tonal prosody—the congruence of the tonal and rhythmic features of the local languages in the musical setting of the text. Amu composed in his native Ewe language and Twi, which he learned in school. These are tonal languages in that the meaning of words change with the length and pitch of syllables. Unlike the earlier German hymns translated into local languages, Amu recognized the importance of maintaining the spoken quality of the language in his compositions. Amu told Agawu in 1986: “[I]n our music, even the music for the bamboo flutes, every tune that is played has words and the rhythm of the spoken word is retained in the song. Not only the rhythm, but speech intonation is retained” (1987:57). Agawu argues that Amu's approach means considering the text as “pre-compositional” material that must be attended to in the musical setting (1984). This feature of Amu's compositions distinguishes them from the translated German hymns, and situates them as a local form of Christian expression.

Amu became well-known nationally for his actions in defiance of Presbyterian Church leadership to wear traditional cloth and include drumming in Sunday service. He was fired in



1933 from his teaching position for refusing to back down from these actions. Based on exhaustive archival research including Amu's writings, Philip Laryea has provided an insightful account of this incident from a theological point of view (2012:18-26). Laryea points out that this incident was not a fight between European missionaries and Ghanaians, but between indigenous factions of the church. He writes, "Rather than see their decision as mischievous and misguided, it is important that this should be placed in a historical perspective and seen as an attempt to deal with the thorny problem of the translation of the Christian faith into African terms" (2012:23). Although he supports Amu's project of including indigenous elements, Laryea also recognizes that the indigenous church leaders were acting with good intentions, based on their understanding of Christianity. Nonetheless, this controversy spilled into the public sphere at the time and both supporters and detractors explained their positions in the newspapers. Amu became known as a nationalist and his likeness was eventually displayed on the 20,000 Cedi bank note after his death.

Scholars have sometimes struggled to reconcile Amu's revolutionary stance with his devout Christianity and acceptance of European musical practices. Nketia explains this issue as a distinction between European musical elements and colonial ideology: "Though Amu had turned from Western music to African music with success, his compositional techniques and later events showed that what he was fighting was not Western music per se, but Western 'cultural imperialism,' which had downgraded African music" (Nketia 1998:41). So, Amu's acceptance of Western music in no way compromised his opposition to colonialism. Kofi Agawu takes a more critical stance to this seeming paradox of Amu's life:

The seemingly sensible compromise of choosing the best from both [African and European] traditions and merging them into a third culture is also the least satisfactory solution to the post-colonial dilemma. For it seems odd to embrace the songs that hunters sing after a successful hunt without taking on board the libations they pour, or the particular gods and ancestors they call upon.... To appropriate the mould of traditional culture while throwing out its content is to fail to recognize the extent to which the mould itself is content-based (1996:278).

Agawu views Amu's rejection of traditional religious practices, such as pouring libations, as playing into the narrative that national progress should be judged based on Christian norms.<sup>2</sup>

Agawu considers the possibility that Amu's promotion of a "third culture" plays into the marginalization of African religions and the people who practice them.

Ethnomusicologist and Ghanaian composer George Dor has also struggled with what he sees as inconsistencies in the ideology of Amu's musical innovations. First, he argues that Amu's work is deeply connected to traditional cultural practices through musical analysis of his work: "Ghanaian composers have sought not only to situate their songs in the broader social, cultural, and political landscapes of their nation, but also to use indigenous materials and creative procedures [to] redefine their identity as African composers" (2005:443). In a recent article, Dor focuses on Amu's "*Bonwere Kentenwene*" ("Kente Weavers of Bonwere") to show how Amu honors and represents local knowledge through his music (Dor 2014). In making his argument

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<sup>2</sup> Alcohol is central in traditional Ghanaian life. As Emmanuel Akyeampong writes, "The ritual use of alcohol in communicating with the gods and ancestors made libation central in rites of passage, festivals, and other aspects of human life" (1996:45). Akyeampong provides a history of the tension between traditional leaders and Christianity in Ghana (1996:70-88).

Dor distinguishes between “Western” knowledge, represented by the piano accompaniment in the composition, and traditional, indigenous knowledge: “This article has sought to demonstrate the extent and domains of Ghanaian knowledge that Amu, as an imaginative composer, creatively revitalizes and crafts into his beautiful art song. Amu’s use of the piano and Western tonal harmony does not overshadow how this piece serves as a remarkable Ghanaian cultural text” (2014: 31). Although it does not overshadow, Dor does portray the use of the piano in this song as an impediment to the expression of a local perspective. His suspicion of the piano in this context is evident when Dor asks, “Was he then inconsistent in his creative cultural patriotism when he chose to use the piano to accompany his three art songs and the *Prelude for Atenteben*? Yes, I think he was” (Dor 2014:23). For Dor and Agawu, Amu’s utilization of European instrumentation and musical elements, along with his embrace of Christianity, was inconsistent with his rejection of colonialism. All scholars of Ghanaian choral music have recognized its hybridity and its emergence from missions, but have differing interpretations of this history as it relates to colonialism. I continue to explore these perspectives and how they relate to my own work throughout this dissertation.

#### *A Historical Anthropology of the Voice*

My understanding of the role of hybrid choral music in the history of Ghana is informed by two recent disciplinary interventions. First, I focus on discourses and representations of the human voice as a social instrument. This approach follows the recent work of an interdisciplinary group of scholars who have developed an “anthropology of the voice.” This work provides a framework for historicizing the voice as a locus for conceptualizing the human. For anthropologist Nicholas Harkness, the voice forms a “phonosonic nexus” between the physical

body and the social environment (2014:12). His framework distinguishes between the physical process of singing and the concept of “voicing” as “a metaphor for the uniqueness of an authentic self or collective identity...” (ibid.). Through ethnography, Harkness documents the aspirations of urban Christian singers in Seoul, South Korea. He explores how singers’s aspirations for a particular “clean” sound, through techniques of vocal production, matched the “Christian narrative of ethnonationalism advancement” (Harkness 2015:316). South Koreans employed vocal techniques associated with European opera to distance themselves from the painfulness of the past. While the history of Christian singing in Ghana certainly does not mirror that of South Korea, Harkness’s attention to the semiotic relationship between voice and voicing is productive in considering, for example, how Fante singers use *Ebibindwom* to express their local understanding of Christianity in a non-written form.

Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier’s work on the history of aurality in Colombia provides a another anthropological perspective on writing about the voice (2014). She examines the ideologies involved in the “techniques of listening” that transform the human voice into the archive in the form of written word. She shows how nineteenth-century Colombian writers came to define the musical voice as signifying the human and cultural, as opposed to nature: “ideas about sound, especially the voice, were central to the very definition of life” (Gautier 2014:5). This colonial distinction continued to be used by folklorists and national leaders to dictate what singing was appropriate to use in representing Colombian native people after independence from Spain: “[L]istening practices were crucial in determining how the voice was understood and what counted as a proper form of voicing and cultural expression for different peoples in Colombia at a historical moment when the colonial itself had to be reformulated as a postcolonial

politics of an independent nation” (Gautier 2014:3). Gautier reveals how the history of musical scholarship has been intertwined with these politics of writing about the voice.

The second way my approach diverges from previous approaches to African musicology is that I focus on biography and the histories of specific institutions. My approach here is to develop what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls “History 2” (2007). While those who write History 1 assume movement toward the universalization of capital in an ever more rational world, History 2 deals with things, like music, with “which we make our ‘worlds’ out of this earth” (Chakrabarty 2007:69). With the category of History 2, Chakrabarty introduces Heidegger’s phenomenology into the Marxist historical framework. He writes, “[T]he idea of History 2 beckons us to more *affective* narratives of human belonging where life forms, although porous to one another, do not seem exchangeable through a third term of equivalence such as abstract labor” (ibid. 71). So this history attempts the “translation” of a non-European past into written history without ascribing the universal narrative of the European Enlightenment onto it. Thomas Turino provides an example of what Chakrabarty calls “History 1” in his consideration of the history of popular music in Zimbabwe, in that he tells a transition narrative that documents the transformation of a pre-capitalist society into a universal, rational, capitalist one (Turino 2000). Instead, I am interested in how musical practices assert difference from imperial power.

Part of pursuing History 2 means having a skepticism of claims of equivalences or differences between musics based on sonic or behavioral features. Making comparisons between the music I discuss and other styles from different places or time periods would assert more knowledge about the subjects than I profess. Hypothetical comparisons would also rely on a political assertion of a universal framework of human interaction. I believe that comparisons can

be useful if done collaboratively, but a dissertation, with its emphasis on specialization, is not the place for it. Neither the approach of History 1 or History 2 is more correct; they might be considered different sides of the same coin. However, Chakrabarty shows us that the narrative of globalization (or modernization) as a homogenizing force can be countered with histories, like this one, that deal with the specifics of institutions and individuals who confront these forces through creative cultural hybridity.

### **Scope and Historical Overview**

The object of study of this dissertation is broad. “Ghanaian choral music” can be said to encompass all multi-part vocal works composed (either in written form or aurally) by Ghanaians. I limit focus to three subsets of this broad topic in this dissertation. First, in the next three chapters, I explore how hybrid Christian expressions of part-singing emerged within the two largest and oldest missions: the Methodist Missionary Society which established churches in the coastal region among the Fante, and the Presbyterian missions established by German-speakers among the inland, Twi-speakers in the town of Akropong and among the Ewe. Some may question my use of the umbrella term “choral music” to describe *Ebibindwom*, because it is typically composed orally (in contrast to the Presbyterian choral music, which is notated). However, it has also now become a written tradition as well, with compositions sung by Ghanaian choirs, and I consider both variants to be essential to an understanding of the broad history of choral music hybridity in Ghana. The third subset of this topic that I address regards compositions sung by government workplace choirs and broadcast by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. While workplace choirs sing written works primarily from the Presbyterian

tradition, there have been instances of composed works in the *Ebibindwom* style programmed as well as some European classical compositions. In teaching these compositions the choir director often uses aural means along with the notation as some members are unable to read notation.

I will not cover even these three areas comprehensively. My goal is to provide an overview of musical change within these missionary and government institutions to examine how musical hybridity relates to colonialism and national formation. As demonstrated above, scholars have provided much insight into both the Methodist and Presbyterian choral traditions in Ghana, but have not explored Ghanaian workplace choirs specifically, or taken a broader historical perspective by examining them together as I do.

Choirs in the Greater Accra region, where I conducted my fieldwork, can be categorized as church choirs, workplace choirs, and youth choirs. Church choirs are the oldest type, originating with the earliest forms of Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Ghana. They exist in much the same form today as they have since the missions began. They sing both European and Ghanaian Christian works at weekly services and typically rehearse twice a week. Workplace choirs began in the 1970s when the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation started an “in house” choir to record compositions for broadcast and to sing at official functions, as I describe in chapter five. Soon, other government departments and non-governmental corporations began their own choirs; and annual competitions began in the 1980s. However, today only a few non-governmental choirs continue to function, and those are mostly within banks. Of these three types of choirs currently functioning in Ghana I focus on workplace choirs and particularly the GBC choir. Youth choirs arose in the late 1990s as professional organizations following the success of the Winneba Youth Choir. The composer and leader of a youth choir called the Bel

Canto Chorus, Alfred Addaquay, explained this history to me: “We have many youth choirs now out of what Winneba Youth Choir did. And these are the choirs that are doing well in the country... Before [the 1990s] all the choristers were in the church, so you wouldn’t find an adult choir outside the workplace” (Recorded Interview, March 9, 2015).<sup>3</sup> These choirs are typically made up of singers from various church choirs in an area. They sing at functions such as weddings and funerals, in addition to advertised concerts given during the Easter and Christmas holiday seasons. The leaders of these choirs are typically accomplished composers and keyboardists. I chose to work with this choir in part because its repertoire consists of a balance of historic, patriotic Ghanaian works and Christian works. The negotiation of this repertoire provides insight into the nature of the workplace choir as a community, which I discuss in chapter six.

To understand the significance of these choirs some background is necessary. The history and geography of Ghana has resulted in a great diversity of languages and ethnicities. The north of Ghana is savanna while the south Ghana was historically heavily forested. Historically the north had contact with Arab traders and Islam, while the southern region had the most contact with Europeans (Gocking 2005:8-12). A map produced by the Ghana Statistical Service in 1960

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<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that there were also non-church choirs that sang arrangements of traditional songs around the time of independence in Ghana as well. Based on his research at the GBC, German ethnomusicologist Marcus Coester writes, “The La Youngster's Choir was formed in 1949 by Marte Markwei. Their paternal home in the center of La became the first rehearsal ground for the young women and men Markwei had grouped together to learn and perform songs. In the course of the 1950s the group grew into quite a large choir of around thirty members, eight female singers, the rest male, and quickly gained a reputation as a very good choir. The La Youngster's Choir was among the first choirs (if not the first) to draw on Ga traditional music and dance for their repertoire, which Markwei arranged for it” (2011:7). It is unclear how many choirs of this type there were, and more research is needed in this area.





documents the ethnic makeup of the country (Figure 1.3). The cartographer attempted to geographically define the ethnic groups; however, they are intertwined especially in the urban areas. Ethnomusicologist Paul Schauert writes that, while this map is flawed, it “attests to the complexity of ethnic identity within Ghana, alluding to the challenge that [national leaders] faced in their attempt to create a unified nation” (2015:54). As the choral music I address in this dissertation emerged from Christian missions in southern Ghana, the song texts demonstrates the national prominence of the southern languages, including Fante, Twi, Ewe, and Ga. Native speakers of these languages make up the majority of the population, but they are not representative of the northern regions of Ghana.

I do not include in this dissertation a discussion of the many forms of vocal music that are associated with particular ethnicities. My exclusion of these forms should not imply, however, that they are irrelevant to postcolonial consciousness or that these forms have not changed. One such form that has been studied is *Nnwonkoro*, which began as entertainment among women at night, to become a feature of Asante funerals during the twentieth century (Ampene 2005). Although *Nnwonkoro* and other ethnic-based singing traditions continue to be relevant to contemporary life in Ghana, I limit my discussion to choral music that arose directly from the missionary encounter.

Because the music I discuss is rooted in Christianity, an overview of the role of religion in Ghanaian public life is pertinent. Religion is an inseparable part of public life in Ghana, and prayer is common in the context of the government choirs in which I participated. In 2012, an international survey of 57 countries conducted by the WIN-Gallup International Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism ranks Ghana as the most religious country. According to this survey, 96

percent of Ghanaians self-identify as “religious,” compared to the global average of 59 percent. Most identify as either Christian or Muslim. These religions are not limited to the churches and mosques, but extend into public life, including politics. The relationship between religion and politics is tied to the history of Christian missionization in Ghana. Missionaries ran the schools, churches, and hospitals, central institutions of public life during the colonial era. Thus, the intersections of religion and politics in Ghana goes beyond voter affiliation: Many of the institutions that make up civil society (health care, education, media, etc.) arose out of missionary institutions and many continue to be run by various churches.

The Catholic church had less of an impact on the development of choral music in Ghana than the Protestant churches. This may be because their primary missionary society, the Jesuits, were not as active in the nineteenth century compared to Protestant missionary societies (Hastings 1979:39). Some Catholic missionaries did begin work in the 1880s among Fante and Ewe people (Agordoh 2011:4), about fifty years after the Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries. This has led to what is now a substantial number of Catholic churches in Ghana, which utilize a variety of local forms of musical expression. Especially since the Second Vatican Council, Catholic churches in Ghana have included traditional songs from *Nnwonkoro*, *Adowa*, and *Akpalu* groups in services. Because of the diverse ethnic contexts in which Catholic churches were founded in Ghana, Agordoh notes, “almost every parish has its own choir or dance group to suit its own culture” (2011:152). So, an identifiable musical form has not emerged that is specifically associated with Catholicism in Ghana. Other prominent Christian denominations in Ghana include Seventh-Day Adventists, Church of Christ, Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and



Figure 1.4. Map of Gold Coast Colony in 1896 by John Bartholomew in public domain

African Independent Churches such as the Musama Disco Christo Church.<sup>4</sup> While each denomination has a particular approach to music in worship that overlap in some ways with the Presbyterian and Methodist musical traditions, this is a matter for further research beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The history of missions in what was then the Gold Coast is tied to European colonial interests in trade and slaves. Through most of the nineteenth century the Portuguese, Dutch, and British competed for trade on the Gold Coast. In 1874, however, the British established control over all trading forts on the coast and declared the Fante, Asante, Ga, and some of the Ewe territory to be under their rule as the Gold Coast Colony. In 1896, British control expanded north, encompassing the Dagomba and other groups as a protectorate (see Figure 1.4). The movement for Ghanaian independence began with the assassination of three WWII veterans who were marching to petition the British governor of the Gold Coast Colony to receive their full pension benefits on February 28th, 1948. This event and subsequent protests led Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to break from the United Gold Coast Convention, a group of indigenous leaders that formed the previous year, to form the Convention People's Party. Although earlier organizations, including the 1890s Aborigines' Rights Protection Society had challenged aspects of colonial rule and advocated for elected representation, this was the first political party that called for "self government now" and had broad public support (Korang 2004:255). During this movement, leaders adopted the name "Ghana" from the name of an ancient empire (300-1200 AD) that was

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<sup>4</sup> See Paul Gifford (2004) for an overview of the Christian denominations in Ghana, the rise of "mega-churches," and the impact they have had on public life in Ghana.

located in the area of present-day Mali (Parker and Rathbone 2007:20). I discuss the independence movement further in chapter five.

### **Research Methodologies**

This dissertation is primarily historical overview of choral music in Ghana conducted through ethnographic methods. To focus and direct my research I began by conducting formal and informal interviews with Ghanaian scholars and expert practitioners. I also attended concerts and spoke with leaders in the field. Foremost among them is Professor Emeritus Kwabena Nketia, with whom I collected over twenty hours of recorded interviews. Their insights directed my further investigations and led me to speak to many relatives of composers who are now passed. While ethnomusicologists have historically focused on individual musical genres, ethnolinguistic groups, or individuals, my approach utilized these methods to develop a presentist history of the social contributions of choral music in the colonial era and postcolonial transition in Ghana, broadly. This approach follows a trend in ethnomusicology to combine historiographic and ethnographic approaches. For example, Kay Shelemay has pioneered historical work that utilizes ethnographic methods in her work in Ethiopia. She writes that ethnography has the potential for “bringing into focus transmission processes and musical meanings as situated among real people in real time,... [to] enhance the historical musicologist’s appreciation of the workings of a fully contextualized music culture” (Shelemay 2001:5-6). The details of my methodology emerged through the process of three trips to Ghana as my dissertation scope changed during this period. Discoveries made during these trips have shaped the scope and approach of this dissertation.



My first dissertation-related trip took place during five weeks in the summer of 2012. I stayed with the family of Judith Opoku, the director of the audio-visual archive at the Institute of African Studies on the University of Ghana, Legon campus. During my time there I studied Twi with Judith, made connections with workplace choirs, and attend church choir rehearsals in order to develop a dissertation proposal. I was also able to document the funeral of the sitting president of Ghana, John Atta Mills, discussed in chapter seven. During that trip I became aware of the resources contained at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and how to request access.

During my second trip, which lasted seven weeks in the winter of 2013-14, my goals were mostly historiographic in nature. I had decided that I would need to combine ethnography with archival research. In particular, based on my reading I set out to find archival material regarding Ephraim Amu and his signature piece “Yen Ara Asase Ni” to complete an article regarding its history (Terpenning 2016). This involved three research trajectories: 1) developing a relationship with Misonu Amu, Ephraim Amu’s daughter and estate manager to have access to his personal documents and compositions 2) Gaining access to the GBC Gramophone Library and Sound Archives to explore the material regarding choral music and radio broadcasts, and 3) interviewing Professor Nketia to gain more information about his involvement in choral music and his relationship with Amu. All of these were successful and the results are presented in the fourth chapter.

During the third and final trip, I focused on government choirs and their connection to national consciousness. I planned my trip to coincide with the preparations for and celebration of the national independence day, March 3rd. Unfortunately, when I arrived in January, 2015, although the threat from ebola had subsided, an electricity crisis was effecting the country.

Throughout my twelve weeks there power was out about two-thirds of the time, but it always seemed to come through when there was an important football match. There were some political protests against the political party in power in February that I witnessed and national services were cut back. For example, the overnight radio broadcast was suspended for some time by the GBC. Also, the annual festival and competition of choirs was not held because of a lack of funds.

It was during this final trip that I expanded my historical scope to include the Methodist church. I became aware of some scholarship that was not accessible outside and traveled numerous times to the Methodist University College in Dansoma, a suburb of Accra, to speak with professors there. I continued to sing with the GBC choir and also joined the Accountant General choir for a few weeks and one performance. Toward the end of my stay in 2015, I interviewed as many members of these choirs as possible. These interviews all took place in English. For both choirs, my approach to recruiting participants was to make announcements at the end of rehearsals asking for volunteers. I also approached some members individually to ask if I could interview them about their experiences in the workplace choir. Some were more reluctant than others, but everyone I approached eventually allowed me to record an interview with them.

Developing a historiography of Ghanaian choral music has required many of the same skills associated with traditional ethnomusicological fieldwork, including interviewing, networking, and negotiating state bureaucracies. I collected oral histories and archival recordings and documents through these means. Then, to compliment work done in Ghana, upon returning to Colorado, I continued looking for sources available through the university library or online. This material included biographical material regarding missionaries, microfilm of pre-



independence newspapers, and publications by Ghanaian composers. My writing process began with a history of the most well-known work of Ghanaian choral music, “Yen Ara Asase Ni” (Terpenning 2016). It was from the process of developing this article and getting it published that my concentration on hybridity emerged and from which this dissertation follows.

## Chapter 2: Expressing Christianity through *Ebibindwom* in the Methodist Church, Ghana

In her book *Hearing and Knowing* (1986), Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye considers how Christianity in Ghana is aligned with local histories and traditions. For her, locating an African theology means listening to oral tradition as a way of knowing religious faith. It is in this context that she describes her experience growing up Christian in the Fante area of Ghana: “Just as they had transmitted history orally, Africans retold [Biblical] stories, elaborating them and drawing out what struck them as particularly relevant and enduring... All that God means to the congregation is expressed in these songs” (1986:45). The song tradition she is referring to is called *Ebibindwom* or “Fante Lyrics.” Oduyoye provides an example of a text, in English translation, that she learned through oral tradition:

Spirit arise and praise God,  
Wake up my spirit, arise and praise Him  
Blessing[s] be upon God and His Child  
All those who fly wake up to praise God  
Human soul spring up and praise your God (Oduyoye 1986:47)

As this example illustrates, *Ebibindwom* is a creative, poetic mode of expression. Forms vary from region to region and between performers, but all songs serve as an expression of faith congruent with Methodist teachings imported from Britain including European hymn sonorities. The musical structure of *Ebibindwom* also resembles Fante pre-colonial musical practices of call-and-response forms and storytelling features. In this chapter, I explore how *Ebibindwom*

developed as a hybrid musical expression and its significance within the Methodist Church, Ghana (MCG).<sup>5</sup>

As noted in the introduction, hybrid musical forms are potent because of their ambivalent positions in society. The ambivalence towards *Ebibindwom* in the MCG is related to its association with non-literate Fante women who are outside the formal hierarchy of the MCG. Superintendent Minister and *Ebibindwom* scholar, Rev. Henry Ampaw-Asiedu expresses this acutely in describing *Ebibindwom* as “the simple ecstatic ultrasound of the untutored minds” (2008:42). He expanded upon what he means by “untutored minds” and the challenge it poses when he told me: “When you correct them, they will sing [correctly], but once in a while you go to another place [and] they will sing the same wrong thing because of the untutored mind” (Interview, March 3, 2015). So, because these songs are passed from non-literate singer to singer, they are unregulated by those, like Ampaw-Asiedu, who have a literary experience with the Bible. These statements echo an earlier concern expressed by the British missionary S. G. Williamson. Williamson lamented that *Ebibindwom* texts treat the Bible “as a valuable appendix to rather than a corrective of the traditional religious outlook” (Williamson 1958:131). Williamson viewed *Ebibindwom* as part of a problematic trend in Fante Methodism of expressing and transmitting Christianity through an oral tradition that did not discard traditional Fante

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<sup>5</sup> The MCG became an autonomous institution in 1961 when it became independent from the Methodist Missionary Society of Britain. While the hybridity discussed in this chapter is limited to a consideration of Fante and British musical and social elements, there is a need for more research into the possibility that the development of *Ebibindwom* was also influenced by American spirituals. Unfortunately, the history of freed slaves returning to Ghana is a silenced history. In my conversations with *Ebibindwom* scholars and practitioners, the possibility of American influences on *Ebibindwom* was not mentioned. While Agordoh (2004) does address post-World War Two instances of American influence, the musical and social impact of former slaves and their descendants returning to Ghana requires further research.

beliefs. Despite these challenges that *Ebibindwom* poses to Methodist orthodoxy and the hierarchy of the MCG, Ampaw-Asiedu and other Ghanaian Methodist leaders equally celebrate the “vital role [*Ebibindwom* plays] in the evangelistic drive of Methodism in Ghana” (2008:46). Especially since the founding of a music department at the Methodist University in Dansoma in 2006, these scholars have struck a balance between celebrating *Ebibindwom* as an expression of Christianity rooted in local culture and advocating for the advancement of literacy that would standardize and align this practice better with Methodist doctrine.

Leading Ghanaian Methodists also played a role in shaping and promoting *Ebibindwom* as a legitimate aspect of the Ghanaian Methodist experience since 1937 when eighteen *Ebibindwom* texts were first included in the Fante Methodist hymnbook. Since then, it has become a more written and written-about form of religious expression. This ongoing transition from oral to written has opened up a contested space where personal and collective identities are negotiated through musical discourse. Below, I explore the ambiguities and divergences of written scholarship along with the oral histories I encountered to provide insights into the role of musical hybridity in the expression of postcolonial consciousness in Ghana. My approach to understanding the transition of *Ebibindwom* from non-written to written tradition is informed by Diana Taylor’s theorization of the distinction between oral and written knowledge in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003). She describes how knowledge contained in the unwritten “repertoire” is passed on through performance while knowledge in the written “archive” is often controlled by the elite (Taylor 2003:18-19). Knowledge transmitted through performance is more difficult to censor and “correct” than the archive. Also, transferring performative knowledge of the repertoire into written form is a process of reduction that invokes power relationships.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier also explores these issues in her investigation of the history of “aurality” in Colombia (2014). I borrow this term to foreground the potential of the written *Ebibindwom* narratives to reduce the local specificity of the historical consciousness expressed by performers. This term also reveals the legacy of colonial ideology in the construction of written history. Gautier writes, “Once sound is described and inscribed into verbal description and into writing it becomes a discursive formation that has the potential of creating and mobilizing an acoustic regime of truths, a power-knowledge nexus in which some modes of perception, description, and inscription of sound are more valid than others in the context of unequal power relations” (2014:33). My approach to the history of *Ebibindwom* brings attention to the multiplicity of oral historical narratives. At the same time, I am engaged with the written scholarship by Ghanaians, which has been marginalized, and do not assume I have any special legitimacy to “read” the African experience. As Grace Musila notes, within the global knowledge economy it continues to matter where knowledge is produced (2011). In the Ghanaian context, lack of access to resources have limited the circulation of knowledge production, so, by engaging this work obtained through travel, my intervention seeks to give the work of my Ghanaian colleagues broader exposure while engaging critically with it.

### **The 19th-century beginnings of Fante Methodism**

Written histories of *Ebibindwom* often begin with the first Methodist missionary able to survive on the Gold Coast for more than two years. Thomas Birch Freeman was the son of a freed slave from the Caribbean and an English mother. He ran the Methodist church in the Gold Coast from his arrival in 1838 until 1857, when he was dismissed for financial mismanagement.

In this section I explore the early years of Methodism on the Gold Coast, and how the structure that Freeman developed allowed for the emergence of *Ebibindwom*. This song tradition was developed by Fante Methodists who had direct experience with Christian teachings, but were *not* separated from their families and histories in the nineteenth-century, as were the Presbyterian converts discussed in the next chapter. I argue that *Ebibindwom* emerged as a local, hybrid style of singing that persisted in part because of a lack of administrative structure in the mission and the related lack of separation between Fante Methodist converts and their surrounding communities.

The emergence of Fante Methodism must be understood in the context of the practice of slavery that preceded the arrival of Methodist missionaries. The slave trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a highly traumatic event for the Fante and other people who lived in the costal area of the Gold Coast. The castles and forts that still dot the costal landscape of this region are a reminder of the largest forced migrations perpetrated by Europeans that the world has ever seen. However, the slave trade ended fairly abruptly, as historian Rebecca Shumway writes: “Because of the strong British presence on Ghana’s coast by the early 1800s, Britain’s legal abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in 1807 took hold almost immediately here, even as other parts of the West African coast continued and sometimes increased the scale of their slave trade” (Shumway 2011:6). Methodists had been instrumental in pushing for abolition and ending the slave trade in Britain (see Bartels 1965:10,66; Hole 1896). Some Methodist missionaries even saw their work as a form of reparations for the slave trade. There is evidence of this perspective in a 1840 letter from the Methodist Missionary Society that frames the five thousand pounds put towards the work of introducing “Christianity, education, and civilization” in the

Gold Coast as recompense, for “Britain owes so vast a debt of reparation for the wrongs and miseries of the accursed slave trade” (Freeman 1968 [1844]:75). Methodist missionaries also sought to end indigenous forms of slavery occurring in areas where there was little European contact (Freeman 1968 [1844]:93). So, the eighteenth century, when more than a million people were shipped across the Atlantic from the Gold Coast, set the stage for the arrival of Methodist missionaries.

The official narrative of the origins of Methodism on the Gold Coast in 1830s is that missionaries arrived in response to an indigenous interest in Christianity. A thirteen-member Bible study group who called themselves the “Bible Band” or the “Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge” requested bibles from a British trader who passed the message along to the Methodist Mission Society in Britain (Bartels 1965:8; Ampaw-Asiedu 2008:7; Southon 1934). The circumstances leading to this request illustrates the confluence of factors that led to the beginning of Methodism in Ghana and shaped its character. Before his death in 1824 the colonial governor, MarCarthy, had arranged for a shipment of Christian books to be used for Fante education (Bartels 1965:7). At this time, there was a well-established school within Cape Coast Castle, which had been run by native teachers since 1766, but in the 1820s had been disrupted by deaths and war. By 1829 a Fante man named Joesph Smith had taken charge and began to teach from these Christian books that had arrived (Bartels 1965:14). While he taught his adult students how to read, he was reluctant to elaborate on the meaning of the passages in the Bible (Ampaw-Asiedu 2008:6). Some of his students, led by William DeGraft, began to meet outside the castle on their own to further discuss Christianity. They were unsatisfied with their progress and communicated their desire for a Christian education to a British sailor. He then

delivered their message to the Methodist Missionary Society. Thus, this Bible Band went around the official, colonial routes and made contact with a society that was willing to devote tremendous resources to build Methodism in the Gold Coast. The lack of available European educational opportunities, and the ambitious leadership of DeGraft resulted in a circuitous request and the beginning of a relationship between British Methodists and some well-connected Fante. This narrative, which is repeated within the MCG, reveals that early British missionaries are viewed by Fante Methodists not as a colonizing force, but as collaborators with their ancestors. *Ebibindwom* can be heard as a result of this encounter, a sonic reminder that Fante themselves had agency in the conversion process.

Singing was already part of Fante Christian practice before Methodist missionaries arrived. Although it is impossible to know what exactly early Fante Christians were singing, we get an idea of the context in which they sang from Southon's history, published a century later (1934). During the period without a missionary, in which De Graft organized his Bible Band, he and some of his fellow Christians were jailed by colonial governor Maclean. According to Southon, at some point while this group of Fante Christians were in jail they heard news about a new Fante convert to Christianity. Southon describes what he learned from the records of this event:

De Graft and his companions were so overjoyed at his conversion that they redoubled their prayers and songs of praise. Their lusty voices rose above all the chattering of litigants in the Castle compound through the days, and seemed to fill the whole Castle during the quiet hours of the night. The governor sent to them again and again, ordering them to be quiet, but this was an occasion when they



felt that they ought to 'obey God rather than man,' and they ignored the order (Southon 1934:30-31).

This description of the prisoners' singing indicates that their voices, even when inspired by a Christian conversion, were perceived by the governor as inconsistent with European decorum. That they sang "during the quiet hours of the night" despite being ordered to be quiet indicates a disruption of the temporal and sonic order of the castle. Singing in this passage is configured as a marker of difference that supports the colonial order.

This trope of disciplining the voice of the Other reoccurs in missionary literature across the colonial world (see Agawu 2003:6). The passage can be understood to fit Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier's assessment that in the colonial mindset that, "the voice needed to be regulated in order for that human to become a proper person, and the passions needed to be tempered in the moral alignment of the physiological body" (2014:203). Although Southon celebrates the apparent passion for Christianity the Fante men demonstrated, he also describes their voices as "lusty," lacking the discipline expected of Christians, and in need of European guidance.

Many of the early Methodist missionaries on the Gold Coast saw themselves as responding to this great need, and were prepared to make sacrifices. The obstacles that faced them were great, and many died from tropical disease. Dunwell, the first Methodist missionary to the Gold Coast, arrived on New Year's Day, 1835. After his first Sunday meeting with the Bible Band led by DeGraft, he writes: "They sang a psalm which delighted me" (Dunwell, quoted in Bartels 1965:13). Psalms, and likely hymns, were heard in the area prior to the arrival of the Methodists because traders and colonial officials met to sing even when an Anglican priest was not available. In his six months on the Gold Coast, Dunwell saw the numbers of his followers

grow from the original 13 to around 80 (Bartels 1965:16). On his death, he left a devoted group of Methodist followers. Joseph Smith, a Fante teacher at the castle in Cape Coast, wrote in his diary after Dunwell's death: "I met the class on purpose to know whether they would continue in the profession they had recently entered into, or desire to return to their former ways, in consequence of the death of the missionary. They said they would remain in the profession; for though the missionary was dead, God lives" (Smith, quoted in Bartels 1965:19). This group maintained regular meetings on their own for fifteen months until the next four missionaries came, demonstrating a high degree of dedication to the institution. These missionaries subsequently died as well. A total of six Methodist missionaries and wives died in the three years before Thomas Birch Freeman arrived in January of 1838.

### **Freeman, a Camp Meeting, and the Origins of *Ebibindwom***

By most accounts, *Ebibindwom* dates to the period of Freeman's leadership of the Gold Coast Methodist Church (1838-1856, Figure 2.1), but there are diverging narratives of when and how it arose, and how it became an accepted aspect of the MCG (see Ampaw-Asiedu, 2008; Amuah 2001; Amuah and Kras 2013; Turkson 1975). The idea that *Ebibindwom* arose from the conversion process is common among all of these perspectives. In this section, I assess some of these narratives based on my understanding of the structure of the church under Freeman.

Ghanaian historian F. L. Bartels's description of Freeman suffices to depict his significance in the history of Methodism in Ghana: "Living in England was the man whom God wanted for the Gold Coast; one in whose body Africa and England had already met, and who possessed the best of both races" (Bartels 1965:39-40). Because he was able to survive to an old



Figure 2.1. Portrait of Thomas Birch Freeman (1844)

age in conditions where his contemporaries did not, Freeman had a tremendous impact on Methodism in Ghana. However, his approach to missionary work was shaped by a belief that his time might be short. Not long after he arrived with his wife, whom he married not long before leaving, she died, while he became bedridden. These events, and his awareness of his predecessors' fates, brought him to the realization that the best approach was to focus on a rapid expansion and the development of native leaders quickly rather than attempting to import British missionaries to manage the details running the new congregations.

Freeman built upon the work accomplished by both the missionaries and Fante Christians who came before him. He quickly set about traveling and integrating the congregations outside of Cape Coast into a network of Methodist churches. His work led to a dramatic increase in the number of Methodists in the Gold Coast, but Freeman's ability to supervise this expansion was limited because travel and communication was slow and difficult due to the climate. Freeman resolved to focus on developing "a native ministry" after a close call with death himself six months after his arrival. It was at this point that he recommended William DeGraft as the first indigenous candidate to the Missionary Committee (Bartels 1965:32). This approach resulted in a lack of cohesion and "isolated fellowships" early on across the various communities (Bartels 1965:40). I suggest that the lack of administrative oversight allowed congregants to draw from their indigenous knowledge and musical forms.

The Methodist mission to Ghana suffered from a lack of missionaries and resources through most of its first century of existence. Freeman frequently asked for more resources to provide clergy and buildings for his rapidly expanding congregation in the Gold Coast. In 1857 the British Missionary Society decided that he was not handling the finances well (Bartles



1965:72). The man who succeeded Freeman, Rev. William West was also concerned about the lack of resources the mission was receiving from Britain. He wrote to the Missionary Committee before his retirement in 1871, “I can hardly bring myself to believe that you intend to leave the district with only two white men in it both of whom will be leaving this time next year” (West, quoted in Bartels 1965:76). So, after the departure of Freeman the European administration of the mission continued to be stretched. In this environment of limited European presence Fante Christians likely developed their own hybrid approach to worship and evangelism.

Another factor that may have shaped early Ghanaian Methodism was the lack of attention to the development of Fante orthography and a Fante-language Bible. Without a Fante Bible, local literate Fante were on their own to translate and teach the gospel. Ghanaian scholar Ato Turkson implies that this was a reason *Ebibindwom* became a prominent component of Methodist practice in the nineteenth century: “The early Methodist missionaries did not concern themselves with reducing the local languages into writing. This was a great set back in their evangelical work” (Turkson 1975:4). He then explains that native-language, orally-transmitted songs provided a way to teach non-Christians about the Bible. As this occurred, non-literate Fante reflected on what they were being told about the Bible, and expressed their own understanding of it. Mensah writes, “Ever since its creation, the lyric has been a favourite [sic] medium of reflection on popular Biblical stories (such as the story of Moses, or of Samuel in the presence of God), some of the profound assurances of the Bible, as well as the events of the Christian year” (1960:184). The problem for some European missionaries, like Williamson, was that these reflections came in the form of a hybrid musical expression that did not discard pre-colonial cultural elements.

The earliest written evidence that a native repertoire of Christian singing had developed in the Fante area comes from the history of Presbyterianism in Ghana. When the German linguist and Presbyterian missionary J.G. Christaller (1827-1895) began to publish Twi language hymnbooks for the Basel Mission in 1860 he is said to have included some examples of Fante Lyrics. Turkson cites a hymnbook published in 1865 that contained “236 Hymns in Akuapem, 15 songs of Native Christians in Fante” (1975:9). Also, Debrunner writes, “[F]ifteen were incorporated into the first Basel Mission vernacular church hymn book: they had been recorded at Anamabu. Unfortunately, these seem to be the only early Fanti lyrics which were written down” (1967:142). Nketia confirmed that Christaller made an attempt to introduce Fante songs to his students in Akropong, and explained to me why they were not accepted by the Twi speakers: “Christaller tried to bring a selection of Fante Lyrics, [but] in the next edition he took it out because people here were complaining [about] the Fante dialect and the style” (Interview, Jan. 16, 2015). Nketia suggests that the linguistic and cultural differences between the Fante and Akuapem people of Akropong explains why *Ebibindwom* was not incorporated into the musical practices of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana. Although I was unable to find Presbyterian hymnbooks that include *Ebibindwom*, there may be a copy of one of these hymnbooks in the Basel missionary archives in Switzerland. Further research there and at the Methodist Missionary Society archives in London could provide more context for understanding the early history of this music.

Atta Annan Mensah proposes one specific narrative of how *Ebibindwom* spread, for which I did not find evidence. He suggests that Fante musicians were responsible for traveling from congregation to congregation in order to unify practices. He writes, “At the early stages of

the development of the lyric the lead was taken by Fanti musicians. They were indeed responsible for its creation and growth. Teams of them were sent round many parts of the country to teach it to Christians” (Mensah 1960:183). Although he does not cite a source, Mensah may have collected this information as oral history through his job as the first head of music at the national radio station. Probably considering e goes on to write, “The lyric was introduced in the Methodist Church some hundred years, or more, ago. It was then the only form of African music accepted in this country by that Church, and it appeared that it was going to take root as music for all churches in Ghana. It was with this hope that experts were sent round to teach other Methodists congregations” (1960:187). This narrative situates *Ebibindwom* as an early unifying and evangelical feature of Methodism in Ghana that was directed by that Fante themselves rather than missionary leadership.

Other scholars claim that Freeman directly encouraged the development of *Ebibindwom* through his evangelization efforts (Turkson 1975:4, 1992:66; Amuah and Andoh 2014:708; Atiemo 2006). According to Turkson: “Freeman realized that the non-literate members of the church did not participate in singing of the English hymns. He therefore encouraged members to sing biblical texts to traditional tunes” (1975:4). However, because Turkson does not provide evidence for this view it is difficult to determine on what basis he believes Freeman directly encouraged *Ebibindwom* from his arrival. Nonetheless, this narrative has been adopted by subsequent Ghanaian scholars. For example, Abamfo Atiemo writes, “Around 1835 the Wesleyan missionaries encouraged the adaptation of Fanti musical forms such as *adenkum* and *adzewa* to the words of hymns and scripture” (2006:145-6). Ghanaian professors Joshua Amuah, Kras Arthur also rely on Turkson’s narrative to situate local singing as being a central element of

the structure of Ghanaian Methodism from the beginning (2014:119). Similarly, Amuah, Ocran, and Acquah write: “Through the effort of Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman (1809-1890), the *Ebibindwom*, (Akan Sacred Lyrics) which became accepted and widely used in worship, was incorporated in the revised book of office [in 1936]. This laid the foundation for the use of traditional music in Christian Churches in Ghana” (2014:21). These accounts emphasize the important history of *Ebibindwom* in Methodist liturgy in Ghana, but do not bring much clarity as to how it emerged in the early church.

While Turkson’s view provides a convenient narrative of *Ebibindwom* as central to the emergence of Fante Methodism, it is more likely that it developed on the margins of the Methodist mission (in the “isolated fellowships” as Bartels describes them (1965:41)), and without the explicit approval of European missionaries. I find it unlikely that Freeman personally encouraged the development of *Ebibindwom* during his tenure as the leader of the Methodist mission in the Gold Coast (1838-1857) for two reasons. First, like other European missionaries at the time, he sought to separate Christianity from traditional ways of life. A passage from Freeman’s proposal to develop schools in the Gold Coast written seven months after he arrived confirms this: “I would say the thing most adapted to meet the case [of Fante educational needs] is an establishment into which the children could be taken, and kept entirely beyond the reach of demoralizing influences, allowing them no contact with the townspeople until they are capable of taking care of themselves” (Freeman, quoted in Bartels 1965:33). Second, Freeman expressed a negative view of native musics. In a passage of his biography, written soon after his death, Milum quotes Freeman’s description of a “pagan procession, with its rude band of music and the wild intoxicated dance” (Milum 1893:32). This description is in line with descriptions of African



singing made by other Europeans in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Equating traditional music with paganism supported the ideology of purification and the denigration of African culture.

Protestant missionaries claimed natives imbued natural objects with agency and spiritual power through rituals that included music, which conflicted with the Protestant semiotic ideology in which only words, in the form of prayer to God, had agency. Keane writes: “[S]emiotic ideology is a reflection upon, and an attempt to organize, people’s experiences of the materiality of semiotic form” (Keane 2007:21). These descriptions of native music dehumanized and emphasized its incompatibility with a Christian understanding of faith and indexically associates Christianity with European music.

There is also evidence that Freeman encouraged Fante converts to sing European hymns. His description of one event in which his educated Fante companions sang a hymn indicates their importance in his Christian practice. On one of his missionary trips to an unconverted village in the 1940s Freeman wrote that after dinner, “an altar was for the first time erected to the Lord God of hosts, and the whole of that beautiful hymn, ‘Jesus, the name high over all,’ ascended to heaven from grateful hearts... which, when it is sung by the Christian in barbarous regions, surrounded by all the horrors of superstition and Paganism, fills the mind with an overwhelming influence” (Freeman 1968 [1844]:155). This passage provides insight into Freeman’s conception of the hymn as providing order in the midst of an unordered environment. Methodists were known to have embraced congregational singing, which distinguished them from Anglicans. This

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<sup>6</sup> See McCall (1997) for an overview of writing on African music by European explorers and traders in the nineteenth century. McCall demonstrates how the theme of paganism is used to question whether the sounds produced by Africans could be classified as music in European writings about African music.

was likely transferred to the Gold Coast. “Methodism was born in song” is a phrase printed at the beginning of hymnbooks and is often invoked by Ghanaian scholars to emphasize the importance of singing in the MCG (Amuah and Kras 2013:116).

It seems more likely that local singing traditions emerged in communities that were not under Freeman’s direct control. Considering that *Ebibindwom* or any hybrid singing tradition is not mentioned in the documents from the period, it is unlikely it was recognized by Freeman or other missionaries as a legitimate form of Methodist worship. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Freeman learned the Fante language during his tenure as a missionary. This is an argument for viewing *Ebibindwom* not as a component of the missionary program but as a reaction to that program generated outside the confines of European purview by Fante themselves. This perspective could provide new insights into the meaning of *Ebibindwom* and how it relates to postcolonial consciousness.

At some point, it seems that Freeman did become aware of hybrid Christian singing traditions among the Fante, but this may not have occurred until after he returned to the Methodist mission in the 1873, from his work in Accra as a civil servant. In Freeman’s journals, praise for indigenous singing is limited to instances when converts sing English language hymns. There is a significant exception to this, however: In describing a camp meeting he organized in 1876, Freeman wrote:

Several larger groups collected for exhortation, prayer and praise. This was a beautiful scene, the culminating point of the day... in every direction the voice of prayer and praise was heard while others were walking about in the open spaces engaged in earnest Christian conversation. In the afternoon a lovefeast was held,

at which there must have been fifteen hundred people present (Freeman, quoted in Milum 1893:147).

Freeman doesn't mention *Ebibindwom* or describe further the vocalizations that took place at this event, but the oral history in the area around Anomobu collected by Rev. Ampaw-Asiedu, confirms that a camp meeting took place in the year 1876. Locally, this event is associated with the origins of *Ebibindwom* singing. Based on interviews with *Ebibindwom* practitioners around the coastal town of Anomabu Ampaw-Asiedu writes, "Ebibindwom is believed to have dated as far back as 1876, when it was first sung at a camp meeting at Aakra" (2008:43). Freeman's description provides some insight as to how *Ebibindwom* may have spread from congregation to congregation at the time. That thousands of people heard *Ebibindwom* at that time indicates the existence of a Methodist public sphere in which non-literate Fante could directly participate. But, contrary to some *Ebibindwom* histories, this passage suggests that Freeman was an observer of this social formation, not an administrator of it. Furthermore, after living in the Gold Coast for more than thirty years and having a local wife, identifying Freeman as a missionary is more complicated at this point in his life.

Freeman's discussion of the 1876 camp meeting, along with Ampaw-Asiedu's collection of oral history regarding this event, is helpful in imagining the context in which *Ebibindwom* may have emerged as a central form of Fante Methodist musical expression. These camp meetings drew thousands of people and lasted for multiple days. More camp meetings took place in the years following the first one, and continue to the present day. These events have continued to be important sites for *Ebibindwom* performance (Ampah-Asiedu, Interview, March 19, 2015; Ellen Yorke, Interview, March 30, 2015). Furthermore, this large gathering, with thousands of

people participating, is an indication of the existence of a public sphere that allowed the participation of non-literate Fante. This image of large, multi-day, public gathering that Freeman provides allows us to imagine *Ebibindwom* as a unifying form of Christian expression among the Fante that was not dependent on writing during a period of rapid expansion of Methodism in the Gold Coast.

The various historical narratives discussed in this section demonstrate the complexity and multiplicity of *Ebibindwom*, and suggests avenues for further research. In considering this history, I have sought to problematize generalizations about the mission encounter. Because of the largely one-sided written historical record, even extraordinary research efforts leave much unknown about the experiences of those on the other side of the missionization process. Generalizing about the missionary encounter or putting forward a definitive narrative risks silencing other narratives.

### **Gaddiel Acquah and Writing “Osabarima”**

Gaddiel Robert Acquah (1884-1954) was a seminal figure in the history of Methodism in Ghana because of at least three areas of his work: as a Fante translator, as the first indigenous chairman of the MCG, and as a promoter and composer of Fante hymns and *Ebibindwom*. He composed several *Ebibindwom* texts and was influential in bringing attention to *Ebibindwom* during his chairmanship (1950-54). Despite his stature in the MCG, there is little published

information about him.<sup>7</sup> This section is a modest attempt to reassess his involvement in the development of *Ebibindwom*, and encourage further research. I begin with a narrative of how Acquaaah became a musician, then move to an ethnographic account of my experiences investigating his association with the particularly well-known song “Osabarima.” I present two competing narratives of Acquaaah’s role in the origins of this piece.

Music was not a significant aspect of Acquaaah's formal education. Although his father was a church organist, Acquaaah Sr. encouraged his son to become a civil servant. Nonetheless, Acquaaah did study music and began to compose later in life. His success in hymn composition in a European style is evident in four of his compositions included in a widely used collection of Ghanaian Christian choral works entitled *Ghana Praise* (unknown editor, 1976:4-6). The oral history regarding his beginnings as a composer illustrates both his commitment to the Methodist Church and an extemporaneous talent associated with *Ebibindwom* practitioners. Rev. Ampaw-Asiedu, a pastor at Betel Methodist Church in Kokomemle, Accra, told me the story of how Acquaaah came to compose his first hymn. He gathered this particular narrative during interviews in a town called Shama where Acquaaah was posted as a teacher in 1906. According to oral tradition there, Acquaaah was inspired during the annual Harvest Day of the church in Shama to compose a praise song. The Harvest Day is a common tradition in many Christian churches in Ghana where people bring their surplus goods to present to the church. Acquaaah was inspired by the quantity of produce and fish, because it is a fishing village, to compose something

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<sup>7</sup> The most comprehensive biographical information I was able to find is a self-published work by Henry Ampaw-Asiedu (2008). At 63 pages, this work represents the culmination of his masters thesis and is based on interviews and archival material from the MCG headquarters in Accra.

spontaneously. Ampaw-Asiedu continued, “And the words to the song about harvest came to him. And there he composed a song and they started singing about the harvest that had been. He himself didn’t know he was a musician [until that moment].” (Interview, March 3, 2015). This narrative of Acquaaah’s first composition, which was followed by other hymn compositions, reflects common themes that are associated with the practice of *Ebibindwom*. *Ebibindwom* is associated with spontaneous performance even though singers do often consciously compose ahead of time, as my interview with Ellen Yorke discussed below demonstrates. Thus, the narrative of how Acquaaah’s musical career began when he was moved to spontaneously express his joy of the harvest through a song can be considered a way of situating him within the realm of *Ebibindwom* practice.

The most well-known *Ebibindwom* song, “Osaberimba” (“Warrior King”), is widely attributed to Acquaaah. The text of this work situates Jesus as a warrior for the defenseless on earth, using a traditional Fante word for warrior. It has gained prominence in Ghana well beyond the Methodist Church. For example, the song was recorded by the inter-denominational Winneba Youth Choir as the first track on their 2001 album, *Worship Vol. 1* (Track 1 on CD). This recording, with its organ accompaniment and slow tempo, demonstrates how “Osaberimba” has been adopted into the standard choral repertoire of Ghanaian choirs. The prominence of this work within the Ghanaian choral repertoire makes the origin of the piece particularly salient in *Ebibindwom* discourse.

There are two basic narratives of how “Osaberimba” came about. Either Acquaaah composed it entirely himself or he arranged and standardized a pre-existing song. Some scholars and family members believe Acquaaah composed the music and the text entirely himself. For

example, music professor Joshua Amuah attributes the composition to Acquaaah and provides an analysis of the musical features of the composition. Considering the tonal prosody of the composition, he writes "Acquaah observed the tonal characteristics of the Fante language, the conjunct and distinct movements of Osabarimba are determined by those of speech-melody" (Amuah 2001:97). Albert Acquaaah, a nephew of Rev. Gaddiel Acquaaah who I spoke with, also holds the view that this was an original composition. But some scholars have suggested that "Osaberimba" was a preexisting song in Fante oral tradition that Acquaaah adopted for use in the MCG. For example, Atiemo writes, "Rev Gaddiel Acquaaah, for example, parodied that Fante national song, 'Osahen eyi hen efir mbusu mu' ('The Warrior-king delivered us from evil') into what has become the popular *Akan* Christian classical, 'Osabarima' ('Hero')" (2006:148). Music professor at the Methodist University College, Arthur Tsemfofo, also claims the latter. This distinction regarding the historical narrative of this work can be considered in the broader context of the Africanization of liturgy that took place in the post-World War II era.

I first met both Albert Acquaaah and Arthur Tsemfofo at an event at the Methodist University College in Dansoma that was organized by Mr. Azonko to recognize the anniversary of the death of Gaddiel Acquaaah. At the event I noticed they disagreed on the origins of "Osabarima," so I subsequently visited them both in the following weeks. I spoke with Albert Acquaaah, a businessman in the fruit juice industry, at his home in a suburb of Accra. I came to understand that part of Albert's motivation for attending the memorial event was to discuss raising funds for the rehabilitation of his family's house in Anomabu. He told me there was a cache of archival material related to Acquaaah maintained by relatives, but Albert had not seen

this material himself. Once the renovations to the home were complete, he told me, it would be possible for researchers to have access to the material.

When I asked Albert Acquaaah if it was possible that Gaddiel Acquaaah adopted some of the pieces attributed to him, such as “Osabarima,” from oral tradition, he was adamant that these were Acquaaah’s original compositions. Part of his justification was that in the Fante Hymnbook the compositions attributed to Acquaaah are immediately followed by the *Ebibindwom* section (Interview, March 28, 2015). There are sixteen texts with no musical notation listed in that section, but “Osabarima” is not included in the Hymnbook and there no attributions. Albert Acquaaah concluded emphatically, “He wrote them all, just ask anyone at the Methodist Headquarters” (Interview, March 28, 2015). The Methodist Church has an archive in Accra. Unfortunately, these documents, including synod minutes and Acquaaah’s personal documents, were unavailable to me while I was in Ghana.<sup>8</sup> An examination of this material may provide a more definitive answer to the question of the origins of “Osabarima.”

I met with Methodist College University music professor and *Ebibindwom* singer Arthur Tsemfo at his office on the Dansoma campus. He explained his view that a longer version of “Osabarima” was a part of the *Asafo* song tradition, a traditional dance and drum society, in Etwam, his hometown (Interview, March 19, 2015). Ekumfi Etwam is a small fishing village in the Mfantiman District of the Central Region, Ghana, also known as Tantom, and spelled by Tsemafo as “Otuam.” This multiplicity of the name of this town itself is indicative of colonial history and the persistence of aural tradition despite the emergence of maps and written histories.

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<sup>8</sup> These documents were being restored by the National Archives. I requested access but was not able to receive permission from the appropriate church authority.



Tsemafo told me that during Acquaaah's tenure as chairman of the Methodist Church Ghana (1950-54) he traveled to Etwam and heard this song, and decided to arrange it for Christian practice. His narrative of how this song originated includes specific details of his hometown and his family:

Yes, "Osaberimba." I was told by my grandmother... [that] the people of Otuam, where we live, were going to fight the Dego, that is another people from the same Akan community, but they are of different tribe, let me say ethnicity. And there was misunderstanding between them about a dead body which was: Those from my town sent [people who] pass through the land of Dego people, and because there wasn't any car then. So they were sending the sick person to another town, and when they were coming, unfortunately the person died, so those people who, because there wasn't any car, those people who were carrying the man were tired, so they put the corpse down. And the people there intentionally started to tease them, "Hey, your dead body is smelling! We don't like the scent that comes out" and so on. And this gradually yielded war, so when they went back, in fact it was a very terrible war, but after that...

Terpenning: When was that? In the ...

Tsemafo: That was in the 1920s. Then, my grandmother said, "When Rev. GDR Acquaaah was the chairman, he was to visit our town for the first time." Because of his work he has to go round, and it came to a point where he had to visit our town.

Terpenning: So it was only once he was Chairman...

Tsemfo: Yes, so he and his entourage came to Otuam. And then when he came there, that is one typical thing with my people, even today: As soon as the Methodists are going to have anything which will be beneficial to the town, even the traditionalists will all join and support, give moral support. So when he came to visit the town, the traditionalists also came to welcome him, so they started playing *Asafo* drums and whatnot. And you know the typical thing is that when those who then converted to Christianity, that is the Methodists, they also turn the music, that kind of *Asafo* song to biblical subjects, that is it. (Interview, March 19, 2015).

Tsemafo then began to sing the version of “Osabarima” that his grandmother knew, but stopped after a few words, saying he needed to consult his archive before continuing. Tsemafo’s performance of the history of this particular *Ebibindwom* song was also a performance of his identity as a historian and as someone rooted in the locality of the Fante town of Otuam. While he did not make an explicit connection between the war and “Osabarima,” his narrative implied that the song was from his town and was collected by Acquah there. The connection Tsemafo made between “Osabarima” and his hometown is indicative of how music and oral history are intertwined in Fante life. The implications of his narrative exposes the multiplicity of performative knowledge that is often overlooked by written histories.

The passion with which both Tsemafo and Albert Acquah argued their positions signifies the prominence of Gaddiel Acquah in the history of *Ebibindwom*. Both narratives foreground elements that are important in the context of their own family histories. While Albert Acquah seeks to preserve the authority of authorship in his family, Tsemfo expressed the oral history of

his hometown in the context of the history of “Osabarima.” Their narratives are also related to the discourse on how *Ebibindwom* texts originate and their position in-between the non-literate Fante Christian population and the elite leadership of the MCG. I discuss these issues further below in the context of musical analysis and my interview with a prominent *Ebibindwom* singer.

Historians are also uncertain as to whether Acquaaah actually sang *Ebibindwom* himself. Ellen Yorke, an eighty-four year-old respected *Ebibindwom* singer, told me that he didn’t sing the songs himself, but acted primarily as an interpreter or promoter of the music (Interview, March 30, 2015). In this formulation, Acquaaah’s role in promoting *Ebibindwom* can be understood as an extension of his work in translating the Bible into the Fante language; he sought to better align the practice of Methodism introduced by the British with local needs. It is likely that he was involved in the decision to include *Ebibindwom* texts for the first time in the 1937 Fante hymnbook. However, it is also likely he was not the only person involved in that decision, as things such as the revision of a hymnbook are typically done through committees. Methodist composer Moses Kinnah (b.1934) told me that Acquaaah’s contemporary, hymn composer I.B. Riverson, was responsible for the collection of *Ebibindwom* in the hymnbook (Interview, March 30, 2015). Because hymns composed by both men were included in the hymnbook, it is possible they were both involved in revising the hymnbook at that time. Nonetheless, the inclusion of *Ebibindwom* in the hymnbook is the first clear evidence of a change from an exclusively orally transmitted and composed tradition to a written one that was sanctioned by Methodist church officials.

Despite the controversy regarding the origins of “Osabarima,” Acquaaah’s legacy in the history of *Ebibindwom* is unmatched. Four years after Acquaaah died, the British Methodist S.G.

Williamson published an article regarding “The Lyric in the Fante Methodist Church” (1958). In it he credits Acquah with composing the lyric “W’omfa ndaase mma hen Wura o” (“Let us render thanks to our Master”) for the occasion of his induction as chairman of the MCG in 1950. Williamson upholds Acquah as a model for others to follow, but concludes: “There is little sign that the present and coming generation will provide, in the Christian context, the men and woman steeped in their own culture, as Gaddiel Acquah was, to bring to fruition the promise the lyrics hold” (1958:132). Unfortunately, Williamson, like later writers on the topic, is not specific about Acquah’s contributions. He does not attribute any of the eight lyrics to Acquah, although one that he includes, “Buebue Sor Ntokura ” (“Open, Windows of Heaven”) is widely attributed to him by other scholars (Ampaw-Asiedu 2008:48, Kras Arthur, Interview, March 2, 2015).

Acquah’s work promoting *Ebibindwom* can be seen in the context of the broader movement to reframe Christianity for an African context. Ampah-Asiedu writes:

No longer is theology to be regarded as the preserve and monopoly of western intellectual thought, nor can we continue to think of theology as belonging solely to the academia, whether in Africa or elsewhere. Rev Acquah is seen as representing the many ordinary Christians whose reflections on the Gospel can be discerned in many ways, which set for us the parameters and framework for doing theology today. (2008:49)

Because Acquah was chairman of the MCG, his participation in *Ebibindwom* validated local knowledge as contributing to the broader Methodist Christian project. This work was part of a trend across much of the Christian world in the 1950s of incorporating local musical features into worship. For example, the Congolese Missa Luba is considered the first African setting of the

Catholic mass performed by Africans. It was first performed in 1958 under the direction of Father Guido Haazen, a Franciscan missionary from Belgium. This was not initially a written composition, but was later transcribed by Haazen and has been sung by many choirs all over the world (Foster 2005:1). These developments are related to the Pan-African movement that originated in the United States, and may have been influenced by the popularization of spirituals in the African American community. Ethnomusicologist Jean Ngoya Kidula makes this case in the context of her comparison of Kenyan and African American Christian musical forms of expression and approaches to worship (Kidula 2013). Her work ties the African experience of colonialism to the experience of slaves in America through musical analysis. This connection has not yet been established in the case of *Ebibindwom*.

Although more research needs to be conducted regarding Acquah's musical activities, his work promoting and composing *Ebibindwom* seems to be an aspect of his work developing Fante as a written language. *Ebibindwom* became a more written and written about component of Ghanaian Methodism during this time, but it also continues to be practiced in non-written form, and in this way enables non-literate women to voice their understanding of Christianity on their own terms, in a way that does may not always conform to the expectations of the MCG hierarchy. In this way, *Ebibindwom* continues to resist categorization and the purification that was a prominent aspect of the missionary and colonial project.

### **The Practice of *Ebibindwom* in the National Sphere**

The practice of *Ebibindwom* is distinct from the European style hymns sung in MCG churches by church choirs, as its name, which can also be translated as "Black Song," implies.



# THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA

## KOKOMLEMLE CIRCUIT

### BETHEL SOCIETY KOKOMLEMLE

P. O. BOX 12635 ACCRA - NORTH TEL 0302237779

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>WEEKLY ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>TIME</u>
SUNDAY DIVINE SERVICE	(FIRST SERVICE) (SECOND SERVICE)	7.30AM - 9.00AM
COMMUNION SERVICE	(FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH)	9.00AM - 10.00AM
BIBLE CLASS MEETING		6.00PM - 8.00PM
LEADERS MEETING	(2ND & 4TH THURSDAYS)	9.00AM - 12.00AM
SPECIAL PRAYER MEETING	FRIDAY	5.00AM - 6.00AM
MORNING DEVOTION	(MONDAY - FRIDAY)	6.00PM - 7.30PM
CONFIRMATION CLASS	(WEDNESDAY)	

<u>ORGANIZATION MEETINGS</u>		
<u>ORGANIZATIONS</u>	<u>DAY</u>	<u>TIME</u>
WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP	MONDAY	5.30PM - 7.00PM
GUILD	"	6.00PM - 7.30PM
MEN'S FELLOWSHIP	TUESDAY	6.00PM - 7.30PM
CHURCH CHOIR	"	6.00PM - 8.00PM
SINGING BAND	"	6.00PM - 7.30PM
SUSANNA WESLEY MISSION AUXILIARY (SUWMA)	"	6.00PM - 7.30PM
CHRIST LITTLE BAND	WEDNESDAY	5.30PM - 7.30PM
YOUTH FELLOWSHIP	"	6.30PM - 8.00PM
CHURCH CHOIR	THURSDAY	6.00PM - 8.00PM
SINGING BAND	"	6.30PM - 7.30PM
BOYS AND GIRLS BRIGADE	SATURDAY	2.00PM - 5.00PM

Figure 2.2. Weekly meeting schedule of the Bethel Methodist Church in Kokomlemle, Accra.

This distinction is visually apparent in the weekly schedule of Bethel Methodist Church in Kokomlemle (Figure 2.2), which lists the organizations that meet regularly at a typical Methodist Church in the Greater Accra area. While the choir and singing band (performers of highlife-style music performed primarily during offerings) rehearse twice a week, the Christ Little Band meets

on Wednesday evenings. The Christ Little Band functions primarily as a bible study group. The members sit together during Sunday services in a separate section from the choir. Christ Little Bands are mostly made up of women who sometimes wear matching clothing. They sing *Ebibindwom* at their weekly meetings, during church services, at camp meetings, and at annual events where it is appropriate. These groups carry on *Ebibindwom* as an aurally-transmitted tradition, some learning the tradition from their relatives in the home at a young age (Tsemafo March 19, 2015).

Although not as well-known as the music of the Presbyterian church composers discussed in the next chapters, *Ebibindwom* has become accepted as part of Ghanaian national heritage. Methodist scholars and church leaders have promoted *Ebibindwom* in this respect. For example, University of Ghana Professors Amuah and Andoh have recently argued that, “Through *Ebibindwom*, the Ghanaian is able to receive and relate to Christianity as if it originated from Africa” (2014:712). Their use of the general terms “Ghanaian” and “Africa” demonstrate a view that *Ebibindwom* is broadly relevant beyond its specific Fante origins. This view has been supported by national media broadcasters, who have invited *Ebibindwom* singers to perform and explain their music for a national audience. In particular, TV Africa has included *Ebibindwom* in its programming (Yorke, Interview, March 30, 2015), as has the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC).<sup>9</sup> The Greater Accra diocese Little Christ Band was recently invited by the GBC to participate in their 2015 Easter “Seven Lessons on the Cross” program that took place March 31, 2015. This nationally broadcast program, which I participated in as a GBC choir member,

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, because I interviewed Yorke late in my research process, I was unable to confirm the role of TV Africa in broadcasting *Ebibindwom*, but she did show me a recording of the session.

indicates an official acceptance of *Ebibindwom* as nationally relevant. The GBC choir also sometimes sings written arrangements in the *Ebibindwom* style. The GBC music department has been interested in *Ebibindwom* from the time of independence. Williamson writes: “Outside the Church, at the moment of writing, the Fante lyric is receiving recognition as an aspect of that indigenous culture in which the coming of independence to Ghana and nationalist feeling have helped to revive an interest. Radio Ghana, for example, appears to provide more frequently than formerly programs wholly given over to traditional songs and rhythms, and the Fante lyric has found its place in this context” (Williamson 1958:133). It is likely that Atta Annan Mensah, as the first director of music at the GBC, was instrumental in the inclusion of *Ebibindwom* on national radio at that time.

### ***Ebibindwom* Structure: An Analysis of Recordings**

As I was able to witness only one performance of *Ebibindwom* in context during my time in Ghana (discussed below), my understanding of its musical features is based on three recorded sources. These sound recordings come from different historical time periods (1950s, 1976, and 2008) and regions (Etwam, Cape Coast, and Greater Accra). Although there are significant differences between them, these recordings share the significant musical features that makes *Ebibindwom* an identifiable musical genre. Listening to these recordings means listening to how Fante women have internalized Christianity and adopted hymn singing into their own form of worship. Although there are significant differences between them, many musical features such as contrary motion, triadic harmony, and call-and-response form are common throughout these recordings. I argue that the frequent occurrence of contrary motion and triadic harmony in all



these recordings indicates the influence of the European hymn harmonic structure. While some would consider the occurrence of European harmony to be evidence of the success of European hegemony in Africa (see Agawu 2003:6), I consider the indexical creativity and hybridity of *Ebibindwom* as evidence of the agency of the Fante people in the context of the colonial environment.

The only internationally available recording of *Ebibindwom* I know of is included on the Smithsonian Folkways record titled “Woman’s Music of Ghana” (1981). This recording project was conducted by Verna Gillis in 1976 with women in Cape Coast (Email Communication, September 21, 2015). In the liner notes for this release, Ghanaian musicologist Francis A. Kobina Saighoe provides a description of the track: “Despite the Africanness of the musical contents and structure, the texts of these lyrics are almost always based on biblical texts. This song first tells the story of the offering of Isaac to God by his father, Abraham, and then goes on to laud the mightiness of the power of God” (Saighoe 1981). By providing a summary of the song text, Saighoe guides “world music” listeners through the experience of hearing Fante woman tell a Biblical story in their own way.

I begin by illustrating some common musical features of *Ebibindwom* based on a transcription of a section of this Smithsonian Folkways recording (Figure 2.3, below). First, there is at least one soloist who includes at some point in each *ndwom* (song) an extended recitation, similar to an operatic recitative. If there is more than one soloist they may trade off, only one singing at a time. They typically decide ahead of time how this will work (Ellen Yorke, Interview, March 30, 2015). The text of this recitative is typically based on a Bible passage and

ma wo na me ni tu me ni wo fe nsa a go ro bi ne tu me ni

5  
ya wa wa na me ni tu me ni wo fe sa go ro bi tu me ni

Figure 2.3. My transcription of the first call-and-response section (0:40) of the Smithsonian Folkways “Woman’s Music of Ghana” (1981), Track 7: “Fanti Women.”

ends with a specific melodic call, which cues the supporting singers to come in with a particular response in harmony.

The melodies sung by the soloists follow the speech patterns of the language.<sup>10</sup> This distinguishes *Ebibindwom* style of singing from the early Fante Methodist hymns where the tonal contour of the language is not followed. The choral responses may take the form of unmetered, sustained harmonic support for the continued melodic phrase sung by the soloist (such is the case with “Osabarima”). Or, alternatively, the response can take the form of a metered, repeating phrase that continues with variations performed by the soloist (Figure 2.3). In live performances, bells, drums and shakers often accompany these responses, especially toward the ending of a song. The relationship between the soloist and chorus is complex. This general form can be

<sup>10</sup> This concept of tonal prosody and its relationship to hybridity as postcolonial consciousness will be further examined in the following chapters.

considered “African” in that call-and-response and cyclical formal structures are ubiquitous in sub-Saharan Africa generally.

The harmony of these choral responses reflects the influence both of European contact and local, story-telling musical traditions. There are typically at least three independent vocal parts that move in contrary motion. The frequent occurrence of contrary motion is significant because it separates *Ebibindwom* from the non-Christian styles of singing such as *Asafo* and *Adenkum*, Fante traditions which are generally considered to be the closest related to *Ebibindwom* (Turkson 1992:66-8, Amuah and Andoh 2014:709). Although contrary motion (and complex polyphony) does occur in the vocal musics of South and East Africa (see Nketia 1974:165), it is not common in traditional vocal harmony in Ghana. As Agawu writes, “In traditional Ghanaian music, vocal polyphony is restricted to two or occasionally three parts.... traditional music moves only in homophonic parallelism of thirds and sixths” (1984:52).<sup>11</sup> Thus, the occurrence of independent voices in *Ebibindwom* can be attributed to the influence of hymn singing.

This vocal independence can be heard on track 7 of the Smithsonian Folkways “Traditional Women’s Music From Ghana” (Supplementary CD, Track 2). The chorus comes in with a repeating, cyclical, three-part descending line after the meter is established by the soloist’s call at the end of her recitative (Figure 2.3, above). Instead of following the other voices in a descending motion, the lower voice begins by moving up a fourth. The minor seventh that begins

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<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, my knowledge of *Asafo* and *Adenkum* singing is limited. I have found only unverified recordings of *Adenkum* and my understanding of the *Asafo* tradition is based on Turkson’s work (1982). This limited research supports Agawu’s assertion that when harmony occurs in these traditions it is parallel in nature, due to the tonal character of Ghanaian languages.

measure five is another indication of European musical influence. Resolving to a major third, this movement is reminiscent of a dominant to tonic movement, and it is not a common interval or resolution in traditional singing practices. The contrary motion and resolutions of this example demonstrate a departure from traditional Fante musical practices.

The soloist continues singing variations of the call throughout the repeated refrain, adding harmonic complexity. The A-flat dorian tonality is reinforced in the last resolution (before a new soloist comes in) when the lowest voice drops out so the last resolution is from B-flat and D-flat to A-flat and C-flat, a parallel movement that would not be conventional for a hymn cadence. Although there are many similarities to hymns in the way the harmonies work in *Ebibindwom*, they are distinct from hymns in that they are primarily modal, or diatonic, in nature. Thus, *Ebibindwom* generally does not follow the rules of “functional” European harmony. Attta Annan Mensah supports this view of *Ebibindwom* as distinct from the Ghanaian Presbyterian choral tradition on the basis of this modal approach to harmony:

A striking example [of African modal composition] is an arrangement by Isaac D. Riverson (Ghana) of a Fanti song. To serve practical needs, he sets it for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. However, he consistently avoids chordal progressions as they reveal themselves in both Western classical and modal harmony, though his chords are tertian (in Akan fashion). He yields to the part-making habits of a new tradition of religious songs popularly known as "Fanti lyrics," smacking not a little of Palestrina. One can only describe this as "Riversonian-Akan harmonic style." In a different and equally convincing manner, we have an Nketia-Akan harmony in "Mmɔbrɔ Asem." (Mensah 1998:240)

Mensah uses the more general term “Akan” to unify Riverson and Nketia instead of “Fante” and “Ashante,” casting these traditions as historically related and thus able to constitute a cohesive national tradition, however distinct they are. Mensah’s reference to Palestrina is significant here because it situates *Ebibindwom* within the framework of European musical history. Palestrina was an Italian composer during the Renaissance, before the functional harmony used in Protestant hymns. Framing the harmonic character of *Ebibindwom* in this way emphasizes its difference from Methodist hymns. This passage also distinguishes the harmonic style of Fante Lyrics from that established within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, discussed in the following chapter. Mensah supports an analysis of the modal harmonic character of *Ebibindwom*, but neither he nor other *Ebibindwom* scholars have considered the significance of the instances of contrary motion within this modal framework.

A transcription from a different recording illustrates the variety of *Ebibindwom* musical forms and further illustrates the modal character of *Ebibindwom* harmony. This musical example is a transcription of the beginning of one of four tracks of *Ebibindwom* contained in the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Gramophone Library (Figure 2.4, Supplementary CD Track 3).

Although there is no identifying information on the disk, I believe it was recorded by Atta Annan Mensah sometime after 1956 when he became the first Head of Music at the GBC. He mentions collecting *Ebibindwom* in his writing, so it is likely this recording was produced in the late 1950s or early 1960s (Mensah 1960:186).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> It does not seem that this particular recording is the one Mensah refers to in his article because he uses the masculine pronoun. But, because he was the first head of the GBC music department (Nketia 1997), and he was an *Ebibindwom* scholar it is likely he was involved in producing these recordings.



Figure 2.4. My transcription of the beginning of side B of GBC Local Disc 2638

As no information is available regarding this recording at the GBC, I initially had trouble identifying if these were Methodist singers or if the women were from another Christian denomination that sings in a similar style. The response from Professor Kras Arthur (Interview, March 2, 2015) and Ellen Yorke (Interview March 30, 2015) was that this recording was made by singers from the Mosama Disco Church, an Independent Church that broke off from the MCG in the 1920s. Their responses implied that the type of singing represented on the four tracks does not represent the Methodist tradition they knew. However, when I spoke to another music professor at the Methodist Univeristy, Arthur Tsemafo, he immediately recognized one track when I first played it for him, as being a part of Methodist tradition in his hometown of Etwam, in the Central Region: “Long time ago, I first heard this song, when I was about 12 or 13. I don’t

hear it again. Its a Methodist one, Methodist style of *Ebibindwom*. If it is Mozama I would easily [tell]... I know their style because I've been with them too (Interview, March 19, 2015). He went on to explain that because the recording was old and the women speak in a local dialect, the other people I asked did not hear it as contemporary *Ebibindwom*. He continued, "It's a typical language from my hometown, a dialect" (Interview, March 19, 2015). Unlike the language heard in the Smithsonian Folkways recording, this dialect is not mutually intelligible with Asante Twi. My investigations into the source of these tracks reveals the regional variations of *Ebibindwom* and the differing conceptions of the boundaries of this genre held by different scholars and practitioners. The contested boundaries of *Ebibindwom* reveals the often subjective nature of African musical historiography.

When Tsemafo recognized the track labeled side B of GBC Local Disc 2638, and began to sing along, I asked him the meaning. He responded:

It means 'If it had not been God we would have died. You would have died if God did not intervene' And this one is not completely in the bible, but maybe there was a preaching— Sometimes this is how they get their message. The preacher goes on, and by intuition somebody will come out with a message and use it. It is not always chosen from the Bible, but it is chosen from a theme. This is a kind of theme. (Tsemafo, Interview, March 19, 2015)

The phrase "*Ye wie*" can be translated as something like, "we've finished" or "we rest." Then toward the end of the piece there is a refrain that Tsemafo translated: "These people came and they fight. It is because of the future prospect that is why we are suffering. Because of the heaven

which we will enter, that is why we are suffering” (ibid.). While there is reference to “heaven” and “God,” the text is not directly based on a Bible passage.

Like most *Ebibindwom*, the four tracks on the GBC recording are in the dorian (or “Re”) mode (Mensah 1960:184). These tracks also include instances of contrary motion of the parts (see Figure 2.4, measures 7-8). However, there are less frequent instances of contrary motion in the GBC tracks compared to the Smithsonian Folkways recording, discussed above. Lastly, all four of the GBC tracks contain cadences in which the lower voice moves down a fourth (Figure 3, measure 9). The frequency of this descending fourth motion in the GBC recordings is evidence of the influence of the plagal, “Amen” cadences, common in hymns. Although more research is needed to determine the exact nature of local and European influences, my analysis of these two transcriptions provides evidence that *Ebibindwom* is a hybrid singing tradition.

### ***Ebibindwom* Composition from the Perspective of a Practitioner**

In this section I consider how Ellen Yorke, a renowned *Ebibindwom* practitioner, composes and conceptualizes this music. I conducted interviews on March 19th and March 30th, with Yorke at her home near the Good Shepard Methodist Church in Bubuashi, Greater Accra, where she attends church and is a member of the Little Christ Band. In our interviews, Yorke shared her perspective on *Ebibindwom* and this tradition connects with her identity as a non-literate, non-English speaking, Fante Methodist. I was helped in these interviews by Pastor Kwaku Fosu, who translated and introduced me to Ellen Yorke. In addition to the two recorded



interviews, I attended a church service with Yorke on her eighty-fourth birthday to witness how she performs *Ebibindwom* in the context of a church service.<sup>13</sup>

Our interviews began with a discussion of her family history. She learned to sing *Ebibindwom* from her father, who came from the town of Ekomfi, a fishing village in the Central Region. She said her father's family were fishermen and that they were converted to Methodism. She told me that although women are known as carrying the tradition of *Ebibindwom* today, it was men who first sang and developed the genre from their work songs, so it was not unusual that she learned from her father at the time. Yorke's historical narrative that *Ebibindwom* came from the work songs of male fisherman connects her own family history with the practice just as Tsemafo's conception of the origins of "Osaberima." These two highly-knowledgeable *Ebibindwom* singers and historians come from different areas of the Fante area and understand its history in the context of those localities. The divergence in their historical narratives indicate that *Ebibindwom* is not one unified genre, but a descriptive term that refers to a variety of locally emergent Christian singing practices in the Fante language. This multiplicity can be considered a product of different family and community experiences with *Ebibindwom*. In other words, the act of telling the *Ebibindwom* genealogy is also a performance of family and community genealogy.

To elicit her opinion of written *Ebibindwom*, I asked Ellen Yorke how she views the effect on the congregation if the church choir sings *Ebibindwom* instead of the Little Christ

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<sup>13</sup> Because she does not speak or read English, I did not ask her to sign an IRB form, but she did give me verbal permission to record the interviews and use her name in my writing. Because the IRB forms were specifically intended for workplace choir members, it was not applicable or appropriate to our relationship. I did communicate with her directly on a limited basis to set up interviews over the phone in Twi, which helped convey my commitment to my research in Ghana. She is a public figure within the MCG and in Ghana, so I feel that using her name here is appropriate.

Band. She responded that when a choir sings *Ebibindwom* style it is “*Eye de*” (“Delicious,” the same phrase used to describe good food), but that it is different from how she sings. She demonstrated the difference by singing in a more refined, and metered, vocal style from what she herself cultivates in *Ebibindwom* performance. The timber distinction she demonstrated was clear, but did not imply a denigration of either the European choral tone or *Ebibindwom*. Her position is inclusive and indicates that she is not opposed to choral adaptations of the songs she sings or composes. She is worried, however, about a lack of interest in learning the repertoire that she has mastered. She indicated that she has tried to teach her songs to a younger generation, but they don’t have time.

Ellen Yorke described the process of preparing for the Sunday service and composing *Ebibindwom* in general terms. First, she first studies the Bible to find a passage that would be appropriate for the upcoming church service and that would work to set to music. The Bible passage to be sermonized is generally indicated in the previous week’s program. She showed me some notes she made in deciding what passages to use. She composes songs ahead of time based on a Bible passage and attributes her dreams to helping her come up with ideas. Sometimes, she said, she practices the recitation throughout the night, so she knows it very well. Then she brings the composition to the other members of the Little Christ Band to learn parts. During the sermon she may interrupt the orator with the song. She told me that when she began to do this with a particular Bishop, he asked her to refrain from singing until the end of his sermon (Yorke, Interview, March 30, 2015). When I attended church with her, the pastor waited at the pulpit as she completed a performance with vocal and instrumental accompaniment from members of the Little Christ Band. This practice has a long and contentious history within the church, as

Williamson notes: “The initial experience of having one’s sermon broken into by the leader of the lyrics just as one is getting into full stride may, indeed, be a compliment to the preacher, but is at the same time a shattering experience” (Williamson 1958:126). Yorke’s creative process requires a significant amount of dedication and coordination to be successful. Although *Ebibindwom* is considered spontaneous, there is a significant contemplative component that requires preparation.

Yorke also attends annual conferences where singers compose works for competitions between *Ebibindwom* groups of different regions. Her experience at one in 2013 reveals her protectiveness towards her work. Yorke said the groups were directed to pick a passage from the Book of Acts to compose a song. Before the competition, one woman came to her to learn from her and Yorke taught her the song she prepared. It turned out this woman whom she taught was from the town of Swedru and she took it and used it at the competition. While the Accra district ended up winning the competition, the result of the experience is that she is now more careful about teaching her songs to people she doesn’t know. This story provides insight into how Ellen Yorke sees herself as a professional singer, protective of her intellectual work. She views the songs she composes as her property which are under threat of being taken for someone else’s gain. She emphasized in our interviews that because she did not learn to read or write, she is particularly vulnerable to being taken advantage of in this way.

Two more examples of particular events in which Yorke composed songs further illustrate her compositional process and the social function of *Ebibindwom*. The first is a song she composed for a Bishop who hosted an event every year for widows. He fed them and hosted them at his house, so she composed a song celebrating his generosity. The song details all the

# Yεaboα ' No

To: My Family -  
O my 28th Birthday

(We Are Gathered)

KRAS ARTHUR  
19 - 07 - 85

Soprano  
Yεα - boa - noo, — me Nya - mei bra na be hyi-ra hεn-oo

Alto  
Hmm;

Tenor  
Hmm;

Bass  
Hmm;

S  
— m'Magyenkwa ei yεα-boa - noo — me Nyame bra na be - hyi-ra hεn oo

A  
yεα-boa - noo — bra na be - hyi-ra hεn oo

T  
yεα-boa - noo — bra na be - hyi-ra hεn oo

B  
yεα-boa - noo — bra na be - hyi-ra hεn oo

Figure 2.5. First page of a 1985 composition by Kras Arthur, reprinted with permission.

types of food that he provided for them. The refrain was translated as, “In the future, we will remember what you have done.” She also composed something to celebrate the inauguration of Kwame Nkrumah. This composition was later recorded by TV Africa on some anniversary to celebrate the independence of Ghana. When she performed the song for me, she added words that addressed the electricity shortage that Ghana was currently experiencing. Fosu translated some of the lyrics as, “If God will not help us, what can we do as Ghanaians? Nowadays, light off, light off, all the tariffs, water, everything, they have increased. If not God will help us, what can we do? Unless we pray to God and God will be our helper, so that we survive” (Interview, 2015, March 30, 2015). These examples demonstrate the flexibility of *Ebibindwom* for Yorke. She composes songs for secular occasions that are significant in her life and includes Christian references.

My interviews with Yorke demonstrated that the non-written practice of *Ebibindwom* is complex and versatile. Next, I examine how those with more formal musical training are engaged in a reconceptualization of the genre through written compositions.

### **“*Ebibindwom* in a New Key”: Shifting From Oral to Written Tradition**

“*Ebibindwom* in a New Key” was the name of a program proposed by the Music Department of the Methodist University College in Dansoma. It was to feature both university choirs singing written compositions in the *Ebibindwom* style and members of Little Christ Bands singing in the oral/aural tradition. Unfortunately, the program did not ultimately receive the funding necessary to take place, but it illustrates the mission of the Music Department of at the Methodist University College. When the Music Department was established in 2005, part of its mission was

to promote *Ebibindwom* as an essential aspect of MCG musical practice (Kras Arthur, Interview, March 2, 2015). As literacy increases, Methodist leaders and musicians are working towards more inclusion of *Ebibindwom* within formal Methodist education in Ghana to ensure its future. Towards that end, at least two members of the music faculty are active composers of choral (SATB) arrangements of *Ebibindwom* songs and original works in the *Ebibindwom* style.

Music Department faculty member Kras Arthur explained the need for such compositions when I asked him about why his church, where he is the choir director, replaced the annual performance of the Christmas hymn “Unto Us a Child is Born” with his own arrangement of an *Ebibindwom* song with a similar text: “Today, we do not want to sound Western, we want to sound African” (Interview, March 2, 2015). For Arthur, his arrangement of *Ebibindwom* for performance by his church choir offered a way of indexing Africaness even when it is written and modified through his use of standard compositional techniques.

Kras Arthur employs written compositional techniques (such as adding leading tones, sequences, retrogrades, imitative counterpoint) to “expand” on the unwritten *Ebibindwom* tradition (Interview, March 2, 2015). Regarding this process of writing *Ebibindwom*, he continued:

Yes, the aural tradition, that is how it happens. Then some of us, we pick them and we try to expand them, trying to bring in some Western harmonic sonorities, you know, to make it appreciable.[...] We try to keep the traditional things inside there. To make people feel that this is really African, this is *Ebibindwom*, this is the Methodist type of *Ebibindwom*. (Arthur, Interview, March 2, 2015)

For Arthur, composing *Ebibindwom* is a way of expressing his experience as a Fante Christian and his knowledge as a literate composer. This process of applying his knowledge of music theory in the process of writing *Ebibindwom* is personally meaningful for him. In an original 1985 composition, he thanks his parents on the occasion of his birthday (Figure 2.5, above). Kras Arthur's compositions maintain the minor tonality and call-and-response form of the historical recordings. But, as is evident in this composition, he adds leading tones, which changes the modal tonality of non-written *Ebibindwom* that I described above. His application of European compositional techniques to the *Ebibindwom* framework adds another layer of hybridity to an already hybrid genre. With this layer of hybridity, new indexical associations are created.

Kras Arthur is not unique in this endeavor; for some decades now, composers, including others at the Methodist University College, have been adapting non-written works, and composing entirely new works. This process involves a reconceptualization of the place of *Ebibindwom* within the MCG. The writing of *Ebibindwom* within the MCG has accompanied the emergence of a discourse regarding its history and function as Christian expression. The early articles by Williamson (1958) and Mensah (1960) are a testament to this process. However, there is a danger that this discourse becomes centered on written texts over aural and privileges the contributions of the literate men (such as Freeman and Acquah) over the mostly non-literate women who continue to practice *Ebibindwom*. At the same time, these composers and writers can be heard as extending the work of hybridity that the earlier non-literate practitioner of *Ebibindwom* pursued. So, the hybridity cycle repeats itself and new associations are created. While my limited research time and resources does not allow me to fully understand these changes, it is clear from my conversations with professors at the Methodist College that they are

embracing local forms of knowledge, rather than turning away from them in favor of a more European model of Christianity.

### ***Ebibindwom* in a Broader Historical Perspective**

The responses of *Ebibindwom* practitioners to questions about origins of particular songs and recordings indicate a fluid, pluralistic notion of *Ebibindwom* as an umbrella term to describe Fante religious expression. The repertoire is flexible and changing, despite the unchanging collection of eighteen Fante Lyrics printed in the Fante hymnbook since 1937. Songs are composed spontaneously and often deal with current events. In these ways, *Ebibindwom* participants have resisted the process of reduction that writing often imposes (Gautier 2014). The continued relevance of *Ebibindwom* is also evidence of the continuing negotiation of the place of aurality in Fante communities as a means of expressing historical and postcolonial consciousness.

The history of the Fante as a socio-linguist group accounts for some of the variation in *Ebibindwom* histories and musical style. As historian Rebecca Shumway points out, Fante speakers are not simply a subgroup of the Akan. They are an amalgamation of various city-states that formed a coalition to resist Asante attempts to control the slave trade on the coast in the 1750s. She writes, “accounts of eyewitness observers clearly indicate that coastal groups exhibited recognizable cultural and linguistic variation prior to the nineteenth century” (Shumway 2011:30). Fante emerged in the context of the eighteenth-century slave trade, eventually replacing most of the smaller language groups, with the exception of Efutu which is still spoken in Winneba. Thus, the emergence of *Ebibindwom* in the nineteenth century



can be considered a result of the unification that took place, while its multiplicity indicates the residual distinctions between communities that are still relevant today.

Lastly, *Ebibindwom* arose in Ghana around the same time African American spirituals in the United States were being composed and performed. In a way that is similar to the origins of *Ebibindwom*, spirituals emerged from camp meetings that were not overseen by the dominant power structures (Burnim 2000). The more extensive research into spirituals and formal commonalities could provide guidance for further research into *Ebibindwom*. For example, the issue of hybridity and expression of community is at play, as Lawrence Levine writes:

Spirituals also testify to the continuation of a strong sense of community. The overriding antiphonal structure of the spirituals—the call-and-response pattern that Blacks brought with them from Africa and that may have been reinforced in America by the practice of lining out hymns—placed individuals in continual dialogue with each other. The structure of their music presented slaves with an outlet for individual feelings even while it continually drew them back into the communal presence” (2016:333)

My investigation has not been extensive enough to permit a comparison in terms of the function or form of these musics, but further research may helpfully provide insights into the musical Black Atlantic connections.

### Chapter 3: Choral Music in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana

As argued in the introduction, hybridity is a central component of postcolonial discourse. It is an integral aspect of expressing a collective consciousness in the wake of the traumatic cultural contact of colonialism, without continuing the separations that structure colonial ideology. Hybrid art forms have arisen from the colonial experience despite colonial attempts to implement separations and hierarchical systems of control. Colonialism is predicated on this ideological framework, and hybrid musical forms threaten the legitimacy of this control. However, these hybrid forms do not necessarily reject the institutions in which they arose, and leaders can come to accept them. We saw an example of this change in the previous chapter when Thomas Birch Freeman praised the singing at the 1876 Methodist camp meeting, and as *Ebibindwom* became incorporated into the official Fante Methodist hymnbook in 1937. The previous chapter considered how *Ebibindwom* developed as a hybrid choral tradition in the context of the British Methodist mission to Ghana and how the institutional history of the Methodist church and its leaders helped shape its development. In this chapter, I turn to the case of the Presbyterian mission and how Ghanaian Presbyterians innovated a written hybrid style of choral composition from within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG).<sup>14</sup> In particular, I consider the relationship between Ephraim Amu and Kwabena Nketia and how their work arose from their experience in the PCG. While they composed from their experience within the mission environment, their work exceeded the confines of this environment. In this and the following two chapters I outline how their creative scholarship and compositional approach challenged

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<sup>14</sup> The PCG was called the “Gold Coast Presbyterian Church” until independence, but I use PCG throughout.

assumptions and expressed a postcolonial consciousness that influenced the trajectory of an emerging Ghanaian nationalism.

The hybrid choral tradition of the PCG differs from *Ebibindwom* in at least four ways. Firstly, although local languages were used in hymns from the mid-nineteenth century in the PCG, a hybrid musical style that incorporated local musical influences only emerged later, in the late 1920s. Secondly, this hybrid tradition emerged as a written tradition, rather than through oral transmission. Ghanaian converts who had a musical education in the PCG and began to compose works with local influences. Thirdly, while *Ebibindwom* is limited to the Fante language, Presbyterian composers have used Asante, Ewe, Ga, and other local languages in their works. Lastly, the Presbyterian choral tradition has become more widely-known both within Ghana and in international music scholarship than *Ebibindwom*. It has become associated with Ghana to the extent that it does not have a particular label, other than “Ghanaian choral art music” (Dor 2005:443). In this chapter, I discuss the history of choral music in the PCG and consider the factors that contributed to its emergence and dispersion. I argue that the particularities of the Presbyterian mission to Ghana and international events helped shape this tradition.<sup>15</sup>

I begin with the nineteenth-century history of language and music scholarship within the Gold Coast Presbyterian Church. Compared to the British Methodist missionaries discussed in the previous chapter, the German speaking Presbyterian missionaries were more successful in implementing a separation between the music sung by Christian converts in church and the musical activities outside the church. However, after German speakers were expelled during the

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<sup>15</sup>The following chapter focuses on one composition by Ephraim Amu, who ethnomusicologist George Dor calls the “father of Ghanaian art music” (Dor 2014:7), that exemplifies his creativity.

first World War, the environment shifted toward more indigenous leadership. It was in this context that the Ewe composer Ephraim Amu (1899-1995) developed a musical hybridity that challenged this separation of local life from the Christian environment instituted by the missionaries (Keane 2007:23). In the 1920s, Amu began to establish a choral style that spread throughout the colony due primarily to the work of his students. Foremost among these students was J. H. Kwabena Nketia (b. 1921). Amu mentored Nketia, who became the most prominent African music scholar of his generation.<sup>16</sup> I also consider how the PCG approached revising the Presbyterian hymnbook in the 1950s and 60s. This revision process demonstrates that Amu's innovations were accepted, but that they were difficult to integrate into the practice of Presbyterianism in Ghana. Lastly, I consider the perspective of a prominent contemporary musician who performs the works of Amu and Nketia and composes new works.<sup>17</sup>

### **Christaller and Early Scholarship in the Presbyterian Church in Ghana**

The history of choral music in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana is intertwined with the history of local scholarship into local languages and cultures. The German linguist and missionary Johann Gottlieb Christaller (1827-1895) did the most to establish a tradition of scholarship within the Gold Coast Presbyterian mission during the nineteenth century. He was the first European to systematically study the Twi language, the most widely-spoken of Ghana's indigenous languages. As the Presbyterian mission was established in Akropong, he focused

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<sup>16</sup> This relationship is also explored in Chapter Four regarding Nketia's work at the GBC.

<sup>17</sup> The primary data for this chapter comes from research at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Akropong and interviews with Professor Nketia and Alfred Addaquay. This material is supplemented with secondary sources.

primarily on the local Akuapem dialect of Twi, which is mutually intelligible with the more widely-spoken Asante dialect. Within a year of his arrival in Ghana in 1853, he had learned enough Twi to begin Bible translations that resulted in the first Twi-language Bible. In addition, he began collecting local proverbs, eventually publishing 3,600 of them (Ofosu-Appiah 1997). Nketia told me he considered Christaller a “real scholar” because he did not edit anything out of this collection, even if the proverbs were considered vulgar (Interview, January 16, 2015). Nketia emphasized this point because it illustrates that Christaller diverged from his contemporary Europeans who were more interested in transforming local traditions to conform with European standards. Instead, Christaller attempted to document traditional life as it existed. Christaller was also responsible for the first Twi language hymnbook, published by the Basel Mission in 1860.<sup>18</sup> He also likely attempted to notate *Ebibindwom* and integrate into Presbyterian practice around 1865, as discussed in the previous chapter (Turkson 1975:9). These efforts demonstrate that Christaller was engaged with local practices outside the immediate context of the Presbyterian mission. This was an important component of the tradition of scholarship that he helped establish within the PCG. These efforts can be seen as a forerunner to what Ephraim Amu was to accomplish through his study of local music, which, in turn, influenced Nketia. Of course, Nketia did not know Christaller himself, but he became involved in furthering Christaller's project of Twi orthography in the 1940s as an assistant to Clement Akrofi, a Ghanaian who succeeded Christaller as the leading Twi scholar in the Gold Coast Presbyterian Church. At that time, Nketia was responsible for editing and preparing Twi texts, especially those used in Presbyterian schools, for publication (Nketia, Interview, January 16, 2015).

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<sup>18</sup> A copy of this hymnbook is contained at the Akrofi-Christaller library.

Christaller was also influential in his willingness to collaborate with educated locals, what Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako calls “African associates” (Bediako 1995:46). Through these collaborations and publications, Christaller began a tradition of scholarship within the Basel Mission that was not exclusive to Europeans. Perhaps the most important Ghanaian scholar to follow Christaller in the nineteenth-century was Carl Reindorf, a German educated Gold Coast native. As Bediako notes, “[B]oth Riendorf and the ‘Akropong school’ testify that in the mid-nineteenth century there did exist in the Gold Coast, as a result of the impact of missionary Christianity on African life, a number of educated Christians who had a clear self-consciousness as African[s] and Christians and who were alive to their intellectual responsibility to their society” (1995:47). This level of intellectual activity within the Presbyterian mission was not apparent in the cash-strapped, overly-stretched Methodist mission on the coast. These institutional differences help to account for the distinct singing practices that developed in these environments.

Christaller and his successors’ work can also be seen as part of the Eurocentric system of control that was instituted by Presbyterian missionaries. In general, nineteenth-century Presbyterian missionaries brought their European conception of Christianity to this new context, and this included a systematic approach to language. As Seth Quartey writes, “The socio-historical background of the missionaries, i.e., their pre-established judgment of the people to convert, Eurocentric rules, their primary objectives and faith-based acts, stand in opposition to the African social and cultural environment” (2007:15). Although Twi was accepted as necessary to facilitate conversions, local traditions were not incorporated into Christian practice and indigenous Ghanaians were not permitted to take leadership roles until after 1918. In her

consideration of correspondence between missionaries and European leaders in the pre-war period, Noel Smith writes, "The missionaries' reports of this period [1900-1917] show that while the desire for increased independence was strong among the Africans, the missionaries felt that the rapid social changes, the evidence of the continuing power of indigenous religion and custom, and the increasing secularisation of life, still demanded their leadership and guidance" (1966:158-9). According to Smith, a European leader in the PCG education system, these German missionaries were concerned about the hybridization of Christianity with local cultural practices. While Christaller might not have placed restrictions on the 3,600 proverbs included in his collection, Presbyterian missionaries did set strict guidelines for Ghanaian converts that separated them from the surrounding community and restricted their use of local expressive culture until well after the first World War.

Part of the purification project that Presbyterian missionaries attempted to implement was a distinction between culture and religion. The domain of the cultural was constructed based on the German conception of "Folk" while Christianity was conceptualized as a universal religion. Historian Birgit Meyer's writing about how German missionaries constructed the notion of a unified Ewe "culture" in the late-nineteenth century supports the application of Keane's conception of purification to the context of Presbyterianism in the Gold Coast. Based on her analysis of the Gold Coast Presbyterian Mission archival material from the pre-World War I era, Meyer convincingly argues, "that the mission employed the notions of culture and nationhood to establish order and impose power, and to prevent the emergence of hybridity, syncretism or whatever one wishes to call the creative trespassing of boundaries which formed a continuous threat to the colonial project" (Meyer 2002:169). George Dor similarly describes this context

when he writes, “Not only were the African converts segregated from the unconverted family members, but the missionaries also persuaded their converts to regard all their musical types as heathen, while only Western music was promoted” (2005: 443). The impact of the Presbyterian missions on the communities where they were located was immense because not only were members expected to come to church at least once a week, but their children were educated in schools run by the missions. European church leaders instituted a clear hierarchy that began with the leadership in Europe and disciplined both missionaries and converts who did not adhere to strict standards of behavior (Miller 2003). It is in this context that the musical hybridity Amu began to develop in the 1920s became politically salient, as I explore further in the following chapter. His creative trespassing of boundaries represents a re-integration of the religious and cultural domains of life in Ghana.

Amu’s work also took place in a time of shifting international circumstances. Because the German missionaries were expelled from the Gold Coast by the British during the first World War, in 1918 there was little option but to allow more local oversight into the mission, but this did not immediately result in a church that was more accommodating to indigenous music. Noel Smith describes the annual meeting of the leadership council in 1918 where there were eight African and three British members: “It was a quiet and encouraging Synod: members left reassured that although a new hand was at the tiller the course would be the same. The sincerity, patience and ability of Dr. Wilkie were evident to all and he quickly became a much-loved and esteemed leader of the young church” (Smith 1966:160-1). Wilkie was a Scottish missionary who replaced the Germans and stayed until 1931. In this period, he sought continuity, but also oversaw the “Africanization” of the leadership and the emergence of greater autonomy. Smith



goes on: "After the return of the [German Presbyterian] Basel Mission in 1926, the two overseas Missions [Scottish and German] worked harmoniously within the Church and became more and more subject to its jurisdiction apart from personal and financial matters" (Smith:163). While autonomy and the authority of local Presbyterian leaders increased, the problems of integrating Christianity into traditional life remained. For example, in the 1935 Synod meeting there was a detailed discussion of the traditional funeral practices that were not allowed. The fifth of eight resolutions states: "That our chiefs be approached, to put a stop to the heathenish customs mixed up with those of the Christians when a Christian dies" (Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast Synod Minutes 1935, Item 14). Using the phrase "our chiefs" may indicate that some Presbyterian leaders considered themselves to be part of the traditional, "Chieftaincy" power structure, thus illustrating allegiance both to the Church and traditional leadership.

The parallel structures of chieftaincy and Christianity is still the case today to a large extent. Particularly in the context of important occasions like funerals, tensions can arise between Christians and traditional rulers. For example, during the funeral of a traditional leader I attended while in Ghana, the Christian pastor emphasized the need to give up the practice of polygamy. The gathered mourners erupted with discussion, an indication that this issue continues to be relevant and contentious for many Ghanaians. As I discuss in the next section, incorporating local musical practices into PCG services was another contentious issue among Ghanaian Presbyterians in the 1920s and 30s, but it has gradually become acceptable to include drums and hybrid musical practices into PCG church services.

## **The Early Life and Education of Ephraim Amu**

Amu was born and baptized in the northern Ewe town of Peki-Avetile in what is now the Volta region of Ghana in 1899, the last of his mother's six children (Agyemang 1988:13). Amu's father had converted to Presbyterianism before he was born and upon doing so abandoned the traditional activities of drumming and woodcarving from which he made his living. When Kofi Agawu asked Amu if he got musical inspiration from his father he responded: "No, no. My father didn't teach me. He was a pagan, became a Christian, and thought that everything he did as a pagan should not be done as a Christian. So he never taught me anything" (Agawu 1987:54-55). This demonstrates the tremendous burden placed on African converts in the nineteenth century to change their way of life in the course of conversion.

Amu was a successful student throughout his time at various mission schools. At the age of thirteen he began his studies at a Presbyterian boarding school near his hometown, but separate from it. Amu's biographer, Fred Agyemang, writes of this school: "The early Presbyterians in Ghana were keen on creating exclusive [C]hristian suburbs or [C]hristian settlements where they had their schools and churches. Their aim was to facilitate pastoral and educational services dispensed in a close community of Christians and to protect the new converts from the pull of some doubtful local traditional beliefs and customs" (1988:14). So, Amu was separated early in his life from the non-Christian Ewe community. At age sixteen he was admitted to the seminary at Abetifi in the Twi-speaking area, walking some 150 miles to get there (Agyemang 1988:17). He pursued an interest in European music theory beyond what was necessary in his seminary training. After completing seminary training in 1920, Amu returned to Peki to teach and sought out Reverend Allotey Pappoe to become his music tutor. According to

an interview Agyemang conducted with Reverend Pappoe in 1978, Amu worked through Books 1 and 2 of the Victoria College of Music textbook on harmony, “In fact we were about to begin work on Fugue when I left,” Pappoe reported (Agyemang 1988:27). Amu’s first documented composition was written on the occasion of Reverend Pappoe’s departure from Peki for Accra in 1923. This and his subsequent early compositions were entirely within the European hymn framework, mostly in English, and a few in Ewe.

In 1927, after being promoted to the position of head music tutor at the seminary in Akropong, Amu became interested in documenting local singing traditions outside the church. According to Agyemang, this interest was precipitated by a missionary who encouraged Amu to undertake a project to notate popular and folk songs (1988:42). Along with a few German comparative musicologists, Amu was one of the first scholars to notate West African melodies in European notation. This scholarly work instigated his early compositional attempts towards musical hybridity.

Amu’s interest in local singing and traditional music occurred at the same he became aware of Pan-African literature. The political unity and broad public movement necessary to achieve self-government had not yet materialized in 1927, but the journey toward imagining an independent nation of Ghana had begun among intellectuals. Ghanaians educated abroad, including J.E.K. Aggrey (1875-1927), J.B. Danquah (1895-1966), and J.E. Casely Hayford, were writing about resisting European colonialism and maintaining African culture. Along with other intellectuals from the United States and Caribbean, such as W.E.B Dubois and Marcus Garvey, they formed an international Pan-African movement. Amu was most influenced by the writing of J.E.K. Aggrey who died in 1927, but had a major impact on education in Ghana by helping to

establish Achimota college, where Amu later worked. Amu read Aggrey's biography which likely encouraged his interest in African traditions (Laryea 2012:17). Like other Pan-African thinkers, Aggrey was aware of a systematic and global racism that effected black people on every continent. To combat this he promoted "unconditional cooperation between the black and white races" (Korang 2004:251). One image Aggrey used to visualize this cooperation was the black and white keys on a piano working in tandem.

Amu's biography provides insight into the changing nature of Presbyterianism in Ghana and helps explain how his work was situated within this environment. Amu faced a different situation growing up as a Christian than his father had. At least one Presbyterian Church superior encouraged the younger Amu to study traditional songs and incorporate them into his teaching in the 1920s (Agyemang 1988:41-42). This interest in local music points to the changing attitudes toward indigeneity during the post-World War I period. Indigenous church leaders emerged and the word "partnership" was used to describe their relationship with European entities during this time (Jenkins 2003:202). Disagreements about the direction of the church and the amount of hybridity that should be permitted emerged among these leaders, however.

Ghanaian Presbyterian church leaders resisted Amu's inclusion of native music in the seminary at Akropong. An item titled "Native Songs in the Seminary" in the minutes for the 1928 annual meeting of the Gold Coast Presbyterian synod provides early evidence of this resistance. It reads: "Strong disapproval was expressed by many members of the Synod, particularly the Presbyters, against songs of Apagya, Asafo etc. taught in the seminary. The Acting Principal promised to examine all songs taught and to avoid anything which would rightly hurt the feelings of the Church" (Gold Coast Presbyterian Church Synod Minutes 1928:

note 22). Although Amu is not explicitly mentioned here, it can be extrapolated that many “Presbyters” (a word used to describe the indigenous church elders from various districts) disagreed with his innovation of teaching songs from local, secular dance traditions. This suggests that Amu was pursuing the controversial integration of traditional music into the Christian context by that time. Also, a British missionary and music educator, W. E. Ward, confirms that he also confronted resistance to replacing hymns with local music. He wrote to A. M. Jones in 1934: “In the Gold Coast we couldn’t possibly use native tunes for our hymns, because the African ministers would object most strongly on account of the heathen associations of the tunes” (quoted in Jones 1976:9). So, the issue of introducing local styles of singing in the Christian context was not simply one pitting locals against foreigners, but involved vested interests in the continuity of traditions between Europe and Africa.

### **The Significance of Tonal Prosody in the PCG Choral Style**

Tonal prosody, or the alignment of melodic and rhythmic features of the composition with the spoken text, came to be a prominent feature of Amu’s music as he began to study and notate song traditions outside the church in the 1930s. The Ewe, Twi, and Ga, languages that Amu came to use in his works are tonal languages in that words change meaning depending on the tone and the length of syllables. This fact was not taken into account by Christaller and the “Akropong school” of scholars that followed as they began to establish Twi as a written language. While European hymns were being translated into these languages as early as 1860, tonal prosody was not a consideration, which led to a distortion of the meanings of some phrases. Based on my interviews with Professor Nketia, I argue that Amu’s dedication to tonal prosody in

PCG choral music can be considered indexically related to the postcolonial consciousness that was emerging among African intellectuals through writing.

The importance of aligning the tonal and rhythmic features of African languages with the musical setting in the context of Christian worship was made in a pioneering article by the Nigerian musicologist Lazarus Ekwueme (1974). He explains that inattention to the tonal nature of Igbo resulted in the phrase “True God, begotten, not made” being mutilated into: “God’s pig, which is never shared” (Ekwueme 1974:15). While these mutilations of the language in hymn singing are considerably persistent, Ekwueme relates that, “on such occasions as the harvest thanksgiving service, traditional Igbo music began to stand side by side with the Protestant hymn tunes, but were still not, nonetheless, permitted in any way to challenge the pre-eminence of the latter” (1974:16). Ekwueme then relates that some young composers trained in the 1960s, such as David Okongwu, Felix Nwuba, and Ekwueme himself, recognized the need to incorporate Igbo music into the church, and compose original choral works that follow the dictates of the Igbo language. He emphasizes that these musicians should be judged as composer-poets and based on how well they are able to contain “the old wine of traditional (sometimes secular) Igbo thoughts in the new bottle of the new (Christian) religion” (Ekwueme 1974:31). This metaphor reveals how both continuity and change are at play in process of musical hybridity.

Amu’s awareness of the need for tonal prosody began in the late 1920s and in the following decades became a fundamental compositional feature for him and the composers that followed him (see Agawu 1984, Dor 2005). Nketia explained to me how Amu came to the realization that the languages he was using were tonal:

Nketia: It was, as I said, the challenge from the Principle [of the Akropong training college]<sup>19</sup> to listen to the music of the workers. And his attempt to notate, finding it difficult, because, you know, the way the syllables...

Terpenning: And when he began to notate it, he was more aware of the speech patterns?

Nketia: Exactly! He was listening carefully, trying to decipher the tones, the pitches, and the durational values.

Terpenning: So he became aware of the tonal aspect of the language?

Nketia: Right, and the rhythm. (Interview Aug. 15, 2012).

When Amu attempted to notate traditional singing in a systematic way, he became aware of the interconnections between music and language in traditional life. Amu explained this trajectory in an interview with a student at the University of Ghana:

I noticed every now and again, when I preach, that in [the] course of singing some of the members of the congregation didn't sing anything. And I asked myself, why was this? And the answer I got was that we were singing in a certain idiom, which wasn't natural to most of the members of the congregation. And therefore I thought of the idiom that would enable them also to sing happily. So that made me feel that I should study our own folk songs, and find out the differences between our music and western music and to get our own idiom. (Amu, quoted in Laryea 2012:282)

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<sup>19</sup> Agyemang writes that the principal Nketia referred to in the conversation above was the European missionary Mr. Ferguson, who encouraged Amu to notate a popular song ("Yaa Amponsa") in 1927 when Amu was the music teacher at the Akropong seminary (1988:42).

Later in the interview he explained that the primary difference was that lack of tonal prosody in the translations of European hymns, so he made this a staple of his new idiom: “The music must agree with the rhythm and intonation. As I began to sing you have no difficulty in forming the words, because it is exactly as I speak. The rhythm and the intonation of the music is exactly the same as the rhythm and the intonation of the spoken word” (Amu, quoted in Laryea 2012:282). Both Amu and Nketia consider tonal prosody to be so central to Ghanaian choral composition that they encouraged others to follow this model. Amu’s commitment to tonal prosody in his compositions arose as an awakening of cultural consciousness that itself came about as a result of his experiences going between the European mission environment and local cultures. Amu synthesized his experiences living between two worlds in the process of composition.

In my conversations with Nketia, the subject of how Amu’s style of choral music aligned with the spoken language arose multiple times; it was apparent that this was something Nketia continues to care deeply about. He and Amu shared the experience of becoming aware of the discrepancy between Twi hymns sung in church and the folk songs sung in the course of everyday life outside the church. The folk songs followed the patterns of spoken language, while the hymns did not. This awareness can be considered an extension of Christaller’s early efforts to collect and translate proverbs. However, the process of developing a written version of the language is qualitatively different from composition with attention to the tonal qualities of the local languages. Expressing awareness of the tonal qualities of local languages through composition can be considered a postcolonial awareness in that it goes beyond the dichotomies (written/oral, European/African) of the colonial experience.



### **Amu's Mature Compositional Style**

Nketia defines three phases of Amu's stylistic development in an unpublished article housed at the University of Ghana Institution of African Studies (Nketia 1978). In the first phase, Amu's compositions were completely based on European hymns. The second phase began in 1927 with Amu's first attempts to introduce African elements into the hymn framework, while still retaining a homophonic texture. "Yen Ara Asase Ni," discussed in the following chapter, is an example of this period of his development. Lastly, after studying music in London for three years (1937-40), Amu developed more facility with counterpoint, which is evident in his later compositions. Nketia posits that Amu's interest in counterpoint logically follows from his awareness of the importance of tonal prosody: "He became interested in counterpoint as a solution to the intonation problem" (Interview, Aug. 15, 2012). In this third and most prolific phase, Amu established tonal prosody, and the relationship between text and music more generally, as the cornerstone of his compositional approach. Amu continued to refine his approach to tonal prosody after returning from London in compositions that employed more imitative or fugal sections. His experiences studying in London from 1937-1941 provided him with more compositional tools to strengthening his commitment to tonal prosody in Ghanaian languages in a way that was musically innovative. His composition "Alegbegbe" is considered the pinnacle of this stylistic development (Nketia, Interview, August 15, 2012). Amu's daughter, Misonu Amu, told me the Ewe text of "Alegbegbe" is taken from John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." Amu's work repeats this phrase in a number of variations, always maintaining the contour of the language in the musical setting. The choice of a bible passage for this work indicates that Amu

remained a devout Christian throughout his life, even while his awareness of traditional life and dedication to local languages increased.

I find Nketia's three-part categorization of Amu's stylistic development helpful in understanding how Amu's life experiences are connected to his musical innovations. As Amu became more familiar with local musical forms, he aligned his own compositional approach with local musical features such as tonal prosody. In the late 1940s, as the independence movement gained momentum, Amu became worried about the pace of change. In a later interview regarding this period he said: "[A]t that time I was bitterly opposed to the method we were adopting. This method of force[,] which we used. And I said, force was not the right thing to use at the time" (Amu, quoted in Laryea 2012:284). The texts of his compositions during this period were not as overtly national in character, as some of his earlier works. Amu's mature creative work connected his musical expertise with his evolving postcolonial consciousness as a Christian.

Amu's creativity in his third period demonstrates an integration of religious, national, and musical awareness. These later works are more complex and did not become as widely-known as some of his early works, but they made a great impression on subsequent Ghanaian composers and scholars. Ghanaian musicologist Kofi Agawu has drawn attention not only to Amu's mastery of tonal prosody, but also to Amu's ability to creatively express the text through the musical setting in other ways. Agawu's 1984 article on the subject makes clear that a purely musical analysis of Amu's choral works is not sufficient to grasp Amu's creativity. He writes: "Amu's works reveal a remarkable variety of organizational procedures, and it is evident that he consciously sought to provide a rapprochement between the requirements of the precompositional elements of language and his own compositional choices" (Agawu 1984:37).

The past has much to say  
 The past has much to teach  
 If we loose sight of the past  
 On what basis do we build a good nation?  
 Countrymen!

Figure 3.1. First eight measures and translation of Ephraim Amu’s “Tete Wo Bi Ka” (“The Past has Much to Say”) composed in 1956 (Laryea 2012:102).

This implies that Amu blurred the boundaries between linguistic and musical creativity. To fully appreciate this creativity, then, a listener must have command of the languages used, as well as musical knowledge.

In his mature style, Amu strived to maintain tonal prosody not only in the soprano, but in all four voices. Amu’s 1956 composition “Tete Wo Bi Ka” (“The Past Has Much To Say”) is an example of this approach (Figure 3.1). This work also illustrates Amu’s engagement with the politics of the time and commitment to the development of historical consciousness in Ghana. At the time Amu composed “Tete Wo Bi Ka,” the issue of historical consciousness had become urgent, as the transition from colonial rule to independence was under way. Amu was especially concerned with what he perceived as the favoring of a Western conception of “development” to the strengthening of local indigenous institutions (Laryea 2012:31). In “Tete Wo Bi Ka,” Amu

not only expresses, but embodies the beauty and relevance of traditional musical practices. He does this through his attention to the relationship between the text and musical setting. This approach reflects his study of Asante court music and other local musical traditions. In Ghanaian societies, music and language are considered highly interrelated artistic domains. This interrelated nature between linguistic and musical creativity is discussed by Kwasi Ampene in relation to the Asante funeral song tradition *Nnwonkoro* (Ampene 2005, also see Nketia 1974:188). Similarly, the text and musical setting of “Tete Wo Bi Ka,” are inextricably linked. It begins with the men and women in octaves following the contour of the text. Notice that the phrases of the text do not line up with the bar lines, as they would in a typical hymn composition. In the European hymn framework in which Amu was trained the structure of phrases is highly regular, with predictable cadences every four or eight measures. Here, Amu moves away from this framework, compromising metric stability for the spoken rhythm, or poetry, of the Twi text. This inconsistency evident in this piece favors indigenous language over European musical practices. This approach is a solution to a problem that Nketia observed in his assessment of the translated European hymns used in African churches: “[P]erhaps the most difficult aspect of these translations [of European hymns into local languages] is that they have to fit into a metrical form, which is invariably foreign to the African. I do not yet know of African traditional poetry that is based on a number of syllables per line as one finds in the western hymn” (1958:273). So there is a conflict between the European hymn form and the traditional poetic forms that Nketia and Amu experienced outside the mission context. At least in some their works, including “Tete Wo Bi Ka,” Amu and Nketia chose to prioritize a local poetic sensibility over the framework learned through Presbyterian schooling.

A result of prioritizing the poetic text in the musical setting in Amu's work is the occurrence of unequal phrase lengths. This is an example of what Kofi Agawu calls "Additive form ... which refers to the linear accretion of unequal units in a formal sequence" (2016:257). Additive form is one of five "principals of form" that Agawu identifies as being part of African musical traditions.<sup>20</sup> Agawu notes that additive form is frequently adopted in African narrative genres where a story is told in the context of oral history being transmitted or in the expression of grief at a funeral (2016:257). This approach to musical form invites contemplation in contrast with the repetitive rhythmic approach heard in the context of dancing that is more widely associated with African music. Agawu makes this distinction: "The additive instinct carries a strong narrative quality as well, whereas a divisive instinct is an invitation to the dance" (2016:258). The use of additive form is an indication that these works are intended for contemplation, rather than dancing. The lack of a cyclical rhythmic feature aligns Amu's compositional approach with the non-written traditions in Ghana. This formal approach can be heard in the opening measures where Amu establishes a continuous triplet-rhythm, with each syllable of the text given the same length (Figure 3.1). The phrases are separated with an eighth rest. Because the first two phrases are five and six eighth-notes in length, respectively, the additive form that results does not reinforce any pre-determined metric formula. A written 2/4 meter is used while a triplet division in the measures is maintained. This juxtaposition is a distinctive characteristic of Amu's work in this period, providing a sense of a two-against-three foundation that is common in African music (Nketia 1974:128; Dor 1992). Amu's solution to

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<sup>20</sup> Two other principals that Agawu identifies, "call-and-response" and "variation," are also evident in Amu's work, as I explore in the following chapter.

notating his music demonstrates his attention to local musical practices and his intention to emphasize the text.

In the third measure of “Tete Wo Bi Ka,” the men and women sing in parallel sixths. Then, before the end of twelve measures they are singing in three and then four parts. This setting of the text reinforces its meaning. As the piece continues, Amu employs the proverb, “It is the crooked stem that bears a straight branch.” Philip Layrea interprets this as meaning, “The past may seem imperfect, but it directs and shapes the future” (2012:223). Amu is arguing for the artistic value of retaining long-established local traditions of poetry and musical forms, but adds complexity by acknowledging the hybridity of the contemporary social environment. This argument is made in part through the musical setting of the text, which foregrounds tonal prosody and hybridity over adherence to formulaic European metric regularity.

Another work composed by Amu about two years later illustrates how his Christian perspective intersects with his musical creativity. Agawu describes Amu’s 1958 composition, entitled “Asomdwoemu Na Mɛ Kɔ Makɔda” (“In Peace I Will Lie Down and Sleep”), as “the high point” of Amu’s ability to balance linguistic and musical concerns (1984:69). Agawu explains that Amu employs musical iconicity in this work through his use of the syllable “komm” as an “onomatopoeic depiction of quiet” (Agawu 1984:69). This piece fits well into what Nketia describes as Amu’s third stylistic period because it is characterized by a contrapuntal texture and parallel harmonic motion. Amu explained the origins of the piece in an interview with a student of the University of Ghana: “It is from one of the Psalms. I took the text and I thought of it. I wrote this at a time the Presbyterians were having Synod at Kyebi. And I thought of an evening song. So I wrote this to teach the Church Choir” (Amu, quoted in Laryea

2012:281). In 1958, the country was in a state of transition. Nkrumah had just become Prime Minister of Ghana and the constitution was being negotiated. This negotiation lasted until his inauguration as President and the establishment of the Republic of Ghana in 1960. It is in this context that this work, as a call for peace after a tumultuous fight for independence, can also be appreciated. Amu's creativity in these works is most evident in the relationship between the text and musical setting. This reflects his understanding of the interrelationships and integration of art forms, which is a posture associated with traditional life in Ghana (Dor 2014).

### **Amu's Mentorship of Nketia**

Another member of the PCG who had a tremendous impact on the development of choral music in Ghana was Kwabena Nketia.<sup>21</sup> The duality of the colonial experience was apparent to Nketia from early on in his life. He was educated in the Presbyterian church, but grew up in the traditional village of Mampong, not far from Akropong, with his parents, who were not Christian. He told me it was his grandmother who encouraged him to go to school: "My parents were not converts, but my grandmother was, you see. And it was because of my grandmother that I went to class [at the Presbyterian Church]" (Interview Jan. 16, 2015). In 1936 Nketia began his studies at the Presbyterian seminary at Akropong. He studied there for five years, including a year of theological training.

Nketia first met Amu in 1940 and from the beginning there was a clear mentorship relationship being built. He told me, "Because Amu never really taught people, he never really

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<sup>21</sup> For further discussion of Nketia's later involvement with the GBC and relationship with Amu, see chapter 5.

explained what he was doing. See, I was close to him, you see, and that is a big difference. Very close to him, you know. Because, when I met him, his *first* thing was not to copy his music..., and the second thing was to go to traditional people and learn” (Nketia, Interview, Aug. 15, 2012). Amu encouraged Nketia to pave his own path toward musical hybridity rather than simply follow his own approach, advice Nketia values to this day. Nketia took this as a challenge to not rely on Amu’s documentation of traditional music and compositional achievements but to seek out his own experiences with traditional music. Nketia lived with Amu’s family for a few days during this period and was impressed by the humility Amu demonstrated in his lifestyle:

I observed how he was adjusting himself, even his diet. Well, he would have bread and butter and jam and so forth, but he would also have the traditional thing [chuckles]. You know, that kind of mixture. And anytime he was going to teach, you know in the whole morning, he would come to me and give me a Bach two-part invention to play. And I would say, “What, why is it that he, the Africanist teaching me all these things, [is] also insisting I learn Bach two-part inventions?” (Interview, August 15, 2012).

Nketia went on to reflect, “It was a training in bi-musicality” (Interview, August 15, 2012). Bi-musicality was a term coined by the ethnomusicologist Mantel Hood to emphasize the need for his American students to learn how to perform the music they are studying (Hood 1960). Nketia use of this term implies the duality of the colonial experience that Amu overcame through his dedication to hybridity in his lifestyle and music.

Amu served as a role model for Nketia in his 20s. Nketia began his own project exploring traditional singing with his grandmother, which eventually resulted in his first monograph,



*Funeral Dirges of the Akan* (1955). This was the first of his many books that transformed African music studies in the twentieth century.

### **Nketia's Compositions**

Although Nketia sought out his own path, his music followed Amu's model in several respects. Nketia's choral compositions continue to be performed in Ghana and internationally. Perhaps his best-known composition is "Monkamfo No" ("Let Us Honor Him," Figure 3.2). He composed this before leaving to study in London during World War Two. The work is a prayer to God for a safe journey during a tumultuous historical period: "It was war time and bombs were flying in England, and we went by boat, [it] took us three weeks. And so I wrote this before [leaving], contemplating, 'Monkamfo' thanking Him for the scholarship. And also saying we look to Him and that type of thing... And then trusting Him, 'E be si yie,' the journey will be all right, it all depends on Him" (Interview, August 15, 2012). It is an unaccompanied choral work characterized by overlapping phrases, parallel harmony, and imitation (Figure 3.2, below). These are elements that Amu also used frequently in his music. Akin Euba provides an analysis of Nketia's application of his scholarship in composition as "creative musicology" (2014).

Today, in his mid 90s, Nketia keeps a full schedule as a public intellectual. One afternoon in March, 2015, in the heat of the day, I was waiting on the porch of his house in Accra to speak to him one last time before leaving Ghana. He arrived by car wearing traditional cloth, as he just came from filming a program all morning for national broadcast. I offered to wait until he had time to change into more comfortable clothing and rest before recording a short interview. He declined and asked me to enter immediately. We then spoke for well over an hour. The following

day he was traveling to Takoradi, a full day’s drive, for a funeral. He attends funerals, concerts, and other events regularly and typically does not leave until the end, often addressing the gathering eloquently. As he has done since before independence, Nketia continues to promote traditional practices in public life in Ghana.

A se tra yi be se yie fi ri

A se tra yi be se yie be se yie A se tra yi be se yie fi ri

A se tra yi be se yie E be si yie E be se yie fi ri

A se tra yi be si yie aa aa A se tra yi be si yie fi ri woa ra

woa ra A se tra yie be si yie aa aa E fi ri woa ra

woa ra A se tra yi be si yie fi ri wo

woa ra E fi ri wo

Figure 3.2. Excerpt of the beginning of the “B” section (beginning at measure 25) of “Monkamfo No” (“Let Us Honor Him”) by J. H. Kwabena Nketia. For more on Nketia’s compositions and a recording of “Monkamfo No” see Euba (2014).

### **Danso, Boateng, and the Revision of the Twi Hymnbook**

In 1949 Amu was appointed as head of the newly created three-year music teacher education program at Achimota. At the same time, his compositional style was championed in Akropong. In a history of the training college written in 1948, G. Gunn writes about the type of music that Amu's students, including R. O. Danso and O. A. Boateng, had taken up: "In the college, too, there began the movement towards the development of African music. One makes bold to say that in the new dramatic songs based on Twi legends the College is making a very distinctive contribution in a new art form. These songs throbbing with African rhythms have melodies which follow the inherent tones of the Twi words instead of running counter to them" (1948:54). This mention of tonal prosody is a clear indication that Amu's ideas had taken hold within the PCG.

By the time Nketia published his article on the Africanization of Christian worship in 1958, the Ghana Presbyterian Church had already decided to reverse course and accept some hybridity in worship. In 1951, a sub-committee was formed at the annual Synod to consider a revision of the hymnbook. They set about considering new hymns to include, not just editing already existing ones. This committee was led by Ephraim Amu's student, Rev. Robert O. Danso. Amu himself was invited to attend this initial meeting to give a presentation utilizing gramophone recordings to present African "compositions that are elevating and suitable for worship." The minutes conclude: "To discourage inferior compositions parading in these days as African music, Mr. Amu was asked as soon as he could to produce compositions suitable for worship. He promised to help and was thanked by the Moderator for his instructive talk" (Gold

Coast Presbyterian Church 1951 Synod Minutes, Item 16, 1951). Although there was no formal apology issued for his dismissal in 1933, this meeting represents an acceptance of Amu's musical innovations and his contributions to Christian worship. Danso and other committee members were assigned specific tasks such as studying the hymns included in the hymnals of other Ghanaian churches, deciding which hymns were not in common use, and soliciting new compositions. Annual progress reports given at the synod meeting in the 1950s indicate that progress was slow. In 1958 they reported, "That the Committee continued to collect new tunes, and material on composers and their compositions, and approached some of the Church[']s leading composers to write tunes to selected hymns for particular occasions" (Presbyterian Church Ghana, 1958, Item 79). Although a committee approach was initially favored, to expedite the process the synod approved a request for Danso to be allowed to take a year off from his teaching duties to complete the hymnbook on his own in 1959. It is unclear why this project took as long as it did, one reason may be the difficulty the committee members had with agreeing on particular locally composed pieces to include.

At some point Danso was released from the committee before the process was concluded and Otto Boateng took over. In 1965 a note marks the completion of the project: "Rev. A. Otto Boateng reported that they now had some 460 tunes in their collection, including 176 from the old Twi, Ga, and Ewe hymn books, and others from the Methodist and Anglican hymn books and from America and Germany. A good number of Ghanaian tunes were included in the collection" (Presbyterian Church Ghana, 1965, Item 18). Boateng reported that Ghanaian tunes were included in the collection, but only two of Amu's works were included in the final *Twifo*

*Asafo Asɔre Dwom Nhoma* (“Twi Speakers Christian Song Book”) (Laryea 2012:88). The vast majority of the hymns in the collection are holdovers from previous Twi hymnbooks.

When I asked Nketia why more of Amu’s works are not included in the official hymnbook, he responded with the following account:

The church choir was there, and Amu’s choir was there [separately]. And the church choir was really the one that incorporated the things for the ceremony. That was the Sunday worship music. Amu’s was kind of something by the way, you see. So the church choir was treading a {European style] uniform over and Amu’s choir was wearing traditional cloth.... The Western thing was entrenched. So Amu had problems getting his music approved. It had to be auditioned at the beginning and when they found that it was nice and so forth they allowed it to be sung. But it was sung as part of a performance thing not as part of the church [service]. (Nketia, Interview, January 16, 2015)

This narrative reveals that Amu’s work was received in a way that, while positive, did not displace the older hymns that missionaries introduced. While Amu’s works are better aligned with the parameters of the language, the complexity of the texts and rhythms make them more difficult for a congregation to sing together compared to European hymns. So, although Amu’s works are sung in PCG and other Christian denominations in Ghana, only a few of Amu’s compositions can be considered interchangeable with hymns.

R. O. Danso took over at Akropong when Amu was dismissed in 1933. He was a primary link in transferring Amu’s philosophy and choral style to Nketia. Danso deliberately adopted Amu’s musical innovations and expanded on them in his own compositions. Before Nketia first

met Amu in 1940 he had studied his music extensively with Danso. Nketia recalls Danso's musical background and his acceptance of Amu's music:

He was a musician and he was in Kumasi. He was even playing with the nightclub thing. He was a musician. And so that is why he was appointed to replace Amu. And of course he adjusted to the Amu thing. Because even though Amu had been dismissed he went to him privately to study his notation and look at his *25 African Songs*, because that had been published [in 1932]. And when we went [to class] we were sight-reading Amu's things. (Nketia, Interview, January 16, 2015)

Through his experience performing popular music, Danso became a competent keyboardist who helped develop Nketia's interest in the instrument. According to Nketia, Danso was interested in African-American jazz, but did not have access to many recordings, so they learned through tune books. Nketia remembers working with Danso from a series of song books published by Lawrence Wright, a popular British composer and publisher, called the "Monster Albums," which included the popular songs of the day, beginning in the late 1920s (Interview, January 16, 2015). Although Danso did not continue performing "jazz" music when he took over for Amu at the seminary, his interest in popular music continued and he encouraged Nketia's interest in learning these songs on keyboard. I was not able to access many of Danso's compositions, but his work as teacher and link between Amu and Nketia ensures him a place in the history of the PCG choral tradition.

## Contemporary Ghanaian Approaches to Tonal Prosody

While the alignment of the text and music is considered a central aspect of Amu's innovation that later Ghanaian composers followed, the older Twi hymns without tonal alignment continue to be sung by Ghanaians. Nketia explained that, from a practical standpoint, the continued prominence of these hymns in Ghana "wasn't a very difficult problem because they would always read the text, you know, and sing it, if you like the tune. Even the revised edition that was done by the church itself, you know a few years ago, followed the same thing with the tunes. Some of the expressions had to be clarified, [but the old hymns remained]" (Interview Aug. 15, 2012). Nketia remains committed to tonal prosody in his compositions, but recognizes the persistence of works that do not follow this approach.

In addition, contemporary Ghanaian composers have a broad range of influences, including commercial Gospel music, which do not strictly adhere to the framework Amu and his students established. As younger Ghanaian composers strive for international relevance the rhythm and tonal contour of Amu's framework is not a primary consideration, even when they compose in a "classical" style. Nketia expressed disappointment with this state of affairs:

Nketia: But what fascinates me is that the old missionary style is still there. There are people who know that better and compose in that style, because they haven't had the kind of awakening that we...

Terpenning: That you experienced.

Nketia: Yeah, and they are used to the old marching songs. And they accept it as part of the style, so we accept the duality of this (Interview, January 16, 2015)

Nketia also supports younger Ghanaian composers who have deviated from Amu's dedication to tonal prosody. I spoke with Alfred Addaquay to get his perspective as a younger composer, professional organist, and choir leader. He performed a concert at the British Council on March 5, 2015, which Nketia attended. He began by performing two vocal works by Nketia and Amu, accompanying himself at an electric piano. The concert ended with a lengthy performance with his choir, the Bel Canto Chorale, including an original oratorio "Laudateur Christus" and an unabridged version of John Henry Maunder's "Olivet to Calvary." At the end of the performance, Nketia addressed the audience to praise Addaquay and the choir.

In a later interview, Alfred Addaquay explained his perspective on the duality that was apparent at the concert in terms of a balance both local and European compositions in his approach to programming for his professional choir, the Bel Canto Chorale:

We are between two cultures, so a Ghanaian choir, any Ghanaian youth choir wouldn't like to sing one way. For instance, all Western, [choir members] would be bored, all African, trust me, they would be bored... They are more excited when you blend. When you blend between African music and the Western music. When you become one way they wouldn't enjoy being in the choir. It is unlike other places where they have one culture and that is what they do. (Addaquay, Interview, March 9, 2015)

This conception of duality expressed by Addaquay is distinct from a compositional approach that privileges hybridity. For him, and the younger generation of composers and choir leaders generally, Nketia's and Amu's compositions represent the Ghanaian music of the past rather than a contemporarily relevant combination of Ghanaian and European styles. Because of the larger



variety of musical styles they are exposed to, these younger composers are less tied to the idea of developing a national style and more interested in developing the versatility needed to maintain a musical career in the context of Ghana. This duality continues to be a prominent feature of contemporary life in Ghana that is also played out in the context of workplace choirs discussed in the sixth chapter.

I also asked Addaquay about his identity as a Ghanaian composer, because in his compositions I didn't hear any identifiable local influences. In this excerpt of the interview he also spoke about his position on tonal prosody and why his position differs from that of Nketia:

Terpenning: Is it important for you to write in Ghanaian languages?

Addaquay: I wouldn't say its important. Everyone has an aim in whatever he is doing.

T: You would say your aim is more musical or more cosmopolitan [than local]?

A: Exactly, I am a musician, [and] it ends there. Although I know I am from Ghana, so at times, oh, I have many Ghanaian compositions. But I can also do Western [...].

T: How important is it to follow the contour, and other aspects of the spoken language.

A: It limits your writing.

T: I see...

A: Those days [of Amu and Nketia] you could do that because there were not that many ideas. When I'm talking about ideas I'm not talking about music only. Ideas in dressing, ideas in eating, cooking. Nowadays there are so many ideas in

cooking: you can add this to this, you can add this to this. So, if you want to transfer it to music, you realize you become limited when you always want your texts to [follow the intonation]. For example, if I am writing “*Awurade*” [“Lord” in Twi] it will mean that all my “*Awurade*”s will be “pam, pam, pam” [performed with a rising intonation on the last syllable]. (Addaquay, Interview, March 9, 2015)

Addaquay’s point is that if the Twi word for “Lord,” which occurs often in choral works, is associated with a particular intonation pattern it constricts his freedom as a composer. His position is an indication that younger composers are moving away from a view of tonal prosody as an expression of postcolonial consciousness and asserting their own musical excellence above national identity.

As Nketia notes, Addaquay and other younger Ghanaian composers have not experienced the colonial purification ideology directly, as Nketia’s generation did during their education in the PCG. While these composers have studied and performed Nketia’s and Amu’s works extensively, they are taking part in a newer musical change that does not attribute the same importance to tonal prosody. This change can be considered another indexical order, or another turn in the hybridity cycle. This shift does not discard the earlier associations of Amu’s musical innovations, but takes a more inclusive global perspective aligned more with European notions of musical virtuosity. While more research needs to be done to determine the ideological implications of these changes, it is clear that the state of Ghanaian choral music is not static. In the next chapter, I move to a more focused consideration of what hybridity meant in the context of the PCG and the Gold Coast Colony by examining the history of one choral work.

#### Chapter 4: An Analysis of Ephraim Amu’s “Yen Ara Asase Ni”<sup>22</sup>

As discussed in the introduction, the choral composition “Yen Ara Asase Ni” (“This Land Is Our Own”<sup>23</sup>) by Ephraim Amu can be considered the beginning of the Ghanaian style of formally-composed choral musical tradition. Amu’s own explanation of how “Yen Ara Asase Ni” originated, related during an interview with Kofi Agawu in Amu’s hometown, provides a starting point to understanding the significance of this work:

In 1929, a past student of mine, who was then teaching here in Peki, wrote to me (when I was at Akropong) to say that he wanted something for his Primary School to sing on Empire Day. He said he wanted something “African”; so I wrote this simple tune and arranged it in four parts and said, “Well, these students will become citizens tomorrow, and therefore they ought to have something to be thinking of.” That’s how come it has this national idea in it (Agawu 1987: 53-54, parentheses in original).

The occasion that precipitated the composition of this piece seems at first to be at odds with Nketia’s claim that this composition represents an original affirmation of identity consciousness. Empire Day was an event celebrated on Queen Victoria’s birthday throughout the British Commonwealth. It was intended as a performance of British colonial power, and to “convince subjected people that they were now part of a larger empire” (Plageman 2012:40). According to historian Nate Plageman, during that time period, “young people spent Empire Day watching

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<sup>22</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was published in *Ethnomusicology* (Terpenning 2016).

<sup>23</sup> This is Ephraim Amu’s own translation of the Twi language title (Agawu 1987:54). It should be noted that the Twi word “*Ara*” is an emphatic article, which here places emphasis on the third person plural “Yen,” so a direct English translation is problematic.

military bands perform regimental pieces and British anthems such as ‘God Save the Queen’” (2012:40). Composing something “African” for such an occasion would have been inconsistent with the nature of the holiday in 1929, but Amu took the request seriously as an opportunity to express something that would resonate with the school children of his hometown.

Amu composed a work that brings the various aspects of his life experiences together, engaging with the ambivalence of the colonial experience through musical creativity. In “Yen Ara Asase Ni,” Amu exposes the ambivalence of colonial ideology through a creative expression of hybridity. In this work, Amu went beyond the European traditions and musical forms he had mastered through his missionary education by incorporating local musical elements and a text that affirms the value of local culture. In this chapter, I analyze the musical features, text, and history of “Yen Ara Asase Ni” to explore how Amu’s creativity contributed to the emergence of Ghanaian national consciousness in the twenty-eight years leading to independence.

### **Amu’s Musical Creativity in the Colonial Context**

The hybrid creativity of “Yen Ara Asase Ni” challenges two separations that characterize colonial ideology. The first separation was pervasive in the context of the colonial encounter generally: the incompatibility of local and European styles. The second operated primarily within the context of Protestant conversion efforts: the separation of local “culture” from universal “religion.” These two separations are part of the discursive construction of power that seeks to legitimize and structure colonial rule. As Edward Said and others have demonstrated, the colonial exertion of power was supported by an intellectual project that constructs distinctions between the colonizer and colonized. Said writes, “For Orientalism was ultimately a political

vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, ‘we’ lived in ours” (1978:43-44). Said focused on literature as the site where this narrative is articulated.

In a later work, Said went beyond a consideration of European authored texts to show how indigenous writers subsequently challenged the colonial narrative by adopting Western forms such as the novel for their own purposes: “Today writers and scholars from the formerly colonized world have imposed their diverse histories on, have mapped their local geographies in, the great canonical texts of the European center” (Said 1993:53). Although scholars have primarily focused on literature as the site where colonial discourse is constructed and resisted, Western European Art Music is equally implicated in this history (see Clayton and Zon 2007). Like African authors such as Soyinka and Achebe, African composers adopted European genres to express alternatives to the colonial narrative. As Ghanaian composer and ethnomusicologist George Dor writes, “Ghanaian composers have sought not only to situate their songs in the broader social, cultural, and political landscapes of their nation, but also to use indigenous materials and creative procedures that redefine their identity as African composers” (Dor 2005:443). The history of “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” provides an opportunity to refine Dor’s characterization of the cultural work Ghanaian composers accomplished by exploring how Amu’s creativity impacted the social landscape described in the previous chapter.

The distinction between culture and religion became useful as a way for the PCG leaders to both support the claim that Christianity was “universal” and allow the continuation of some local traditions outside the domain of the church as long as these traditions didn’t conflict with

the essential components of the Protestant belief system in the post-WWI era. Keane writes, “One of the main ways in which the universal church and local culture were to be reconciled... was through the idea that cultures are distinct from religions and, thus, consist of mostly permissible practices, in contrast with the forbidden ones of false religion” (2007:123). Separating cultural and religious practices became an important component of the purification project as Christians expanded their evangelization activities in the twentieth century. The period between WWI and the independence of Ghana was a period of increasing prominence for indigenous elite, but the marginalization of traditional practices continued. As Jenkins writes, the indigenous church leadership during this period “attempted to maintain the authority previously exerted by the Basel missionaries as well as the tradition that leadership was concerned essentially with theological purity and not with creative adjustments to local problems caused by local styles of life and local culture” (2003:213). Nonetheless, the teaching of “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” was allowed in schools run by the Presbyterian Church throughout Ghana. This contradiction points to the inconsistencies of colonial institutions and the often non-linear path of change.

### **Origins of a Ghanaian Choral Style**

In this section I focus on the musical notation and text to explore how Amu employed harmony, meter, cadence, and call-and-response in “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni.” My approach necessarily relies on the identification of elements that are associated with Europe and Africa, but my intention is not to reify these musical features as essentially connected to any geographic location. Indeed, Amu’s integration of elements associated with these regions suggests compatibility and the deconstruction of boundaries at a time when much effort went into



Ame wo gyife yigba (SATB).

1. Ame wo gyi - fe yigba E nu nu sba sie ye kpa! Ame tsisi wo ekowobogbe  
 2. Agbalẽ nu - nya fufu, 'Loo hokyi kpa - kpa gudun, Kpl'agbeyaka - no - no meye

fi e da ta xos ne mi. E - do nye kplẽ wo etsi nu. Be mia wo mi ato si - nu  
 Kpl'ayigbalis - i o. Ta ba - ba kpl'a - me do amee nyuie didi na 'mesiam e

Nu ve ve nya - nya di do do kpl'a me do koe - to di di. Blu mia zoli  
 Kpl'e la do do a me do koe ne xolis vi wo nyonyo ko, Yo wo ms to

gblẽ mia gyife - yigbalis 'le gbe gbe. } Ayie gba wo nyonyo  
 me fa fa kplẽ gyiyigi nyuie wogyo tso.

Ayie gba wo gbe gbe E - ke ke mie lee ko sigbe ke wo anso tsie.

Figure 4.1 "Ame wo Gyife Yigba" by Ephraim Amu. Image courtesy of Misonu Amu.

maintaining separations. I discuss two versions of the piece. The original version composed in Amu's dialect of Ewe was titled "Amɛ wo Gyifɛ Yigba" (Figure 4.1, above), and the Twi version was published in his *25 African Songs* (Amu 1932:68; Figure 4.2, below). He composed the Twi version soon after the original for his students at Akropong. The latter became nationally-known so it is the focus of my analysis, but comparing the two provides insights into Amu's compositional decisions and his creative process. In comparing these versions, I suggest that Amu moved from experimenting with musical elements to a refinement of his unique, hybrid style.

Rhythm is a primary element that Amu used to deviate from the German hymn framework he mastered through missionary education. George Dor writes, "Rhythm became the first and the most important parameter in which Amu found his African idiomatic expression" (Dor 1992:37). Amu's novel use of rhythm is exemplified in "Yɛn Ara Asase Ni" by the alternation between duple and triple metric divisions (a type of hemiola) which contributes to sense of "African" style. Dor goes on to point out that, "Hemiola' is one major feature of African rhythm which abounds in the works of Amu" (Dor 1992:280). Hemiola occurs in both versions of the piece, but Amu adopts a more standard approach to the notation in the later version. The other prominent rhythmic feature of this piece is the syncopated resolutions at cadences. At the end of two-bar sub-phrases, in measures 2, 4, 10, and 12, the plagal cadences resolve on the "and" of one. This obscures the downbeat and creates another layer of syncopation, reinforced at the end of full phrases in measures 16 and 20. Together, the alternating meter and syncopated resolutions form a unique rhythmic style that deviates from the German hymn tradition Amu and his students were accustomed to.



## Yen ara asase ni

This land is our own.

S. A. T. B.

1. Yen a - ra a - sa - se ni, E - yea - boo den

2. Nho - ma nim dee hu - hu gyar A - na a - de -

nne ma yeh, Mo - gya na - na - na nom hwiegu

- nya, ra kwa, Ne o - bra kyew de e - seeo - man

nyae de too ho ma yeh; A - du me ne woinso so

na e - bo n'a - ho - h'ra, A - soo mmre ne o - bu pa

se ye - be ye bia - toa - so Nim - dee tra so

yoj ko yi - ye di pe daa. A - ho - fa - ma

Figure 4.2. "Yen Ara Asase Ni" by Ephraim Amu (1932:68-9). Permission to reprint granted by Misonu Amu.

N<sup>o</sup> 19.

igko to - krānne nè a - pe - se meḡ kō - menyā A - di yeḡ bra  
nte - te - kwammāo - ni - pa bia - ra yi - ye di E no nom n'è

mu dem mā yeḡ a - sa - se hō do a - tom se  
de. a - som dwoe nè nka so pa bre ɔ - maḡ

ɔ - maḡ no se' be - ye yieo ɔ - maḡ no se' re nnye yieo

E - ye nse nna - ho se ɔ - maḡ - fo bra n'è - ky're.

In terms of harmony, Amu demonstrates a mastery of common practice part writing in “Yen Ara Asase Ni,” but he also introduces deviations that were likely informed by his experience with local singing traditions. The mix of contrary motion and parallel harmony is an indication of Amu’s attempt to balance a German harmonic approach with a local harmonic sensibility. Parallel harmony is a prevalent feature of Ghanaian traditional vocal music. As Kofi Agawu notes, this harmonic approach works well in setting tonal languages, because it “implies that there is only one real voice, the others being merely doublings at given intervals” (Agawu 1984:52).<sup>24</sup> Parallel harmony is prominent in “Yen Ara Asase Ni,” but instances of contrary motion indicate Amu’s competing concern with creating a sense of cadential motion. For example, in the first four measures the bass and alto parts maintain a constant pitch, but in the subsequent phrase they both move to adjust to the harmonic progression implied by the melody (see Figure 4.2, measures 1-8). Overall, the harmonic textures creates a strong sense of F major tonality with significant movement to the subdominant that can be considered consistent with hymn pieces that Amu was familiar with. The harmony is primarily diatonic with resolutions to major triads, but experimentation with dissonances, especially in the first version indicates Amu’s interest in harmonic creativity. For example, on the downbeat of measure 10 there is a dominant seventh chord in third inversion with an appoggiatura. The use of this sonority in this context is evidence of a strong familiarity with the 19th century European part writing tradition.

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<sup>24</sup> Of course, parallel harmony also occurs in European Art Music that Amu may have been familiar with. For example, the theme of the first movement of Mozart’s eleventh piano sonata, K. 331, bares a resemblance to “Yen Ara Asase Ni” in terms of parallel harmony and a repeated inner voice. Sustained parallel harmony is rare in hymn singing, however, so in this context it is more likely a reference to local singing practices.

In contrast, dissonances resulting from the use of repeated notes demonstrate a willingness to deviate from this framework.

Comparing the published version of the piece with the original manuscript reveals how Amu's experimentation with musical elements solidified into a unique, polished choral style. His experimentations with rhythm, harmony, and texture exceeded the bounds of his European training, and so his creative hybridity required revision to form a cohesive style. The latter version is more diatonic, has a consistent meter, and smoother voice leading. This makes it overall easier to learn and memorize, which is important for its primary function as a pedagogical work. First, the harmonic progression is made more diatonic through the removal of some dissonances in the later version. In the original version (Figure 4.1), Amu uses accidentals as lower neighbor tones and as preparation for the subdominant. His use of accidentals is more restrained in the subsequent version, leaving E-flats as the only accidentals. These E-flats all serve a common function: to set up the subdominant, which is a fundamental structural element of the piece (Figure 4.2 measures 14-16). The diminished chords, which provide more harmonic tension in measures 7, 16, and 18 of the earlier version, are eliminated. While both versions are consistent with Victoria College of Music, London music theory textbooks from which Amu trained (Agyemang 1988:27), the first version is more adventurous. The approach to notating meter Amu established remained consistent in his subsequent compositions. The first version of this piece involves meter changes every measure alternating from 3/8 to 2/4. In the second version, Amu resolves this cumbersome alternation by keeping the meter in two, but indicating a triplet quarter note division every other measure. The time signature changes in the original version indicate the challenges Amu initially faced in incorporating a local sense of meter into a

European choral framework. By making the piece more diatonic, and metrically consistent Amu also moved it into better alignment with the diatonic Ewe and Akan traditional singing practices with which he was familiar. This also made the piece easier to learn by rote and thus better suited for the classroom.

Lastly, Amu incorporates call-and-response in the chorus section, which is generally considered a primary characteristic of African vocal music (Nketia 1974:139-146, Agawu 2016). The soprano and altos provide the three-note motive in parallel harmony as a call in duple meter and the basses and tenors join them for the response. The second call is repeated as a sequence down a scale degree in the women's voices and the call likewise is modified to provide a stronger resolution. In the final measures the response is varied so that in the last two measures all four voices come in together. A later published Twi version (E. Amu 1993) indicates a further revision of measure 25. Misonu Amu suggested to me that because the text of the phrase “*Eye nse nna ho se*” cannot be broken up into two, he decided to add tenor and bass to the “call” portion of the phrase (Interview, Misonu Amu, January 13, 2015). These various revisions suggest Amu's willingness to modify his works in service of better refining his music to fit the text. Put together, the musical elements of “*Yen Ara Asase Ni*” demonstrate a strong grounding in the European hymn style, but also a familiarity with local singing and a desire to express the compatibility of the two. The references to local music are not specific to particular genres, however, so they are not associated strongly with particular ethnic groups, which enables the piece to transcend a diverse national population.

### Textual analysis

Yen ara asase ni, Eye aboo denne ma yen Mogya na nananom hwie gui nya de too ho maa yen. Adu me ne wo nso so se yebeyε bi atoa so Nimdee ‘traso nkotokranne ne apεsemenkomenya Adi yen bra mu dem ma yen asase ho do atom se  (Chorus) Oman no se ebeyε yie oo, Oman no se erennye yie oo Eye sennaho se omanfo bra na ekwere	This is our own land It is precious to us. Blood did our forefathers shed To obtain it for us. It is the turn of me and you to continue. Too much knowledge, cunning and selfishness have destroyed our life, and has affected our love for our land.  Whether a nation will prosper or whether a nation will not prosper It is an established fact that this depends on the conduct of its people.
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Figure 4.3. Text and translation of the first verse of “Yen Ara Asase Ni” by Ephraim Amu. Translation by Philip Laryea (2012:80).

In his book analyzing Amu’s song texts, Philip Laryea writes, “‘Yen Ara Asase Ni’ raises issues that are still relevant to the social and political well-being of the country. In particular, Amu helps us to reflect on the foundations on which a nation should be built and the values that engender true patriotism” (2012:200). Amu’s decision to promote awareness of issues such as collective land ownership and national responsibility, that Laryea elaborates on (ibid.:200-204), was likely influenced by the pan-African philosophy Amu was becoming familiar with at the time. The idea of collective self-reliance was a prominent theme of Pan-Africanism that Amu expresses in the chorus: “Whether a nation will prosper, or whether a nation will not prosper, it is an established fact that this depends on the conduct of its people.” Pan-African philosophy was primarily developed in Europe and the United States by educated people of African decent, and

had not spread to the broad, mostly non-literate population of West Africa. So, Amu's incorporation of this philosophy into musical works was a step toward spreading these ideas more broadly. These same Pan-African ideas inspired the independence movement led by Kwame Nkrumah. Like Amu, Nkrumah was influenced by Aggrey to seek to balance the various aspects of Ghanaian society (Korang 2004:251). In explaining his approach to overcoming colonialism Nkrumah writes, "Consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic... in such a way that they fit into the African personality" (Nkrumah 1964: 79). Although there are no Islamic references, "Yen Ara Asase Ni," is an example of how the philosophy that Nkrumah articulated was being enacted well before he returned to Ghana from overseas study in 1947. Like the musical style, the text of "Yen Ara Asase Ni" is an attempt to balance the past with the contemporary. This contributed to the development of a collective consciousness that Nkrumah then adopted as the basis for post-independence nation building. This is shown by the fact that the phrase "Blood did our forefathers shed, to obtain it for us" inspired the use of red in the Ghana flag (Laryea 2012:82).

Amu's choice to use local languages rather than English indicates a conscious effort to reach an audience beyond the confines of the Christian community. In the Presbyterian schools across the Gold Coast, English was the primary, if not the only language, so the use of indigenous languages in Amu's songs represents a departure from the purification project. Writing the original text in his native Peki dialect of Ewe allowed Amu to express a nativist perspective directly to his own linguistic community without the mediation of European Christianity. As Austin Okigbo shows in his study of South African choral music, using

indigenous languages enabled African composers to “posses the ability and means for self-creation,” that colonial languages did not allow (2010:52). Amu’s decision to translate the piece from his native language into Twi in 1931 to teach his students at Akropong, a Twi speaking area, enabled its spread throughout the colony. When he began teaching at the Akropong training college in 1927 Amu set out to study the local language and culture extensively and soon became fluent in Akan/Twi (Laryea 2012:16). As this is the most prominent language group in the colony, this allowed him to communicate with a broad section of society. The piece was later translated into at least two other indigenous languages by other teachers. An English version was proposed by the Ghana Ministry of Education and Culture in 1988, but Amu did not approve of it, and it did not catch on (Laryea 2012: 81).

Amu was sent a request by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in 1992 to compose new verses “in which mention is made of God” so “Yen Ara Asase Ni” would be appropriate for publication in a hymnbook (Laryea 2012: 81). This desire to modify the text to fit the requirements of a hymn book indicates that the purification project of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana had shifted. Instead of rejecting Amu’s attempt to integrate local culture into religious practices by dismissing him in 1933, by 1992 the church leadership was interested in adopting this secular work into the religious cannon. At the time “Yen Ara Asase Ni” was composed, the Presbyterian Church leadership had become largely indigenous, because the German missionaries were kicked out during World War I. So, the controversy surrounding Amu’s use of traditional cloth and drums during Sunday services that led to his dismissal was not between European missionaries and educated African, it was a disagreement about the separation of religion and culture within the indigenous church leadership (see Laryea 2012:21). Amu



considered himself a devout Christian, but for him that did not mean rejecting local traditions or avoiding the secular sphere of life. He makes this clear in a Twi language sermon delivered the same year “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” was composed: “African language shown in culture: wearing of cloth, singing and greetings are things from God that are good. It is therefore necessary that we cleanse these with the Spirit of God” (Amu, quoted in Laryea 2012:18). To advocate for cleansing traditional practices with the “Spirt of God” in 1929 challenged the prevailing Protestant conception of Christianity. Although sermons were sometimes delivered in local languages and some traditional practices had begun to be tolerated outside the church, these were considered an impediment to salvation (Jenkins 2003). Given Amu’s position, it is not surprising that “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” challenges the purification project by advocating for traditional practices to be retained. After referring to the sacrifices made by ancestors, Amu writes, “It is the turn of you and me to continue” (see Figure 4.3, line 5). Amu asks the youth of Ghana to challenge the purification project by continuing the practices of their forefathers, that had been marginalized by Protestant conversion efforts.

Lastly, any analysis of Amu’s work must deal with the relationship between the text and music, or tonal prosody. Agawu argues that the contour of the language should be considered “precompositional” material in analyzing Amu’s work (1984:37). However, “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” does not conform to this fundamental aspect of Ghanaian choral composition, as Agawu also recognized (1984:55). Nketia confirmed the lack of tonal prosody to me by demonstrating how the spoken text of the first line descends in pitch while the soprano line ascends in Amu’s composition (Interview, August 15, 2015). Furthermore, Ephraim Amu’s daughter, Misonu Amu, demonstrated to me that the original composition, “Ame wo Gyife Yigba,” also does not conform

to speech patterns in the soprano voice (Interview, January 13, 2015). Agawu proposes an explanation of why this piece is an outlier: “‘Yen Ara Asase Ni’ then, would seem in its simplicity to meet the needs of the youth for whom it was written ... social function has exerted a necessary influence on musical procedure” (Agawu 1984:55). I disagree, however, that music for children would be less likely to conform to speech patterns, especially if tonal prosody makes songs easier to learn and remember, as Agawu also argues. In addition, Amu’s choral works “San Befa” (“Go Back and Take It Forward”) and “Yaanom Abibirimma” (“Sons of Africa”), composed soon after “Yen Ara Asase Ni,” both demonstrate a high level of tonal prosody. Amu categorizes all three as patriotic songs in his publication *25 African Songs* (1932), so distinguishing between them in terms of social function does not seem accurate. I would suggest that “Yen Ara Asase Ni” does not conform to the melodic contour of the text simply because Amu had not yet made this a defining characteristic of his style by 1929. At the time of composing “Yen Ara Asase Ni” Amu had different creative considerations in mind. He was more concerned with meeting the requirements of the initial request: creating an “African” composition that was suitable for performance during the secular holiday, Empire Day.

Combined with the broad relevance of the Pan-African themes in the text, this non-prosodic approach to composition actually helped this work reach a national audience. Because the melody is not tied to one particular language, it could be easily translated into other indigenous languages without losing meaning and spread among the diverse ethnic groups that constitute Ghana. Also, the text of “Yen Ara Asase Ni” does not refer to any particular religious or ethnic tradition, nor does it condemn European colonial influence in Africa. This openness allowed it to spread widely without becoming attached to a particular political position.

### **Amu's Emergence as a Public Figure**

The history of how Amu's music became widely known throughout the colony reveals how postcolonial consciousness arose from the very institutions that constituted colonialism in Ghana. Amu's compositions spread primarily because of his work as a music educator and through his students who took positions as teachers throughout the colony. The two most influential educational institutions in the Gold Coast in the 1930s were the Presbyterian teacher training college at Akropong and the new government school at Achimota. "Yen Ara Asase Ni" was composed during a period of transition when a sense of nationhood was beginning to be formed within these institutions.

Amu was the music teacher at Akropong from 1926 until he was dismissed in December of 1933. However, he was quickly hired at Achimota upon the recommendation of the British music educator who was teaching there, W.E.F. Ward. At Achimota, Amu's efforts to develop an educational program that combined Western and African music were supported. Reverend Robert Danso became Amu's successor at Akropong, followed by Kwabena Nketia. Both continued to teach Amu's music there using the methods he had established. This was possible without interference from church authorities because it was his approach to church services, not compositions that were cited as the reason for his dismissal. Thus, the controversial dismissal of Amu from Akropong actually served to broaden his influence rather than limit it. His African music education "initiative" (as Nketia calls the approach to African music education developed by Amu) was in place at two of the most prominent teacher training colleges in the Gold Coast by the late 1930s and soon children all over the colony had teachers who were trained there. Nketia told me, "[Amu's] influence was strong because he was teaching students at the training

college who were posted into the schools. I knew Amu's songs when I was in elementary school, because his students taught us his songs" (Interview, December 1, 2013). Thus, when they finally met after Amu returned from his studies at the London Royal College of Music in 1940, Nketia had already become familiar with Amu's work and philosophy. The spread of Amu's earlier music he composed in Peki through the PCG by teachers is also confirmed by Agyemang (1988:28).

Amu's music also became known through performances. In March of 1933 Amu and his students performed a concert at the Colonial Secretary's residence in Accra, which was attended by many dignitaries including the Colonial Governor (Agyemang 1988:81-87). Two excerpts of newspaper reviews indicate the impact of this concert and provide insight into how Amu's music was received by the intellectual elite at the time. The first, published on March 18th, 1933 in *The Gold Coast Independent* was titled "Remarkable African Efforts and Achievements":

By the Colonial Secretary's House function, in fact by his compositions, Mr. Amu has effected a revolution in more ways than one. Firstly, he has introduced something that must contribute to a complete recasting of the prevailing notion that only European music is fit and proper for the ears of the educated African; secondly, he has at one stroke silenced the voice of bigoted priests and sanctimonious ministers who in holy horror have condemned and still think that purely African music and the instruments from which they are produced including the drums, as integral parts of the social structure of pagan Africa, are unfit attachments to the sublimated yearnings and aspirations of the converted. ... Mr. Amu has given us music with a perfectly fitting background of racial hopes and

aspirations instead of the comparatively meaningless and unsatisfying products of other people (author unknown, reproduced in Laryea 2012:385).

Although the author is unknown, this last sentence reveals that the reviewer considers himself to be part of the “educated African” class. His assertion that this concert was revolutionary is evidence that Amu’s music disrupted colonial ideology by presenting “African” music in a context that was not expected. Compositions that could be considered both “African” and suitable for concert hall performance disrupted the prevailing association that “African” music was barbaric.

Another review provides evidence that Amu’s musical creativity had a national impact. Dr. J.B. Danquah, a lawyer and leader of the independence movement, ran a daily newspaper at the time called *The Times of West Africa*. During this period of indirect rule in the Gold Coast there was some tension between the traditional rulers, who had more governing authority, and the educated elite, who were relegated to clerical jobs. Danquah was attempting to bridge this divide to develop a more unified opposition to some colonial policies (Gocking 2005:65). It seems that he saw Amu’s music as useful in this national project. In March 21, 1933, Danquah published a lengthy article under his traditional name, Kwame Kyeretwie, praising Amu and providing a narrative of Amu’s quest to develop African music. He concludes the article by writing, “Mr. Amu believes that African music is not as fully developed as it should be. But it will grow... it will aid the African to ‘turn back’ from his search after the European mirage and take the very thing which lies nearest as that destined to bring him success — the thing he left behind, the thing that is not European, the thing that is African. Supremely good, but ‘different.’ Amu leads the way to the new Africa” (Kyeretwie 1933, reproduced in Laryea 2012:386). Amu had

succeeded in presenting “African” music in a context that was sanctioned by the colonial government and he became nationally known in the process. Amu’s creativity was clearly having an impact among the elite class of educated Africans, despite his controversial status within the church.

Amu’s position on the independence movement helps explain why his music was not tied to any particular political party or ideology. When the populist movement for independence started to take shape in the late 1940s Amu did not become directly involved. In fact, in a sermon he gave in Kumasi in 1950 Amu prayed for an end to the divisive rhetoric and violence of that time (Laryea 2012:358). Nkrumah had come back the Gold Coast in 1947 to work in Danquah’s United Gold Coast Convention which sought a path to independence. However, Nkrumah broke away to form his own organization because he was frustrated with slow pace. In his notes to this sermon Amu reacts to this development, “If in 1948 and 1949 we employed physical and intellectual forces only without spiritual forces, this year let us employ first and foremost all the spiritual forces at our disposal: regular reading of the Bible with quiet meditation, constant earnest prayer for wisdom and courage as well as tenacity of purpose to enable us to do right at all costs and at all times...” (Amu, quoted in Laryea 2012:358). This framed the struggle for national independence as a spiritual struggle rather than political, and thus challenged leaders to be more reflective and less self-confident. There is further evidence of Amu’s position toward Nkrumah’s revolution in a letter he wrote to a friend in 1955:

As a citizen of the Gold Coast I am deeply concerned about the path we take in our development... this is how I see affairs in the Gold Coast. We began in 1948 with bloodshed and forced the hands of the government of that time to give us

what we wanted. Having started with bloodshed, we are bound to continue in bloodshed and end in bloodshed. Nkrumah himself referred to the situation in these words: ‘We began this struggle with bloodshed, privations and imprisonments, and anybody who would try to oppose the work of the party would live to regret it.’ ...When things go on like this without any sign of change of heart our doom is certain (Amu, quoted in Laryea 2012:340-341).

These archival documents help us understand not only Amu’s position, but what kind of a public figure he wanted to be. He was a pacifist, and he defended the European missionaries who educated him. Through his compositions and work as a music educator he sought to convey a Christian perspective and thus shape the trajectory of the new nation. Perhaps because of the lack of Amu’s involvement with the political campaign for independence, “Yen Ara Asase Ni” did not acquire a strong association with any particular political ideology. Also, because Amu moved to Kumasi in 1951, he was geographically removed from the focal point of the independence movement.

Around the time of independence, “Yen Ara Asase Ni” was featured in national broadcasts on the government radio station. As mentioned in the introduction, when Sir Charles Noble Arden-Clarke’s was retiring from the Gold Coast as colonial governor in April of 1957 “Yen Ara Asase Ni” was performed for him in the northern Ghanaian city of Tamale. It was sung

in both Twi and Dagbani, a primary language in northern Ghana.<sup>25</sup> While the Dagomba are the second largest ethnic group in Ghana, their distance from the coast meant there was less missionary and colonial presence there during the colonial period. Instead, Arabic and Islamic influence from northern Africa are prominent. Because Amu did not speak Dagbani or live in that region himself it is most likely that one of his students introduced it to the area. The performance of “Yen Ara Asase Ni” by local school children at this event indicates that the song was becoming accepted nationally, transcending ethnicity, language, and regional differences. It also indicates Amu’s influence as a music educator and the strength of the educational institutions, such as Akropong and the Presbyterian church, where he taught.

By independence “Yen Ara Asase Ni” was the most well-known of Amu’s choral work. The national radio station continued to feature it as a national song in a variety of situations well after independence. It was selected as the “signature tune” for the most prominent national radio news show, called “Ghana Magazine” in 1957 (Figure 4.4). This was the primary weekly news magazine of the Ghana Broadcasting Services, later Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). Also, in a GBC publication of various dramas and scripted programs broadcast in the years leading to independence, the introductory material states, “*Yen ara asase* [sic] is the nearest approach the country has to a national hymn” (Swanzy 1957:12). Lastly, in the time when there was no broadcast at night, it was customary to mark the beginning and ending of each day’s

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<sup>25</sup> This information is based on a recording of a broadcast housed in the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Sound Archive, Disk 008, dated 2/4/1957. Although the broadcast only included the Twi version of the song, the announcer indicates that it was also sung in Dagbani. Dagbani is the language of the Dagomba who make up 16.6 percent of the national population of Ghana according to a 2010 census. They are the majority in the three northern regions, but only make up around five percent of the population in the remaining ten regions. (Ghana Statistical Services National Analytic Report, 2013).



broadcasts with “Yen Ara Asase Ni.” This lasted until FM replaced short wave in the 1980s.

Thus, through a number of coups and changes in the political environment after independence

“Yen Ara Asase Ni” remained a staple at the GBC, and it continues to serve as a national symbol.

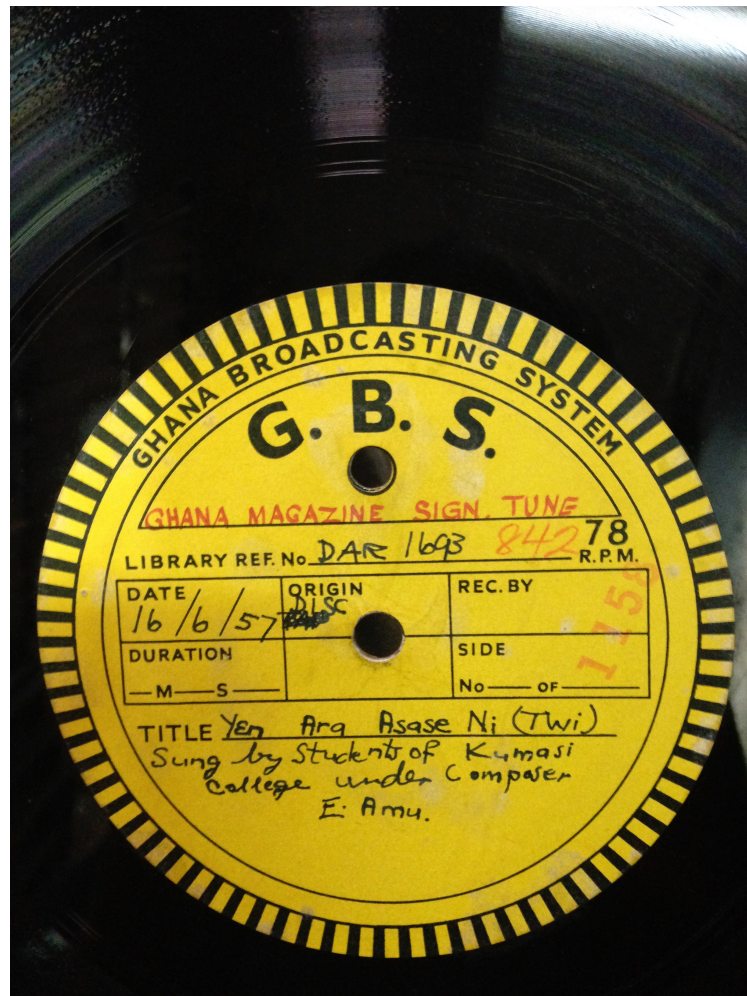


Figure 4.4. Image of record label. Courtesy of Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Department of Radio.

“Yen Ara Asase Ni” was not Amu’s first attempt to compose in an African style. Two years prior, in 1927, he composed a Christian composition, “Onipae Da Wo Ho So” (“People, Let’s Go Forward”) which his student, Otto Boateng calls “the first original composition in African idiom in correct notation” (1963:104). However, in “Yen Ara Asase Ni” Amu had moved beyond experimentation to a refinement of his hybrid style. It was not enough to combine

Western harmony with traditional rhythm, as had already been done by Highlife musicians. The separation between culture and religion was an equally important distinction to challenge. For a deeply religious man such as Amu to promote traditional values in a musical setting that indexes Christianity is perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of this piece. By writing this piece in a style that indexically references German Christian hymns (*a cappella*, four-part, functional harmonic framework) in a secular context that makes no explicit symbolic reference to Christianity, Amu was overcoming the separation between universal “religion” and local “culture” to express a hybrid identity that came to resonate with a diverse Ghanaian population. To borrow Homi Bhabha’s assessment of a different work of art, it could be said that this composition helped “open up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (1994:5). This expression of hybridity is strengthened when other aspects of Amu’s approach to life, such as his conviction to include drums in services and wear traditional cloth to the pulpit, are taken into account.

Since independence, “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” has retained a prominent place in public life. It is commonly sung by school children and at official occasions as a second national anthem. Nketia told me that some people felt “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” was more appropriate to sing in some cases because the official national anthem was in English: “‘Yɛn Ara Asase Ni’ became an alternative thing when we realized that we didn’t really have our national anthem that corresponded to our image of [the nation]. Amu anticipated this, and suddenly we remembered Amu’s thing, so it became a second national anthem” (Nketia, Recorded Interview, December 1, 2013). A music video that revitalized the anthem as the “Official Peace Song of Ghana” was

posted to YouTube in 2011 and has garnered more than 260,000 views.<sup>26</sup> The performers in the video include Richie, Tinny, VIP, Quabena Maphia, Eazzy, Ayigbe Edem, Zigi, Ambulley, Okyeame Kwame, Jael Wiafe and Efya. Some sing the verse or chorus of the soprano melody of “Yen Ara Asase Ni,” while other rap in various Ghanaian languages. These popular music stars perform in various nationally significant locations such as the National Arch or Independence while others are filmed in busy street scenes. The production of the video was supported by ECOWAS, the World Bank, and the UN Development Program. The high production value and the number of popular musicians from different genres included reveals a substantial effort to promote unity and political stability. The choice to feature “Yen Ara Asase Ni” in this way indicates its continued relevance in Ghanaian national life.

### **Conclusion**

The history of “Yen Ara Asase Ni” demonstrates how musical hybridity can be employed in the contestation of the colonial social structure. It also provides a counter-narrative to some ethnomusicology scholarship that has framed musical hybridity in Africa as playing into a globalization discourse that effectively extends European hegemony. As ethnomusicologist Sarah Weiss writes, “Theorists like Deleuze may have determined that everything is hybrid and purity is impossible, but threats to cultural purity remain a primary concern in globalization discourse” (2014:511). Many critiques of cultural globalization continue to rely on the dichotomies, such as indigenous vs. cosmopolitan, to frame their argument.

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<sup>26</sup> “Lynx ft All Stars - Yen Ara Asaase Ni (Official Peace Song For Ghana)” YouTube, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_QSQR8597dY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QSQR8597dY)> accessed January 28, 2016.

While Weiss does not cite any specific scholars in her concern about the celebration of cultural purity, the work of Thomas Turino provides an example of how the critique of globalization within ethnomusicology has been tied up with debates about of cultural purity. In his consideration of the role popular musicians in Zimbabwe played in the transition to independence he provides “concrete case studies of how ‘cultural globalization’ happens through colonialism, nationalism, and postcolonial state policy” (2000:4). By framing these three -isms together under the rubric of cultural globalization, Turino minimizes the distinctions between them. The colony and the postcolonial state appear to be in lockstep in terms of how music is utilized within these institutions. His argument that the process of post-independent national formation is an extension of colonial globalization relies on a conception of the popular musician as a modernist reformist, in that they forge “a synthesis of the ‘best’ or ‘most valuable’ aspects of local ‘traditional’ culture and ‘the best’ of foreign ‘modern’ lifeways and technologies” (Turino 2000:16). Based on this definition, “Yen Ara Asase Ni” can be considered an example of modernist reformism in Ghana.

Through his examination of the role of music in the Zimbabwe independence movement and failure of the regime of the Zimbabwe independence leader and president-for-life Robert Mugabe, Turino is skeptical that modernist reformism, and musical hybridity in general, can act in any way other than to reinforce the global-capitalist marginalization of indigenous lifeways:

Put more directly, reformism typically objectifies, recontextualizes and alters indigenous *forms* for emblematic purposes in light of cosmopolitan dispositions and social contexts and programs. The meaning, ethics, and practices that originally infused indigenous forms are typically not transferred into the reformist

mix.... Through this process, diverse local forms are incorporated and homogenized within the same cosmopolitan frame while maintaining surface (emblematic) differences in relation to the cosmopolitan. (Turino 2000:16)

While this assessment may have some validity in for an analysis of music in the post-independent state of Zimbabwe, the history of choral music in Ghana shows that modernist reformism has been a vital way of celebrating indigeneity, without replacing it.

Rather than representing a continuation of Western cultural hegemony, “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” provided a disruption of the colonial status quo, without discarding European thought altogether. My divergence from Turino’s perspective can be further illustrated in how we read the work of Partha Chatterjee into ethnomusicological scholarship. While Turino cites Chatterjee in establishing nationalism as a cosmopolitan formation that implicitly accepted the premises “on which colonial domination was based” (Chatterjee 1986: 30, cited in Turino 2000:164), I see Chatterjee’s work as emphasizing the importance of creativity in a process of contesting this domination. I suggest that “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” opened up the possibility of national formation that constructs a “*difference* with the ‘modular’ forms of the national society propagated by the modern West” (Chatterjee 1993:5). Musical hybridity can then be claimed as part of the formation of a modern, national consciousness from within colonial institutions.

In this choral work and in his actions, Amu expressed a modernity inclusive of both indigenous practices and European Christianity. By saying Amu expressed an “affirmation of consciousness of identity” in 1929, Nketia situates “Yɛn Ara Asase Ni” as modern, not in opposition to tradition, but in dialogue with it. Amu affirmed a modern, African identity using the tools he acquired from his missionary education. This affirmation was then sung back to the

colonial governor on the eve of independence. In events such as this we see modernity as an emerging discourse constructed to deal with the reality of colonial cultural interaction. This discourse employs both historical awareness and creative hybridity to forge a vision of the future and was adopted by postcolonial nationalists in order to imagine the nation-state (Nkrumah 1964). As Comaroff and Comaroff write, "From the precolonial epoch, through the colonial era, and into the advanced capitalist age, the ongoing revaluation of signs has always been [a] palpable feature of African creativity.... [These creative] activities are in fact a means of producing historical consciousness: they seek to shape the inchoateness, the murky ambiguity of colonial encounters into techniques of empowerment and signs of collective representation" (1993:xxii). This is what Amu accomplished through his musical creativity. It was not simply about a manipulation of pitches and rhythms; it was about a manipulation of socially constructed categories. This creative indexicality became integrated into the institutions, such as the Presbyterian mission and government schools, that initially rejected it. In time, Amu's stylistic innovations formed a new indexical order that helped Ghanaians make sense of the colonial experience and enabled a postcolonial consciousness that was not derivative of European thought to emerge. In the following chapter, I explore how this hybridity was adopted by state institutions to help define the character of Ghanaian nationhood.

## **Chapter 5: Choral Music in the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and Other State Institutions After Independence**

In this chapter and the next, I explore the history of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Music Department and its workplace choir. This marks a transition from a consideration of Ghanaian choral musical hybridity as an expression of postcolonial consciousness to considering how the post-independence Ghanaian state furthered the musical innovations begun in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches for the purposes of developing cultural nationalism. In this chapter, I analyze archival material and interviews to argue that leading Ghanaian music scholars promoted and shaped the development of choral music in a way that furthered Amu's musical innovations, outlined in the previous chapter, through the GBC Music Department. My focus is on the period of transition from colonial rule to independence in the 1950s and the work of Kwabena Nketia in particular.

I consider this history in the context of Homi Bhabha's analysis of cultural hybridity as the "third space of enunciation," a space where difference is articulated from a position outside the dominant historical paradigm (2004:54). Both Ghanaian choral music and the GBC, as a post-independence institution, can be considered examples of efforts to enunciate in this third space as they reflect a combination of local and foreign, colonial influences, but speak beyond this duality. Following Bhabha, I suggest that to understand how choral music functions within Ghanaian national discourse requires moving beyond the Hegelian-Marxist dialectical framework of thesis, antithesis, synthesis, where European colonialism is configured as either in opposition to, or subverted by, indigenous thinking. Bhabha suggests that cultural hybridity is more than synthesis; it can constitute a disruption of dialectical thinking and, thus, challenge the

colonial notion of the Other as an object of knowledge. In this chapter, I explore how the GBC framed choral music as an expression that moves past dialectical thinking at the time of independence primarily through a close listening of a radio program produced for the GBC by J. H. Kwabena Nketia in 1957.

I first became aware of the GBC Music Department through Judith Opoku, the archivist of the Kwabena Nketia Audio-Visual Archive at the University of Ghana, in 2012. She introduced me to Moses Adjei, who holds a comparable position at the Gramophone Library at the GBC. Through Adjei, I came to learn about the GBC choir that he led and the extensive collection of historic broadcasts and musical recordings held in the Sound Archive and Gramophone Library of the GBC. The choir, Sound Archives, and Gramophone Library all fall under the Department of Music, which, in turn, falls under the larger bureaucratic umbrella of the Radio Department. I attended a few rehearsals during that first trip and made plans to request access to the audio material during my next trip. During two subsequent trips in 2013 and 2015, I applied and was granted access to the GBC Gramophone Library and Sound Archives to explore the material regarding choral music and radio broadcasts. Some of this archival material has been discussed in the first and third chapters, and my ethnographic work with the GBC choir is discussed in the following chapter.

### **Colonial Origins and Expansion of Radio in the Gold Coast**

Radio in Ghana began in the colonial era as a component of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The BBC itself began in the 1920s and came to rely on a mix of public and private funding to broadcast diverse programming. As historian Walter Arnstein writes,



“[E]stablished in 1927 in a form that was to persist for the next forty years, the BBC was a monopoly established under the auspices of the state but not subject to its day-to-day control... From the beginning the pattern of programming was established as a combination of classical music, discussion and variety programs, weather forecasts, a children’s hour, Sunday services, and programs for schools” (Arnstein 2001: 319). As in Britain, radio in Ghana was entirely a national enterprise until recently. The GBC had an effective monopoly on radio airwaves until 1994 (Gocking 2005:227). Choral music was an integral aspect of music programming at the BBC from the 1920s. Three singing groups arose to provide music for broadcast along with the BBC Symphony. The largest of these singing groups was the Choral Society, which in 1939 totaled two hundred and fifty members (Woodgate 1939:493). The choir master at the time, Leslie Woodgate, explains, “The Choral Society is largely recruited from church choir members who take their singing seriously” (Woodgate 1939:494). In 1935, the British set up a relay radio station in the Gold Coast to transmit news and develop original programming. Many parallels remain between the two institutions, including a mix of private and public funding. Support for the arts, including amateur choral groups, also continues in both institutions.

When the colonial governor of the Gold Coast at the time, Sir Arnold Hodson, opened the first radio broadcast in Ghana in 1935, he explained the mission of the new station: “One of the main reasons for introducing the Relay Service is to bring news, entertainment and music into the homes of all and sundry. This will bring to an end the barriers of isolation and ignorance in the path of progress and also to enable the people of Gold Coast to improve on their very rich cultural music” (GBC website, “About Us,” [gbcghana.com/aboutus](http://gbcghana.com/aboutus), n.d., accessed May 10, 2016). This statement reveals that the establishment of radio in the Gold Coast was a component

of the British Empire's "civilizing" mission. The satellite station was intended not only to broadcast British programs but also, as articulated by Hodson, to "improve" indigenous music, making it suitable for broadcast. Station employees were involved in not only recording, but also staging local musical performances for national consumption. This entailed a transformation of local musical forms in the context of British colonialism. Thus, from the beginning, radio in Ghana pursued a hybridity of local and foreign cultural formations, a mission that soon incorporated choral music.

Historian Nate Plageman notes that the GBC expanded in the 1940s and 50s to become the primary source of information and entertainment, largely through their broadcasting of highlife music, the Caribbean-influenced guitar-based commercial music performed in nightclubs at the time. Plageman writes:

Over the course of late 1940s and early 1950s, the Gold Coast Broadcasting Company transformed its small subscription service into a mass medium of information and entertainment. In 1941, the colony only had four thousand radio subscribers, most of whom were educated elites, government employees, and places of business. Shortly after the second World War, however, the colony expanded its radio infrastructure and offered an expanded number of programs designed to cater to the interests of large and diverse audiences. (Plageman 2012:126)

Radio was a primary way for the colonial government to communicate with a broad, largely non-literate population. The use of music and other "entertainment" programming drew an audience for news stories and other information that the British colonial government wanted to disseminate.

## **Radio in the Transition to Independence**

During the transition from British rule to independence in the 1950s and 60s, the GBC generally retained its institutional structure and mission of developing local cultural forms and providing news and entertainment. Today, it continues to operate on the same location and in the same buildings as the colonial-era station. However, in the transition, local control was established and radio came to function as the official broadcaster and mouthpiece for the new government. Ghana was a one-party state at the time and radio was the primary way of reaching a broad national population in both English and local languages. A music department was founded in the GBC as part of this transition in 1956.

Three Ghanaians had the most impact on the shape of the GBC music department from the beginning: Atta Annan Mensah, Kwame Nkrumah, and Kwabena Nketia. Mensah was the first director of the GBC Music Department from 1956 until 1961, when he left to continue his musical studies at UCLA (Nketia 1997:31, Ekua Mensah, Phone Interview, October 22, 2016). Prior to coming to the GBC, Mensah had studied with Ephraim Amu at Achimota College, and through his work at the GBC, and in his later career, was a primary exponent of Amu's philosophy of musical pluralism and hybridity. After leaving the GBC, Mensah went on to have a distinguished international career in Uganda, Zambia, Canada, and in Ghana as a music scholar, choral music composer, and administrator until his death in 2006. (Ekua Mensah, Phone Interview, Oct. 22, 2016). His daughter, Ekua Mensah, described his leadership style and approach to mentoring students as "firm, but nurturing" (Interview, Oct. 22, 2016). She told me that at Cape Coast University in Ghana, where he taught in the 1980s, Atta Annan Mensah drew large crowds to concerts that featured African compositions alongside standard European musical

works (Interview, Oct. 22, 2016). Mensah brought this same dedication to a broad musical education in foreign and local music to the GBC Music Department. According to Nketia, Mensah coordinated educational programming and recording activities with university faculty in Ghana (Nketia 1997:31). Thus, the GBC Music Department was part of a constellation of formerly colonial institutions that worked to provide a postcolonial musical education based on a mixture of European and African music to a broad Ghanaian population.

While Kwame Nkrumah was not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the GBC Music Department, his leadership in the independence movement, and as first president of Ghana, had an influence its development and mission. Nkrumah's vision for self-rule in Ghana as social justice emerged during his ten years of philosophical study in the United States, first at Lincoln University and then at the University of Pennsylvania. During this time, he developed what he called a "revolutionary ideology" not only against colonialism, but also for the creation of a just and inclusive society that reflected local values and traditions (Nkrumah 1964:34). In developing this ideology, Nkrumah was influenced by the work of Marx and Engels, along with the anti-colonial writing of scholars such as Franz Fanon and Markus Garvey. He viewed Marxism as directly relevant to his experiences as a colonial subject because it dealt directly with the oppression that capitalism entailed. Furthermore, Marxist socialism appealed to him as a framework for integrating traditional ideas and practices into the fabric of postcolonial state. He writes, "[T]he restitution of Africa's humanist and egalitarian principles of society requires socialism. It is materialism that ensures the only effective transformation of nature, and socialism that derives the highest development from this transformation" (Nkrumah 1964:77). Nkrumah sought to foster state institutions that would help Ghanaians build a national culture that was

more aligned with traditional ways of life, but did not reject Christianity or European ideas. He was committed to a nationalism based in hybridity as a tool to counter the ever-present threat of colonialism. This is most clearly outlined in his philosophy of decolonization that he later called “Consciencism,” which put forward a path to “enable African society to digest the Western and Islamic and the Euro- Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality” (1964:79). He saw the state as a means of promoting this development of a unifying, hybrid national culture. It is in this context that the GBC Music Department can be understood. The newly independent GBC promoted hybridity in alignment with Nkrumah’s mission, and music was an integral aspect of this mission.

One of Nkrumah’s early collaborators in the project of building cultural nationalism was the music scholar J. H. Kwabena Nketia. In terms of educational experiences in London and the United States, these two intellectuals had much in common. In fact, they first met as students in the 1940s in London (Nketia, Interview, Jan. 15, 2013). By the time of independence, Nketia had become a prominent scholar with a broad knowledge of the various Ghanaian musical traditions outside his own ethnic group. This knowledge was useful when he became involved in national activities, such as advising Mensah at the GBC Music Department. Mensah writes: “Nketia had ready on hand the kind of material that Radio Ghana sought to nurture its listenership on.... [Listeners] received a good feast of freshening new adventures in musical creativity and scholarship, with Nketia in a leading role” (Mensah 1992:11). Direct evidence of Nketia’s involvement comes in the form of a 1957 broadcast recording promoting Amu and his choral works, discussed below.

## **Traditional Music and the Projection of National Unity through Radio**

Choral music was not the most prominent type of music broadcast by the GBC. The role of traditional music was emphasized in my discussions with GBC Music Department employees in their explanations of how music was employed to promote unity in the country across ethnic groups. In the past, the GBC made an effort to collect and broadcast traditional music from various ethnic groups to foster a sense of inclusion. For example, when I asked the former director of the Music Department, Mr. Philip Atsu, to reflect on what he was most proud of in his decades of work at the GBC, he responded:

What actually offers me some amount of pride is that the traditional people<sup>27</sup> feel part of GBC, and the nation. Yes, because of going to them, traveling all the way from Accra to the village to record their activities for broadcast in Accra, gives them some kind of belongingness. Otherwise it was like they have been neglected. So GBC should be commended a lot for doing that. (Interview, December 20, 2013)<sup>28</sup>

He told me about the positive feedback he received from musicians when they heard their recordings on the air. Sometimes they would come to the station to listen to their recordings at the Gramophone Library. Atsu also lamented that these recording activities had become less common after the switch to FM and the end of GBC monopoly in 1994 because of decreasing

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<sup>27</sup> My “traditional people” I take him to mean the rural population outside of Accra who identify more with ethnic traditions than national ones.

<sup>28</sup> Philip Atsu's involvement with the GBC music department began in the 1970s as a choir director and head of music. He then became the Director of Radio before retiring in 2007. My interview with him took place at the GBC Gramophone Library on the day of the annual Christmas celebration.

funding. Nonetheless, as the most public national institution in post-independence Ghana, the GBC played a crucial role in fostering a sense of inclusion for the variety of ethnic and faith groups, especially groups who felt marginalized within a nation perceived to be dominated by the Asante and Christianity.

Because of the religious, political, and ethnic diversity in Ghana (discussed in the introduction), developing a sense of inclusion was a complex task. For example, GBC employees had to consider the possibility that some of the music produced or brought to the GBC by commercial artists had divisive messages or had the potential to increase ethnic or political tensions in the country. Atsu told me how he addressed this problem when they encountered in the course of auditioning groups and preparing them through rehearsals for the recording studio: “Ghana is made up of, you know, various types of ethnic groups. And everybody is very sensitive about his area, so that if you go there and attack a certain aspect of that area, you know, it can cause a lot of problems. So we *guide* people coming with material for broadcast, against attacking any other tribe or any other personality” (Interview, December 20, 2013). There was a conscious effort on the part of GBC employees to use music to bridge ethnic and religious divides. They had to exercise discretion in shaping the musical product because of the risk of inciting tensions or offending individuals. There is evidence of what might be considered “censorship” in the Gramophone Library in the form of discs with the letters “NTBB” (“Not To Be Broadcast”) written in red ink, and the playing surface intentionally scratched. Atsu explained that GBC employees could be held accountable for screening songs for hidden meanings that should not be broadcast: “You must be careful, because some of the texts are [inflammatory], and if you use them you are in trouble, especially obscene songs, songs that are illicit, songs that are

political, songs that have a political leaning, leaning on one party” (Interview, December 20, 2013). This statement implies that there are continuing tensions that exist between communities and the real possibility that music could potentially be a means of inciting violence.<sup>29</sup> Because music is an integrated aspect of social life in Ghana, the GBC Music Department played an active role in negotiating the complex network of ethnicities in the process of building an integrated, independent nation-state.

### **Producing Choral Music in the GBC**

While traditional music was the primary way the GBC Music Department approached the problem of developing national unity in a diverse ethnic and religious context, choral music also played a significant role in signaling the possibility for a more homogenous Ghanaian society. Through various means, the GBC sought to maintain and develop the choral style Amu had begun into a national tradition. Atsu talked about the need to encourage young composers by recording and broadcasting their work. He said, “If you are a composer, there’s a place for you here to come and record” (Interview, December 20, 2013). These recordings of new choral works in local languages were broadcast alongside older Ghanaian compositions and European compositions on weekly programs such as *Campus Melodies* and *Songs of Praise*. Along with other national institutions, such as the Ghana National Symphony, the GBC sought to foster

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<sup>29</sup> For example, there is an ongoing chieftaincy dispute between the Konkomba and Nanumba people regarding land ownership that has resulted in violence in northern Ghana. In reaction, the national government has imposed curfews and bans on drumming because of the fear that it incites tensions. This was the situation when I visited the northern city of Tamale in 2003 on a study abroad trip.



hybrid musical creativity by giving formally-educated, literate musicians an outlet where their work could reach a large audience.

The function of these programs was, at least in part, to promote national unity in Ghana. The producer in the GBC Music Department who specialized in choral programs from 1984 to 2010, John Hammond-Acquaah, told me that his superiors taught him to promote national unity in his work. He said, “You have been taught... [to promote] national unity. Those who we record from [anywhere], even if they are in Accra, the music they give us goes on air, and it is around the country. So it should be something of unity. Not anything to divide the people” (Interview, Jan. 6, 2014). This statement illustrates that the engagement with choral music was not passive, but an active effort to shape the music for consumption by a national audience. This process included working with choirs and their directors to improve the overall quality of singing prior to recording. Hammond-Acquaah and other GBC employees often auditioned choirs before they were invited to the studio to record and rehearsed choirs prior to the recording session. As Atsu explained, GBC employees would also organize workshops to improve the quality of singing: “We teach the outside choir masters what to do. Because we are looking for certain qualities, certain aspect of composition, and then certain aspect of singing.... Sometimes we go out to the choir masters to organize them, organize workshop for them” (Atsu, Interview, Dec. 20, 2013). Thus, employees of the GBC Music Department needed to be expert conductors and be able to work with choir directors to increase the quality of choral music in Ghana.

Working in the GBC Music Department also required mastery of recording technology. In our interview, Hammond-Acquaah spoke about how he approached his work as the producer of a weekly program called *Campus Melodies*, for which he prepared and recorded school choirs for

many years. He told me he would go listen to choirs from various areas of Ghana, and he would either record them on location or ask them to travel to the studios in Accra. He described a typical trip to a town where he endeavored to record as many choirs as possible: “On the first day, I rehearse two, three, four choirs a day then the second day I move to another area, two, three. Then the following day is when I have to return to Accra. I bring all the choirs at one venue and record them one by one. So I [would] be going with twelve tapes, the reel[-to-reel] tapes. Twelve tapes, label them, write my script, then feature them” (Interview, Jan. 6, 2014) The process was largely dictated by the technology of the time. Unfortunately, when one technology was replaced by another the older material became obsolete. According to Hammond-Acquaah, most of the reel-to-reel tapes and scripts for broadcasters, which provided information about the choirs, were discarded when CDs and digital recoding became standard (Interview, Jan. 6, 2014).

I also asked Hammond-Acquaah if he had the opportunity to travel to the north of Ghana, where Islam is the majority religion. He told me, “I once recorded a group from Bimbilla [the capital of Nanumba North district in the Northern Region]. But I was lucky. I know the music master. I knew what he was capable of, so I asked him [to] come [to Accra]. And we had really, some small rehearsals here and I recorded it. And somebody asked me: ‘Oh, did you go to Bimbilla, when?’ And I said, ‘Oh, I went to Bimbilla in Accra’ [laughs]” (Interview, Jan. 6, 2014). Nanum, the language spoken in Bimbilla, is closely related to the more prominent Dagbani language of northern Ghana. Although the choral music I heard in Ghana uses the languages of southern Ghana, this is further evidence, in addition to the 1957 broadcast of the retiring Governor’s visit to Tamale, discussed in the previous chapter, that choral music was practiced in the northern regions of Ghana, especially where there were missionary efforts.

Through various means, GBC Music Department employees have shaped Ghanaian choral music and presented it to a national audience. Their work is in line with Nkrumah's philosophy in that a variety of languages and ethnicities from the various regions of Ghana are represented on a national platform. This provides a sense of unification by building Ghanaian choral music, based on Amu's hybrid innovations, into a national singing tradition.

### **Nketia's Radio Portrait of Amu**

The intellectual framework for the work of GBC Music Department employees promoting choral music as a national tradition was established at the time of independence by Ghana's foremost music scholar, Kwabena Nketia. Although Nketia is most renowned for his teaching and writing, his contribution to cultural development in Ghana through this involvement with the GBC and other state institutions has not received much attention.<sup>30</sup> This section explores how Nketia shaped the GBC Music Department and promoted Amu's legacy and how this work intercepts with his scholarship. This work can be interpreted as an attempt to enunciate from the postcolonial third space.

I focus on a twenty-nine minute broadcast that Nketia scripted and produced for the GBC in 1957 regarding Ephraim Amu (Track 6).<sup>31</sup> While ostensibly this broadcast is about Ephraim

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<sup>30</sup> An exception is Paul Schauert's book (2015), documenting Nketia's role in promoting national culture through the National Dance Ensemble and National Theater. His work is complimented here with an analysis of Nketia's contributions to the GBC.

<sup>31</sup> This broadcast is contained in the Sound Archive of the GBC (catalogued under Library Number 25, dated 02/08/57). I was provided a copy of this recording and given permission to publish it by the director of radio and Professor Nketia (see Appendix). Although the recording was not attributed to Nketia at the GBC, I recognized that he was the likely author. After playing it for him at his home in Accra, he confirmed to me that he wrote the script and produced the program.

Amu, Nketia also presents his own vision for national development through music. This includes a music industry with specialized roles for music educators, scholars, publishers, composers, instrument manufacturers, and professional performers within Ghana. Additionally, about eight minutes of the program is devoted to a critical evaluation of the history of African music scholarship. This section can be considered a precursor to his influential 1997 article regarding the history of African musicology (Nketia 1997). After considering the many European writings on African music Nketia concludes:

All of them wrote for the Western reader... It is no wonder therefore, that their observations, and even those of latter writers such as Rattray and Ward, never led in this country to the kind of enthusiasm that has been growing up for our music since Ephraim Amu began to preach the gospel of African music from the Akuiapem ridge. From the Presbyterian training college at Akropong on this ridge, he first saw his vision of a new African musical style that would replace hymns in the Western style. A new musical tradition that would permeate schools and centers of learning in much the same way that it does in our social life.

(Nketia 1957)

Nketia situates Amu's work as displacing the dominant Eurocentric historiography of African music that had emerged as a component of colonialism. He presents Amu not as someone beholden to tradition, but as someone whose work is emergent from local music and thought, yet relevant to contemporary life. In this way, Nketia proposes that the future of Ghanaian national music should be modeled as an extension of his mentor's innovations. By framing Amu's music within the broader history of African music scholarship, Nketia is articulating the intellectual

basis for viewing his musical hybridity as the emergence of Ghanaian national consciousness. As Bhabha stated in a 1990 interview, “Th[e] third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. ...The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (Bhabha 1990:211, cited in Taylor 2007:145). Similarly, Nketia emphasizes that Amu’s work is a *new* style of African music that enthused Ghanaians in the period leading to independence. The last sentence of Nketia’s passage above points to the importance of educational institutions introduced by colonialists and missionaries in furthering Amu’s work. He historicizes Amu’s musical hybridity at the moment of independence and propels this musical innovation into the realm of institutional hybridity, of which the GBC itself can be considered a component.

The half-hour broadcast is sprinkled with recordings of Amu’s choral works, providing the listener with examples of the music Nketia hopes will define the national music of an emerging Ghana. It ends with a recording “Alegbegbe,” a work composed by Amu in 1943, that can be considered the height of his compositional creativity (Figure 5.1, below, also see Chapter 3).<sup>32</sup> I believe the recording included in the broadcast is of the Kumasi University Choir performing under the direction of Amu, as the GBC has other recordings of this choir in their collection from the early 1950s. The text of “Alegbegbe” is in Amu’s native Ewe and is taken from John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that that he gave his only begotten Son, that

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<sup>32</sup> This image comes from a forthcoming complete edition of Amu’s works produced through a collaboration between Felicia Sandler, Misonu Amu, George Dor and others.

whosoever believeth in him should not perish.” Amu’s choral work repeats this phrase in a number of variations, always maintaining the contour of the language in the musical setting. The dedication to the tonal contour of the Ewe language results in a contrapuntal and imitative texture, an approach that Amu perfected during his studies in London. The promotion of Amu’s music by the GBC signaled an official acceptance of his musical hybridity as a sign of an emerging Ghana. Although Amu was not involved in this broadcast and did not support Nkrumah in general, his music became intertwined with Ghanaian national identity through the work of his students, including Mensah and Nketia.

This program can be considered an articulation of the mission of the GBC Music Department, and this articulation can be understood in terms of Bhabha’s theorization of the potential for cultural hybridity to activate an articulation of difference without hierarchy. The challenge to hierarchy arises through the ambiguity of hybridity. In this case, “Alegbegbe” can be equally be interpreted as an extension of the colonizing force of Christianity as it can be interpreted as an assertion of the integrity of Ewe language and musical sensibilities over outside forces. Although much of Amu’s music can be considered tonal, “Alegbegbe” in particular goes beyond mimicry of the European tonal system that was instilled through missionary education. There are few clear cadences in the work (Figure 5.1). Instead, Amu overlaps and intersects melodic phrases to provide a continuous polyphonic texture. Nketia recognized this style as a model for African creativity that was worth educating all Ghanaians about through the medium of radio.

In this broadcast, Nketia also presents a broad vision for the development of a new music industry in Ghana that is both local in character and based on European capitalist norms. In

# Alegbɛgbɛ Mawu lɔ̄ xɛxɛame

S.A.T.B.

In Moderate Time (♩ = c. 80)

(With Vigour)

Soprano (S): *mf* 3- A - lɛ-gbɛ-gbɛ, A - lɛ-gbɛ-gbɛ, A - lɛa - gbɛ-gbɛ Ma-wu lɔ̄ xɛ-xɛa - me,

Alto (A): *mf* 3- A - lɛ-gbɛ-gbɛ, A - lɛ-gbɛ-gbɛ, A - lɛa - gbɛ-gbɛ Ma-wu lɔ̄ xɛ-xɛa - me,

Tenor (T): *f* 3- A -

Bass (B): *mf* 3- A -

Soprano (S): *mf* 3- A - lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ, lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ,

Alto (A): *mf* 3- A - lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ, lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ,

Tenor (T): *mf* 3- lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ, lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ, lɛ - gbɛ - gbɛ, a - lɛ, a - lɛ, a - lɛ, A -

Bass (B): *mf* 3- lɛ, a - lɛ, a - lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ, lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ, lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ, lɛ - gbɛ-gbɛ,

Figure 5.1. First page of Amu’s “Alegbɛgbɛ,” provided by Felicia

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explaining this system, Nketia is attempting to convey to his own people the importance of maintaining traditional practices in a way that also accepts modernizing components of a specialized economy. He prescribes a specific path toward developing musical professions in Ghana. In introducing this vision he says: “The subject of music lends itself to specialization and in fact thrives when nourished by diverse hands. In all societies where music is not only practiced but seriously studied, the development of music depends on the activities of different people specializing in one or more of its aspects” (Nketia 1957). The broadcast then goes on to list specialized roles such as music critic, theoretician, and instrument manufacturers. There is an element of institutional hybridity in this proposal. For example, in discussing music instrument construction, he lists the various local traditional instruments that he believes could be produced more efficiently.<sup>33</sup> The hybridity that Nketia supports in this program mirrors that of the history of GBC, an institution that, although not mentioned explicitly in Nketia’s script, was at the center of shaping the emerging music industry in Ghana and promoting choral music as a national tradition.

When I asked Nketia if Amu had been involved in producing this program, he said Amu was not, but he received a call from Amu complimenting him on his work when it was broadcast. In general, Nketia’s involvement in national discourse was greater than Amu’s at the time of independence. Amu had a significant impact on public discourse through his creative work of

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<sup>33</sup> Nketia later became involved in an unsuccessful project to produce traditional drums in Kumasi from fiberglass in collaboration with a former student (Interview, August 15, 2012). He continues to advocate for more support for instrument manufacturing. He told me, “If you want to promote traditional music make the traditional instruments available. Then they should be properly constructed, and this should be supported. It is part of the development agenda.[...] If Nkrumah was still alive we would be very far” (Interview, August 15, 2012).



musical hybridity, but he did not become personally involved with details of institutions as Nketia did. The texts of his compositions were poetic and general, advocating for unity and traditional values, but they did not support any specific political party or policy. He expressed his views about the direction of national politics in letters to his friends and sometimes in sermons around the time of independence, but was not directly engaged in Nkrumah's project of shaping cultural policy or the practical logistics of nation building, as Nketia was.<sup>34</sup> Amu's views on national independence were complex, but were not formulated to address specific, practical issues.<sup>35</sup> During the transition to self-rule, Amu did express opposition to Nkrumah's position on limiting the role of traditional leaders in the state (Laryea 2012:33). As discussed in the previous chapter, Amu was successful in developing national consciousness that acknowledged the hybridity of the colonial experience through his compositions, but it was Nketia who was able to articulate this project and do the work necessary to integrate this hybridity into national institutions.

Nketia is aware of his impact on national development, and the ways his approach to applying his knowledge of Ghanaian music differed from Amu. He told me, "So that was the difference between me and Amu. Amu went on as a private individual, schoolteacher,

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<sup>34</sup> Amu did become directly involved in a movement for unification of the Ewe people, however. They were split between Ghana and Togo because of colonial borders. As his biographer writes, "Amu played a leading role in committees, at public meetings, conferences and other activities of the all Ewe Union Movement. Amu named his second daughter born during this campaign in 1949 Misonu, meaning "Be United". The campaign and desire for Ewe unification was as close as that to his heart" (Agyemang 1988:144). In 1976, Amu also served on the Anin Commission on Bribery and Corruption to provide citizens a place to report abuses of power (Agyemang 1988:142).

<sup>35</sup> See Laryea (2012: 29-34) for a discussion of Amu's Christian framing of nationalism and the independence movement.

nationalist... but I was more involved in the dynamics of this. You know, applying what I learned from the traditional people in my own work, and in national contexts” (Nketia, Interview, August 15, 2012). I view these two approaches as complimentary, each contributing to national development in their own way. Nketia considers Amu “the lone voice crying in the wilderness in an effort to decolonize music and music studies in Ghana” (1993:7). It was Nketia himself, however, who interpreted this voice and built on Amu’s pioneering efforts through scholarship and through national institutions.

This 1957 broadcast can be seen in broader context of the various ways Nketia had been involved in shaping cultural nationalism as a prominent academic in Ghana. He composed a symphonic work for Nkrumah’s inauguration celebration and helped select and organize the traditional musical groups included in this event. He explained this work to me in a way that foregrounds the tensions in Ghanaian society at the time of independence:

We have a problem, those of us who are literate and so forth have a problem with our culture, because we did not learn our cultures, even though we are controlling everything we have a problem giving our traditional cultures priority, so we have tried, since Nkrumah’s time, to ensure the traditional things have a place in national ceremonies, that was my function. When we were making Nkrumah president one of the ministers came to me and said, “We are going to celebrate our independence but we want this to have our culture and so forth, so how can we do it. I have heard your traditional poetry, can we do this, can we do that?” (Nketia, Interview, August 15, 2012)

For this inauguration ceremony, Nketia relied on symbolism and music from one particular ethnic group to convey the power of the state and Nkrumah's role as head of state. He continued:

I didn't use things from different regions, I just used the Akan thing because of the prestige it has in the country in terms of colonial period<sup>36</sup> and in terms of how the chieftaincy thing has developed to a very high point in Asante[...] So even in terms of drum language, we used the language for the king of Asante and Nkrumah is now the big chief. So a few modifications made it possible[...] My part of the ceremony had big [Asante] Frontomfrom drums for the chief. (Nketia, Interview, August 15, 2012)

After independence, Nketia became a founding member of the Arts Council in 1958, which was a governmental department that promoted unity and eventually led to the National Theater Project, which remains a prominent performance space in Accra.<sup>37</sup> The promotion of Ghanaian choral compositions and choir competitions was a prominent mission of this committee. At a meeting in 1960 Nketia advocated for funding the printing of Ghanaian compositions by a government press. The committee agreed to print 1000 copies of four compositions that were performed at the "Republic Celebrations" that year (PRAAD Archives RG3/7/12). They also discussed the establishment of a music school in Accra at that meeting. The Arts Council was responsible for organizing national and regional choir competitions, which

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<sup>36</sup> The Asante were successful, to some extent, in resisting British control through military means.

<sup>37</sup> See Paul Schauert (2015:45-7) for more about Nketia's role in the National Theater Movement and the Arts Council.

continue today. A document in the Ghana National Archives indicates that they provided travel expenses for the choirs. Specific requirements for choirs were laid out for these competitions: “The singing competition should be held in each region, with three items: an original African composition in the style of a folk-tune, and an original African composition in Western style. The first two of these competition pieces should be composed, by invitation, by leading composers in the various regions, and printed with notes on performance by the Arts Council” (PRAAD RG/17/1/223, “Arts Council,” 1960). This indicates the level of involvement taken by the council in supervising the quality of compositions and performance of the choirs. Nketia was a central figure in shaping a national cultural policy of choral music during the Nkrumah administration.

While Akan symbolism was central to the establishment of Ghanaian nationalism, Nketia also told me that Nkrumah was interested in developing a more inclusive nationalism that was not exclusively tied to Akan symbolism. Nketia explained how the Arts Council approached traditional culture in a way that furthered the national project through an inclusive approach to Ghanaian ethnic diversity:

The concept of Ghana as a place with multiple ethnicities, where the ethnic thing [is] still a prominent part in the lives of people, but on the national level providing opportunities for sharing in the ethnic heritage, *that* was the political thing at independence. Because Nkrumah says, ‘You know, it is time we stopped saying we are Asante, we are this; [no,] we are all Ghanaians.’ And so a part of the job of the Arts Council was to create opportunities for sharing the total culture of the country. That is why we re-contextualize performances: So we bring the [Asante] Frontomfrom to perform at the state occasion, we bring the Dagomba to perform

at the state occasion, and so forth. And that process has gone on for fifty years; it is still going on.” (Interview, August 15, 2012)

Nketia worked with Nkrumah through state institutions to develop an inclusive national cultural policy. He used his knowledge and contacts developed during his fieldwork activities to bring traditions out of their local context to a national stage. This approach is reflected in the work of GBC music department, as explained by Atsu above.

Nketia’s association with Nkrumah was strong enough that after the *coup* in 1966 overthrowing Nkrumah he was worried he might be prosecuted by the new government. However, he was well connected: “My wife and I went to a party, and the soldiers saw me. One of them came to my wife and [asked,] ‘Who is that person who says the early morning thing on the radio?’ And then my wife looked at him and said ‘your cousin,’ and that was the end of it [laughing]... [O]ne of the people who did the coup was my wife’s cousin” (Nketia, Interview, December 1, 2013). Nketia had written a Twi poem followed by drumming that was broadcast by the GBC every morning during the Nkrumah administration. This broadcast did not continue after the 1966 *coup* (Nketia, Interview December 1, 2013). Nketia worked closely with Nkrumah behind the scenes, but his involvement was not explicitly political and his social connections were broad enough that he was not detained after the *coup*. Nketia remained engaged through his scholarly and creative work to the development of Ghanaian society.

### **The Intersection of Religion and Music within the GBC**

In this section I discuss the implications of the Christian association of the choral music broadcast by the GBC. The majority of the choral works recorded and broadcast by the GBC are

either Christian hymns or have Christian references in the texts. This reflects both the general pervasiveness of Christianity in public life in Ghana and that the choral music tradition promoted by the GBC grew out of the Ghanaian Presbyterian experience. However, while Christians constitute the majority of the Ghanaian population, there is also a large Muslim minority, which is generally under-represented in the music broadcast by the GBC. In 1996, the GBC made an effort to include more Islamic popular music on the radio in response to pressure from Muslim listeners. Part of this effort was to commission the Muslim popular musician Alhaj Sidiku Buari to produce an album (Samwini 2003:297). The effort to provide proportional representation to Islamic music is complicated by the fact that many Muslim leaders do not approve of listening or producing popular music. This position was expressed to me by the leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Accra. While music can play a unifying role in the postcolonial context, the dominance of Christian music (including the more recent popularity of American-influenced gospel music) presents an obstacle to the promotion of Ghanaian choral music as a national tradition.

Ghanaian musicians and leaders are aware of the continuity between Christianity and the patriotic choral music promoted by the GBC. Also, at times, I witnessed Ghanaians superimpose Christianity with the national. For example, former GBC Music Department head Mr. Atsu explained the history of choral music coming from the church:

In the church, there was this conventional way of singing, so schools also started learning the theory of music. The students must be taught how to compose and harmonize in the conventional way. So, that gave the outlet of, you know, of

music coming from church, outside. So when it came outside it must now explore the outside activities for the nation.

Terpenning: In the secular realm?

Atsu: Yes, in the secular realm. So we have these national songs to remember the enthusiasm of the people to wake up to their reality (Interview, Dec. 20, 2013).

My introduction of the term “secular” here was based on my own perception of a separation between government and religious domains of life. In Atsu’s, and many Ghanaians’, view “the enthusiasm of the people to wake up to their reality” took place within the context of Christianity. Thus, the independence movement arose from the Christian context and the two cannot be separated.

As discussed in the introduction, Peircian semiotics provides a framework for understanding how music contributes to the construction of social reality. Mr. Atsu demonstrated throughout our interview that he was keenly aware of the role of music in shaping the nature of an independent Ghana. His remarks demonstrate an awareness that education in Ghana, and much of the British Empire, was propelled by Christian missions. Christian missionaries taught students like Amu and Pappoe-Thompson how to read and write musical notation alongside Christian thought. As a long-time GBC Music Department leader, Atsu understands this history

of how Ghanaian composers works are rooted in their Christian faith. They employed the choral tradition in part to to reveal the political reality of colonial oppression.<sup>38</sup>

### **Emanuel Pappoe-Thompson's Work with the GBC**

The GBC Music Department was very productive during the years around independence. There are approximately 2000 recordings in the Gramophone Library dated to the 1954-1961 period. Of these, the majority are recordings of traditional musical groups from various ethnic groups. Of the choral music recordings, the most frequently represented composer in this era is Emanuel Pappoe-Thompson.<sup>39</sup> He composed about forty Ga-language Christian and patriotic works that remain popular in greater Accra. In contrast with Amu, Pappoe-Thompson composed many works that can be considered explicitly patriotic in the 1950s. Hammond-Acquaah told me that Pappoe-Thompson was commissioned by the GBC to compose choral works (Interview, January 6, 2014). This indicates that there was a formal relationship supported by the institution that benefited composers.

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<sup>38</sup> This process is comparable to what took place in South Africa (see Okigbo 2010). Although the Biblical basis for independence, or liberation theology, was not explicitly argued for through choral compositions in Ghana, a Christian basis for independence was implied by Nkrumah. As Rupe Simms argues, "Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party, the political organization he founded and led, used Christianity to popularize and validate their anti-colonial ideology between 1948 and 1966 by portraying Nkrumah as Ghana's Messiah and the organization as the Party of God" (Simms 2003:463).

<sup>39</sup> This survey is based on my informal survey of the recordings of this era in the Gramophone Library to get a sense of what choral music was being produced. In this process I made notes of the discs that contained choral compositions and who the composer was, if indicated. There were also some recordings of compositions by Nketia and Amu.



Emmanuel Pappoe-Thompson was born 1906 to a Christian, Ga, musical family in the Accra area.<sup>40</sup> He attended Accra Wesleyan Mixed Day School then entered Wesley College in Kumasi in 1929 to train as a teacher. Throughout his schooling, he sung in choirs. In 1952, after teaching primary school for some years, he took a leave to study with Ephraim Amu at the Kumasi College of Technology. As he studied music formally, “[H]e noticed the absence of Ga choral songs on the national air waves” (Vieta 2000:415). So he followed Amu’s model, but composed almost completely in his Ga language. Some of his works supported the independence movement and garnered Nkrumah’s attention: “A number of the songs were commissioned. For example, [one] was composed for the Young Pioneer Movement in the Nkrumah regime” (Vieta 2000:416). This was a program that Nkrumah began in 1960 to provide leadership training in extracurricular contexts to a select group of school aged youth. This further illustrates the reciprocal relationship between Pappoe-Thompson and the Nkrumah government.

After completing his studies at Kumasi Science and Technology, Pappoe-Thompson was posted to a prominent teaching position at the Accra Teacher Training College where he composed most of his well-known patriotic works. Throughout his life, he was devout Methodist, proclaiming, “I do not drink, do not smoke, because I know these things displease God. I try to hold to what is good and finally I never forget to praise my Lord for every new day” (Pappoe-Thompson, quoted in Vieta 2000:417). This Christian thought is apparent in many of his song texts. However, in her consideration of Pappoe-Thompson’s theology, Angela Addy writes, “He, unlike many Christians of his time, believed in and revered the ancestors to the extent that

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<sup>40</sup> This brief biography is based on a thesis by Addy (2005), and the entry on Pappoe-Thompson in *The Flagbearers of Ghana* (Vieta 2000:414-417).

no Wednesday went by without his supervising the *Asafɔiatɔe* (company officer) to perform the duty due the ancestors, namely pouring libation. Apart from being the custodian of the family stool, he was an elder of the *Asere Mantse We* [traditional Ga society]" (2005:3). So, even as a devout Christian, Pappoe-Thompson was devoted to maintaining Ga traditions. This dedication can also be seen in the texts of his works, which extoll traditional values and practices such as the possibility of being ostracized from the community because of a misdeed (Addy 2005:38). By accepting both Christianity and local thought, Pappoe-Thompson was following the path Amu had forged.

Although Pappoe-Thompson supported Nkrumah's regime through his work with the GBC, at some point it seems that tension arose. Angela Addy writes, "According to Ernest Thompson, under the Nkrumah regime, [Pappoe-Thompson] was arrested for composing a song, *Kokoo Ni Dze Ghana* (Cocoa from Ghana), which was about the shipping cocoa from our shores to other lands. The song was then seen as castigating the government of the day for being apathetic about the plight of the people who toiled on the farms to get this produce which earned the state so much foreign currency" (2005:7). While I was unable to confirm this narrative, when I asked Professor Nketia about the veracity of this account he acknowledged that it was possible (Interview, January 16, 2015). Toward the end of Nkrumah's rule, especially after an assassination attempt in 1964, Nkrumah became increasingly intolerant of dissent (Gocking 2005:136). This narrative provides a more nuanced portrait of Pappoe-Thompson as someone who did not blindly support the government but also braved confronting it through his compositions.

### Pappoe-Thompson's Musical Style

Although a Methodist, Pappoe-Thompson did not follow the *Ebibindwom* style in his compositions. This is not surprising considering that *Ebibindwom* is a Fante language tradition, and Pappoe-Thompson spoke and composed in Ga. Instead, he worked within the compositional framework Amu established in the 1950s (see Chapter 3). The similarities demonstrate Amu's prominence as an educator. It also illustrates how his compositional approach became nationalized through the strong institutional structure of the PCG education system while *Ebibindwom* was mostly limited to Fante-speakers. Pappoe-Thompson began his formal musical studies with Amu when he went to the Kumasi College of Technology in 1952. Prior to that, Pappoe-Thompson had a career as a primary school teacher. By the time they met, Amu had established a consistent compositional and philosophical approach that he transferred to his students. There are three ways Pappoe-Thompson's compositions align with Amu's mature compositions.<sup>41</sup> First, in terms of notation, Pappoe-Thompson adopts Amu's practice of using a consistent 2/4 time signature, frequently with triplet indications within the measures, instead of a 6/8 time signature. Secondly, he adopts Amu's dedication to tonal prosody, so parallel harmony is frequent. Thirdly, Pappoe-Thompson prioritizes poetic texts over conventional cadences and phrase lengths. These similarities can be observed through a musical analysis of one of Pappoe-Thompson's most well-known compositions, "Ghana Aflagai" ("Flag of Ghana," Figure 5.2, above). An excerpt of this patriotic work also illustrates Pappoe-Thompson's linguistic and

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<sup>41</sup> I was provided with a book of approximately twenty hand-written Pappoe-Thompson compositions by his son, Ernest Thompson. Examples of works that bare similarities to Amu's "third period" of compositional development include "Suomɔ," "Yen Yen Yen," and "Miye naa nyoko."

(4)

Ghana Aflagai

E.P.-7.

The musical score is written on six systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are as follows:

System 1: *oo-na? oo-na? Ani oo-na? oo-na? oo-na?*

System 2: *oo-na? Ani oo-na? oo-na flayai pa pa pa pa*

System 3: *ni tsoo pa pa pa pa ni tsoo pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa*

System 4: *ku ba ni e tsoo he wa le, tsoo he wa le, tsoo he wa le He wa ni*

System 5: *e ka ke nyem ku hi soo se ha a flayai le se lo*

System 6: *flayai le, flayai le, ye yi ni fee, ha fee, gni brubru bru bru*

Figure 5.2. First Page of "Ghana Aflagai" by Emanuel Pappoe-Thompson, provided by Ernest Pappoe-Thompson.

musical creativity.<sup>42</sup> This piece remains part of the Ghanaian choral music repertoire today; it was featured in a recent album of Pappoe-Thompson songs sung by an all-star choir made up of members from various government workplace choirs including the Fire Service, Accountant's General, and Parliament choirs.

Although this excerpt might more easily be notated in a 6/8 meter, Pappoe-Thompson follows Amu's convention of maintaining a 2/4 time signature with triplet indications. Secondly, parallel harmony is pervasive in this excerpt, as it is in much of Pappoe-Thompson's compositions. As discussed in chapter three, parallel harmony is common in traditional singing in Ghana and allows the contour of the language to remain intact while introducing Western harmony. Amu went on to use other, more complicated compositional techniques such as fugal counterpoint to achieve a similar result. Pappoe-Thompson also employs parallel octaves and repeated notes in the lower voices "Ghana Aflagi."

Pappoe-Thompson's music also reflects the influence of Amu's mature style in terms of how the length of phrases vary. As demonstrated through my analysis of "Tete Wo Bi," Amu's mature compositions were less tied to articulating a clear metric sense throughout and more concerned with the coherence of the text. This is also apparent in much of Pappoe-Thompson's compositions. While the first phrase of figure 5.3 is a standard four measures in length, the following repetition of the phrase "*tsɔɔ hewale*" ("shows strength") does not conform to regular phrase breaks. Instead, these phrase lengths are dictated by the text, which is poetic, rather than a

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<sup>42</sup> As far as I know, Pappoe-Thompson's compositions have not yet been formally published. Like the work of other Ghanaian composers, his compositions are informally distributed between choir directors. However, his son, Ernest Thompson provided me with copies of about twenty compositions, including "Ghana Aflagai." The exact date of this composition is unknown, but it was likely composed around the time of independence, when the flag of Ghana was created.

The image shows a musical score for 'Ghana Aflagai' in 2/4 time, featuring a piano accompaniment with triplets in both hands. The lyrics are written in two systems. The first system contains the first four measures, and the second system contains the next four measures. The lyrics are in Akan and English.

Kwɛ ɓɔni ɛtsɔɔ hewale,

See how it shows strength,

Hewɔni ekaa ke nyɛmɔ

That is why boldness and might [are projected]

Kɛ hiesɔɔ sa ha aflaga ɛ.

Thus, the flag deserves gratefulness.

Figure 5.3. Notation, text, and translation (provided by Prince Kwarteng-Crooklyn) of measures 16-24 of Pappoe-Thompson’s “Ghana Aflagai.”

formulaic, pre-determined approach. This is a continuation of the additive form that Amu pioneered and can be considered conducive to contemplating the text. These musical features are also apparent in the work of many other Ghanaian composers who were trained by Amu or his students (see Agordoh 2011 for a survey of 39 Ghanaian composer biographies).

### Conclusion

Amu pioneered the emergence of a national style of choral composition in Ghana around the time of independence. Amu’s legacy was largely shaped, however, by his students through state institutions, such as the GBC. The GBC Music Department put forward a new historical narrative to a broad public that displaced the colonial narrative. Nketia and Mensah shaped this narrative from the beginning through their work, which followed Nkrumah’s national leadership.

They and other GBC employees built on Amu's musical innovations by recording, commissioning, and broadcasting Ghanaian choral works as a component of national cultural development. Pappoe-Thompson's patriotic works also became central in this mission. The GBC was at the center of national life in Ghana as the only media organization that reached a broad public through the radio. Throughout many political changes, GBC music employees actively promoted musical hybridity and plurality in the service of maintaining peace and developing a sense of national unity.

## **Chapter 6: Ethnography of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Choir**

This chapter continues the history of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Music Department by developing an ethnographic account of the GBC choir. While the last chapter argued that intellectuals, such as Kwabena Nketia, promoted Ghanaian choral music through radio in an effort to enunciate in what Homi Bhabha calls the “third space,” this chapter explores the realities and disjunctures of negotiating hybridity as lived experience in the postcolonial nation-state. As Bhabha recognizes, the ambiguity that imbues cultural hybridity with disruptive force also undermines efforts to express a unified culture (2004:53-5). When the structure of colonialism is displaced, the meaning of cultural statements need to be renegotiated, but meanings cannot be assigned from an authoritative position. This is particularly true for musical statements which rely on indexical associations that are continually remade through performance and discourse. So, even as postcolonial intellectuals seek to form an inclusive polity from the third space, divisions emerge. In this way, the third space is an always-emergent space of negotiation. This negotiation continues in Ghana, as my experiences with the GBC choir demonstrate. Based on my experiences there, I argue that leadership is still needed to create the environment where this continued negotiation can happen in a productive manner.

I consider the GBC choir as a diverse community that negotiates cultural hybridity on an everyday basis in the context of a Ghanaian postcolonial institution. My approach to understanding the workplace choir is influenced by Gregory Barz's writing about choirs in Tanzania “as distinct formations of disparate peoples gathering for the purpose of meeting communally determined needs” (2006:22). I find that the needs fulfilled by the GBC choir are both musical (in that they provide material for the GBC to broadcast) and social in nature. Barz



continues, “[C]ommunity is not a static object; rather it is a process by which people come together for a particular cause or purpose... [they can] often be more *factious* than we might normally recognize them to be” (Barz 2006:26, emphasis in original). In urban Dar es Salaam, Barz found church choirs that were made up of members from various ethnolinguistic groups who sacrifice their time and money to participate in this community. These singers form a communities in an urban, Christian context that act as extended families for those who have moved from rural areas (Barz 2006:31). While I did not find the GBC Choir to be as central to meeting the needs of members as the church choirs Barz worked with, members did demonstrate that they were strongly invested in the choir as a community. This investment was evident in their dedication to the choir, expressed during the interviews I conducted with choir members and the interactions between members and choir leaders during rehearsals. However, there was sometimes disagreement about the nature of the choir as community. This was revealed in the tensions between the choir members and director in the lead-up to the 2013 Christmas concert, in which I participated, and the leadership transition that followed. Based on interviews and my experience in rehearsals, I compare the philosophies of two GBC choir leaders to explore how discourses about musical hybridity remain relevant to the construction of community in the choir and within the GBC more generally as a postcolonial institution.<sup>43</sup>

I begin with a brief history of workplace choirs in Ghana to provide further context for my ethnography. This history further explores how choral music moved from the churches and schools to become part of national public life. A program from the 1994 Pappoe-Thompson

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<sup>43</sup> The intended audience of this chapter is not only academic, but also the members of the GBC Music Department who are discussed in this chapter. I thank all of those who allowed me to participate in rehearsals and especially those who gave extra time to sit for an interview with me.

Choral Competition provides a glimpse into the thriving state of workplace choirs in the greater Accra region during the 1990s. Then, I discuss the benefits and challenges of maintaining the GBC choir based on participant/observation research over three years and three trips there. Lastly, I consider the competing philosophies of leadership demonstrated by can be understood as a negotiation of hybridity within the GBC as a postcolonial institution. Ultimately, my interpretation celebrates the dedication of GBC choir members who regularly sacrifice their lunch-time to contribute to this institution within an institution.

My account is limited both in terms of the time I spent with the choir and my own ability to speak and understand the local languages spoken during rehearsals. Despite these limitations, I feel my experiences with the GBC choir allows for a general analysis of the place of the GBC choir in the overall structure of the GBC as a postcolonial institution. I proceeded from an inductive analysis of my interview transcriptions and experiences at choir rehearsals, rather than a deductive test of a predetermined hypothesis. The context of the GBC choir allows a glimpse of what Mbembe calls the “time as lived... in its multiplicity and simultaneities” (Mbembe 2001:8). Mbembe argues that colonialism disrupts the temporal social order, and reduces the complexities of African life to strangeness without history. This reduction has continued to be perpetrated through some structuralist ethnography and social theory that has not fully confronted its own dependence on the continuation of colonial power structures. While I do not claim to entirely remedy the persistent vestiges of colonialism inherent in ethnographic writing, I do avoid structuralist social theory that oversimplifies the experiences of Ghanaians. Instead, my account emphasizes the multiplicity of experience in time as lived. As an outsider, my views do not necessarily represent those of choir members, I assume a basic familiarity with GBC choir

members, rather than treating them as strangers, which allows for this limited consideration of how music is intertwined in the negotiation of a pluralistic, postcolonial nation-state.

### **Origins of the GBC Choir and Workplace Choirs in Ghana**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the GBC Music Department produced choral recordings from various regions of Ghana for broadcast on weekly programs. The GBC choir was formed in 1974 in part to provide high-quality recordings of Ghanaian choral works for these programs. It was initially intended as a “model choir” and to supplement the recordings of church and schools for broadcast purposes (Recorded Interview, Atsu, December 20, 2013). The first leader of the choir was Moses Kinnah. I spoke with Kinnah, who is now retired and lives near the city of Takoradi in the Central region, on March 30, 2015 by telephone. He is also a composer of *Ebibindwom*, which he learned at Methodist school and from his mother growing up in a Fante speaking family (Phone Interview, March 30, 2015). Kinnah attended the University of Ghana at Legon, studying under Professor Nketia in the 1960s. In the 70s, he began work at the GBC and left in 1979 to become a school teacher. Regarding the decision to begin the choir, he told me that the church choir directors were not trained in music, so he had to help them when they came to record for radio broadcast (Kinnah, Phone Interview, March 30, 2015). The origins of the choir, then, was largely to meet the needs of the GBC Music Department.

Philip Atsu, who I introduced in the previous chapter, took over the choir in 1979. In describing the development of the GBC choir, he told me that music is the “lifeblood of broadcasting” and that relying on outside groups for their programs had become “untenable” (Atsu, Interview, December 20, 2013). He told me the GBC Music Department

realized it would be better to have an in-house group that could be called on quickly to record or perform: “So, that was the idea, just to, you know, to take care of some aspect of the program[s] that, other, outside choirs might not honor” (Atsu, Interview, December 20, 2013). This situation should be understood in terms of the general political and economic instability of the 1970s in Ghana. As Gocking writes, “between 1971 and 1982 GDP [in Ghana] fell by 12 percent, while the population grew by more than 20 percent” (2005:185). This was a difficult economic and political period as Ghanaian leaders sought to develop export industries in an era of fluctuating commodity prices and domestic political unrest. As the primary national media organization, the GBC needed a choir that could reliably perform a sense of stability. This necessitated maintaining an in-house choir made up of employees. Both Atsu and Kinnah took pride that their work leading the choir during this tumultuous period, and claimed that the GBC Music Department raised the level of choral music in Ghana during this time.

Soon, other governmental departments developed choirs to serve the particular needs of their institutions. For example, the Fire Vibrations Choir, made up of employees of the National Fire Service, began in 1986 (Mensah, Interview, August 9, 2012). The original function of the choir is explained in a program for the Pappoe-Thompson Choral Competition, discussed below: “The main objective of forming the group came about when [Fire Chief] Rev. Sackey, having observed the solitary moments that often confronted the Fire service at functions, such as passing out parade, funeral activities, church gatherings and on top of it all to stop personnel who would often sing profane and embarrassing songs at such gatherings, decided that a Service Choir be formed to take care of such activities” (1994:7). The Fire Vibrations served the particular needs of an institution where tragedy was too frequently a component of the job.

This function expanded under the current director, Sammy Mensah, who is a member of the Music Department at the Fire Service Headquarters in Accra. During my preliminary research trip in 2012, I contacted the Fire Service headquarters in Accra to request permission to conduct ethnographic work with their choir. While the administration eventually declined my request, I was able to conduct an informal interview with Mensah. He told me that he had composed original works for the choir that raised awareness of “public safety” issues and was in the process of producing a recording of these songs (Mensah, Interview, August 9, 2012). Thus, the mission of Fire Vibrations had expanded to satisfy the broader mission of the Fire Service. According to Mensah, his choir has had regular success at workplace choir competitions as well.

In the late 1980s and 1990s the number of workplace choirs expanded, especially in the private sector. Industrial choirs, such as the Ghana Textile Producers Choir, and bank choirs formed (Dor 2005:445). However, many of these choirs are no longer in existence today. When I arrived in 2012, I was unable to locate any industrial choirs, but many bank choirs continued to operate. When speaking to workplace choir directors, including those of the Ghana Ports and Harbor Authority (Nelson), Bank of Ghana (Amos), and Accountant General (Obeng), they generally emphasized the benefits of singing to raise morale of workers, and keep them from getting bored at their jobs.

While choir directors in Ghana did not attribute the growth of Ghanaian workplace singing to any external movements (the origins of choirs are generally attributed to internal, institutional needs), there are European precedents for working-class amateur singing movements. For example, as Charles McGuire (2006) documents, there was a rise of middle-class amateur singing in England in the mid-nineteenth century, in which social engineering was

a component. This movement was a component of a the Protestant temperance movement, which promoted abstinence from alcohol, and the rise of Tonic Sol-Fa notation, which allowed musically illiterate people to more easily sight-read and participate in choirs. This same type of notation continues to be used in workplace choirs in Ghana. From 1862 to 1886, the temperance movement, also known as “Band of Hope,” held national choir competitions in England where up to 15,000 singers participated and taught Tonic Sol-fa to children (McGuire 2006:114). It was believed that: “Not only would Tonic Sol-fa provide a method of rational recreation for the individual worker, it would also strengthen him by distracting him from vice[...] and increase worker productivity by putting the singer into an automatic frame of mind conducive to factory work” (McGuire 2006:117). Although choirs in Ghana use Tonic Sol-fa notation, I found no evidence that the growth of Ghanaian workplace singing was in any way connected to the English temperance movement.

### **The Pappoe-Thompson Choral Festival and Competition**

An annual festival of workplace choirs in Greater Accra, organized by the Arts Council of Ghana, began in 1987.<sup>44</sup> Thirteen choirs from both governmental and private sector institutions

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<sup>44</sup>As a printed program explains, “The Pappoe-Thompson Choral Festival was introduced in 1987 when the then Arts Council of Ghana decided to bring workplace Choral groups together for an Inter-Departmental Sing-Song session to raise their standards and to broaden their repertoire” (Pappoe-Thompson Choral Competition 1994:4). I thank Francis Obeng, the founder and leader of the Controller and Accountant General’s Choir, for providing me a copy of this program.

participated in the inaugural festival.<sup>45</sup> Because Emanuel Pappoe-Thompson himself regularly attended and was honored as an invited guest until his death in 1993, the festival was named after him and continued to feature performances of his compositions (Pappoe-Thompson Choral Competition 1994:2). It began as a non-competitive festival for workplace choirs and transitioned to a judged competition in 1994. The decision to transition to a competitive framework is explained by the anonymous author of the 1994 program: “During the 6th Pappoe-Thompson Choral Festival held in March, 1993 it was observed that the festival had improved immensely and had become more keen. The Festival Planning Committee therefore found it necessary to allow the programme to take a different dimension in 1994 to be held on competitive basis with the award of prizes to deserving groups” (Pappoe-Thompson Choral Competition Program 1994:5). The shift to a competition in 1994 indicates that the annual festivals were popular and that Greater Accra workplace choirs thrived during this period.

The process for judging the competition reveals how Ghanaian choral music is not only a hybrid formation in terms of musical features, but also in terms of performance contexts. Local expert musicians are selected by the Arts Council each year to judge the Pappoe-Thompson Choral Competition. These judges select a “set-piece” composed by Pappoe-Thompson that all choirs are required to learn.<sup>46</sup> A rubric is used by the judges to score each song the choir performs. Figure 6.1 is a sample rubric that was used in the 1995 competition. It shows that,

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<sup>45</sup> A list of these choirs is provided in the 1994 program. A few examples are: “Metalic [sic] Group Singers from GIHOC Metals Industry[...] Highway Gospel Advocates from Ghana Highway Authority[...] Fire Vibrations from Ghana National Fire Service[...] Voices of Hope from Bank of Ghana” (Pappoe-Thompson Choral Competition Program, 1994:4).

<sup>46</sup> This process was explained to me by Joseph Lamptey, who is the current organizer of the annual competition (Interview, March 29, 2015).

CENTRE FOR NATIONAL CULTURE - GREATER ACCRA REGION  
 2ND PAPPOE-THOMPSON CHORAL COMPETITION  
 4TH MARCH 1995  
 SCORE SHEET

NAMES OF GROUP: No. 8..... NAME OF ADJUDICATOR:.....

CRITERIA	VOICE PRODUCTION	HARMONY	EXPRESSION	DICTION	STAGE PRESENCE/ GEN. IMPRSN.	CONDUCTING	TOTAL	
GROUP'S WORKPLACE	4	4	3	4	2	3	20	Be su at
COMPOSITION	3½	3	2	3	2	2½	16	
TEST TUNE	8	8	6	7	2	4	35	C to E
	7	7	5	5	2	3	29	
PAPPOE THOMPSON'S	6	6	4	4	2	3	25	
OPTIONAL SONG	5	5	3	3	2	3	21	
GROUP'S OPTIONAL SONG	4	4	3	4	2	3	20	
	4	3½	2½	3	2	3	17	

SIGNATURE: 83.....

Figure 6.1. 1995 Pappoe-Thompson Competition score sheet, provided by Joesph Lamptey.

along with the assigned “tune,” another Pappoe-Thompson composition was chosen by the choir director. The third composition was to be specific to the workplace the choir was located within, and a fourth composition was to be chosen without restriction. Out of these four, the “test tune” is weighted the heaviest in the rubric. The six metrics judged are: voice production, harmony, expression, diction, stage presence, and conducting. The use of a rubric in competition required judges to apply subjective standards of choral singing, such as voice production and expression. This structure of the competition points to the acceptance of international values of choral performance, while the requirement for choirs to perform two works by Pappoe-Thompson



indicates an emphasis on the local environment. The structure of the competition, thus, reveals another level of institutional hybridity in the performance of choral music in Ghana.

Descriptions of the twelve choirs that participated in the 1994 Pappoe-Thompson competition are included in the program. These reveals the variety of workplace institutions where choral singing takes place in Ghana. Some of the descriptions of the choirs provide insights into the difficulties of establishing and maintaining workplace choirs. For example, the GHAPOHA (Ghana Ports and Harbour Authority) Choir faced layoffs soon after it was established in 1988. The description reads: “[A] year after its inauguration the redundancy exercise of 1989 affected some members of the Choir including the then Choir Master. Thus the group collapsed. The remaining members did not relax but managed to reorganise the group as the main aim was to provide choral music for the staff of the Authority whilst at work to boost their performance” (Pappoe-Thompson Choral Competition Program, 1994:6). While the GHAPOHA choir is still in existence today, some of the choirs listed in the 1994 program are now defunct, including the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority Choir (Obeng, Interview, March 20, 2015).

The Pappoe-Thompson competition usually takes place around the time of Ghana Independence Day celebrations on March 6th. However, in 2015, the year I had planned to attend the festival, it did not take place. I asked the person in charge of organizing the festival, Joseph Lamptey, who works at the Center for Arts and Culture in Accra, why it did not take place that year. He explained that it was due to lack of funds (Lamptey, Interview, March 29, 2015). That year had been particularly economically difficult for Ghana due partially to electricity shortages. The lack of a festival can also be considered part of what is perceived as a general decline in

administrative support for workplace choirs that I heard from some workplace choir members and directors.<sup>47</sup>

The GBC choir regularly participates in the Pappoe-Thompson competitions and festivals. Many choristers considered singing at these events to be the most memorable performances of their time with the choirs because they got to hear and appreciate choirs based in institutions that are comparable to the GBC (Quainoo, Interview, March 20, 2015). The GBC choir sometimes does not enter into the competition, but, because of their history as the first workplace choir, serves as the “host” choir (Obeng, Interview, March, 2015). The GBC choir also sometimes travels to perform at choral festivals in other regions of Ghana. One long-time choir member told me about a trip the choir took to perform at a festival in the city of Ho sometime in the 1990s: “I quite remember when we performed in the Volta region. There was a program for one of Ghana’s greatest composers, [the] Ephraim Amu choral festival. We performed creditably. We even slept overnight, and performed the following day” (Quainoo, Interview, March 20, 2015). Festivals and competitions such as these provide an opportunity for individuals to experience their participation in workplace choirs as part of a national tradition.

### **The Benefits of Singing in the GBC Choir**

The reasons GBC choir members participate in workplace singing and the benefits they derive from it illustrate the type of community that these members have formed. Doccus Pappoe, who has been a GBC choir member and Music Department employee since 2007, provided me

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<sup>47</sup> For example, Doccas Pappoe told me: “Our management interest in the choir is very low. This is because they don’t attend to our needs and this realization is discouraging our members” (Interview, March 9, 2015).

with a list of five benefits to being a member of the choir. She composed her responses to my questions in writing: “I’m of the opinion that workplace choirs are very important to support. This is because: It opens doors for people with all kinds of beliefs to join. Thus, it brings unity among people. [An] example is that both traditionalist, Christians, Buddhists etc. can join, if only the interest is there. It improves our singing ability. [It provides] another form of socialization” (Pappoe, Interview, March 9, 2015). The theme in this response is that the GBC choir provides a space for people from different departments of the GBC, ethnic backgrounds, and faiths to interact.<sup>48</sup> Other members provided a variety of responses that fit into this theme and describe the GBC choir as a diverse community with a uniquely social mission that sometimes precedes the musical mission.

While the social benefits were emphasized, some members were also interested in improving their singing ability through participation in the choir. Choir members who had not studied music in school cited the opportunity to learn to read Tonic Sol-fa notation as a benefit of joining the choir. This is a type of notation is used instead of the staff notation. It employs letters rather than symbols to indicate the pitch and dots and lines to indicate rhythm. Emmanuel Tatsi explained that singing with the GBC choir helped him to read this notation. Previously he had only been taught by rote, although he had sung in school and church choirs since he was young (Interview, March 13, 2015). Tatsi, along with two other members of the GBC choir, did not work at the GBC. He and Ernest Asamoah were part of a youth choir called Royal Harmonic Youth Choir, which had a performance “in celebration of national thanksgiving” with the GBC

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<sup>48</sup> It is significant that Pappoe left out Islam from the list of religious affiliations. Because some Muslim leaders discourage participation in some types of musical entertainment, Muslims are generally underrepresented in workplace choirs.

choir in 2013. Because the GBC choir was having difficulty recruiting members, members of the Royal Harmonic Youth Choir were invited to join the GBC choir at the performance. Then they began regularly attending rehearsals at the GBC (Tatsi and Asamoah, Interview, March 13, 2015). When I asked Tatsi why he accepted the invitation, he said, “Wherever music is, I love to be there” (Interview, March 13, 2015). So, the GBC choir offered Tatsi an opportunity to become more musically literate. Others wish there was more time spent on learning the mechanics of reading staff notation. For example, Faith Avuuah told me she has not learned to read notation yet: “Those of us who don’t have any musical background: It’s what the choir master sings, we sing along. And when we have friends who also know how to read the sol-fa [notation] when they sing, we sing along with them” (Interview, March 20, 2015). The variety of levels of educational background and singing abilities represented in the choir meant that some members helped others learn the songs, sometimes even outside set rehearsal times, but it also created a sense of inequality for some members.

Faith Avuuah equally emphasized that the workplace choir is a social experience where members can develop relationships in the workplace outside of their immediate job at the institution. She told me: “Because we have some friends, though we are working in the same place, you don’t meet them. So it is only when you get [to rehearsal] you talk: ‘Oh, how are you? How is the family?’ and all that, you joke a little. You relax, and then you get back to business” (Interview, March 20, 2015). However, treating the choir primarily as a social occasion can conflict with some of the expectations of the choir leaders, as I discuss below.

In addition to learning to sing better and read music, choir members are also exposed to languages in which they may not be fluent in the course of learning songs.<sup>49</sup> The choir is made up not only of employees from the various departments of the GBC, but also speakers of various native languages including Fante, Twi, Ewe, and Ga. So it is a hybrid institution in more than one way. When I asked choir members if they preferred singing in any particular language, they sometimes said that they enjoy singing in languages that are not their own. Godfred Palm, who is Ga, told me he enjoys learning Ewe songs even though he does not understand the language, especially if there is someone there who can translate the meaning of the texts. He related an amusing incident: “Once, there was a time I had to go to the Volta region for work. During the time I was working I was singing a lot of Ewe songs [learned through participation in choirs]. So they think I speak Ewe. I look at the *Egya* [elder] and he says, ‘Oh wow, you are singing those songs [well]!’” (Palm, Interview, March, 2015). Participating in choirs provides a way for members to become familiar with the pronunciation of local languages in which they may not be fluent. Within the GBC choir, there are native speakers of Ga, Ewe, and Twi who would sometimes be called upon in rehearsal to translate or pronounce particular words, if the director requests. This multi-lingual experience is sometimes viewed as a benefit by singers like Palm.

Other choir members expressed personal preferences for a particular language, but also expressed the importance of being flexible in a diverse setting:

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<sup>49</sup>Perhaps because some of the most well-known composers were not from the Akan ethnic group (for example, Amu was an Ewe, and Pappoe-Thompson was a Ga), there are a variety of Ghanaian languages sung by workplace choirs. This is equally true for many church choirs in Accra, where congregations are made up of migrants from various areas of the country.

Personally, hmm, I'm an Ewe, okay. But I mean if a master is teaching you a song, you can't decide that you won't sing this or that. So you just need to do your best and learn whatever you have been taught despite the language. It is difficult though. Especially if you are not the one that speaks a particular language pronunciation, it is a bit difficult. But then, if you are determined and you have the love of music, you can easily learn. (Donkor, Interview, March 11, 2015)

Donkor's response illustrates that singing in a variety of languages can pose challenges for choir members who have limited time to learn works. But, regardless of the difficulty, including a variety of Ghanaian languages in the repertoire benefits the choir by reflecting the broader Ghanaian national experience of striving for unity in diversity.

### **Challenges for the GBC Choir**

In this section I discuss two categories of challenges that GBC choir members and leaders face in building and maintaining a successful choir. The first challenge is a lack of resources for the basic operations of the choir. This includes securing a comfortable and consistent place to rehearse, providing uniforms for performance, and funds for traveling to performances.

Secondly, choir members and leaders noted that it was a challenge to recruit members and maintain the motivation of choir members. This second challenge is related to the philosophies of leadership and the negotiation of hybridity, which I discuss in the following section. These challenges represent threats to the stability and cohesion of the GBC choir as a community.

Organized choirs worldwide require a consistent place to rehearse and access to resources to be successful. Having a regular meeting place and time is important in terms of providing

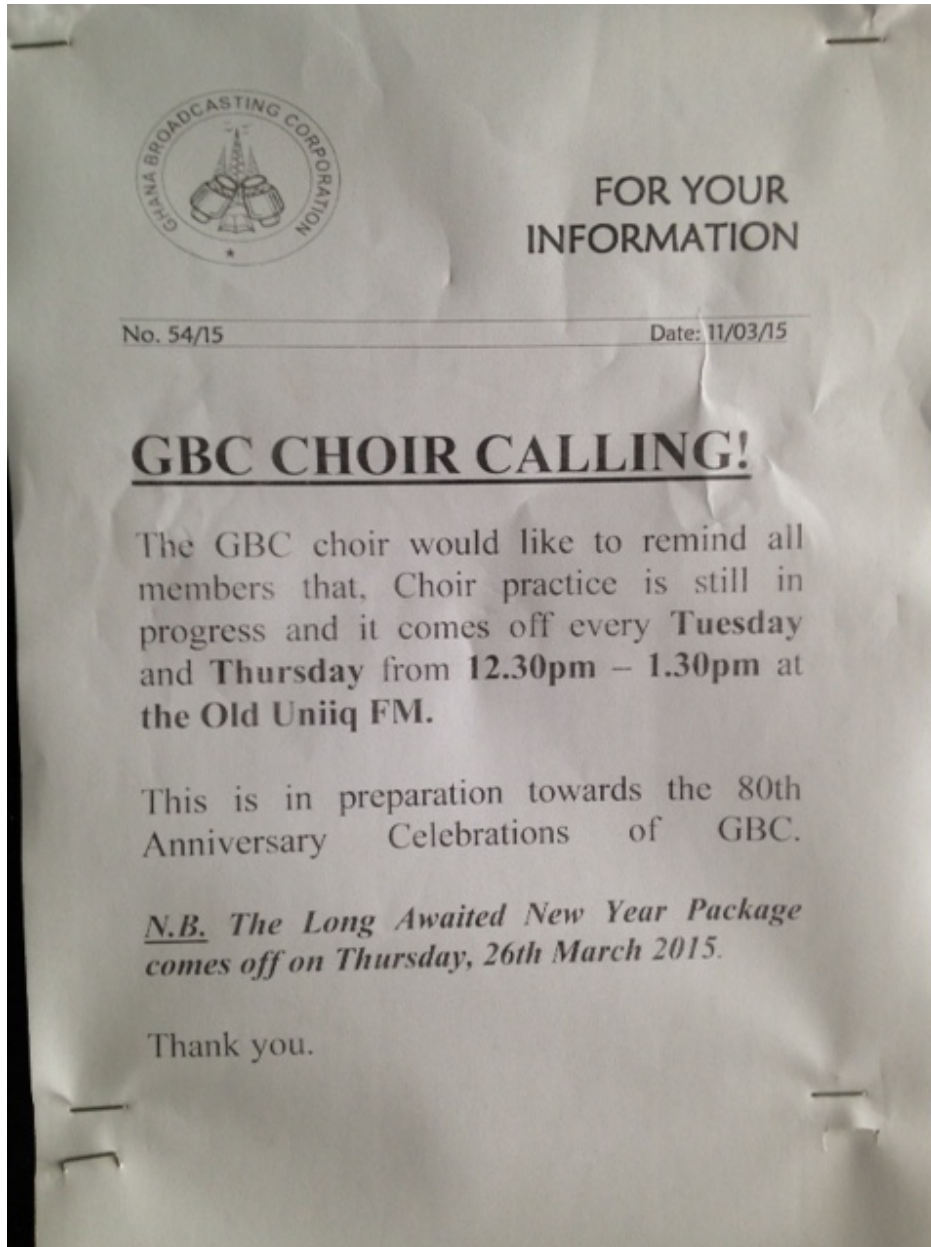


Figure 6.2. Notice posed to GBC bulletin board encouraging rehearsal attendance, March 11, 2015.

stability and organization. For the GBC choir, their scheduled rehearsals are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 to 1:30, but finding a suitable location was often difficult. Choir members particularly expressed frustration about the rehearsal space situation in 2015. The building that

had been used for rehearsals during my previous visits was not available because it was scheduled for demolition. This location was not ideal for rehearsals at any rate because of the lack of air conditioning and limited seats. During the six weeks I sang with the choir in 2015, there were at least four different places that the choir met. None were air-conditioned and three were outdoor public spaces, where distractions were many. Moving to different places created challenges for choir members to find the correct spot. While they did finally settle on a space in a shaded area where employees ate lunch, some members felt it was not a private enough space for rehearsal. Employees and administrators who were just coming and going for lunch could hear the learning process. Furthermore, some choir members felt the lack of a dedicated place represented a more general lack of administrative interest in the choir.

Because of the circumstances of representing a well-known institution, the GBC choir also requires uniforms for performances, provided by the administration, and funds for members to travel to performances outside the GBC to promote the institution to the general public. While uniforms and travel funds were not a primary issue during the period I attended rehearsals, members and administrators indicated that this was sometimes a struggle. The management of funds was another layer beyond the musical that could sometime become part of the discourse surrounding the choir.

Motivation was a theme that arose in conversations with both choir members and administrators. The motivation of choir members was often connected to promoting regular rehearsal attendance. During the period I rehearsed with the GBC choir in 2013, regular attendance was often encouraged by Moses Adjei, the director. Sometimes he would encourage those in attendance to ask other choir members who were absent why they had been absent, if



they passed them walking around the GBC compound. The emphasis on attendance continued after Adjei resigned, as can be seen in notice posted to the main company bulletin board located near the machines workers used to clock in and out (see Figure 6.2). Posting notices such as this was the main form of formal communication outside of rehearsals. The “New Year Package” mentioned was a catered celebration of their performances during the previous Christmas/New Year season in lieu of the regular rehearsal.

Because there was little accountability, there was a variety of commitment levels demonstrated by the members of the choir. Faith and others expressed concern that the younger generation was not as committed to choral singing because it is more difficult to learn than the more popular commercial gospel music: “Yes, we like choral music, but the youth are not really appreciating it, because it is difficult. We have the gospel songs, which they sing easily, unlike the choral music. So, I think if [choral music] will have a future, it means we have to get the youth to appreciate it” (Faith Interview, March 20, 2015). She went on to connect the lack of youth interest in the GBC choir to the state of music education in Ghana: “[In choir] you must sing according to the notes, and how many people can read the notes? Like, I don’t read. So, that is the difficulty. I think people who are into music should train more people to read the notes, to be able to appreciate the choral music, so that [in the] future, people can continue with it” (Interview, March 20, 2015). GBC choir members were generally concerned about the state of choral education in Ghana and a perceived lack of interest by younger Ghanaians in continuing the tradition. Some saw participation in the GBC choir as a way to help ensure the continuation of choral singing as a national pastime.

Some GBC choir members were concerned also that a lack of interest demonstrated by higher-level administrators had affected the motivation of members. For example, Peter Quainoo, a member since the 1990s, noted that a shift occurred when one particular director of the GBC retired:

Peter: Our directors don't show much interest in the choir. We used to have a director who was very keen.

Terpenning: Hammond-Acquaah?

Peter: No not Hammond-Acquaah. He was the choirmaster. I mean the director of the corporation [...].

T: And he showed interest in the choir?

Peter: [He] showed very much interest in the choir. And his wife being a choir member, so he showed much interest with getting us uniforms. Sometimes he organized small chops [food]. He comes to visit us during our practices. Ever since he left/

T: When did he leave?

Peter: He left about 10 years ago. Ever since, no other director has showed much interest in the choir. It is just that we the staff love singing. So although we are not getting any help, we keep coming to sing. It is just recently that our new director of music has also showed interest and she's helping us with one or two things to keep the choir going. (Quainoo, Interview, March 20, 2015)

This narrative provides an explanation of how the higher levels of GBC bureaucracy can effect the moral of choir members and the current hopefulness of increased support by the current head

of the Music Department. He went to specify the current needs of the choir: “We need to get a permanent place for rehearsal. We have to get [an] organ, we have to get local instruments. And then we have to get at least four or five different types of dress for performances. And we need some motivation from our leaders. We have to be motivated. We also [need to] put in our zeal to perform” (Quainoo, Interview, March 20, 2015). With the last statement, Quainoo is recognizing that it was also up to choir members themselves to improve the morale, rather than only rely on administrative support.

After several decades of choir membership, and regular rehearsal attendance, Quainoo has demonstrated a dedication to the choir that he hopes others will follow. This experience results in an institutional memory that can provide younger members with a broader historical perspective on the role the choir has played in the history of the GBC. Another longtime member, Fortune Donkor, recalled the early years of the choir under Philip Atsu as a period when there was a high level of moral and respect for the choir leader, and how that has changed: “Anytime we are in rehearsals or rather practice, you know, discipline was there. We listen attentively to our master, about the various [vocal] parts. Because if you are not committed to whatever you are doing, you cannot remember any song. The respect was there, we were very disciplined” (Fortune Donkor, Interview, March 11, 2015). Donkor left after a few years because of an increase in her job responsibilities as she was promoted as an administrative secretary at the GBC. When she rejoined the choir in 2012, she noted that the morale of the choir had diminished. Nonetheless, she felt a religious obligation to help build the choir back up:

[After Hammond-Acquaah left,] membership was very low. There were times, according to those in charge, they will tell you, when they go to practice [there

would be] only one treble singer, at times two. So it got to a point they had to, you know, mobilize. So I was in the office when they came here [to recruit me].

Knowing I had been a member, they came to me to plead with me to join the group again. In fact, from the start I didn't want to join, but looking at things, a colleague advised that: "No. This sort of job that we are doing as singers, we are not doing this for our own sake. It's by God's plan that we are able to sing." So once I'm still a singer, there is no problem at all. I should just try and join so that we all deliver to enhance God's work in our offices and in our workplace. So with that, I went back and since then I've been a member to date. (Donkor, Interview, March 11, 2015)

For Donkor, participating in the GBC is part of her religious faith. Her dedication to workplace singing as a social service overcame the challenges that arose recently in leadership transitions. Other members also expressed a similar religious basis for their commitment to the choir.

The current head of the Music Department, Millicent Ablordeppey, has made efforts to manage and improve the choir. She was appointed to the position after Mr. Hammond-Acquaah retired. Prior to this, her position was in the production of Akan language morning radio shows. Her educational background is in the field of communication studies, rather than music specifically. So, although she has sung in choirs and professes a love of music, she does not direct the choir herself as Hammond-Acquaah did. In an interview, she described how she approaches the challenge of motivating GBC choir members and supporting the choir:

I believe there should be some motivation somewhere, not payment as such, but some motivation that will edge them to become part of the choir. Like getting

them attire once in a while, taking good care of them in all spheres. So when someone asks them to go outside and perform, they will be happy, even when it is outside working hours they will want to come. They know they will get transport, they will get refreshed at least. They won't just leave their homes and it's as if nobody cares. So I'm trying to impress upon management that they should really really take the choir seriously. They should know the choir represents GBC.

(Ablordeppey, Interview, March 26, 2015)

So, Ablordeppey is aware of the challenges the choir faces, and advocates for the resources the choir needs within the GBC bureaucracy. However, while she is aware of the importance of the choir and the challenges it faces, because she does not direct the choir herself she is more limited in the control she over it. The choir director has the most influence on the motivation and morale of choir members, as I discuss in the following section.

### **Leadership and Dissension in the GBC Choir**

In examining the approaches taken to leading the GBC choir, I aim to examine how hybridity can be productively negotiated in the context of a postcolonial institution. I happen to have participated in the choir at a time of tension and leadership transition, which allows for a consideration of the process of institutional change and resistance to it. The tensions occurred under the directorship of Moses Adjei, and culminated during preparations for the 2013 Christmas concert. Later interviews with members and leaders provided insights into these tensions as the result of differing philosophical approaches to leading the choir. Their insights, particularly the perspective of the subsequent leader, Gottfried Palm, emphasize that the GBC

choir is a local institution that operates within a particular history. While founded to raise the level of musical performance in Ghana, I argue that the success of the GBC choir is dependent on leadership that recognizes the local, institutional social factors.

The leadership challenges began with the retirement of John Hammond-Acquaah in 2010. He was also the head of the Music Department and choir director since the 1980s. Gottfried Palm recalled his impression of the situation when he joined the choir in 2009: “When we came in, the number wasn’t that much, but we met a lot of experienced choristers. Those who have sung about thirty years at GBC. The respect was there because Hammond-Acquaah, he’s been with them, and you could see that his presence demands that respect” (Interview, March 17, 2015). According to many, he ran rehearsals in an organized way and in a way so that people knew the routine. Palm continued:

Palm: [H]e is also somebody who, when we come, he just shares the parts: “Here you take up this, you take up this part.” So that quickens the process.

Terpenning: So he was directing very clearly and things were organized?

Palm: Yeah, things were organized. (Interview, March 17, 2015)

About a year after the departure of Hammond-Acquaah (after the failure of one interim director), Moses Adjei took over. On February 23, 2015 I spoke with him about how things unfolded with the GBC Choir, his general philosophy regarding workplace choirs, and his personal philosophy of workplace singing. Moses and I had gotten to know each other well since I first came in 2012 and became friends. Because of this relationship, he honestly explored his views with me about the difficulties he experienced. His experience with the GBC choir provides

a lens into both the positive aspects of workplace singing and the difficulties of maintaining a successful workplace choir, especially during a time of leadership transition.

Before coming to the GBC, Moses was a long time music educator with about sixteen years of experience as a schoolteacher and choir director. It was in this capacity that he first met Hammond-Acquaah in the mid-1990s when he was directing a school choir that participated in a choral competition organized by the GBC Music Department (Adjei, Interview, March 23, 2015). His choir won this competition, he told me to demonstrate his high reputation and explain why Hammond-Acquaah recruited him to assist with the GBC choir in 2009 (Adjei, Interview, March 23, 2015).

When Moses began working at the GBC in 2006, he was not initially interested in participating in the choir even after he was hired on a full-time contract because of a previous negative experience with a workplace choir (Adjei, Interview, March 23, 2015). In general, he perceived workplace choir members as not having enough commitment and passion for singing: “When I see people singing and they are just singing [without passion], I don’t normally like it much. So that is why I didn’t really want to join initially” (Interview, March 23, 2015). Before joining the choir around 2009, and then becoming the leader in 2011, Adjei’s experiences led him to believe that workplace choir members were more interested in looking good within the institution rather than singing well. However, he became more positive about the potential of workplace choirs to achieve excellence when he witnessed a performance by the UT Bank Choir at a Christmas concert (Interview, March 23, 2015). After their performance he was inspired to become more involved and try to improve the musical excellence of the GBC choir.

The tensions in the lead-up to the 2013 Christmas concert revolved around repertoire, language, and the commitment level of GBC choir members. These issues are related because, as Adjei pointed out, if members only come for a few rehearsals prior to the concert, they prefer to sing songs they already know, rather than learn new works in varied languages. For Adjei, it was more important to learn new works. He told me: “If a choir sings [only] old songs, then there is no progression” (Interview, March 23, 2015). But, some choir members who had been in the choir for many years were not interested in learning new works.

Some members were also not very receptive to singing non-Ghanaians works that may be more challenging than the local-language works to which they were accustomed. A few weeks prior to my arrival on November 20th, 2013 Adjei had started teaching an arrangement of the English carol “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” By December 3rd, some choir members expressed their disapproval for the arrangement and their preference for local-language works they already knew. One woman, who was the “Choir Mother,” supported this position at one rehearsal by asserting her seniority, saying that she had thirty-six years of experience at the GBC (Field Notes, December 16, 2013). “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” was difficult for some members because of the chromaticism in the arrangement, the use of staff notation rather than Sol-Fa notation, which many members were more familiar with, and some challenging linguistic passages, such as “so give us some figgy pudding.” In addition, the topic didn’t seem very relevant to contemporary Ghanaian life. Although the GBC frequently uses English as a primary language of communication, within the choir there was a variety of perspectives as to its appropriateness. Some singers were more comfortable singing in local languages. Even though some choir members never did learn their parts, the work was performed on the Christmas



program, which was broadcast nationally. After the performance, Adjei left the choir, citing physical ailments due to the stress of directing the choir, but remained an employee of the GBC music department. I view this conflict as an attempted musical change that was not accepted by the institution as a whole. While Adjei had a laudable vision and high expectations for the choir, he was not able to form a consensus around that vision for various reasons.

Another subject of conflict during this time was Adjei's decision to perform highlife style songs with the GBC band as part of the Christmas program.<sup>50</sup> The choir did not regularly sing with the band, and some members also resisted this change as well. During the rehearsal with the band two days before the concert there was almost constant arguing among members in local languages, and tensions were high (Field Notes, December 18, 2013). There was a general feeling among choir members that Moses was not listening to or perhaps respecting their views. Their social needs as members of a workplace choir were not being met. Both supporters of Moses and the choristers who opposed his leadership saw the other side as unwilling to compromise their positions and communication had broken down.

Based on my experiences with the choir and interviews, I believe that the tensions in the GBC choir resulted in part due to Adjei's approach to leadership. As a long-time successful music educator, Adjei approached his leadership role in the choir as an opportunity to instill a higher level of musicality. He challenged the members to attend rehearsals more regularly and introduced more challenging musical arrangements that required more focus. However, the GBC choir was more than a musical ensemble. As members emphasized in interviews, it had become a

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<sup>50</sup> Highlife is a form of popular music that arose in Ghana in the twentieth century (see Plageman 2012). Since independence, the GBC has maintained a professional highlife band that performs at functions as part of the Music Department.

social institution where long-time members could connect in the context of the workplace. The choir offered a respite from the hierarchical and bureaucratic environment that permeated the overall institution of the GBC. While Adjei attempted to be egalitarian in some respects (for example, he sought input from choir members in the early stage of setting the concert repertoire), some members felt left-out of the decision making process. Adjei was correct in pointing out that choir members demonstrated varying degrees of commitment to the choir, but pointing this out fostered a negative environment from which hostility emerged. I observed that even GBC choir members who did not regularly attend rehearsals until the weeks leading up to a performance were nonetheless committed to the choir as a social institution. However, they were not as committed to Adjei's conception of musical excellence and resisted change. While founded to support the needs of the Music Department, the GBC choir functions as a social institutional for the members with an institutional memory that is essential to its survival.

The tensions between Adjei and choir members exceeded the bounds of rehearsals. Some members went to Millicent Ablordeppey, the head of the Music Department, to express their objections regarding the repertoire, instead of coming to Adjei directly (Adjei, Interview, February 23, 2015).<sup>51</sup> Disagreements within the choir also spilled out into the everyday workplace. In the Music Department Gramophone Library where Moses Adjei, Bright Aheto, and Doccas Pappoe worked daily, and where I spent time doing archival research, I sometimes heard discussion regarding repertoire and leadership of the choir (Field Notes, December 3,

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<sup>51</sup> I also remember overhearing a GBC choir member talking before rehearsal in December about discussing the repertoire selection with Ablordeppey.

2013). Although it was clear all of them cared deeply about the success of the choir, there was disagreement about the nature of the GBC choir as collective endeavor.

When I returned in 2015 for my third research trip, the choir was under the leadership of Gottfried Palm, an operations manager in the television set design department of the GBC. Although not an employee of the Music Department, he had experience leading church choirs (Palm, Interview, March 17, 2015). When I asked him about his views on leadership, he made two points that revealed his attention to the institutional factors that shaped the choir. Firstly, he made a distinction between the character of a church choir and the character of a workplace choir in Ghana. He recognized that because rehearsals take place during the workday when members often have other responsibilities, rehearsal attendance is more of a sacrifice for members than in church choirs, where rehearsals are typically in the evening:

Trying not to be too much of a dictator. At least trying to understand everybody's position, because it is not like the church where you have committed people [who] have dedicated themselves to singing. But within the work environment people also have different different schedules. It's also one challenging aspect. Because there are times depending on my schedules, I am not even able to come for rehearsals. And so you need to accord everybody that same respect and understanding. And I think, um, [with] Moses, there were things he was,... I don't know if he was refusing to understand or appreciate, that within the institutional choir, it's more sacrifice. (Palm, Interview, March 17, 2015)

Palm accepted this situation as part of the dynamic of the GBC choir and made repertoire decisions accordingly, even if they did not challenge the choir as much to improve their musical excellence.

The second point had to do with a traditional sense of respect for elders that continues to be an important aspect of Ghanaian society as a whole: “The other aspect [of leadership is] our language, how you speak to them.... Because we have a blend of different ages, and we need to be tactful when are speaking to everybody. So that once you are speaking or even uttering any statement, and you satisfy all the [various] ages” (Palm, Interview, March 17, 2015). In Ghanaian languages there are different terms of address for speaking to your elder as compared to a peer. As Palm is younger than some of the members, he was conscious of the need to use appropriate forms of address.

In observing his leadership in rehearsals, I saw that Palm emphasized fostering a positive atmosphere and recognized the challenges that faced the choir. He allowed for more discourse about decisions during rehearsal so members felt their voices were heard. Working within the institutional and cultural constraints of the GBC, he has tried to make people coming from different ethnic groups, departments, and musical perspectives feel welcome. This approach may not result in the highest level of musical performance, but it allows for the continuation of the vision of national development and unity through musical hybridity that Nketia articulated in his radio portrait of Amu at the time of independence, discussed in the previous chapter.

## Conclusion

There are two themes regarding Ghanaian workplace choirs that my fieldwork with the GBC reveals. First, I found that many workplace choir members are invested in their choir and its reputation, despite the many challenges and lack of extrinsic reward they receive. When Moses Adjei attempted to change the institution and improve the quality of musical performance through a more challenging repertoire, members demonstrated their attachment to their own vision of the choir. This commitment to an institution may be viewed as a strength of Ghanaian society, however it can result in tensions as well. When I asked GBC choir members about their motivations for participation, they typically started with their love of singing. For example, Palm told me: “I think my motivation for still going on with the choir is because I like singing, it is the food I eat! A day doesn’t pass without singing” (Interview, March 17, 2015). However, they were also aware of the broader social implications of participating in a choir and how it functions as a social institution. Palm continued: “Aside of that one, I think choral music brings people together” (Interview, March 17, 2015). This idea that music is an essential aspect of social life was frequently expressed by various choir members. However, because some members had participated in the group for many decades, they had a particular conception of the choir and wanted it to continue the path established by their director, which made transitioning to new leadership difficult.

The second theme reflected in this ethnography is that the GBC is a postcolonial institution that remains intertwined with local ideas and customs rather than a purely cosmopolitan entity. This is reflected in my experience with GBC choir members who are more comfortable with Sol-Fa notation than staff notation and are concerned with appropriate local forms of address rather

than viewing GBC choir as a beacon of musical excellence. The tensions surrounding the 2013 Christmas concert illustrate the difficulties of bringing diverse voices together within the context of postcolonial institution. In this way, the GBC choir relates to the broader struggle for national unity that Ghanaians are engaged in. Music is a central part of this struggle, as it helps constitute the social contract in Ghana and elsewhere that citizens make with each other to form a state.

## **Chapter 7: The Continuing Significance of Choral Music in Ghana in the Wake of National Tragedy**

This dissertation has argued that the origins of Ghanaian choral musical hybridity should be understood as an expression of postcolonial consciousness in the context of the colonial project of purification. The first two chapters explored how distinct choral forms emerged from the Presbyterian and Methodist missions. Then, in the fifth and sixth chapters, I considered how the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Music Department and their workplace choir continued to engage and develop Ghanaian choral music in the era of self-rule as national expression. In this final chapter, I further explore the cultural work accomplished by Ghanaian choral music by considering its prominence during the mourning period following the national tragedy of the death of the sitting president of Ghana, John Atta Mills. This event provided a lens into the contemporary relevance of Ghanaian choral music in national discourse during the early stage of my fieldwork process. The use of music in this event also provides an opportunity to consider how choral music functions in relation to traditional music in expressing Ghanaian identity. While Ghanaian choral music was forged in the context of colonialism, these performances show that it continues to have relevance as a performance of history and nationhood.

### **Experiencing a National Tragedy**

On the afternoon of July 24, 2012, I was at the rehearsal space of the Ghana National Symphony Orchestra in Accra where I had been speaking with orchestra members who are also workplace choral directors. I had only just arrived in Ghana about a week prior. As the director of the National Symphony, Isaac Annoh, and I were leaving the premises, we heard news that the sitting president had died suddenly earlier that day. There was immediate shock and some heated

discussion in the local language among the Ghanaians present. There seemed to be some concern of foul play and the stability of the country, concerns that were echoed in newspapers and broadcast news programs in the days that followed.

John Atta Mills died of throat cancer, but his declining health was not reported to the public prior to his death. While this sudden event disrupted my preliminary research in some ways, it also offered an opportunity to witness first-hand the role of choral music in the national mourning process. This was a unprecedented national tragedy that tested the democratic stability of Ghana. Never before had a president of Ghana died in office, and the history of *coups* in Ghana (see Gocking 2005) contributed to a worry that the government might be overthrown, or that disputes would break out. During the two-week mourning period before the official funeral, people clothed in black and red (traditional mourning colors in Ghana) gathered in public spaces and various types of traditional music were composed, performed, and broadcast on television and radio. A professor of music at the University of Ghana, Legon named Osei Korankye composed and performed a song of mourning, accompanying himself on his *Seperewa* (an Akan string instrument), that became particularly prominent. Parallel to these traditional performances were speeches by government officials and religious leaders that emphasized the importance of national unity.

The first signs that choral music was integral in the public mourning process were the choral interludes between news programming on the GBC television and radio stations. These interludes typically featured video recordings of youth choirs performing patriotic works spliced with images of national symbols such as the flag and the Independence Arch in Accra. New choral works memorializing Mills were also composed by various choir leaders. As mentioned in



the introduction, Music Department employee Bright Aheto told me that the choral composition that received the most attention in this period was an original composition by Newlove Annan (Aheto, Interview, March 11, 2015). I spoke with Annan about this composition memorializing Atta Mills to better understand the work and his intentions.<sup>52</sup> In listening to the work, I noticed the text mentioned Atta Mills meeting Kwame Nkrumah and Ephraim Amu, but didn't understand the Fante lyrics, so I asked him if he meant indicate that these national figures would meet in heaven. He told me that he did not reference Christianity in the work. Instead, when explaining these references, he used a term I was unfamiliar with, "Asamanadze," which he told me refers to "the land of the dead" in the Fante belief system (Annan, Phone Interview, Aug. 25, 2016). Although Newlove Annan is a Christian minister now residing in California, he said that he wanted the composition to be relevant on a national level and, in service of inclusivity, he used terminology that could unite Ghanaians across religious affiliation. Many of Annan's composition are explicitly Christian in character, so his decision to use traditional religious references in the context of mourning President Mills reveals his acceptance of a pluralistic Ghanaian society, where many faith traditions coexist. The composition also reflects his belief that choral music can bridge religious differences despite its Christian origins and associations.

In explaining his choice to reference Amu and Nkrumah in his composition, Newlove Annan told me, "Amu stands for tradition, Nkrumah stands for what was acquired from outside" (Phone Interview, August 25, 2016). Thus, by invoking these names he was situating Atta Mills as both a modernizer and a leader connected to local tradition. In browsing Annan's

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<sup>52</sup> A recording of the Dansoma Youth Choir performing Newlove Annan's composition is available on youtube under the title "Song Tribute to the Late Prof. Mills" <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFoW8\\_mKjHI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFoW8_mKjHI)> (accessed August, 20, 2016).

Facebook posts, where he often provides messages of inspiration to his many followers, I came across a post that reflects a similar sentiment: “European influence on Africa can never be done away with! Let's see what we can make of it! It’s our life-puzzle!” (Newlove Annan, public Facebook post, Aug 8, 2013). I found this post to be a succinct expression of the project Ghanaian composers have grappled with at least since Amu composed “Yen Ara Asase Ni” in 1929. Ghanaian choral composers have contributed to the ongoing project of negotiating Ghanaian identity through their creative engagement with this puzzle.

Although he was not in Ghana at the time, Annan experienced the tragedy of the death of Atta Mills as a Ghanaian. He expressed his grief through his choral art while reflecting on the history of Ghanaian leadership, and Ghanaians heard and responded to this message because of the work of Bright Aheto at the GBC Music Department.

### **Official Use of Choral Music at the State Funeral**

Choral performances were also prominent in the context of the three-day official funeral for President Atta Mills. On August 8th and 9th a vigil was held outside the parliament building where tributes were read by various dignitaries, including Prof. Kwabena Nketia, between musical performances. Because of my early affiliation with the National Symphony, I was invited to travel with them on August 8, 2012. After the orchestra performance, this first night featured traditional performing groups representing the many diverse traditions from various regions of Ghana including northern regions. During the performances, the general public lined up to view the body of Atta Mills in wake. The second night was the choral vigil where more than a dozen choirs performed. These choirs were mostly from the Greater Accra Region

including the Tema Youth Choir, the Accra Youth Choir, Dansoma Youth Choir, and many others. The typical performance consisted of three songs: an English language work, followed by an a cappella work in the local language, and concluding with a highlife/gospel style medley often with instrumental accompaniment. These performances lasted until 3AM, so I spent a few hours sleeping on folding chairs outside the parliament building and then walked to Independence Square for the official state funeral service. The large quantity of choirs that performed a mixture of works that all fit into a standard mold, indexed the broader country working together to overcome the tragedy and move forward. However, unlike the previous night, where groups from various regions of the country were represented, the choral vigil on August 9th was more Accra-centric and less representative of the linguistic diversity of the country.

On the morning of August 10th, a large ceremony took place at Independence Square where around 50,000 people were in attendance. Hillary Clinton and many other international figures attended this service. I was able to sit with the mass choir, which consisted of the members of Tema Youth Choir, Dansoman Youth Choir, Osu Castle Choir, and National Parliament Choir. They were seated on the floor of the stadium beside a military band. The choir performed hymns as interludes between tribute speeches and bible readings.

This mass choir was led by Francis Obeng, who has worked for the Accountant General department since the 1970s. He is the leader of both the Accountant General Choir and the Castle Choir, which is the name of the choir made up of staff of the Office of the President. I later interviewed Obeng about his role in the funeral and his work as a workplace choir leader. Although he works for the Accountant General, he is posted at the Office of the President and has his own office there. He has worked there since the 1980s and began the choir there shortly

after he started. He told me that he heard the news of the president's death after the Castle Choir had rehearsed on July 24th. He was soon informed by the funeral planning committee at the Office of the President that they wanted him to lead the mass choir at the official funeral (Interview, March 20, 2015). So, he attended planing meetings and began to rehearse the choirs for the performance. The Castle Choir was joined by the Parliament Choir and the Dansoma Youth Choir. The choirs mostly rehearsed separately, but there was one rehearsal prior to the funeral where they were all together (Obeng, Interview, March 20, 2015). While the hymns performed were chosen by the committee, Obeng also included some "local dirges" he chose himself. He told me he drew on his many years of experience performing at funerals in Ghana to choose appropriate works for the occasion (Interview, March 20, 2015). The mixture of hymns from the Methodist and Presbyterian hymnbooks with local compositions demonstrates that balancing local compositions with internationally recognized indexes of a Christian funeral was important for the planners.

Obeng told me that he views choral music as an integral aspect of Ghanaian culture that is essential in national events, "because we are Ghanaians, and we don't leave our culture. Choral music is an integral part of Ghanaian [identity], so we couldn't have done [the funeral] without [choral music]" (Interview, March 20, 2015). For him, choral music remains not only relevant within national discourse, but is a staple of official events. However, traditional music of the various ethnic groups on a national stage remains equally relevant in discourse about national unity, as Nketia pointed out. When I asked Nketia about the purpose of the choral vigil to the expression of national unity, he noted that it was actually the previous night that truly expressed the diversity that still exists in Ghana through traditional music (Nketia, Interview, December 10,

2013). Nketia told me that first “developing a consciousness of who you are and what your [specific] culture has to offer” enables Ghanaians to engage in the national project more productively. Furthermore, national “development means reconciling ethnicity and nationhood. So that you are Asante, but you are Ghanaian [etc.].” So, the funeral called for a balance of presenting Ghana as a Christian nation through the languages of the southern regions heard in the choral compositions and Ghana as a diverse collection of over fifty ethnolinguistic groups. This was the same balance that Nketia sought to achieve through his involvement with organizing musical performances for Nkrumah’s inauguration at the time of independence.

Musical performances at the funeral provided interludes for the tributes given by dignitaries, such as John Mahama, the former vice president who was sworn as president on the day of Mills’s death. In the centerpiece of the Daily Graphic, a government newspaper, the next day there was an article that provided the content of many of these speeches with the headline “Prez Mahama appeals for peace, tolerance - to consolidate country’s democracy,” (Daily Graphic, August 11, 2012, Abiakwa). As tragedy often is, this was a chance for officials to reaffirm national unity under their leadership. Mahama’s statements reflect this: “Our common yearning to see Ghana move forward binds us together as one people, in honoring his memory, we share a common goal of building a better Ghana” (Mahama quoted by Abiakwa, 2012). In the official program, Mahama also situated the passing of his predecessor in a way that looked to the future in consolidating political progress: “I am in no doubt that the unifier and man of peace that our late President was, his passing on to glory will be a catalyst for our country to consolidate the peace and forge ahead in unity. His legacy will live long into eternity.” Mahama did not address the question of under who’s leadership this unity should come under, however.

Collective singing is a common medium to express grief as a common experience at a time of national tragedy around the world. The indexical association that collective singing has with unity in the face of tragedy was exemplified when congress sang “God Bless America” on the steps of the capital on the night of September 11, 2001. The diversity of religions and languages in Ghana makes the expression of national unity a particularly important aspect of national events. The dissemination of patriotic songs is a way of encouraging a collective consciousness and spirit of unity, but the recognition of the diversity of ongoing ethnic traditions on the national stage remains equally important. While Ghana has been relatively stable through its brief history, a unified Ghana with equality for its citizens across linguistic/ethnic divides is still a work in progress rather than a reality that came with independence. The death of the sitting president brought these issues of national identity and cultural expression to the forefront of public consciousness.

### **Performing Nationalism through Choral Music Hybridity**

As demonstrated in chapter five, the musical hybridity that Ephraim Amu developed was adopted by the GBC and other state institutions as indexically representative of the emerging nation-state. However, I resist labeling Amu a nationalist because of his reluctance to support Nkrumah during the independence movement. Amu’s political activism was actually centered on Ewe political unification across the Ghana-Togo boarder. This was a movement he participated in later in life after becoming a public figure. The hybridity of his compositions, and those of the Ghanaian composers that followed him, work on the semiotic level of secondness; they represent the transformation of creative indexicality into a new indexical order that challenged the semiotic

ideology of separation that supported the colonial paradigm. In contrast, nationalism, in the strict sense of a political argument for self-rule, necessarily takes place in the domain of thirdness. Postcolonial nationalism requires a logical argument that rebuts the illogic of colonialism based on an appeal to historical narrative and liberal values that were ascendant in the post-WWII era. Nkrumah understood the importance of making this argument both to his fellow Ghanaians and the British based on his international educational experiences and intellectual philosophical grounding. Cultural hybridity was crucial in defining a polity that was broader than ethnicity, yet not defined by European standards. However, while the nationalism argument was partially enabled by Amu's earlier musical hybridity, it was not determined by his work.

Pappoe-Thompson perhaps comes closest to representing a Ghanaian musical nationalist. He composed works that followed Amu's style at the time of independence that had more overt references to the Ghanaian flag and that supported Nkrumah. Further research into his work and life could refine and expand our understanding of his contributions. His works continue to be promoted by the state through an annual competition, and so continue to have national relevance.

Changes in Ghanaian choral musical style and practice continue to reflect continuing changes in Ghanaian society. Now a younger generation of composers has emerged with works that speak more to international conceptions of musical excellence rather than maintaining the tonal prosody that has historically been a hallmark of a Ghanaian choral style. Understanding the nature of these more recent musical changes will require more research. This research could involve investigating how both historic and newly-composed works are utilized by youth and church choirs in contemporary Ghana to define and support religious institutions. These religious institutions play a central role in Ghanaian social life and this role is partially mediated through

music. I was able to witness only a few these more contemporary performance contexts, such as the funeral discussed above. An in-depth ethnography with youth choirs and current practices of Presbyterian and Methodist choirs might also reveal the ideological significance of recent musical changes.

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation provides a broad vista through which one might explore the interconnections between religion, postcolonial theory, national consciousness, and music that continue to shape Ghana. A wide variety of Ghanaian scholarship provided helpful sign-posts in this journey. I have endeavored to engage with this scholarship as deeply as possible from my own perspective, which has developed through years of coursework and reading in musicology, anthropology, and related disciplines. I have been guided both by a desire to develop an appreciation of Ghanaian choral music and a curiosity about how music functions within the broader constellation of modes of human communication. The semiotic model developed by Peirce and clarified and expanded upon by subsequent scholars is useful in this regard. In particular, this scholarship has guided me to investigate the indexical creativity of Ghanaian choral music as related to broader social changes.

Michael Silverstein's notions of indexical creativity and “orders of indexicality” have guided my investigation into musical creativity as the process of manipulating signs and the appropriate contexts for performances. As Ghanaian Christians began to incorporate local musical elements into their telling of Bible stories and expressions of local subjectivity, the dichotomies that structure colonial power, such as missionary/native, colonizer/colonized, and



European/African, became less stable. While these categories are not discarded entirely, they are revealed as arbitrary and based in a semiotic ideology that has led to the underdeveloped Africa. As Veit Erlmann puts it, “[G]lobal fictions—of modern statehood, national identity, history, subjectivity, art, music, writing, and so on—result from the fact that the making of modern subjectivities in Africa and the West was not determined by mutually opposite positions: of conqueror and conquered, of master and servant. Rather, it was determined by an articulation of interests, languages, styles, and images” (1999:3). The history of Ghanaian choral music provides an example of this articulation as a mutually constitutive creative negotiation. Musical composition and performance provided an opportunity for Ghanaians to *respond* to the colonial experience, not be determined by it.

Ghanaian composers have used European tonality and part-writing traditions as an expressive tool, but this does not imply an acceptance of European colonial hegemony. For Ephraim Amu, engaging with creative musical hybridity in his choral compositions and teachings was a revolutionary stance that contributed to his dismissal from his position in the Presbyterian Church. In the GBC workplace choir the negotiation of hybridity continues in discourses about what repertoire to perform. Language, religion, and nationhood remain salient features of public life that the GBC choir grapples with as a diverse community. Thus, there is still a need for leadership that opens up space to constructively negotiate the complex historical issues of Ghanaian identity through music.

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**Appendix: Excerpts from interviews with Professor J.H. Kwabena Nketia at his home in  
Accra**

**August 15, 2012**

**Amu's Advice: A Bicultural Approach to Music**

Nketia: But you see, there was a time, after Amu came back from, uh, England that he was really close to me. That was when he asked me not to copy his music. And I would, you know, visit him, stay a few days and so forth. I was really sort of observing him. Seeing the bamboo, seeing him making his bamboo flutes and the drums he kept there. But the other side of him when he was at that college [in London], he learned to play the piano properly. He had learned it as a keyboard instrument when he was in the training college, but now he came back, he had ordered a grand piano. I mean, this man. And I observed how he was adjusting himself, even his diet. Well, he would have bread and butter and jam and so forth, but he would also have the traditional thing [chuckles]. You know, that kind of mixture. And anytime he was going to teach, you know in the whole morning, he would come to me and give me a Bach two-part invention to play. And I would say, "What, why is it that he, the Africanist teaching me all these things, [is] also insisting I learn Bach two-part inventions?" Because of his interest in counterpoint. Then he would play a Beethoven thing that he learned.

Terpenning: Right, so he did enjoy Western classical music.

N: And then he was expecting me to do the same. But then I thought about it later—that it was a training in bi-musicality, you see. He didn't say it that way, but I would say it that way. And so when I got a scholarship and was going to England, and I went home to visit him and told him about it. I slept overnight. He said that night he did not sleep because he thought anybody could go study linguistics, and that I should have been given a scholarship to go and study music, the way he did. And then he advised me, "When you go, don't give up that music, do it on your own," and so forth. And then he told me, "when you get your allowance, save some money and buy a piano when you are coming back." And when he was in London he had investigated the piano firms and knew one firm in London that produced the kind of piano he thought would survive in our climate, and that I should buy Monington and Westin piano.<sup>53</sup> I did, I followed everything. Because when I went to, you know, concerts, Albert hall, I even took lessons at Trinity college, and so forth. I prepared myself for that aspect of music, not my own, but something I thought I should know because it is part of our colonial thing.

T: Western music was part of your colonial identity?

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<sup>53</sup> Monington and Weston made upright pianos with a double iron frame, which were more durable in tropical climates.

N: Yes, it was part of our colonial thing, here. And I did, I had so many friends, somebody who plays concertos at Albert Hall, took me, I would spend weekends with him and I learned all that. Someone I spent weekends with British families. And because they knew I had musical interests, they would play Brahmas. So just quietly, I learned that stuff, not that it was of immediate thing, but I enjoyed it. And I had a kind of intellectual curiosity about some of them. For example, you know, a song Bach, Brahmas things has the triplets that we have in traditional music, you see. So I was fascinated by all that.

T: The commonalities?

N: Yes! And then sometimes, I heard something by [sings a melody] Midsummer's Night Dream, the scherzo, and I'd hear it and it sounds like African to me. Things like that. So five years in London I was doing this, of course I studied systematically at Trinity college and so forth. But this was part of my background, my own personal background, I had no interest in composing in the style of Western music, you see. Because I didn't think I wanted to copy, be an expert in that kind of area. But my thinking was influenced by the way, you know, I listen to music and so forth. So when I came back, the things that I wrote show this. I was still sticking myself to the Amu framework, you see. So if I'm writing my music in the African style, this is how I do it. I could do the other one, but I did not want to do it, because it was unnecessary. So at a later stage in my career, 1958, when the Rockefeller Foundation found me in Ghana and gave me a fellowship to the US it was my compositions that they were interested in. And they gave me a fellowship so I could go to Colombia and study with Henry Cowell because Henry Cowell was exploring music from the Orient and so forth. And they were interested in my getting to know such composers. I went to Juilliard met with all kinds of, you know, best people you can think of, you know, in music theory.

### **Nketia's Relationship with Kodaly and Approaching Composition**

N: Kodaly too, I went to Hungary I was with him most of the time, we became friends and so forth. So my background was very different [from Amu's], you see. I mean I traveled so much to other places, to Australia, and India and so forth. By then I had made up my mind about what I was doing in African music. How far I wanted to go. And always the techniques fascinated me, because I could employ similar techniques using my African materials.

T: You could do...

N: Use similar techniques using my African materials. So if Kodaly is using Hungarian folk tunes, then I'm not using Hungarian folk tunes, but I know what to write from my own tradition, you know. So those are the differences between what I do and what most people do. You know, not only in Ghana, other African countries because my experience has been very different. But the *early* opportunity of meeting Amu as a nationalist was very important, because then I could sort out my experience what I want, what I don't want, not ignoring because, I mean, I'm part of the world too.

T: You're part of the world too.

N: Yes. There's things that I enjoy and everything... And I remember this man who has died, but he was a well known composer in Europe. Anyway, he had read some of the things I had written, and he was very interested for me to meet him in Holland, you know. And, uh, his interest in African music was very strong, but it was a revolutionary kind of interest. Instead of a bell pattern of six or twelve, he would think about 64, you see, a cycle of 64, I've just forgotten his name. So I went through this kind of experience, appreciating how other people were thinking about African resources and knowing what I wanted to do.

T: Musical resources.

N: Right, and so, what I do may look like... For me, to be in my culture with my people seemed to be the way I should communicate.

T: I wanted to ask more about that. What do you see your relationship between your audience and, I mean even the people who are performing your music. Because as an ethnomusicologist, I'm really most interested in the social aspect, how people, um, practice this type of music, the choral music, which has this history. And does it mean the same thing now?

N: Well, because I write in my own language, I haven't had that problem communicating, or getting people to appreciate. Like Moboroasem, because I learned so many traditional musical types like funeral dirges and so forth. And when I'm writing Moboroasem and so forth, I know the dirge, because I did a study of lament, funeral laments.

Me: So when people sing that they know its a dirge, but I thought that particular piece, is talking about the problems of the poor are the problems of us all.

N: No, no. Moboroasem meant, uh, well Mo Boro is someone whom you take pity, someone in distress and so forth and I am saying that this is something for all of us. You might be... Death has created a farm, and all of us have to go and weed in it. But nevertheless, we all die. One person doesn't, everybody dies. So that was Mo Boro Asem. The pity, don't grieve too much because this is something created by our creator. We all go work on the farm of death, his plantation, you know [laughs].

T: I see. So people understand that as a funeral dirge?

N: Yes, but they also, if it is sung in church it, people, they derive comfort from it. Because it is saying that "kataman kraa bi." You know, "when death is holding something no body can take it from him." And so it says, "Look up to heaven, there is circle from heaven." And I'm using that in [the context of] church, but it also part of the traditional theology, because we believe in God. So at that point you can sing it anywhere, you see.

## Nketia's Approach to Secular Vocal Compositions and The Singing Night GBC Program

Nketia: Well, I have at times [created secular] solo songs because of an incident. For example, when the big chief of Akyem Abuakwa died, Nana Ofori Atta.<sup>54</sup> I was shocked by the news, this was before I went to England, 1943, 44 or so it was. Ofori Atta was a great chief because he could cook with the British and the British relied on him and so forth. And he was a great statesman, then it was announced that he died.

T: He was Akan? What was his name?

N: Yes, the Akan area. It was announce that he died. I'm coming to the piece. Anyway, so I wrote two compositions. Maybe I was inspired to write the compositions because Amu had written something for this man when he died. Anyway, two pieces, one after the other. Listen, [sings "Yaanom Muntie"], "listen comrades, we are in dire distress. The big tree on which the birds roost has fallen down and the birds are perplexed, what can we do?" So that was my theme and this is a traditional saying. So for this man like a big tree that has fallen down, is a kind of lamentation. This is for solo voice, with accompaniment. [Sings more]...

T: What were the first words of the song?

N: So, I wrote two pieces, that one and then another piece using a traditional proverb, which says "A man came to do what he could, but not everything. "Onipa Baayæbi na Enye Ninyara" I talk about, you know: "If you're looking for a [unclear], you'll find him only in the light of the day" [laughs]. But the first one, "Yaanom Muntie," was something that a British person who came to work with our Ghana Broadcasting Corporation liked. He started a program, a literary program called The Singing Night, and he used this as the signature tune. So for ten years every Tuesday, Thursday, "Yaanom Muntie" [was played] and people liked it. It had piano accompaniment, but people liked the words and everything. But Amu had also created some songs for him, because Achimota school was something to do with it.

T: So there's definitely some traditional themes in your works. You've worked hard to be aware of your culture.

N: I have traditional themes, I mean, for me those themes are not *apart* somewhere. I mean, they are a part of my culture, I don't even have to, I think in traditional terms. In terms of the poetry, the poetic heritage that I know. And I create my own along the same lines. So I can create my own imagery and so forth.

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<sup>54</sup> He lived from 1881-1943.

T: Right, but with, because I've been attending some rehearsals and I'm just wondering how much of the social practice of rehearsing and performing these piece should also be influenced by traditional ways. So, does traditional social life emerge through...

N: If they understand it, you know, the words and so forth, they will appreciate it. But I'm sure that's why I write that kind of music in my language. I don't write music in Western English. A couple of song are done, a couple of things, a text I had on a Christmas card that I set to music.

T: A Christmas card?

N: Yeah, someone sent me a Christmas card when I was in London, [sings melody] but I set it using my style. Because I had so many British friends, I had a nickname. Instead of pronouncing my name Nketia, was difficult, so they simplified it and called me "Inky." That was my nickname in England.

### **On Nkrumah's Inauguration, Akan Cultural Dominance, and National Development**

N: We have a problem, those of us who are literate and so forth have a problem with our culture, because we did not learn our cultures, even though we are controlling everything we have a problem giving our traditional cultures priority. So we have tried, since Nkrumah's time to ensure the traditional things have a place in national ceremonies. That was my function. When we were making Nkrumah president one of the ministers came to me and said, "We are going to celebrate our independence but we want this to have our culture and so forth, so how can we do it. I have heard your traditional poetry, can we do this? Can we do that?"

T: But then when you use things from different regions.

N: Even for the republic, I didn't use things from different regions, I just used the Akan thing because of the prestige it has in the country in terms of colonial period and in terms of how the chieftaincy thing has developed to a very high point in Asante, for example—where the culture of chieftaincy is very, well, complex, highly developed. So even in terms of drum language, we used the language for the king of Asante and Nkrumah is now the big chief, so a few modifications made it possible. Things like that, you see. So my part of the ceremony had big Frontomfrom drums for the chief. I had the chiefs from another place.

T: For the inauguration of the president. And classical music, art music also?

N: Art music was for a different occasion, not for the ceremony. You see, that was for the independence concert. That was performed the evening after the public ceremony.

T: So that was the same thing reflected in the recent funeral [of Atta Mills].

N: Yes, because we are trying to bring the traditional thing into the contemporary. We're instating traditional music in the contemporary context. The contemporary context is where you have people coming together because they belong to churches, schools, politics, commerce, and so forth and they relate to themselves. The traditional context is where people are relating. So the complex thing, is that in Ghana, is how a person operates in both, you go to my village, I am part of it, but I can go to the president's, or to the church. So the problem is not with the traditional people, but those who have gone to school and learned how to play the piano and so forth, who impact our tradition. So we are making it possible for them to go back to the tradition when we introduce them to Agbadza and so forth. We recontextualize the performance, so its not just in the village but we have brought it from the village to the town or we have brought it from the north to the south. So that is all a part of the cultural development, learning how to take on new things that are not in your traditional culture.

T: So you do that through choral music as well as/

N: So, if you take Amu as a founder of the choral style, his intention was not to use only the Akan, that is why he compose in Ga, and he speaks Ga, and he speaks Ewe. And there are some Ghanaian composers that have tried to use Dagomba in their choral music.

T: They have? But it hasn't been successful or popular.

N: Well, because we have opened the door, but we don't have people coming to do this. You see the education and so forth is concentrated from the Asante down. The colonial people did not develop the northern regions. And the northern people also come south when they come to the south they learn our language and our food, and they even come and sing in the Asante and create their own. So that process is nation building, and the nation building thing must also go with the culture. So we are in the process. We have never, we have not really reached any kind of final area where we don't have to think about it. Now, we think about it and we have to plan for it. Meanwhile we have a big population of young people, you know, who do not have the same grip on the culture who are starting up a new scene hip-hop and hip-life and so on. And choral groups who like the other one because it is the Western and traditional thing mixed. Who are doing that but cannot do traditional Adowa and things like that, so that is the situation. Right now for the choral groups they were representing that kind, that group of Ghanaians.

T: The younger generation? All the youth choirs/

N: Yeah, yes, because they go to school, that is what they learn in school, you see. Originally they were singing things by Handel and so forth, they still do, so these new compositions are taking them a step forward into the culture.

**December 1, 2013**

### **Nketia on Amu's position toward Nkrumah**

N: He had a different view of it. Because he as an older person and someone who started this thing, because of his awakening in terms of his culture and so forth. He had worked with chiefs and so on, and he respected the culture.

T: Amu did?

N: Yes, and respected the authority and so forth. And he was taught by people, so he could not quite agree with Nkrumah wanting to dispose of the chiefs and so forth. You know that was, that part of Nkrumah he did not. So he did not join him, even though they were all talking about identity and so forth. But Amu was strictly, uhh, in favor of the chiefs and so forth, whereas, um, Nkrumah did not want the chiefs because they were bent towards, they had some independence from the colonial system,

T: Yes

N: Because of indirect thing, indirect rule. The chiefs had their power and so forth that they exercised in *their* region.

T: He saw it as a challenge to national unity

N: Right, and so they were somewhat semiautonomous, you see, and the governor was the only person who could give direct orders.

T: So even when Nkrumah was prime minister under the British colonial system/

N: Yeah, well, Nkrumah saw the chiefs as siding with, you know, the, uh, governor and so forth. Because they had that independence and Nkrumah wanted all of them to rally behind him. So there was a big struggle in Kumasi because Kumasi was a very strong, big stronghold of chieftaincy. And uh, when he wanted to follow there was a lot of, in fact there was violence and so forth, there. But eventually they gave up, because then Asante wanted to be independent, by themselves. And Nkrumah was trying to get them to be part of the whole of Ghana. Under Nkrumah, it took some time for them to ... But, uh, Amu, Amu was very conscious of tradition and so forth. Even though he liked independence and so on, he didn't become a part of the Nkrumah approach to independence.

### **Nketia's Work as a Linguist and the Reason for his Studies in London**

Nketia: You had an examination system that is national, controlled by the government, and the syllabus and so forth are all worked out. So they are teaching the same courses everywhere, whether it is the Methodist school or the Presbyterian school or something. So they then had training colleges where teachers were prepared for this. So the colonial government was the

coordinator. In fact, that area of government was controlled by them through this kind of mechanism. But they formed committees [on] which churches served. So you had a unified system. Even for the languages, you know, how to spell and so forth, the government became interested in that part too. Even though it was the churches which started [education in Ghana]. When I was offered a scholarship to go to England to study linguistics it was because there was a problem of orthography. Asantes did not like the way they had to write Aquiapim Twi and they complained bitterly. And said, when it came to their promotion, they had to sit for exam and they failed and so forth. So the government, you know, took their petition and brought [someone] from School of Oriental and African Studies to look at this problem. And then she investigated and did a report, but before the report was going to be implemented she met me and I was also teaching Twi, and found the work I was doing. She arranged for me to get a Commonwealth scholarship to go to London to study linguistics and come back and be secretary of a committee that would implement that report. So that kind of thing: close relationship between government educational systems and the missionary thing. Because the missionaries were then in control.

T: So there was collaboration, but there also must have been some tension, especially because the missionaries are more invested in incorporating local traditions, so that the people can/

N: The content, there was no problem with content. The missionaries would do their missionary [thing and] the government did not interfere. The missionaries had their own journals and so forth. But the thing is that to insure that there was a general kind of, uh, system somewhere the education department also supervised the work of textbooks. In terms of making sure that the orthography was consistent. And so books were published with the approval of the education department, which was a government thing. And most cases Akrofi and I were you know viewing the manuscripts and [laughs].

T: So you were, when you went to the school of Oriental Studies.

N: I was on the staff of the Presbyterian training college. And I was assigned to teach Twi and music. And the Twi department was working for the government in terms of looking at manuscripts submitted for publication, to make sure the orthography was right and make sure books were properly written.

T: These were pedagogical manuscripts.

N: Yeah, all kinds of things. Because Christaller had started you know standardizing the writing of Twi early on. So the orthography was certain, we had to make sure anything going to schools as readers were consistent and so forth.

T: and did you find/

N: So we read the manuscripts where it can be edited we did it. Akrofi was my boss, and so when this lady came to look at this Twi orthography thing, you know, obviously I was there. If I



understood her recommendations, I could incorporate them. And so I spent, I was there [in London] for five years, unfortunately. Well, unfortunately for the project, but very good for me! [laughter].

### **On Learning the Harmonium in 1936**

Nketia: I was at Acropong. Amu left and Danso came, and Danso went and studied his African rhythm and he started to write in Amu's style. It was at this point that I went to the training college. I was eager to learn from Amu, but he had left, so now it was Danso who was passing on to me the things that Amu had done. You see. And I remember, I went to the college knowing nothing about Western music notation or so forth,

T: So you had a different experience than Amu.

N: Yeah, but you know, I had, what do you call it. There was a book for learning to play you know the, you know, I got one...

T: The keyboard,

N: Yes, I've forgotten the name of it. But when I was going to my hometown for vacation, I copied the exercises, I bought a plain drawing paper and ruled the lines and so forth, to play, to learn to play in my hometown, where there was a harmonium. It was played only on Sunday mornings, and so the whole, for the four weeks or so, morning, afternoon. By the time I came back I could play hymns. So, one day, the person who could play the hymns in church was ill, and so I took over, and from then [laughs] I became. And so that gave me the thing to go and study Western music, because I had the foundation. And Amu did not discourage me, because he wanted me to learn that. Even though I wasn't given the scholarship for that. I did everything on my own. I registered at Trinity College of music and was doing things.

### **On Nkrumah's relationship with Amu and the Formation of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana**

Nketia: When Nkrumah had this idea [for an African Academy] he did not tell him [Amu] that he was doing it because he wanted to honor him. It was at the back of his mind. But he got his staff out at the flagstaff house to sit with him and discuss how to create an African academy of music. If it worked he would have formed it and given it to... But in the course of it there were disagreements, the way he was thinking, and Nkrumah did not quite, you know.

T: They didn't get along.

N: Amu was a little more conservative, he would want, you know, to arrange a course like this, and so forth. And he would set the school up *not* in Accra, but somewhere near Acropong, or you know... And Nkrumah was a sure boy, if he was setting up an African Academy it would be

straight in Accra. And then there were other little things, very, very little things. Like, uh, he had then retired from university and was in Peki and was coming down for the meetings, you know, and that time, when you traveled to government thing you ask for your transport, your allowance, and he was demanding it. So the thing fizzled out, Nkrumah didn't follow him. But this was, uh, a private, because he did not tell me when it did not work. That was when I got, you know, the person who was the intermediary called me and told me about this.

...

But Nana came to me, Nana Nketia, and told me, uh, that the thing has fizzled out. At that time the English department went to Nana Nketia because he was Interim Vice Chancellor [at the University of Ghana] and wanted 10,000 dollars to build a little rehearsal hall. So Nana came to me and said "this is what the English department wants, but do you think I can give them 10,000 pounds and they will be rehearsing Shakespeare and all that [laughs]. Why don't you write a letter to Nkrumah, you could, you know, you want this African Academy? Why don't you write a letter to Nkrumah and say you want to set up a school of performance of music, dance etcetera?" And so I did, so we could use the 10,000 pounds for that.

T: I see, I see.

N: And so I wrote the letter and hand carried it to Nkrumah myself, and it came back. And it was signed by Nkrumah in green ink. And that was how the School of Performing Arts came to be.

T: I see, well, that is very important.

N: And then, around the same time Nketia who was the liaison, you know, there was a request from his office that we should set up a dance company, and I agreed that we would set this up with the Institute of African Studies. And I managed to do that. So we had the dance company and the school of performing arts as part of my Institute of African Studies, so that is it. And then everything worked well, you see, so we continued the Amu tradition in his [laughs] and he was no longer a part of it. But when he retired from the [Kumasi] School of Technology I appointed him to that school.

T: To come back. Can we?

N: Yes, And it ended up, we gave him an honorary doctorate. I was able to bring him, and I even went further: I was a member of the UNESCO International Music Council. They wanted to give me an honorary member, individual member. And I said, "Amu was my big man, I cannot see myself being given this honor." And they agreed, and so they paid for him and his wife to go to Czechoslovakia. I was there myself [for the ceremony], because I was still a member of the council.

### **On Nkrumah's Inauguration**

Nketia: When we had the ceremony for inauguration of Nkrumah as president Wenima [sp.?] came to me, to my house to tell me that he, uh, wanted a format, a different format for, for...

T: Nkrumah came to your house to talk about/

N: Wenima was uh the minister of finance, but he was in charge of the celebration. And he came to my house in [unclear], to tell me about the kind of ceremony he wanted. Because he had heard my Twi poems on the radio.

...

I brought the performers for drums to play, the chief's drums. And we had the horn blowers, and so forth. I even wrote a drum text to play on the talking drum. And I didn't know Wenima wanted me to play, you know, the, the bell and announce Nkrumah's, you know [unclear].

T: Sure.

N: And I wrote a set of poems for the talking drums. I mean that was my, the application of my research.

T: Um hmm, it's replacing the chief with the president.

N: That was the link between me and Nkrumah and Busia. Busia [who helped overthrow Nkrumah], you know offered me my research fellowship in African Studies. And I started doing research collecting these things and he didn't know then that there would be any foment, very soon, very soon after I started.

...

I got roped into it [the national spotlight] because whoever saw [laughs]...

T: Because why?

N: I mean, because, you know, because I was talking about culture from my research, and radio, and so forth, and my publications of course. That's the difference between Amu and myself. Amu is *well* known for his innovation and for the way he propagated it and so on. Some people knew I was his student, but the outcome of my research has been felt in Ghana much more so then... you know, because I publish, I write articles in the papers, you know, and I have made several appearances on radio, television, you know. And then of course, you know, moving from Acropong to Accra, to the University [of Ghana]. You know, I was right here where I could be [accessible], and so forth. So I have, or I would say all the governments that came recognized what I was doing, you see. Including the first coup d'etat people who, you know.

T: In the sixties?

N: My wife and I went to a party, and the soldiers saw us. One of them came to my wife and I. “Who is that person who says, you know, [unclear], who says the early morning thing on the radio.” And then my wife looked at him and said “your cousin” and that was the end of it.

T: Your cousin?

N: Yes, he was. In fact, it was one of the, uh, people who did the coup, was my wife’s cousin.

...

One of Nkrumah’s people, you know, asked me to do a radio outlet. So he was saying, you know, “what we have achieved, they have people who play the gongon and make announcements. And in that way even though the chief is not accessible, people hear of him all the time. Because the person playing the announcement greets the nation on behalf of the chief.” And they wanted me to do the same. So I did, and I wrote something in Twi, [a] poem, and after which the drums play. But then they did it as a station outlet, [it] was playing every morning. Until the coup came [laughs].

T: Until the *coup d’etat*?

N: Yeah, you know, it was. Anyway, as I was saying I would have been in trouble because when the coup came, they were thinking about who wrote the poem. I did, you know. That was, the person who asked the question found out it was me, he didn’t drop it [laugh]. I would have been in trouble, I would have been in jail or something. All those associated with Nkrumah had problems, you know.

T: So anyone who supported Nkrumah was in trouble after that.

N: It wasn’t really support, but, uh, I mean, it was just one of the things I thought could be done given the materials I have. All that we did: contextualizing performances, bringing performers from various parts of the country to perform here at important ceremonial occasions, I was involved in all of that. Because I was a research fellow in African Studies, and I had done research collecting traditions from all around the country, and Nkrumah knew about it. But, uh, you know, everybody recognized the importance of it. The opposition, they all, even Danquah was a very good friend of mine. He took interest in my academic work.

## **January 16, 2015**

### **Nketia’s Beginning as an Ethnomusicologist**

N: Somebody else told Amu about me and he came to Akropong, you know, when he came back from London, and saw me. That was how he became my tutor. It was he who drew my attention to the traditional thing. Go back to your village and learn.

T: Right, but you were already doing that, even before...

N: My parents were non-literate, so I was already, you know. But when he asked me, then I was doing it consciously, because I was learning the songs and writing down the texts. I have a book of [unclear]. Sitting down with my grandmother, who was the leader of the Adowa group, and she teaching me the song. From a very good teacher. And she would teach me this is the call, this is the response, this when the chorus comes on top. Then she classified the songs: these are songs for the chief, these are songs for this and so forth. Very good. So that was the foundation for my ethnomusicology.

T: I thought you were working with the court before you met Amu, or was it only after.

N: No, after.

T: He was the one who told you about those people?

N: Yeah. He was the one who told me about Akufo. When he told me to go to my traditional people and I showed him what I had been able to get from them, he told me about those who had taught him at Akropong. So I went to the same teachers and got the songs that they sing and so forth. And it was that group that I, uh, involved in Nkrumah's public ceremonies.

T: Right. So when you took over from Danso in, when was it? In 41 or something.

N: That's right.

T: What was the controversy about the drums and those things? Was that kind of resolved by then?

N: Well, we were not playing drums. But actually, we had, you know, sort of used it casually, not seriously.

T: So it wasn't an issue.

N: No, because we had to learn the drumming and so forth.

T: You did?

N: Yeah, we couldn't just start a course in drumming if you yourself hadn't learned it.

**March 13, 2015**

**On the place of Amu's compositions in the church and the Current State of Tonal Prosody in Ghanaian Composition**

T: So he [Amu] wasn't interested in writing hymns?

N: Well, he thought he would write what would substitute for the hymns, you see. And so when he did not succeed, the ordinary, the Western church choir remained. They wore the western robes and then the other... they were sort of experimental, would be called to sing.

T: So the choir, they don't dance. But did Amu see value in writing hymns that would follow the contour of the language and/

N: Yes, that was his main, that was his assumption that because the language was not followed people were finding it difficult to join in the song, they were finding it difficult to learn.

T: But then those kept going.

N: But then that was, the Western thing was entrenched. So Amu had problems getting his music approved. It had to be auditioned at the beginning. And when they found that it was nice and so forth they allowed it to be sung. But it was sung as part of a performance thing not as part of the church.

T: Service?

N: I mean the section of the church where the liturgy and so forth. This was just an event, you know.

T: So Amu didn't try to change the liturgy itself then?

N: No he didn't. Well, I mean he learned how to write Akan lyrics and Ewe lyrics of course. But the main thing he discovered was there was relationship between the speech form and the music forms and that when the two are together it is easier for non-literates who are learning that by rote.

T: Because one of the things I am hearing in the new choral works composed by people like Alfred Addaquay or James Verric Armah or Newlove Annan is that they don't follow the tonal contour.

N: That in fact is the problem now. They don't realize we have that kind of relationship between our music and our language. so what they were doing is follow the Western patterns, the melodic patterns of Western thing, [provides example of disjunct melodic phrase] da da da. That is not Ghanaian.

...

There was a British composer who was really using the British intonation and rhythm in his opera he did. Benjamin Britten. And I knew, because I was doing phonetics... Benjamin Britten, was following the speech rhythm in the music. And because the speech rhythm of his music is different from our speech rhythm I could see the difference, but he was following the text as it is spoken rather than the text as it is sung. The difference between the text sung is that you follow a meter. So that your short syllables and so forth, if the rhythm is wrong it will be expected. And it makes a difference: how the language shapes the music, or how the music shapes the text, because you are stretching the syllable duration or shorting them.

T: Okay, yes. So in your music you are doing that.

N: As far as possible.

T: And you wanted to hand that over to the next generation.

N: Yes, because as far as possible follow the texts.

T: Because it respects the language.

N: If you want to change it there are some ways of making small changes here and there. That way nobody will upset the intonation. If it is low high don't make it high-low. And if it is da da da short-long. And somehow these patterns of melodic and so forth get fixed in ones mind. So if you don't have a text you are apt to ...  
And I could set that to the correct text.

T: It is related to the drum language.

N: Yes, the drum is the same replication of the syllabic values. Tonal and rhythmic. All the highs will be high tones in the language.

Me: And there's so much collective history embedded in that. Many generations

N: Yeah. Yes, but you see, the language thing takes precedence because this is what you learn as a child, you learn to sing. And the language you are learning as you sing in that language. So the correlation is established very quickly, very early.

T: But with people like Alfred Addaquay he has obviously studied your work and studied Ephraim Amu. He can sing those songs and play at the keyboard. I wonder how it makes you feel.

N: Yes, well It is because he learned the British thing first. And he is happy with it. I mean all those singing in the British style, they follow, even when the words are distorted in the music they can still appreciate it. You get used to it. And in fact there are composers who are so used to it they do a Twi text ignoring the syllable duration and even ignoring the intonation. It has

become so common now people don't think of. It makes it difficult to follow the meaning, but very quickly you are able to understand, in the context.

T: But those piece are popular. The people at the GBC who are putting the programs together, and they say that pieces by Newlove Annan and James Verric Armah are the ones that people are responding to today. So I wonder why you think that is, and if you think a time will come where people will realize that the language is not.

N: Well, but we have accepted the style. I mean, Armah's thing, people like it. Even Fante, they like it.

T: So it hasn't changed, even the language usage?

N: I think people know it is not proper Twi, but we have accepted it. You won't speak like that. You won't distort the intonation in your speech, but in music you can do it.

T: Okay.

N: And you do it at your peril, because eventually you may not be properly understood.

T: But don't you think eventually how people speak/

N: It won't effect the speech. Because it is a stylistic thing. I mean people won't speak [imitates a march tune] "da dada da."

T: Well, its not that it will be replicated, but maybe because people learn English from an early age. Maybe they don't learn their own language as immersivily.

N: When I look at my little grand babies and they speak a few Twi words now, but they speak them correctly. And the English thing. So, I mean, people, when you get used to the hymn style then you follow it, even if you are upsetting the intonation you go on with it. People are able to catch the meaning because it is spread over a sentence. The sentence somehow shows that this is the text. But in the traditional way of course now and then they will alter the intonation, but that is for stylistic reasons.